

Paradigm Shift A Future for the Briscoe School

The difficulty in reaching a decision on what should be done with the Briscoe property stems, in part, from the difficulty in diagnosing the mood of the greater community. The right and left may not agree on how education should be changed, but they do agree that change is needed.

As we look for innovative models for the District to emulate, it soon becomes apparent that Ashland is well equipped to take a leadership role; as childhood education moves into the future.

14 years ago the Ashland School District ceased using Briscoe Elementary School as a teaching facility. Despite challenges, Briscoe remains dedicated to the education of children and adults. There is OCDC, a Federally and State funded preschool; and the ArtWing, a Community Arts Center teaching creative process as a means to innovation.

The cultural contribution that the Briscoe Elementary School has brought to the community is ongoing. The school itself has been a part of Ashland's cultural mix since 1949. In our brief tenure of 12 years we have hosted First Nations Day, MidSummers Dream Art & Music Festivals, Jazz Jams, Holiday Festivals, Puppet Shows and more. ArtWing teachers pay the District to be retained, and contribute to educational diversity within the schools. The evolutionary potential of the ArtWing model cannot be denied.

A Possible Path

Open Enrollment rewards schools for educational excellence. The pursuit of educational excellence must be fiercely protected, and guide our decisions into the future.

Selling the grounds to Parks and maximizing use of the building as educational space is in the best interest of the community. A Briscoe property partnership between Parks and Schools would be a strong alliance in promoting culture and education. Through investment, Parks fulfills its covenant with the community to protect open space; and the District gains a partner, while shifting the expense of summer watering and groundskeeping. The possibility of Parks investing in the building for historical reasons, while leaving ownership in the hands of the District, should be explored. As institutions, Park Staff is fully prepared to maintain the grounds, and School District Maintenance is best equipped to service the building.

As we step beyond the bounds of traditional schooling and relationships, it is important for organizations like SOSF to actively support these decisions both now and in the future. Those of us who are gathered here understand the issues that guide District decisions. Sharing this understanding with the remainder of the community is paramount, if the full extent of our intention is to be realized.

Submitted by Jim Young