

Backwards Glance

The Doing Spirit— Wildwood's DNA

How is it that a spark of an idea takes hold? What drives some forward while others languish?

If history is any indication, it's less knowledge and expertise than it is conviction, courage, and drive. Wildwood School began as a kernel of an idea in the minds of a few driven people—a go-getter couple, a child psychologist, and a small group of parents—all with a shared vision of what elementary education *could be* back in the early '70s.

Propelled by their beliefs around what school *should be* for children, these early founders envisioned a school that was "attentive to emotional, social, and physical development and attuned to the real world because children cannot

develop meaningful interests in things they have not experienced." Thus was born a developmentally sensitive, experiential educational program that is at the root of the Wildwood we know today. Little did the founders know that less than 50 years later, a school of 20 would have morphed into a robust K-12 with more than 700 students, still deeply committed to its progressive roots and now sending well-prepared and empowered young citizens into the world.

In the early '90s, when it became clear that the campus of 20-plus years no longer served its needs, another group of parent volunteers took it upon themselves to find a new home for Wildwood School. Relentless visits to property after property to assess

the possibilities eventually led to the former Betsy Ross Elementary School site, which was about to go on the market. In less than an hour after hearing about the site, the search group gathered, surveyed the campus, and crafted an offer—determined to secure what has been the home of Wildwood's elementary school for 22 years. There was no stopping these parents. And though they were committing the school to a significant long-term lease and renovations the likes of which Wildwood had never known, their drive, courage, and "can-do" spirit compelled success.

Less than 10 years later, several parent trustees wondered what an expanded Wildwood might look like. Casual discussions quickly

became energized brainstorming, and with a few bold drivers leading the way, committees were formed and the research began in earnest. One evening in spring of 1997, a motion was put before the Board of Trustees to create Wildwood Secondary School to "provide a student-centered, developmentally focused, progressive education in grades 7 through 12"—a program unlike any other offered in the region. Passing unanimously, champagne glasses were raised, excited toasts were made, and then work like we'd never imagined commenced. Had it not been for the commitment to realize a vision filled with known and unknown possibilities and the relentless "we can do this" energy of a small group of people, Wildwood would

have remained a nice little elementary school in Culver City rather than the progressive powerhouse we've become with more than 500 graduates—many of whom are affectionately known as "lifers"—out in the world making *their* difference.

Recently, we examined the Wildwood of today with a goal of creating updated language to more accurately reflect who we are now. What emerged is new language steeped in the drive of a near half century of bold, energized people who had the courage to turn vision into reality. I imagine others would agree that the outcome from that work to capture, in words, the spirit and the essence of Wildwood School will resonate.

It needs people who take risks wisely and boldly, who are excited to collaborate with those who think differently than they do, and who are grounded in the belief that success is defined by accomplishments of the mind and the heart.

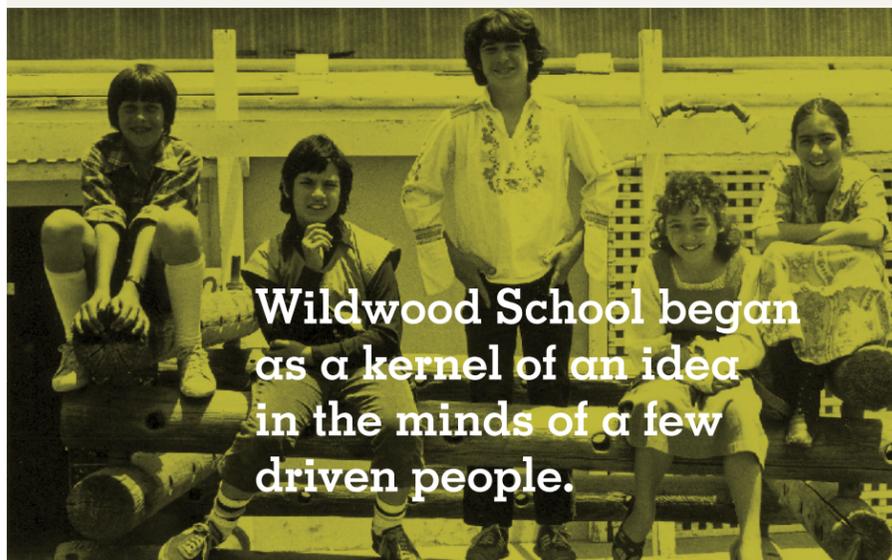
Today's world needs the kind of bravery that moves people toward originality, curiosity, and the mastery of their passions. It needs people who are willing to get in over their heads, to learn from failures, and creatively find their ways out. Today's world needs people who not only have the desire to make an impact but also the knowledge, discipline, and resources required to put ideas into action.

Today's world needs Wildwood School.

What today's world needs:

brave

learners, thinkers, and doers.



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