



Commissioner's

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Comments

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The meaning behind the symbol

Last week, we unveiled the new logo for the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) via a news release. I am sure that some of you found this to be expected with new leadership, and while somewhat accurate, I would like to explain the logo a bit more in this blog.

Branding of any product is important. It shows a recognition of the product or organization and it helps the user identify the brand. For me, however, it is more than that. Perhaps I have read too many Dan Brown books, but I believe that a logo, or symbol of the agency in this case, should carry with it the symbolism of the vision and work of the agency. As such, there are subtle, but significant, symbols within the new KDE logo itself.

Equity, Achievement, Integrity

As I have said before, equity, achievement and integrity are the guiding principles of our work together for the betterment of our students.

The silhouettes of the three students at the heart of the new logo symbolizes that we want equity for all of our students. The silhouettes are of actual Kentucky students and are meant to represent students of different ages, family incomes, zip codes and abilities. They were added to the logo to show the work of our agency is about all students. The fact that they are at the center of the state, symbolizes that students are at the center of all of our work and decisions.

The students are surrounded by an outline of our beautiful Commonwealth shown in gold. Gold is the color of achievement and we expect every child to have opportunity for achievement. Additionally, as a state, I expect us to be the "gold standard" for the rest of the country. I have been so touched by the commitment of Kentuckians to our students that the line from the Jesse Stuart poem rings true, "If these United States can be called a body, then Kentucky can be called its heart." In this case, a heart of gold. Finally, the ray of light that comes from the upper right corner has a dual symbolism, one of which I will discuss later. In this context, it means we will shine a light on our work with our students and our schools to ensure honesty and integrity for every child.

Our Children, Our Commonwealth

By now, no doubt you have heard me refer to Our Children, Our Commonwealth. This is our motto because I believe we have to focus on working together for the betterment of our students. The circle that surrounds the logo is not simply a circle. While it represents something official and governmental, for me it is the symbol of unity. To ensure unity, we have to move past a compliance model of education to a model of shared responsibility. Our Children means that we all take responsibility for all children; not just the ones in a single classroom, building, district, or even home. Rather, we recognize that while it takes a village to raise a child, it takes a Commonwealth to educate one. If we embrace this idea of Our Children, Our Commonwealth will benefit. Our children will graduate ready to contribute to their communities and build a happy life for themselves.

Hope for a Brighter Future

I mentioned the ray of light earlier and one of its two meanings. While it is representative of our guiding principles, this meaning is deeper and equally important. We can no longer set goals for students to graduate high school. Of course

we will still work toward supporting students to graduation, but we cannot see this as the end. Some would argue this may be the end of our responsibility, but is it really? As long as we set our sights only on graduation, we lose sight of the bigger picture. This ray of light is hope, hope for a greater life ahead. The graduating student holds their diploma aloft with pride as they achieved a meaningful milestone. But they lift their eyes to the future with graduation to a future that holds promise and hope for a happy and fulfilling life. This is what school is about, not just the classrooms and the tests. School is about opportunity, for every student to do whatever they choose with his or her life -- be it university, college, career or the military, students must have an education that prepares them for the future that includes their interests.

The new Kentucky Department of Education logo marks not only a new brand for the department, but also a new day in Kentucky education. I hope it is a symbol for a renewed focus on all of our students. For Our Children, Our Commonwealth.