

CHAPTER



ESTABLISHING YOUR "COMPASS OF DESIGN"

Finding Your Way	22
Branding/Rebranding	22
Logo/Mascot.....	24
Redesigning a Logo or Mascot	24
Color	25
Navigating Your COLOR Landscape.....	26
Font	27
Signage.....	28
Marketing.....	28
Funding.....	29

ESTABLISHING YOUR "COMPASS OF DESIGN"

Finding Your Way

Does your school have a mascot or logo? Is there a school motto? If yes, you already have a brand. If not, developing them can be an important first step in working together to form a visual identity and a statement of your school's ethos or core values. If you have some or all of these elements, are they still relevant? Is your school involved in a merger or consolidation? Creating a logo or mascot can be the first step in unifying the students, faculty, staff, and communities brought together through a political process that might have been painful or divisive.

If you are satisfied with your school's symbols, you might consider whether your CIC projects need a visual identity that is derived from them. Careful consideration of details like fonts for text, colors, and signs can bring profound results: greater unity among the members of your school community, a drive for success, and a pride of place. This "Compass of Design" will support marketing and funding for the projects your team selects.

"A brand doesn't simply mean a logo. We take the thinking developed in the brand strategy and use it to inspire the creation of rich, flexible and responsive design systems. Everywhere and everyone that identity touches is an opportunity to create an experience, make an impact and build your brand."

—THERE, We Build Brands,
"Identity, What We Do,"

THERE, (<https://therestudio.com/>)



Expanding the school logo in creative ways.

Branding/Rebranding

Branding and rebranding is an exciting process. There is an opportunity for your team to redesign and re-energize your overall mission. The branding and rebranding process provides schools with innovative and inspirational opportunities that promote your identity. Reworking your existing brand and logo brings a fresh outlook to an outdated and uninspiring design. Branding and rebranding are your "Compass of Design" and the foundation that impacts the three phases of your makeover projects. (High Impact, Secondary and Future.)

Branding describes the overall design and promotion of your institution and your values to your stakeholders. Branding supports your school's ethos through its logo, color palette, fonts, and marketing strategies. The challenge is to consistently display these visual elements of your brand that are easily recognizable. These design elements are vital to communicate your school's mission, values, and ideals. Your brand needs to reflect these core values to your targeted audience.

Rebranding is when an existing brand design elements are modified or altered to create current messaging and connections. Successful rebranding builds upon your existing brand. Updating your "brand equity," the logo and font, and the color

palette will create a contemporary and meaningful image. Your “brand equity” consists of the major visual elements within your brand that historically have resonated with your community. Your branding “makeover” will re-energize and engage your students, staff and school community.

Branding helps set your institution apart from others. When done effectively and consistently, the public should immediately recognize your brand based on its design elements, e.g., logo, color, and font. Many examples of this approach can be seen with corporate products and services (Nike, Apple, McDonald’s). The image of their logos clearly identifies their particular brand to consumers. Colleges and universities also spend great effort and focus to develop their brands, so they are instantly recognizable (University of Texas: Texas Longhorns; University of California, Santa Cruz: Banana Slugs; University of Alabama: Crimson Tide).

Spending time developing your new brand provides a solid platform that supports your school’s mission. Again, it is important to be brave! Change can be difficult. It is human nature to be fearful of the unknown. It takes courage and risks to develop innovative design ideas. Your team is a group of bright people collaborating to develop something great. We recognize that schools and institutions may have had the same logo for years. We are not suggesting you abandon your brand equity. Nevertheless, it is important to re-assess the existing design. Creating a new brand is part of establishing a solid design foundation to build upon for the new, the next, and the better, one step at a time.

Successful branding is instrumental in transforming your school and inspiring your stakeholders. It’s important to be consistent with your branding. You will influence positive behavior and facilitate positive changes throughout your environment. The visual impacts should not be underestimated. Our brains process visual imagery faster than text and written information. To be effective, your branding should be used throughout numerous venues. These are design opportunities to support your mission while building your brand and having a positive impact on your community.

BRANDING AND REBRANDING ARE YOUR “COMPASS OF DESIGN”

After exploring these questions, the next step is to create a visual and verbal brand that best communicates your school’s ethos and goals. The important elements of your branding are logo, color palette, fonts, and consistent visual displays. Integrate and weave branding into all visual work throughout the school campus. It’s important to maintain a level of comfortable continuity. Developing consistency is key to supporting your identity. Through your branding you will continually develop strong connections with your stakeholders and the overall community.



Simple, yet effective logo.

GUIDING DESIGN QUESTIONS

Reviewing some core questions about your school and community will point you in the right direction.

- What is the image you want to represent?
- What message do you want to convey?
- How will your branding and logo reflect your mission statement?
- How is your school evolving to changes in the 21st century?
- Who are your stakeholders?
- What separates your school from other schools?

Logo/Mascot



Logo variation as a constant school theme.

Your brand is more than your logo. Yet, your logo is the “core” of your brand. Review your existing branding elements: logo, color palette, and font. If you’re comfortable with your existing logo, you may choose to keep this as your foundation and build upon it. You don’t need to abandon your current logo. Build on its history which has been established while positioning it to be relevant and successful in the 21st century...*don’t stand still*. Expanding upon your logo will dramatically improve its impact and message in the present and for the future.

Many school districts define their name/identity from a specific geographic area, region or environment, e.g., beautiful natural surroundings, animals, birds, weather elements. We advocate being respectful and cognizant of one’s history and support maintaining these elements. At the same time, we encourage you to use existing emblems positively and creatively in your design.

Suggestions for developing your logo:

- Review the “Elements and Principles of Design.”
- Think outside the box, while maintaining continuity and a connection to your current logo.
- Introduce a less realistic interpretation.
- Integrate the use of negative space. (Use of negative space adds interest to the eye.)
- Movement: simple complementary lines.

Redesigning a Logo or Mascot

Schools replace and redesign their logos, mascots, and colors for a variety of reasons:

- Some schools choose a new identity.
- Some schools consolidate and merge.
- Some schools are mandated to change their logo by their state boards of education.

It is paramount that logos and mascots are not discriminatory, controversial, racially, or politically degrading to their stakeholders. Throughout our country, schools, corporations, and professional sports teams have rebranded their logos and mascots. Because schools strive to engage learners and inspire teachers, they must be receptive to positive changes that promote a climate of civility to welcome and support everyone. As America’s 21st century education standards advance so must school logos and mascots adapt, transform, and evolve.

When beginning a large-scale rebranding campaign, it’s important to allow input from stakeholders. The decision-making process can be challenging. Students, staff, alumni, and people in the community are exceptionally sensitive to rebranding changes. Dialogue and transparency are key elements for successful outcomes and transitions. Student and staff input are important. You want them onboard with these new initiatives. There are always going to be the “naysayers.” Encouraging a “buy-in” from your stakeholders will make for an easier rebranding transition.

Different methodologies will work for different schools when selecting the new logo and mascot. Be open minded and sensitive to all the possibilities before a “top down” process is implemented. Not everyone is going to be onboard with the final outcome; however, it is important to create a visual image that engages all learners.



"Color My World!" Cups filled with paint for "Pour" painting project.

Replacing a logo or mascot is an opportunity to promote your school's mission and direction. This is a fortuitous time for the makeover team to brainstorm new venues that highlight your school's ethos.

Color

"Nearly every academic study on colors and branding will tell you that it's far more important for colors to support the personality you want to portray instead of trying to align with stereotypical color associations. Bottom line: There are no clear-cut guidelines for choosing your brand's colors. "It depends" is a frustrating answer, but it's the truth. However, the context you're working within is an essential consideration. It's the feeling, mood, and image that your brand or product creates that matters." Gregory Ciotti, "The Psychology of Color in Marketing and Branding," Huffington Post.

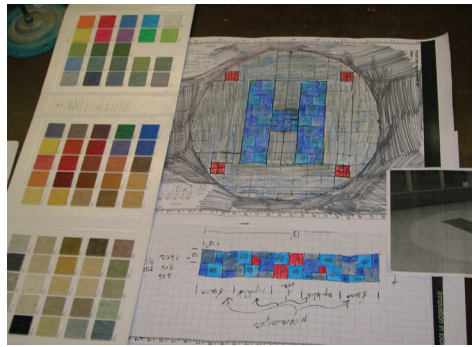
Color is one of the most critical design elements when developing a new identity. Colors are

subjective, regional, and cultural. In addition to cultural differences, geographic impacts and social experiences may influence different responses to color. For example, the Southwest region of the US has a different color palette than the Northeast region. Once again, we suggest your team do its own research as well as reaching out to students, staff, and community members to help formalize a decision regarding the expanded palette. Keep in mind the final decision should be determined by the team members.

Color symbolism is personal. Everyone reacts to and interprets the color yellow differently. To some, yellow is energizing, happy, warm. To others yellow is unpleasant and possibly harsh. How the color yellow works in our environment is scientific. Its impact is technical. School buses are yellow because the color "jumps out" and grabs our attention. Think of McDonald's golden arches. Your challenge is to design with color that simply complements your institutional history, values, and vision.



School Lobby Before Transformation.



New Lobby Design Proposal.



New Lobby.

Navigating Your COLOR Landscape

Some schools have redesigned their color palette to reflect a new and exciting journey. Other schools feel strongly about maintaining their colors with its historical connection to the institution and community. We do not advocate one approach over the other. Yet, we do encourage your team to reassess, highlight, and reinforce your color palette in order to support your ethos and your future.

A regional technical school's newly appointed administrator hired the CIC to facilitate a school and campus wide "branding makeover." The new principal was interested in expanding the color palette to improve the connections to their stakeholders of nine sending schools districts. Using CIC's approach, the makeover team reworked their existing brand and logo and brought a fresh outlook to their Technical Center.

Using three shades of blue provided the foundation for their new color palette. They then selected three additional colors (light green, orange and yellow) for highlighting and providing sparks of energy. These splashes of bright additional colors were used sparingly to enliven, invigorate, and engage. The team found ways to use the branding as accent colors throughout the building that supported the overall palette. They were able to develop and maintain a consistency of design which they continually built upon in interesting ways that enhanced their campus. It's important to remember that less is more. You don't want to be overzealous in your approach. The goal is to be comforting, inviting, and thought provoking.

The team was brave in taking a risk to select a new color palette beyond the colors used in the past. They were respectful of the school's history while building a school identity that resonated with their stakeholders. The new color palette was an instant success. It was as if people were waiting for something new and exciting to happen. Once the palette had been decided and work began, the energy exploded throughout the student body, staff and school communities. The positive responses were and still are palpable. The school was able to incorporate their new color palette to full advantage through their marketing campaign, social media, correspondence, and merchandise. They creatively used their new color palette in interesting ways to support their message of welcome to a broad range of new stakeholders.



Limited by zoning, the new signage and sculpture support the school's ethos.

Font

Fonts will pilot, plot, and direct the course of your branding identity to a higher level because fonts have strategic visual power. Your font (typeface) is the CPR lifeline that gives life to your visual identity and the GPS that gives direction to your logo and conveys your branding elements so that they stand out, are timeless and draw in an audience. Remember our brains process visual imagery faster than reading text. Fonts communicate messages faster than a viewer can process what they mean. A typeface has a lot to say. It may be interpreted as welcoming, happy, classy or it may be interpreted as unappealing and boring.

Using two fonts/typefaces is the norm. Select a primary and secondary. Avoid trendy appearances; the goal is that every font needs to transcend time and not become outdated quickly. Standard types of fonts that are available come in four different forms: Serif fonts, Sans serif fonts, Slab fonts, and Script fonts. Times New Roman is one of the oldest classical serif typefaces and historically works well because it is highly legible for printed documents, while digital platforms respond better to sans serif fonts.

PRIMARY:

The primary font accompanies your logo. Your primary font has the boldest of all personalities and characters. It is your visual lifeline of communication. This typeface sends a solid message of your branding and identity. Try to select a font that makes your logo stand out and represents the qualities that make your school unique.

SECONDARY: "Body Text/Copy Fonts"

The secondary font has to be easily readable, work well for fine print, and be displayed in low resolution for your web sites and internet offerings. Body text and copy should be so easily readable they are unnoticed. Readers will therefore focus on visual images and headers, not the body text. All print material generated by your school (letterhead



Taking the "Show on the Road!" A great public visual, school utility trailer with logo.

brochures, advertisements, publications, banners, etc.) should use your consistent secondary font. Your secondary font also needs to work well in italic and bold applications. Aesthetically, these options are necessary in communicating a strong and inviting message. Take time to access and research these different fonts when deciding which typeface works best to support your ethos and represent your school. There is a plethora of font resources for free and for purchase on the web.



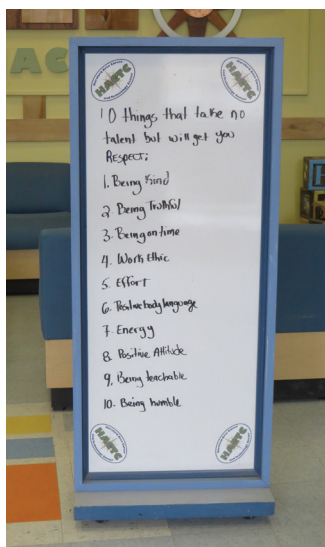
Exterior Signage.

Signage

Well-designed and thoughtful signage is a critical design element for your school branding and makeover. Signs need to be engaging to students, staff and the community while providing important decision making and directional information. Exterior and interior signage should not be left on the back burner. Signage should complement and support your design improvements, not clash, not compete and not be an afterthought.

Signage must include elements of your branding, logo, color palette and fonts. Signage, information management and directional mechanisms designs must be consistent throughout the campus.

Developing an orderly signage system that is clear, concise, and logical is an opportunity to promote your brand in a thoughtful way. You will want this to be consistent in your promotional material as well. Avoid negative images and phrases. Your signage should be welcoming to all.



Front of message board sign. Back of message board sign.

Marketing

A major marketing objective is to generate trust (safety), interest, engagement, and school spirit with your stakeholders. It's important to connect with your audience, elicit interest, attract new recruits, and reinforce your positive brand. A well-thought-out marketing campaign will attract an audience.

“Signs continue to provide essential things such as building identity, messaging, directions, and wayfinding amid various changes. And by doing so, such signs, like themed graphics, help a school function while focusing on its primary mission: educating students.”

—Scott Berman, “Give Me A Sign,”
School Planning and Management,
webspm.com/Articles/2016/02/01/Signs-Graphics.aspx.

Social media plays an important role with students and the larger community. It is insightful, fun, and inspirational to share your school's everyday stories through the voices of students. Technology today and in the future will allow you to communicate effectively with your stakeholders. Updates, reminders, stories, sharing student, alumni successes, staff achievements and profiles show that your school is in touch with its stakeholders. An online presence reinforces your ethos, encourages ownership and supports positive developments in your community.

Do your “Design Thinking” research. Brainstorm and generate a variety of ideas. Assess how other schools, colleges and universities promote their branding.

- How do they market their institution to potential students and recruiting staff?
- How do you want your school to be perceived?
- What sets you apart and makes you stand out from other schools?
- What might give you an edge in marketing and overall brand objectives?

Make sure that your brand elements are consistent across all marketing channels. Well-designed branding that is fully integrated into aspects of your promotional materials will help make your school instantly recognizable and attractive for viewers. Make sure your promotional platforms consistently reflect your school's brand. Images, logos, colors, and narratives genuinely represent what makes your school exciting and unique.

Branding “Leadership” and design teamwork communication are vital. It’s necessary to have the people in charge of PR (public relations) to be consistent when visually communicating your brand and promotional materials. Marketing unification must be consistent with all promotional materials. Whether with band and athletic uniforms, school swag, banners, competitions, performances, bake sales, posts on social media and on the web, it is important to promote your brand identity consistently.

Funding

You can spend a lot of money working with a design firm to develop your brand. Our hope is that by providing you with a compass for direction along with helpful resources, your team will be successful establishing your personal brand. Keep in mind that every school has valuable resources that may be accessed, e.g., Art Departments, Media Arts and Technical Center programs. The internet is filled with current branding and rebranding resources; many are free. It is important to invest some time in researching what professionals have done in the past for inspiration.

Be proactive. Highlight interesting developments that are taking place in your school. Connecting with your audience, sparking new interest, and reinforcing your positive message will all help with your fundraising efforts. Show a human face to your brand. Document your makeover projects with photographs (before, during and after) and with videos. Share the success and impressive improvements with the public to drive more enthusiasm and support for future projects and financial support.

Every community has small businesses, craftspeople, artisans, and caring citizens. You may discover that by sharing your well-conceived ideas regarding your makeover projects, your approach will resonate with many community businesses. Through a generous and honest approach, the CIC found that some businesses donated products or provided them at cost. Donations for projects included exterior lighting for outdoor murals, sand and bricks for walkways and wood for benches. Chain stores have also been helpful providing goods and services at cost in order to support school improvement projects that benefit the overall good of their greater community.

YOUR “COMPASS OF DESIGN” WILL STEER YOU IN A POSITIVE AND SUCCESSFUL DIRECTION!

Volunteers are valuable and precious resources. The same approach in assembling your “team” should be used when identifying community volunteers. It is great to have their support, but you need to be vigilant in your ideas and approach and not be sidetracked by alternative viewpoints from outside sources, should they differ from the team.

In-kind donations (goods and services provided without compensation) are also very important resources. It is important not to burden those willing to share their “sweat equity”, their efforts will be instrumental to your success. In-kind contributions may be applied towards “matching grant” applications. Keep a record of these donated goods and labor. Having a record of contributions is helpful to the local school boards and business to demonstrate the support from the community.

Be sure to highlight and celebrate everyone’s contributions to the “makeover” and transformational process. Don’t forget to thank and invite donors to your launch and unveiling ceremonies. Share your story through text and photos with great enthusiasm. Not only will you be celebrating your accomplishments, but you will be positioning yourself to have further successes with future fundraising campaigns...Good Luck!

In conclusion, every communication through your brand is a way for your school to inform and channel the public perception. Your school’s brand can be promoted through its website, building signage, promotional materials, school merchandise, etc. Your brand is the direct reflection of your school. It is critical to connecting present, past and future students and helps build positive relationships.

