



A Century Strong: Celebration & Hilander Brand Refresh

SUMMARY

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To honor the 100th anniversary of the Kelso High School Hilander mascot, Kelso School District launched A Century Strong—a strategic, communications and marketing campaign combining a full brand refresh with a centennial celebration. Guided by a January 2025 stakeholder survey, the district assembled a cross-functional team of students, staff, and administrators to design an inclusive new Hilander logo and comprehensive brand guide. The final silhouette mark reflects the shared values of Honor, Courage, and Grit and reproduces cleanly across print, digital, and athletic platforms. Implementation included a coordinated roll-out—updated gym graphics, staff gifts, centennial video, branded apparel, and unified email newsletters. The result is a modern, community-owned identity that celebrates tradition while positioning Kelso High School for the next century.

RESEARCH

In fall 2024, the Cowlitz County Museum confirmed the 2025-26 school year marked the 100th anniversary of the Hilander as Kelso High School's official mascot. At the same time, stakeholder feedback showed the school's existing Hilander logo—an intricate illustration—was dated, hard to reproduce, and failed to reflect the diverse student body. To understand community values, the district launched a [January 2025 survey of students, families, staff, and alumni](#), asking:

“What is the most important quality of a Hilander?” and “What does being a Hilander mean to you?”

[Hundreds of responses](#) revealed dominant traits, including: Honor, Courage, and Grit, and strong desire for an inclusive, modern brand.

PLANNING

Goals were to (1) refresh the Kelso High School brand in time for the centennial, (2) engage the school community in the design process to ensure ownership and pride, and (3) launch a cohesive celebration under a unifying theme.

Primary audiences included students, staff, alumni, families, and local community partners.

A cross-functional team—Principal, Athletic Director, ASB Secretary, Leadership Teacher, Superintendent, and the district's Public Information Officer—outlined a timeline from January through August 2025 with key milestones: stakeholder input, iterative design review, brand-guide development, and coordinated centennial rollout.

IMPLEMENTATION

- Collaborative Design: Multiple logo concepts were developed, narrowed by the team, then vetted in student focus groups and refined through final feedback.
- Inclusive Icon: The final mark features an original Hilander silhouette—a deliberate choice so all students and alumni can see themselves in the figure.

- [Comprehensive Brand Guide](#): Provided clear direction for typography, colors, and usage across athletics, academics, and district communications.
- Centennial Theme: “[A Century Strong—Honor. Courage. Grit.](#)” paired the new visual identity with the anniversary message.
- High-Visibility Launch: The brand debuted with upgraded [gym graphics and equipment](#), an all-staff [opening-day video](#), [commemorative slate-coaster](#) gifts, new [email signatures](#), ASB and [District Office t-shirts](#) (including a [student-designed variant](#)), and consistent integration district-wide.

EVALUATION

- Broad Engagement: Survey participation and student feedback shaped every design decision, creating a strong sense of ownership.
- Unified Identity: Staff, students, and alumni report overwhelmingly positive reactions, citing pride in a logo that embodies the strength, pride, and tradition of Kelso.
- Longevity & Versatility: The simplified silhouette reproduces cleanly on uniforms, signage, and digital platforms, ensuring cost-effective use for decades.

The Kelso High School rebrand was more than a logo update—it was a strategic, months-long communications and marketing campaign that honored a century of Hilander tradition while creating an inclusive, future-ready identity. One guided by research and grounded in community voice.



More Links:

- [Supports One-Sheet](#)
- [Google Folder with all files](#)