

Opening Speech
Thailand Phi Delta Kappa 25th Anniversary
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Phi Delta Kappa is an international association for professional educators. Membership includes K-12 classroom teachers, school administrators, college professors, and educational specialists. The organization's mission is to promote quality education, with particular emphasis on publicly supported education, as essential to the development and maintenance of a democratic way of life. A network of more than 660 chapters exists in the U.S., Canada, and all over the world, including Thailand, with half the chapters based on college or university campuses that have graduate departments in education.

The Goal of Phi Delta Kappa is to promote free public education as essential to the development and maintenance of a democracy through the continuing interpretation of the ideals of research, service, and leadership and the translation of these ideals into a program of action appropriate to the needs of public education.

The coat of arms can be interpreted as follows: The three original organizations, Phi Kappa Mu, Phi Delta Kappa, and Nu Rho Beta, are represented in the coat of arms by the three keystones. The three stars represent the student, the home, and the school. Research is symbolized by the burning lamp and the book. Service is represented by the flaming torch and leadership by the upraised hand and sword. Surrounding the shield are acanthus leaves, which signify learning.

Looking at the organization's goal in the Thai context, starting with the promotion of free public education, we can see that this is an ongoing challenge critical to the future of the Kingdom of Thailand. We know that many of our student's families have challenges with poverty, unemployment, and family structure breakdown. Our goal should be to uplift our students by providing opportunity for those who may not otherwise be able to study, and to encourage the privileged amongst us to reach out to those less fortunate and help them to overcome the challenges they are facing. Overcoming these challenges is a product of combining diligence, compassion, and the courage to reach out in love and understanding to those who are in need. Our task in education is to provide opportunity for learning, for community development, and for positive change in our students, in the wider community, in Thailand, and in the world.

Looking next at furthering the development of democracy through research, in Thailand, we can see how critical such issues as academic freedom, press freedom and the attendant responsibility to report accurately, have been and continue to be to our national development. Globally, we can see that when the light of freedom and truth in research are allowed to shine, positive change is all but assured. The more we encourage and allow for bold breaking of new pathways into the unknown, the greater will be our ability to deal with the challenges we continue to face day by day.

Turning to service, leadership and the translation of goals into action appropriate to educational need, again this is a critical area for the Kingdom of Thailand. Our current political difficulties are a clear sign of how important the linkage between service and leadership has become in our modern world. When this link is broken, disaster can be expected to follow on in very short order. Education, and educators, have as their very *raison d'être*, (reason for being) the service of the learning and social interaction needs of their students. This includes the need to serve a higher goal than just the personal or economic benefits to be expected from a good education, and goes to the very heart of providing the ethical base foundational to a good society. The good society of which we are speaking must be inclusive of all its members, at all economic, social, and political levels. We cannot afford to be exclusive in the carrying out of our mission as educators. In our ever-shrinking world, the needs of one are becoming more and more synonymous with the needs of all. Education is the great leveler in society, the one constant by which, across all ages and times, those less fortunate have been able to take as a means to rise to opportunity and fulfillment, not only in personal and materialistic, but more importantly in spiritual and ethical dimensions.

I invite you to bear in mind the goals of Phi Delta Kappa as you consider the research contained in the pages that follow. As we fulfill our mission as educators, let us remember the words of the late Christa McAuliffe, when asked just before the fated mission of the US Space Shuttle, on which she was to die along with six other astronauts back in 1986, what she did for a living, Christa responded, "I touch the future, I teach." Let us all remember as we touch the future of our students, to do it with love, with an abiding respect for truth, with caring, and with compassion.

As an added personal request to those of you reading these words who are members of Phi Delta Kappa Thailand Chapter, I would like to ask for a special commitment from you to the ideals of Phi Delta Kappa. These are promoting free public education as essential to the development and maintenance of a democracy through the continuing interpretation of the ideals of research, service, and leadership and the translation of these ideals into a program of action appropriate to the needs of public education, as discussed above. Thank you very much and God Bless.