

# School Themes

<http://www.schoolthemes.org>  
email <admin@schoolthemes.org>

Dear *Educator*:

**Congratulations, and thank you for making the decision to purchase a winning School Theme production. We know you will find it one of the most valuable tools available for your staff, students and school community.**

**Introducing:**

- **School Wide Themes Purpose**
- **Theme Benefits**
- **Theme Creation Strategies**
- **Rewards**
- **Theme Timing**
- **Theme Kick-Off**
- **Community Involvement**

**You can participate in the personal and professional growth of all students. The theme process encourages school spirit and with each theme session staff members will learn new strategies. See more details on our website <http://www.schoolthemes.org>.**

**Build School Spirit**

**After all.... It's all about the kids**

**Thanks again and enjoy !**

# School Wide Themes

## Purpose

**The need for school wide themes !**

**What themes do for the staff and the leader of a building?**

School wide themes provide the principal with “*the glue that holds a staff together.*” Themes help evolve staff members into an education family; a family that works together to educate and recognize individual *student and staff* successes.

It’s all about attitude. Themes help keep the entire staff motivated and positive throughout the school year. A highly motivated staff maintains a positive attitude and students are inspired. The learning environment is super charged and great accomplishments prevail.

Themes let great things happen for everyone in the learning community !

## Theme Benefits

- Generate and set the stage for the upcoming year
- Create a positive environment
- Provide opportunities for individual recognition
- Develop winning attitudes
- Develop and foster relationships among people
- Develop a sense of togetherness (education family)
- Keep staffs motivated throughout the year
- Celebrate successes
- Reward positive behavior
- Build character among students and staff
- Generate excitement in the community
- Provide direction to the learning community
- Enable the administrator to support morale building events throughout the year

# Theme Selection

## Three Theme Creation Strategies

### **Method One: Principal**

The school principal creates or selects the theme. The selection process is often based on an assessment of school needs.

Example: The principal might determine that a theme supporting manners, teamwork, academics or community relations best serves the current school climate.

The principal may receive input from the education community (staff, students, parents, and patrons) however; the final decision rests with the principal. This “beginner’s method” is directive in nature and satisfies the principal’s immediate school needs assessment.

Specific theme support days can be established and theme shirts with logo’s may be worn.

### **Method Two: Community**

The principal solicits ideas for next year's theme from the staff, students, and community.

#### Popular methods:

- School newsletter to parents
- District publications
- School website
- Staff bulletins
- Staff meetings
- Classroom student meetings

The publications and meetings describe the criteria for the theme and establish a deadline for submissions.

Example: The theme must be presented in acronym form and support a positive learning environment. A word like HAPPY might be chosen and convert to - -

H.A.P.P.Y --- “Have A Positive Productive Year.”

Once the deadline has passed and all eligible entries are received, the selection process begins.

- All eligible entries are compiled into a ballot form
- The ballot is made available to the learning community, students, parents, staff, patrons, etc. Completed ballots may be received via mail or in person.
- If more than five different acronym theme entries are received, the first vote can narrow the theme selection to the top three. Then a re-vote may be conducted to select the winning theme for the following year.
- If the initial submissions reveal less than five separate acronym entries, then the most votes wins.

Once the winning theme is selected:

- The theme is publicized in all school and district publications
- The staff and students submit ideas for the theme logo that will be used for a wall mural and the theme shirts
- The staff and students choose the colors that will be used for the theme shirt
- The principal selects the theme logo from the input provided

### **Method Three: Staff**

This is a powerful method that focuses on staff unity and their buy in for the entire theme process. Your staff creates the theme for the next school year.

Staff requirements:

- Staff members may choose to work alone, in teams, or small groups
- Staff members submit as many different theme ideas as they can envision.

- All theme ideas are submitted to a selected office administrator by an established deadline.
- A ballot containing all submissions is created.
- A staff meeting is scheduled and staff members will present their theme ideas to fellow staff members. The presentation must include; ideas for decorating rooms, treats or ideas for theme related incentives, how the theme can be integrated in the educational program, theme logo and colors for the theme shirts, and anything else that provides support for their submission.
- Upon completion of all presentations the staff members receive the ballot and vote for the theme of their choice.
- The first vote usually narrows the choices to the top three theme ideas. A second vote may be required to break a tie and the winning theme is supported by the most votes. Save all material – these are competitive presentations made by your staff members and will prove invaluable for future theme selection processes.

#### Rewards

- Provides teamwork for staff members
- Encourages school spirit
- Supports staff buy in for school wide theme ideas
- Entertaining way to select themes and provides healthy competition
- Personalizes staff members ideas on how to implement the theme in their classrooms
- Generates laughter and creativity during staff presentations
- Provides positive staff morale

#### The winning entry can be rewarded:

- If the winning presentation is conducted by two staff members or less, a dinner for two might be offered.
  - If a team of teachers present the winning theme they may enjoy lunch together.

Suggestion: Video the theme contest. The video becomes priceless at teacher retirements or staff functions.

## **Theme Selection Timing**

### **When do I begin the theme selection process?**

This timeline is based upon on a school year that commences in the middle of August and ends in May.

- In early April the principal advertises it is time to come up with a theme idea for the following school year and a deadline is set for new theme submissions
- Middle of April - theme ballots are created and if using method three a date is set for the theme contest
- Last week in April the final vote is tallied and the theme is announced
- First of May - the theme shirt logo and colors are presented to the principal
- End of May - in conjunction with staff departure for the summer - they submit orders for their theme shirts
- First of June - theme shirt orders are placed with the T-shirt vendor.
- Staff reports in August - theme shirts are ready on the first day
- The theme begins for the new school year

## **Theme Kick Off for the Staff**

### **What is a theme kick off?**

A theme kick off is held at the beginning of each school year. This kick off is for the staff and their families. A cook out is held - new staff members and their families are introduced. This is also a great opportunity to thank families for their support to children and the entire education process.

Following the cookout the staff stays to decorate their rooms together. It provides a fun evening and great teamwork as the rooms are prepared for the students. During the evening, drawings and contests are held for staff members.

Prizes related to the school theme are given throughout the night's events. These might include decorations for bulletin boards; stickers, note pads, or larger gifts donated by local businesses.

It is a memorable evening and a fun way to start the school year.

## **Students, Parents and Community Members**

### **When do they get theme shirts?**

Theme shirt orders for students and parents are taken during student enrollment. Order forms for patrons are always available in the school office. All orders must be placed not later than the second week of September.

*This concludes the introduction... however, as you embark upon implementing the selected theme... it's likely you'll want to introduce it to students, staff and select community members. Therefore, we've included some of the introductory material in the theme process too !*

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Let's introduce your selected theme... and ... it's most important functions.

# S.H.O.E.S.

## Students Having Opportunities for Excellence and Success

Each of our themes is introduced in acronym form. Additional discussions may be found at our web site <http://www.schoolthemes.org/acronyms.html> This “play on words” can provide additional sessions for staff fun and creativity.

The name (acronym) selected for your school theme represents your first attempt at creativity. Whether you choose one of our “named” themes or create your own... the fun really begins here.

The name is not what’s important.

It’s your imagination and the methods you use to promote your School’s Spirit.

The word or words chosen may become your school’s slogan for perhaps a full year. Although you’ve selected our theme - **SHOES**, - you might chose to change the name to fit your school’s character or special needs.

Once you’ve seen our examples of theme implementation, you’ll know it’s ok to make changes to suit your style. In fact it’s encouraged. You’ll want to support lasting school spirit so be creative, inventive and have some fun with new concepts.

Once again, it’s likely your theme (**SHOES**) will be displayed on school correspondence, wall murals, lockers, etc. So have fun with step number one.

The bonding, staff unity, student participation and excitement commences now.

Next – we assume total staff participation and support. Without the commitment of the entire staff, themes are just *whispers in the wind*.

Like all good ideas – there is a “kick-off” session and each unique theme contains ideas related to that particular acronym. In your case – the theme **SHOES** has been selected and we’ve incorporated related ideas or “theme” content concepts.

Remember – *a key concept* - themes must contribute to a students’ learning success.

If not - why use them?

Your day is already filled with many other demanding tasks...

However, when you have staff buy in... *school themes*... become the catalysts that ignite the inspiration fuse. Excitement is contagious... effective school wide themes inspire, motivate, and excite staff and students.

---

### **Theme SHOES:**

The **SHOES** theme offers a great opportunity to emphasize citizenship and it can be utilized across the curriculum. It can be used in physical education, science, mathematics, social studies, communications, art projects, and other subject areas. Examples: How **shoes** are used in each curriculum area. In science classification could be used with **shoes** or designing a pair of **shoes**.

In social studies students will walk in the **shoes** of the people in which they are studying. In mathematics they would walk through different math problems and display the steps for each of the problems. In art they could use **shoes** for still life drawings or make different **shoes** from clay. In communications they could write biographies about who they are in a picture of a favorite design or style of **shoe**. They could also learn about descriptive words when describing a pair of **shoes**. In physical education they could discuss the importance of quality **shoes** for physical activity. These are just a few possibilities and there are many more that can be utilized.

## **Theme Kick Off: What is it?**

A theme kick off is held at the beginning of each school year. This kick off is a cookout... for the staff and their families. Often new staff members and their families are introduced at the same time the next years' THEME is introduced. It is also a great time to thank the families for their continuing support.

Following the cookout... the staff remains to begin decorating their classrooms. This is an evening demonstrating staff teamwork. Drawings and contests are held for the staff members and prizes related to the school theme are awarded. They might include decorations for bulletin boards, stickers, note pads, or even larger gifts that may be donated by local businesses.

This can be a memorable evening.

## **Theme shirts**

- Each staff member receives a theme shirt at the beginning of the school year. The kick off – cook out is often a good time to present the shirts.
- How do you provide shirts for your staff ? You may choose fund raisers, a business sponsor, parent/teacher organizations or individual staff members as a means to purchase shirts.

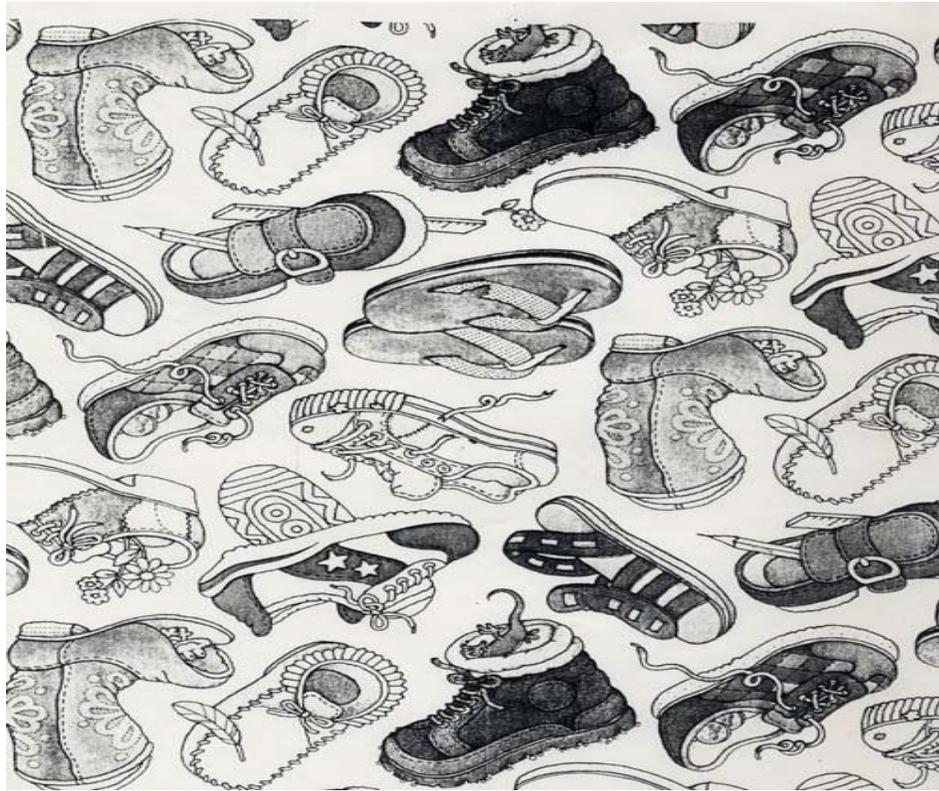


- Our web site provides links to top of the line vendors if you haven't selected a local resource for shirts.  
<http://www.schoolthemes.org>.
- The theme shirt is usually a short sleeve T-shirt however; long sleeve T-shirts, polo shirts, denim shirts or sweatshirts have also been selected.
- **S.H.O.E.S.** shirt: Yellow shirt with navy blue **shoe** prints walking on the shirt. The word **S.H.O.E.S.** is displayed on the back of the shirt in navy blue and under the letters is the saying "Walk a mile in my **shoes.**" On the front of the shirt is a tennis **shoe** with the school name across the toe of the **shoe**.

- Theme shirts are typically worn on the first day of school, during monthly theme celebrations, staff dinners, district meetings, field trips and staff recognition days.
- Shirts are available for students, parents, and patrons to purchase during student enrollment. They provide symbols of staff unity and school teamwork for your education family.

### **Decorating Ideas**

- **S.H.O.E.S.** is displayed throughout the building and can be accompanied by a character education wall in which a ladder of success is displayed with Study Skills, Positive Attitude, Following Directions, Math Skills, Reading Skills, Communication Skills, and Good Manners. You could display any of the character education ideas that you are focusing on in your school.
- **S.H.O.E.S.** theme mural is painted on the wall where student success awards are displayed. The theme mural matches the back of the theme shirts.
- **Shoe** related material is used in the office and classrooms for curtains.
- **Shoes** and socks are used as symbols and character building activities are placed throughout the building.
- All communication documents such as parent newsletters, staff bulletins, front covers of student and staff handbooks, the school website, and school stationary, display the **SHOES** theme. Ideal name for the school newsletter: - Footnotes –



## Staff Incentives

- First school year staff meeting: The staff receives teacher supplies such as pens and pencils that contain theme representations. Also include a “substitution stub” for a designated amount of time during which the principal covers for the staff member. This allows time for teachers to observe other teachers, provide planning time for integrated units, a break from duties, or just an opportunity for the principal to work in other’s **shoes**.
- First Day of School: Theme related treats and a banner stating the theme is placed in the lounge for the first day of school. Ideas for treats: **Shoe**string potatoes or cookies shaped like **shoes**.

----- Sidebar -----

Many schools have become more aware of the advantages and disadvantages of eating in certain ways. People are much more aware of the relationship between what they eat and how they feel. Along with a push to decrease junk and increase nutritional content in school lunch, many school districts also are placing limits on pre-packaged food and drink that have become a mainstay for some middle-and high-school-aged students.

It's all part of encouraging healthy lifestyle choices. Concentration and ability to learn can be affected by nutrition.

And what's in the food we eat ?

Here's a link to the Agriculture Department's food search tool. If reading this document offline, Copy the link URL, then paste in your browser window.

[http://199.133.10.140/codesearchwebapp/\(5rdkvyej0ukns5rpgmu15k55\)/codesearch.aspx](http://199.133.10.140/codesearchwebapp/(5rdkvyej0ukns5rpgmu15k55)/codesearch.aspx)

Alternatively, here's a link to additional food survey information.

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/Services/docs.htm?docid=7673> (click on food search tool)

-----Sidebar end -----

- Birthday Celebrations: Once a month we celebrate staff birthdays in conjunction with the **SHOES** theme. Staff members wear theme shirts and provide treats for the birthday celebrants. Staff members sign up at the beginning of the year choosing the month they choose to be responsible for organizing the celebration and providing treats.

- Mailbox Treats:
  - ✓ Flip flop key chains
  - ✓ Flip flop shape note pads
  - ✓ **Shoe** shaped erasers
  - ✓ **Shoe** shaped magnets
  - ✓ Key chains with a **shoe** on the key chain
  - ✓ Blank **shoe** prints to write a note to a staff member
  
- Music: Theme day music is played over the intercom to get the day started. Music idea: *These Boots are Made for Walking* by Nancy Sinatra
  
- Staff Recognition: Principal places in teacher mailboxes a note formed in the shape of a **shoe** sole. These notes are intended to recognize great teaching strategies, acknowledge quality teaching or a positive activity that is going on in the classroom. This could also be a way to recognize state test standards being taught or any part of a building improvement plan that is being implemented.
  
- Paychecks: Theme related gifts can be attached to paychecks, such as:
  - ✓ Gift Certificate from McDonald's displaying the Golden Arches
  - ✓ Skor candy bar with a note saying you "Skor" big when it comes to working with kids."
  - ✓ Big stuff Oreo cookies with a note that says thanks for a job well done.
  - ✓ Heart candy with a note that says you are the "Heart and Sole" of the school. Thanks for your hard work.
  - ✓ Snicker candy bar with a note that has a picture of a tennis **shoe** and says Have a "sneaker-ific" Year!
  - ✓ Money for a can of pop with a note that says "Step on in for a Pop on me"

**Staff Development Ideas:** Staff reads and discusses the book **Positive Words, Powerful Results** by Hal Urban. It is a book that focuses on ways to be positive to others.

### **Student Incentives**

- Read a positive statement over the intercom each morning. A good source for these statements can be found at [www.pops.com](http://www.pops.com) - click on “attitude boosters.”
- Footprint that says you are stepping toward success is given to a student. It lets others know the student is displaying good citizenship skills that help them become successful at school.
- Give happy birthday pencils to students on their birthdays and announce the student’s name over the intercom.
- Have different shaped **shoes** that are the award certificates for students passing levels of academic achievements test.
- Give super bubble gum for student helpers. Students that help with a substitute, display good manners, help in the lunchroom or any behavior that the school might like to recognize.
- Display academic achievement awards on the **SHOES** Award Wall or a designated area in your school building.

## **Building-Wide Academic Achievement Program**

Building-wide academic achievement programs can be focused around the theme. Examples include timed math tests, spelling, reading skills, keyboarding skills, or any area in which students master a skill level and move forward to the next. This method can be adapted to meet your own building needs.

### **Example of a Building-Wide Timed Math Test: “Walking Down the Road of Success”**

This test is administered weekly on basic facts in addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division and is intended to help students improve these skills.

Each student is given a cut out of a [shoe](#) or boot and their name is written on the cut out. As the student passes the timed test at each level their [shoe](#) moves down the road toward success. The road is displayed on a wall in which students can view their successes. As the student passes each level of the timed math test the [shoe](#) moves down the road through all seven stops a long the road. The goal is to pass all seven levels. A chart is created and placed in each classroom displaying the student successes.

Upon successfully completing each level students receive a certificate and a prize from the principal. Each certificate is printed to reflect the theme and includes the student name, date, level tested and the principal’s signature.

Classroom teacher aides help with grading the tests, keeping progress records, moving the [shoes](#), and preparing tests for the next week.

After the completion of all seven levels the student’s name is announced over the intercom.

## Examples of prizes and certificates

**Level 1-** Stop 1—Student receives an award that says “You are off on the right foot. A prize could be a **shoe** eraser

**Level 2-** Stop 2---Students receive an award that says “Keep on trucking.” A prize could be a key chain with a flip flop **shoe** on the chain.

**Level 3-** Stop 3—Student receives an award that says “We are moving on out” The prize could be a pack of bubble gum.

**Level 4-** Stop 4---Student receives an award that says it is time for a “Rest Stop” A coupon is given for a free can of pop from the principal.

**Level 5-** Stop 5—Student receives an award stating that they have jumped through the hoops. Prize could be a Big Stuff Cookie.

**Level 6-** Stop 6---Students receive an award that states you are sneaking up on the final stop. Prize could be a snicker candy bar.

**Level 7-** Stop 7--- Students receive an award stating you have made it through the arches of success. Prize could be a hamburger certificate from McDonald’s.

Note: This is an example of how a building-wide timed test was implemented. Other strategies may be adopted and we’d be happy to hear from you about how your school used the **SHOES** theme. Please e-mail your stories to <[admin@schoolthemes.org](mailto:admin@schoolthemes.org)>

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Helping the teacher create a common vision or common goal has shown **tremendous** success. Staff members and students all respond to an enthusiastic school wide - **theme presentation**.

Presentation is the key... educators want school spirit to be high... they desire inspired learning and they know it helps to generate classroom excitement.

Students and their education family benefit from good, fun, creative and results oriented endeavors that support their school, their classmates and community.

We hope you have enjoyed the creative prospects we've shared as part of the **SHOES** theme and would enjoy hearing from you. As you recognize by now there is room for additional creativity in both the presentation and execution of our themes. We have a lot of fun creating themes and may even arrange a personal presentation of the whole process if you choose.

Wishing you the best education successes,

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Your day is already filled with many other demanding tasks...

However, when you have staff buy in... school themes... become the catalysts that ignite the inspiration fuse. Excitement is contagious... effective school wide themes inspire, motivate, and excite staff and students.

Student successes mean better grades, better attitudes, and a positive learning environment. It’s much easier to promote school spirit when you have an effective program that benefits all participants and encourages full participation.

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### **Theme HATS:**

The **HATS** theme offers a great opportunity to emphasize careers and the education required for different career paths. Imagine the theme support you could introduce with fireman **hats**, police officer **hats**, Navy, Marine, Army, Air Force, Coast Guard, etc. **Hats** are used as symbols of student interest in various professions. **HATS** can also be emphasized across the curriculum to study different historical time periods.

As an example, various [hats](#) were worn during different time periods in history and can support biographical studies in everything from language arts and still life drawings to Presidents, Sports figures, and First Ladies.



### **Theme Kick Off: What is it?**

A theme kick off is held at the beginning of each school year. This kick off is a cookout... for the staff and their families. Often new staff members and their families are introduced at the same time the next years' THEME is introduced. It is also a great time to thank the families for their continuing support.

Following the cookout... the staff remains to begin decorating their classrooms. This is an evening demonstrating staff teamwork. Drawings and contests are held for the staff members and prizes related to the school theme are awarded. They might include decorations for bulletin boards, stickers, note pads, or even larger gifts that may be donated by local businesses.

This can be a memorable evening.

### **Theme shirts**

- Each staff member receives a theme shirt at the beginning of the school year. The kick off – cook out is often a good time to present the shirts.

- How do you provide shirts for your staff ? You may choose fund raisers, a business sponsor, parent/teacher organizations or individual staff members as a means to purchase shirts.
- Our web site provides links to top of the line vendors if you haven't selected a local resource for shirts.  
<http://www.schoolthemes.org>.
- The theme shirt is usually a short sleeve T-shirt however, long sleeve T-shirts, polo shirts, denim shirts or sweatshirts have also been selected.



- **HATS** shirt: The shirt is beige in color with a chest full of different hats outlined in black on the back of the shirt. The front of the shirt is a **hat** with the initials of the school.
- Theme shirts are typically worn on the first day of school, during monthly theme celebrations, staff dinners, district meetings, field trips and staff recognition days.
- Shirts are available for students, parents, and patrons to purchase during student enrollment. They provide symbols of staff unity and school teamwork for your education family.

### Decorating Ideas

- **H.A.T.S.** is displayed throughout the building and can be accompanied by the words “**Hats** Off to our Students”.

- **H.A.T.S.** theme mural is painted on the wall where student success awards are displayed. The theme mural matches the back of the theme shirts.
- Curtains in the office and classrooms can be made of hat material.
- **Hats** are used as symbols around the building for different activities going on in each area of the curriculum. The classroom selects a hat that would represent their room.



- All communication documents such as parent newsletters, staff bulletins, front covers of student and staff handbooks, the school website, and school stationary, display the **HATS** theme.
- Ideal names for the school newsletter include – Top News of the Week , then select a top **hat** from available clip art. Additional classroom news can be accompanied by the selected **hat** symbol chosen by each classroom.

### **Staff Incentives**

- First school year staff meeting: Each staff member is asked to bring a **hat** and support reasons it can be used to symbolize student education processes.

- First Day of School: Theme related treats are offered and a **HATS** banner or mural is placed in the lounge for the first day of school.

----- Sidebar -----

Many schools have become more aware of the advantages and disadvantages of eating in certain ways. People are much more aware of the relationship between what they eat and how they feel. Along with a push to decrease junk and increase nutritional content in school lunch, many school districts also are placing limits on pre-packaged food and drink that have become a mainstay for some middle-and high-school-aged students.

It's all part of encouraging healthy lifestyle choices. Concentration and ability to learn can be affected by nutrition.

And what's in the food we eat ?

Here's a link to the Agriculture Department's food search tool. If reading this document offline, Copy the link URL, then paste in your browser window.

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Alternatively, here's a link to additional food survey information.

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/Services/docs.htm?docid=7673> (click on food search tool)

-----Sidebar end -----

Ideas for treats:

- Birthday Celebrations: Once a month we celebrate staff birthdays in conjunction with the **H.A.T.S.** theme. Staff members wear theme shirts and provide treats for the birthday celebrants. Staff members sign up at the beginning of the year choosing the month they will be responsible for organizing the celebration and providing treats.

- Mailbox Treats: For Each Month with Paychecks
  - ✓ August-Hats off to a Good Year with a visor or baseball cap with the school logo
  - ✓ September-Payday Candy Bar for that first paycheck of the new year
  - ✓ October-We are getting into the swing of things and give them baseball shaped gum
  - ✓ November-You spice up this staff and give a spice to each staff member
  - ✓ December-You are a real gift to education with an invitation to an open house to celebrate teachers. Provide teachers with various winter hats.
  - ✓ January-Zero Candy Bar with a note that says it is cold outside but warm and friendly in your class.
  - ✓ February-You have a heart of gold and give a heart chocolate. Could also conduct a Mardi Gras celebration with colorful derby hats and celebrate the successes for the year.
  - ✓ March-It is lucky for me that I have you as part of this staff. Give a gold coin of chocolate with the note of thanks.
  - ✓ April-April Showers bring May Flowers and give them a shower cap
  - ✓ May-May the end of your year be bright. Give them a candle.
  
- Staff Recognition: Principal places in teacher mailboxes a Hat shaped note that recognizes great teaching strategies that have been observed. The note is written to acknowledge quality teaching or an activity that is going on in the classroom. This could also be a way to recognize test standards being taught or any part of a building improvement plan that is being implemented.

**Staff Development Ideas:** Staff reads and discusses the book **I Read but I Don't Understand** by Cris Tovani. This book explains how different content leads to different student expectations. Every teacher should be a reading teacher. The **HATS** theme is supported in that readers recognize they put on a different reading **hat** based on different in subject matter.

### **Student Incentives**

- Read a positive statement over the intercom each morning. A good source for these statements can be found at [www.pops.com](http://www.pops.com) click on “attitude boosters.”
- Present stickers of various kinds when the student is displaying good citizenship or implementing a character trait your school is working on for the year.
- Place **HATS** with student names in the hallways and reward them with stars for good behaviors.
- Give birthday **hats** to students on their birthdays and announce the student’s name over the intercom.
- Have **HAT** award certificates for students passing levels of academic achievement tests.
- Give different shaped **hats** as awards for lunchroom helpers, classroom helpers and add a treat to go along with their certificate or **hat** shape.
- Display academic achievement awards on the **HAT** Award Wall or a designated area in your school building.

## **Building-Wide Academic Achievement Program**

Building-wide academic achievement programs can be focused around the theme. Examples include timed math tests, spelling, reading skills, keyboarding skills, or any area in which students master a skill level and move forward to the next. This method can be adapted to meet your own building needs.

**Example of a Building-Wide Timed Math Test: Hats** that would go on a Math Mind. The object is to pass all the timed math tests. After passing all levels the student would design a **hat** for the math mind to display in the hallway. A party **hat** will be given to each student to wear to the final celebration. A cake and drinks will be furnished in the student's honor.

This test is administered weekly on basic facts in addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division and is intended to help students improve these skills.

Each student is given a **hat** cut out and they write their name on it. As the student passes the timed test at each level their **hat** moves toward the top of the head of a student body displayed in the hallway. The **hats** rotate around the head until they pass all the levels. The goal is to pass all seven levels. A chart is created and placed in each classroom displaying the student successes.

Upon successfully completing each level, students receive a certificate and a prize from the principal. Each certificate is printed to reflect the **HATS** theme and includes student name, date, level tested and the principal's signature.

Classroom teacher aides help with grading the tests, keeping progress records, moving the **hats**, and preparing tests for the next week.

After the completion of all seven levels the student's name is announced over the intercom.

### Examples of prizes and certificates

**Level 1-** You were magnificent passing Level 1 and students receive a **hat** magnet.

**Level 2-** I am sure happy you made it past level two and students receive a happy face pencil.

**Level 3-** You went right through level 3 with no mistakes. The student is given an eraser for their good work.

**Level 4-** You showed us your dedication to math by passing level 4. Students receive a pencil with the school visor or baseball cap.

**Level 5-** You can now sit and relax after this test so enjoy a pop on the principal.

**Level 6-** **Hats** off to you for passing level 6. The students receive a **hat** of their choice from the **hat** box.

**Level 7-** You have now passed all seven levels and here is an invitation to the math celebration.

Note: This is an example of how a building-wide timed test was implemented. Other strategies may be adopted and we'd be happy to hear from you about how your school used the **Hats** theme. Please e-mail your stories to <[admin@schoolthemes.org](mailto:admin@schoolthemes.org)>

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Helping the teacher create a common vision or common goal has shown **tremendous** success. Staff members and students all respond to an enthusiastic school wide - **theme presentation**.

Presentation is the key... educators want school spirit to be high... they desire inspired learning and they know it helps to generate classroom excitement.

Students and their education family benefit from good, fun, creative and results oriented endeavors that support their school, their classmates and community.

We hope you have enjoyed the creative prospects we've shared as part of the **HATS** theme and would enjoy hearing from you. As you recognize by now there is room for additional creativity in both the presentation and execution of our themes.

Wishing you the best education successes,

<http://www.schoolthemes.org>



# School Themes

<http://www.schoolthemes.org>  
email <admin@schoolthemes.org>

Dear *Educator*:

**Congratulations, and thank you for making the decision to purchase a winning School Theme production. We know you will find it one of the most valuable tools available for your staff, students and school community.**

**Introducing:**

- **School Wide Themes Purpose**
- **Theme Benefits**
- **Theme Creation Strategies**
- **Rewards**
- **Theme Timing**
- **Theme Kick-Off**
- **Community Involvement**

**You can participate in the personal and professional growth of all students. The theme process encourages school spirit and with each theme session staff members will learn new strategies. See more details on our website <http://www.schoolthemes.org>.**

**Build School Spirit**

**After all.... It's all about the kids**

**Thanks again and enjoy !**

# School Wide Themes

## Purpose

**The need for school wide themes !**

**What themes do for the staff and the leader of a building?**

School wide themes provide the principal with “*the glue that holds a staff together.*” Themes help evolve staff members into an education family; a family that works together to educate and recognize individual *student and staff* successes.

It’s all about attitude. Themes help keep the entire staff motivated and positive throughout the school year. A highly motivated staff maintains a positive attitude and students are inspired. The learning environment is super charged and great accomplishments prevail.

Themes let great things happen for everyone in the learning community !

## Theme Benefits

- Generate and set the stage for the upcoming year
- Create a positive environment
- Provide opportunities for individual recognition
- Develop winning attitudes
- Develop and foster relationships among people
- Develop a sense of togetherness (education family)
- Keep staffs motivated throughout the year
- Celebrate successes
- Reward positive behavior
- Build character among students and staff
- Generate excitement in the community
- Provide direction to the learning community
- Enable the administrator to support morale building events throughout the year

# Theme Selection

## Three Theme Creation Strategies

### **Method One: Principal**

The school principal creates or selects the theme. The selection process is often based on an assessment of school needs.

Example: The principal might determine that a theme supporting manners, teamwork, academics or community relations best serves the current school climate.

The principal may receive input from the education community (staff, students, parents, and patrons) however; the final decision rests with the principal. This “beginners method” is directive in nature and satisfies the principal’s immediate school needs assessment.

Specific theme support days can be established and theme shirts with logo’s may be worn.

### **Method Two: Community**

The principal solicits ideas for next year's theme from the staff, students, and community.

#### Popular methods:

- School newsletter to parents
- District publications
- School website
- Staff bulletins
- Staff meetings
- Classroom student meetings

The publications and meetings describe the criteria for the theme and establish a deadline for submissions.

Example: The theme must be presented in acronym form and support a positive learning environment. A word like HAPPY might be chosen and convert to - -

H.A.P.P.Y --- “Have A Positive Productive Year.”

Once the deadline has passed and all eligible entries are received, the selection process begins.

- All eligible entries are compiled into a ballot form
- The ballot is made available to the learning community, students, parents, staff, patrons, etc. Completed ballots may be received via mail or in person.
- If more than five different acronym theme entries are received, the first vote can narrow the theme selection to the top three. Then a re-vote may be conducted to select the winning theme for the following year.
- If the initial submissions reveal less than five separate acronym entries, then the most votes wins.

Once the winning theme is selected:

- The theme is publicized in all school and district publications
- The staff and students submit ideas for the theme logo that will be used for a wall mural and the theme shirts
- The staff and students choose the colors that will be used for the theme shirt
- The principal selects the theme logo from the input provided

### **Method Three: Staff**

This is a powerful method that focuses on staff unity and their buy in for the entire theme process. Your staff creates the theme for the next school year.

Staff requirements:

- Staff members may choose to work alone, in teams, or small groups
- Staff members submit as many different theme ideas as they can envision.

- All theme ideas are submitted to a selected office administrator by an established deadline.
- A ballot containing all submissions is created.
- A staff meeting is scheduled and staff members will present their theme ideas to fellow staff members. The presentation must include; ideas for decorating rooms, treats or ideas for theme related incentives, how the theme can be integrated in the educational program, theme logo and colors for the theme shirts, and anything else that provides support for their submission.
- Upon completion of all presentations the staff members receive the ballot and vote for the theme of their choice.
- The first vote usually narrows the choices to the top three theme ideas. A second vote may be required to break a tie and the winning theme is supported by the most votes. Save all material – these are competitive presentations made by your staff members and will prove invaluable for future theme selection processes.

#### Rewards

- Provides teamwork for staff members
- Encourages school spirit
- Supports staff buy in for school wide theme ideas
- Entertaining way to select themes and provides healthy competition
- Personalizes staff members ideas on how to implement the theme in their classrooms
- Generates laughter and creativity during staff presentations
- Provides positive staff morale

#### The winning entry can be rewarded:

- If the winning presentation is conducted by two staff members or less, a dinner for two might be offered.
  - If a team of teachers present the winning theme they may enjoy lunch together.

Suggestion: Video the theme contest. The video becomes priceless at teacher retirements or staff functions.

## **Theme Selection Timing**

### **When do I begin the theme selection process?**

This timeline is based upon on a school year that commences in the middle of August and ends in May.

- In early April the principal advertises it is time to come up with a theme idea for the following school year and a deadline is set for new theme submissions
- Middle of April - theme ballots are created and if using method three a date is set for the theme contest
- Last week in April the final vote is tallied and the theme is announced
- First of May - the theme shirt logo and colors are presented to the principal
- End of May - in conjunction with staff departure for the summer - they submit orders for their theme shirts
- First of June - theme shirt orders are placed with the T-shirt vendor.
- Staff reports in August - theme shirts are ready on the first day
- The theme begins for the new school year

## **Theme Kick Off for the Staff**

### **What is a theme kick off?**

A theme kick off is held at the beginning of each school year. This kick off is for the staff and their families. A cook out is held - new staff members and their families are introduced. This is also a great opportunity to thank families for their support to children and the entire education process.

Following the cookout the staff stays to decorate their rooms together. It provides a fun evening and great teamwork as the rooms are prepared for the students. During the evening, drawings and contests are held for staff members.

Prizes related to the school theme are given throughout the night's events. These might include decorations for bulletin boards; stickers, note pads, or larger gifts donated by local businesses.

It is a memorable evening and a fun way to start the school year.

## **Students, Parents and Community Members**

### **When do they get theme shirts?**

Theme shirt orders for students and parents are taken during student enrollment. Order forms for patrons are always available in the school office. All orders must be placed not later than the second week of September.

*This concludes the introduction... however, as you embark upon implementing the selected theme... it's likely you'll want to introduce it to students, staff and select community members. Therefore, we've included some of the introductory material in the theme process too !*

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Let's introduce your selected theme... and ... it's most important functions.



*“As you know, it's all about the kids. Whether it's kindergarten, pre-school, grade school, elementary school, middle school, junior high school or high school... If we unite the staff and students, promote a positive environment and encourage school spirit... the students will respond. They are inspired and better things happen.”*

# “T.W.I.S.T.”

## **Teamwork Will Inspire Students and Teachers**

Each of our themes is introduced in acronym form. Additional discussions may be found at our web site <http://www.schoolthemes.org/acronyms.html> This “play on words” can provide additional sessions for staff fun and creativity.

The name (acronym) selected for your school theme represents your first attempt at creativity. Whether you choose one of our “named” themes or create your own... the fun really begins here.

The name is not what’s important.

It’s your imagination and the methods you use to promote your School’s Spirit.

The word or words chosen may become your school’s slogan for perhaps a full year. Although you’ve selected our theme - **TWIST**, - you might chose to change the name to fit your school’s character or special needs.

Once you’ve seen our examples of theme implementation, you’ll know it’s ok to make changes to suit your style. In fact it’s encouraged. You’ll want to support lasting school spirit so be creative, inventive and have some fun with new concepts.

Once again, it’s likely your theme (**TWIST**) will be displayed on school correspondence, wall murals, lockers, etc. So have fun with step number one.

The bonding, staff unity, student participation and excitement commences now.

Next – we assume total staff participation and support. Without the commitment of the entire staff, themes are just *whispers in the wind*.

Like all good ideas – there is a “kick-off” session and each unique theme contains ideas related to that particular acronym. In your case – the theme **TWIST** has been selected and we’ve incorporated related ideas or “theme” content concepts.

Remember – *a key concept* - themes must contribute to a students’ learning success.

If not - why use them ?

Your day is already filled with may other demanding tasks...

However, when you have staff buy in... school themes... become the catalysts that ignite the inspiration fuse. Excitement is contagious... effective school wide themes inspire, motivate, and excite staff and students.

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### **Twist Theme:**

The theme **TWIST** promotes teamwork. It supports a fun atmosphere for learning by bringing back some of the things worn in the 50’s as well as the tunes that were popular then.

### **THEME KICK Off: What is it ?**

A theme kick off is held at the beginning of each school year. This kick off is a cookout... for the staff and their families. Often new staff members and their families are introduced at the same time the next years’ THEME is introduced. It is also a great time to thank the families for their continuing support.

Following the cookout... the staff remains to begin decorating their classrooms. This is an evening demonstrating staff teamwork. Drawings and contests are held for the staff members and prizes related to the school theme are awarded. They might include decorations for bulletin boards; stickers, note pads, or even larger gifts that may be donated by local businesses.

This can be a memorable evening.

### **Theme Shirt :**

- Each staff member receives a theme shirt at the beginning of the school year. The kick off – cook out is often a good time to present the shirts.
- How do you provide shirts for your staff ? You may choose fund raisers, a business sponsor, parent/teacher organizations or individual staff members as a means to purchase shirts. Our web site provides links to top of the line vendors if you haven't selected a local resource for shirts. <http://www.schoolthemes.org>. The theme shirt is usually a short sleeve T-shirt however, long sleeve T-shirts, polo shirts, denim shirts or sweatshirts have also been selected.
- **TWIST** theme shirt: a short sleeve T-shirt. On the left front – the logo is a record and the title on the record is your school's name. The back of the shirt presents the letters **T.W.I.S.T**. Other shirt options: long sleeve T-shirt, denim shirt, sweatshirt, or polo shirt.
- Theme shirts are typically worn on the first day of school, during monthly theme celebrations, staff dinners, district meetings, field trips and staff recognition days.
- Shirts are available for students, parents, and patrons to purchase during student enrollment. They provide symbols of staff unity and school teamwork for your education family.

## Decorating Ideas

- A **TWIST** mural is painted on the wall where student success awards are displayed. The mural theme matches the shirt logo. , Suggestions: the same picture that is selected for the theme shirt, jukebox, couple doing the **TWIST**, or any other theme related picture.
- Curtains for the office and individual classrooms can be purchased or made to display theme related items such as dancers, jukeboxes, or records.
- Pictures of juke boxes, hula hoops, couples in bobby sox and pony tails or flat tops, 50's cars, soda jerks, Chubby Checker, pink and black, turquoise and black, etc. utilized on bulletin boards.
- All communications documents such as parent newsletters, staff bulletins, the school web site, school stationary, student and staff handbooks, etc., display the **TWIST** theme.

## Staff Incentives

- First school year staff meeting: staff receives an old vinyl record that has been heated and formed into a bowl. The bowl is filled with supplies such as a bag of pretzel twists, a pen with the theme printed on it, a pack of **TWIST** up crayons, etc. Also include a “sub stub” for one hour of free substituting by the principal so teachers can observe others’ teaching skills.
- First day of school: Provide a bowl of Rold Gold Classic style **TWIST** pretzels and **TWIST** and Shout chocolate sandwich cookies (can be purchased at Wal-Mart). Place a **TWIST** theme banner in the lounge.

----- Sidebar -----

Many schools have become more aware of the advantages and disadvantages of eating in certain ways. People are much more aware of the relationship between what they eat and how they feel. Along with a push to decrease junk and increase nutritional content in school lunch, many school districts also are placing limits on pre-packaged food and drink that have become a mainstay for some middle-and high-school-aged students.

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-----Sidebar end -----

- Birthday Celebrations: Once a month we celebrate staff birthdays in conjunction with a **T.W.I.S.T.** Day theme. Staff members wear theme shirts and provide treats for the birthday celebrants.

- Mailbox Treats: On [T.W.I.S.T.](#) Days the principal puts items in staff mailboxes to go along with the theme... such as:
  - ✓ Black record cutout with 50 cents attached. “I ‘Soda’ thought you might be thirsty.”
  - ✓ [TWIST](#) pencils
  - ✓ [TWIST](#) related stickers
  - ✓ Notepads with “T.W.I.S.T.” Imprinted on them.
  
- Music: On “[T.W.I.S.T.](#) Day” play a recording of LET’S TWIST AGAIN by Chubby Checker, over the intercom.
  
- Paycheck Ideas:
  - Coupon from Mc Donald’s for a [TWIST](#) Ice Cream Cone with “[TWIST](#) on into Mc Donald’s for a treat.”
  - Tootsie Roll with, “Rock and ‘Roll’ on down to the bank with your paycheck.”
  - A [TWIST](#) and Glow pop candy with, “I’ve heard nothing but ‘glowing’ reports about you.”
  - A bag of mini pretzel [TWISTS](#) with, “[TWIST](#) and shout all the way to the bank.”
  - A bottle of Pepsi Lemon [TWIST](#) with, “Satisfy that thirst with a [TWIST](#) from me.”
  
- Recognition: Principal sends “Rock and Roll” notes to teachers after observing good teaching skills.
  
- Staff socials: go to a 50’s restaurant, a soda shop, or have a staff party with the 50’s theme.
  
- Competition: Support a bubble-blowing, hula-hoop, or dance contest. These events can be performed at staff meetings or a staff social.

- Staff Development: The staff reads and discusses the book Gung Ho by Ken Blanchard. This book focuses on teamwork.

### Student incentives

- Play LET'S **TWIST** AGAIN over the intercom, at the beginning of the day, on **T.W.I.S.T.** Day.
- Stick a **TWIST**-related sticker, such as a pink Cadillac, on a student when you “catch them being good”
- Present a coupon for a **TWIST** ice cream cone from Mc Donalds to the students whose names are on the “positive efforts” reward wall.
- Give “**TWIST**” pencils to students on their birthdays.
- Place the theme logo on award certificates for students on the honor roll. Conduct a Sock Hop with rock and roll music with the principal for those students on the honor roll.
- Give peppermint **TWIST**s to “positive helper’s with a substitute,” and/or lunchroom helpers.
- Encourage students to purchase a theme shirt to wear on “**T.W.I.S.T. DAYS**” Conduct a contest between classrooms for the highest percentage of students wearing theme shirts. The winner will be awarded a soda pop party.
- Students learn **ROCK AND ROLL** songs in music class and learn to do the **TWIST** in music and/or P.E. class.
- Have a “French **TWIST**” hair contest for the girls/guys
- Play the **TWIST**er game in P.E.
- Read 50’s and 60’s trivia over the intercom on **TWIST** Day.

### Building-Wide Academic Achievement Program

**Building-wide academic achievement programs can be focused around the theme. Examples include timed math tests, spelling, reading skills, keyboarding skills, or any area in which students master a skill level and move forward to the next.**

## **Example of a Building-Wide Time Math Test: “Rock and Roll Hall of Fame” or “Traveling down “Route 66”**

There are seven different levels of test given to the students. The test is administered weekly on basic facts in addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division and is intended to help students improve these skills.

Each student is given a pink Cadillac with their name on it to move along Route 66 or down the road to the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. This road is displayed on a hallway wall with seven stops representing each level of the test. As students pass each of the levels the car is moved down the road indicating which tests have been successfully completed.

A classroom chart is created and each student’s name is displayed with a sticker to measure their progress.

Upon successfully completing each level students receive a certificate and a prize from the principal. The awards and prizes are presented to the student weekly. Information on the awards includes student name, date, level tested and the principal’s signature.

Classroom teacher aides help with grading the tests, keeping progress records, moving the cars, and preparing tests for the next week.

After completing all seven levels the student’s name is announced over the intercom system.

### **Example of prizes**

**Level 1-** Tootsie roll- Congratulations on “rolling” on by level one.

**Level 2-** **TWIST** Licorice-Congratulations on “**TWIST**ing” around level two.

**Level 3-** Piece of super bubble gum-Congratulations you are doing a “Super” job

**Level 4-** A blow pop-Congratulations on blowing right through level four.

**Level 5-** Hard Rock Café Sticker or Rock candy-Congratulations you “Rock”

**Level 6-** Rocky Road candy bar-It was a “Rocky Road” but you passed level six.

**Level 7- Limo Ride to the Soda Shop-** Congratulations you earned a special ride to the soda shop.

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We hope you have enjoyed the creative prospects we’ve shared as part of the **TWIST** theme and would enjoy hearing from you. As you recognize by now there is room for additional creativity in both the presentation and execution of our themes. We have a lot of fun creating themes and may even arrange a personal presentation of the whole process if you choose.

Wishing you the best education successes,

<http://www.schoolthemes.org>

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