

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 !

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.”

F.I.E.S.T.A.

Focusing on Important Educational Standards That All students can meet

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 - **FIESTA**, - 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 (**FIESTA**) 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 **FIESTA** 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.

Fiesta:

Fiesta brings color to your school. Imagine the school filled with bright colors and piñatas hanging in the classroom. This theme sets the learning environment to explore different cultures and languages. In addition to stimulating the interest of exploring a different culture it can also be a creative way for the staff and students to focus on the district, state, and federal standards.

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.
- **FIESTA** theme shirt: parent/teacher organization or staff members may purchase the shirts. The theme shirt is a bright colored short sleeve T-shirt with an emblem on the front to represent the theme. Some suggestions of theme emblems: piñata, the character Speedy Gonzales, maracas or any symbol that represents **FIESTA**. Include your school's initials once the symbol is selected. On the back place the word **F.I.E.S.T.A.** The staff normally helps determine desired shirt colors.
- 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

- **F.I.E.S.T.A.** theme is presented throughout the building.
- A **FIESTA** mural is painted on the wall where student success awards are displayed. The mural theme matches the selected shirt logo.
- Curtains for the office and individual classrooms can be purchased or made from brightly colored materials with **FIESTA** theme content.
- Bulletin boards can be decorated with pictures of sombreros, cactus, hot peppers, Mexican food, guitars, donkeys, parrots, Mexican blankets, ponchos, piñatas, Mexican pottery, etc.
- All communication documents such as parent newsletters, staff bulletins, the school web site, school stationary, student and staff handbooks, etc., display the **FIESTA** theme.

Staff Incentives

- First school year staff meeting: Staff members receive a sombrero. The sombrero is filled with supplies such as a cactus key chain, a pen with the theme printed on it, bright colored notepads, cactus shaped pens, etc.
- First day of school: Display a theme banner and provide Tex-Mex Dip and chips for treats in the staff 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.

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/\(5rdrkvyej0ukns5rpgmu15k55\)/codesearch.aspx](http://199.133.10.140/codesearchwebapp/(5rdrkvyej0ukns5rpgmu15k55)/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 a **FIESTA** Day theme. Staff members wear theme shirts and provide treats for the birthday celebrants.

- Mailbox Treats: On [F.I.E.S.T.A.](#) Days the principal may put items in staff mailboxes to go along with the theme... such as:
 - ✓ Sombrero cutout with 50 cents attached. “Have a pop on me.”
 - ✓ [FIESTA](#) pencils
 - ✓ [FIESTA](#) related stickers
 - ✓ Sombrero-shaped cookies
 - ✓ Notepads with “[F.I.E.S.T.A.](#)” imprinted on the notepad
 - ✓ Sub-Stub – the principal provides a substitution stub for all staff members. They may use this sub stub which obligates the principal to relieve them of their duty for a designated period of time. This also provides the means for the principal to demonstrate staff support.

- Music: “[F.I.E.S.T.A.](#) Day” play a recording of Spanish music over the intercom.

- Competition: during a staff meeting, have the staff wear bright colored clothing. The teacher that is dressed the most festive will receive a dinner for two at a Mexican restaurant.

- Paycheck Ideas:
 - ✓ Hot Tamales Candy with a note: “You probably have a “burning” desire to get this to the bank”
 - ✓ Free Taco certificates from a Mexican restaurant with a note stating: “You spice up education”
 - ✓ Bag of Doritos with a note: “Keep “chipping” away with your great teaching”
 - ✓ A package of chili seasoning with the note: “Hope you don’t get “chili” on the way to the bank”
 - ✓ A coupon for a “Siesta Time” in which the principal would cover his or her class for an hour.
 - ✓ A pack of bright colored sticky notes with a note: “You provide color to this staff”

- Recognition: Principal provides a theme-related note after observing. The note might be in a hot tamale shape with a note stating "You did a real hot job today" It is a good way to recognize outstanding teaching techniques.
- Staff Socials: Bring in a fiesta dinner, a staff celebration at a Mexican restaurant, a chili luncheon, or a piñata breaking celebration.
- Staff Development: Read and discuss the book The Present by Spencer Johnson.

Student incentives

- Stick a **FIESTA** sticker on a student when you “catch them being good” or contributing toward any character building skill that your school is focusing on and wanting to recognize.
- Have a Breakfast Burrito Party with the principal for the students whose names are on the “positive efforts” reward wall. Positive efforts may simply be helping the substitute teacher, custodian, in the lunchroom, or just being good citizens.
- Give **FIESTA** pencils to students on their birthday and read the student's name over the intercom.
- Recognize students that have reached their goal on the building-wide academic achievement test. Have a piñata party with the principal for those students passing all levels.
- Give boxes of Hot Tamales candy to “positive helper’s with a certificate of accomplishment. Post this certificate in a designated area in your school.
- Have **F.I.E.S.T.A.**, or your theme symbol displayed on the honor roll certificates. The students are recognized during an academic award assembly.

- Encourage students to purchase a theme shirt to wear on “**F.I.E.S.T.A. DAYS**” When students wear the theme shirt they are recognized and given a piece of gum for additional incentive. Classroom contests award the class with the highest percentage of students wearing theme T-shirts.
- Adjust music and PE classes to enable students to learn different activities and songs from different cultures. These activities could include such things as the Mexican Hat Dance.
- Basic Spanish can be taught to elementary students by high school Spanish students.
- Have trivia on facts about Mexico read over the intercom in the morning. The classes can send the answer to the office and then the principal can read which classes answered the question correctly during afternoon announcements.
- Positive comments on student’s papers might be: Red Hot Work!, Bravo!, Fantastico!, Magnifico!, Hot Tamales!, Muy Bueno!
- Have Spanish-speaking community members visit the school and teach the students about their culture.

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 an Academic Program: "Traveling down the Santa Fe Trail"

This is a series of seven tests given weekly on basic facts in addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. The purpose of these tests is for the students to improve on their basic math facts.

Each student is given a donkey cut out with their name on it to travel down the trail. The Santa Fe Trail is displayed on a hallway wall so that all students can monitor their successes. As they pass each level their donkey moves along the trail. An individual classroom chart is also created to display individual 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 in use 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 donkeys, and preparing tests for the next week.

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

Examples of prizes and certificates

Level 1- Jawbreaker- Congratulations for "breaking" through level one

Level 2- Stick of gum-Congratulations on "sticking" to the task

Level 3- Snack size bag of Doritos- Congratulations on "chipping" away through the trail

Level 4- Snack size of hot tamales-Congratulations on being red hot.

Level 5- Noisemaker-Celebrate your success for passing level five

Level 6- Breakfast burrito certificate from Mc Donald's-Congratulations and you deserve a burrito for your effort.

Level 7- Piñata Breaking-Congratulations and celebrate your success for completing the Santa Fe Trail with a Piñata Breaking get together with the principal.

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 **FIESTA** 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>

