

# 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.

# H.A.T.S.

## Helping All To Succeed

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 - **HATS**, - 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 (**HATS**) 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 **HATS** 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.

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.

[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 -----

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>

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