

School Themes

<http://www.schoolthemes.org>
e-mail <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 can 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 a theme for the current or following 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 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. This video becomes priceless at teacher retirements or other 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. Adjust accordingly for different commencement dates.

- 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, various drawings and contests may be 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.

This 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.

P.O.W.E.R.

Providing **O**pportunities **W**ith **E**nrichment and **R**esponsibility

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 - **POWER**, - 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 (**POWER**) 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 **POWER** 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 POWER:

We’ve associated the **POWER** theme with a new before school program called the **POWER HOUR**. Although all of our themes are intended to promote school spirit – we also recognize the need to balance that objective with student and teacher academic priorities.

Thus, the **POWER HOUR** implements improved time management initiatives designed to meet individual student needs and promote academic successes. We’ll provide a schedule example in a later section of the theme.

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.

A dedicated **POWER HOUR** offers enrichment activities for all and provides the time and help to complete school work. Additionally, teachers can use this “before school” time as a common planning session.

While teachers are planning during the **POWER HOUR**, paraprofessionals are assigned to designated subject matter rooms, helping students with math, science, history etc. Paraprofessionals, instructional aides, secretaries, vice principal’s and administrative practicum students all participate in the successful **POWER HOUR** concept. The Principal’s time is spent most productively in an instructional leadership role.

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. The theme shirt is usually a short sleeve T-shirt but Staff's have also purchased long sleeve T-shirts, polo shirts, denim shirts or sweatshirts. www.schoolthemes.org/get-started-with-school-themes.html
- **POWER** shirt: Red with the slogan Knowledge is **Power** on the left front pocket area. On the back of the shirt is your school's mission statement.
- 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

- **P.O.W.E.R.** is displayed throughout the building and the focus is - Knowledge is **Power**. You might use your front display case to recognize academic success with pictures of students achieving the Standard of Excellence on their state assessments.
- Banners are hung in the common areas recognizing all classes achieving the Standard of Excellence and announcing the year of award.

- Decorations for **P.O.W.E.R.** may include many different representations. As we mentioned above, your creativity is important. It's your school and no one knows it like you do.

----- sidebar -----

Let's discover a few opportunities together. We've picked knowledge is **Power** and there are many ways to highlight the **POWER** concept. You'll probably have a school logo, shirt logo, school correspondence, wall murals etc.. to decorate.

So how do you display **POWER** in a fashion that is obvious, has relevance and can be used in fun ways to promote school spirit ?

Tough question !

As you read these **POWER** related items..... let some **POWERful** thinking take over and discover how you can create school spirit and display it in creative ways.

Knowledge is Power, Nuclear Power, Power of thinking, Solar Power, Power-To-Charm, Power-of-Nature, Racing Power, Wind Power, Power Point, Within the Halls of Power, Personal Power, People Power, Power of belief, Power of Money, Power Play, Power Bar, Power Drink, etc.

So whether you use racing cars, dollar bills, **powerful** storms, **power** point slides, **powerful** people, eat **power** bars, **power** drinks, horse **power** or combinations of all the above, there's ample opportunity to **power** your way to a **powerful** school theme presentation for your school.

----- Sidebar End -----

- All communication documents such as parent newsletters, staff bulletins, front covers of student and staff handbooks, the school website, and school stationary, display the **P.O.W.E.R.** theme. Your school newsletter name might be changed to (MySchool) **POWER** NEWS.

Staff Incentives

- First school year staff meeting: The staff receives a tie-dye bag with teacher supplies such as pencils, erasers, and sticker packs that are decorated with happy faces, peace symbols, flowers and stickers.
- 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 another’s shoes.
- First Day of School: Theme related treats and a banner presenting your theme is placed in the lounge for the first day of school. Ideas for treats: Happy Face Sugar Cookies, Smiley face snack crackers and other treats from the 60’s and 70’s.

----- 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 a **POWER** Day 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 in which they are responsible for organizing the celebration and providing treats.
- Mailbox Treats:
 - ✓ Peace necklace
 - ✓ Retro Sticker Book
 - ✓ Happy Face items
 - ✓ Smiley Face Decorations for Bulletin Boards
 - ✓ Smiley Face Notepads
- Music: Theme day music is played over the intercom to get the day started. Music ideas: A CD with 60's and 70's music.

- Staff Recognition: Principal places in teacher mailboxes, a Smiley note or a note pad with a tie-dye shirt that recognizes great teaching strategies that have been observed. The note is written to acknowledge quality teaching or an activity that is observed 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.
- Paychecks: Theme related gifts can be attached to paychecks, such as:
 - ✓ Bubble gum
 - ✓ Tie-dye note pad stating that the teachers are colorful
 - ✓ Smiley face erasers stating that the staff erases all the learning problems for students with great teaching
 - ✓ Peace necklace with a note stating “you stick your neck out to reach all students”
 - ✓ Smiley-face magnet stating “you are magnificent with students”
 - ✓ Smiley-face stress ball with a note of thanks

Staff Development Ideas: Staff reads and discusses the book Whatever It Takes by Richard and Rebecca DuFour, Robert Eaker, and Gayle Karhanek. This book addresses professional learning communities and how teams of teachers plan for students that don’t learn.

Student Incentives

- Read a positive statement over the intercom each morning. A good source for these statements can be found at www.pops.com - click on “attitude boosters.”
- Retro stickers for good work or behavior

- Give retro or smiley face pencils to students on their birthdays and announce the student's name over the intercom.
- Present **POWER** award certificates to students passing levels of academic achievement tests.
- Give pencils, erasers, tie-dye slap bracelets for students that help with a substitute, display good manners, help in the lunchroom or any behavior your school might like to recognize.
- Display academic achievement awards on the **POWER** Award Wall or a designated area in your school building.

-----Sidebar -----

Although we've promoted school spirit and fun in a dedicated learning environment – you still must contend with those events that affect your student's daily academic progress.

The **POWER** theme enables improved time management allowing teachers and supporting professionals the opportunity to extend additional *powerful* help as required. This schedule presents an example of how you might implement the **POWER HOUR** concept at your school.

Middle School Schedule

7th Grade Class Schedule

Time	8:00-8:25	8:30-10:05	10:08-11:38	11:38-12:08	12:11-12:41	12:44-2:14	2:17-3:11
Minutes	25	95	90	30	30	90	A-Day/ 54 /B-Day
A-Day		1	2	Lunch	9	3	4
B-Day		5	6	Lunch	9	7	8
Math	P O W e r			Lunch	Skills		Plan/Plac.Class
Comm.				Lunch	Skills		Plan/Plac.Class
Science				Lunch	Skills		Plan/Plac.Class
Soc. Stu.				Lunch	Skills		Plan/Plac.Class
Phys.Ed.				Lunch	Plan		Extensions
For. Lang.				Lunch	Plan		Problem Solving

8th Grade Class Schedule

				11:41-12:11	12:11-12:41		
A-Day		1	2	10	Lunch	3	4
B-Day		5	6	10	Lunch	7	8
Art	H O u r			Plan	Lunch		Multi-Media
Tech.				Plan	Lunch		T-Bolt TV
Math				Skills	Lunch		Plac.Class/Plan
Comm.				Skills	Lunch		Plac.Class/Plan
Science				Skills	Lunch		Plac.Class/Plan
Soc. Stu.				Skills	Lunch		Plac.Class/Plan
Librarian							Placement Class
Counselor				Skills	Skills		
Spec. Ed.							Resource
Building Tech				Skills	Skills		Webmasters
Extended Learning							Extended Class

Elective Classes

Band							7A/8B
				10	9		
Music				8th Music	7th Music		Drama/1-Act

This example features common teacher planning time “first thing in the morning.” It’s also focused on enabling teachers and students to spend the maximum amount of time together – teaching and learning.

Often, some students need extra time before, during and after school to master certain concepts. Teachers are best able to “help” students when your school’s schedule is designed to support student needs.

-----Sidebar End -----

Extended Time(E.T.)

The names of students not completing work on time are reported to the office daily. Parents are contacted with a request for their child to stay after school. Once again, all necessary personnel resources are utilized to assist students. This process continues until daily progress is judged sufficient.

Knowledge is **Power**

The Focus Is... Academics !

An academic success committee is formed. The committee’s goal is to call attention to your school’s number one priority - student learning.

Your entire education community participates in developing ideas that promote a positive learning environment.

And... you certainly want to remember the importance of student recognition as you promote school spirit.

It’s a **POWER**ful concept supported by some additional **POWER**ful ideas.

Most everyone is familiar with “lettering” in sports.

“Did you Letter in Football, Basketball or Wrestling, etc.”

Well, here’s an idea... let’s implement “Lettering” in Academics at your school !

- Students receive “Letters” when they achieve the academic honor roll for two nine week periods. They receive a pin, bar for repeated semester achievements.
- Conduct Academic award assemblies where students receive their “Letters.”
- Arrange an Academic display case providing pictures of students and certificates for their academic success.
- Hang your school’s banners to recognize academic success on state assessment tests.
- Make special half time announcements at football or basketball games, recognizing student academic success.
- Your students can create an academic float and enter it as part of the town parade.
- Prepare Academic pep assemblies with your school band.
- During your week of state testing, conduct a student “run through” as you would at a football game where teachers will announce their names.
- Upon completion of state assessments plan a Reward dance for students.
- Utilize your student led TV program to include vocabulary words, math facts, student skits, and other information that will help your students remember important information.

Helping teachers 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 **POWER** theme and would enjoy hearing from you. Please click on the "contact us" feature at our website or send email to <admin@schoolthemes.org>

As you recognize by now there is always room for additional creativity in both the presentation and execution of our themes.

We have a lot of fun creating themes and hope you enjoy the many different ways to implement them.

Wishing you the best education successes,

<http://www.schoolthemes.org>

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