

# 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.

# U.S.A.

## Upstanding Students All-Around

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 - **USA**, - 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 (**USA**) 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.





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

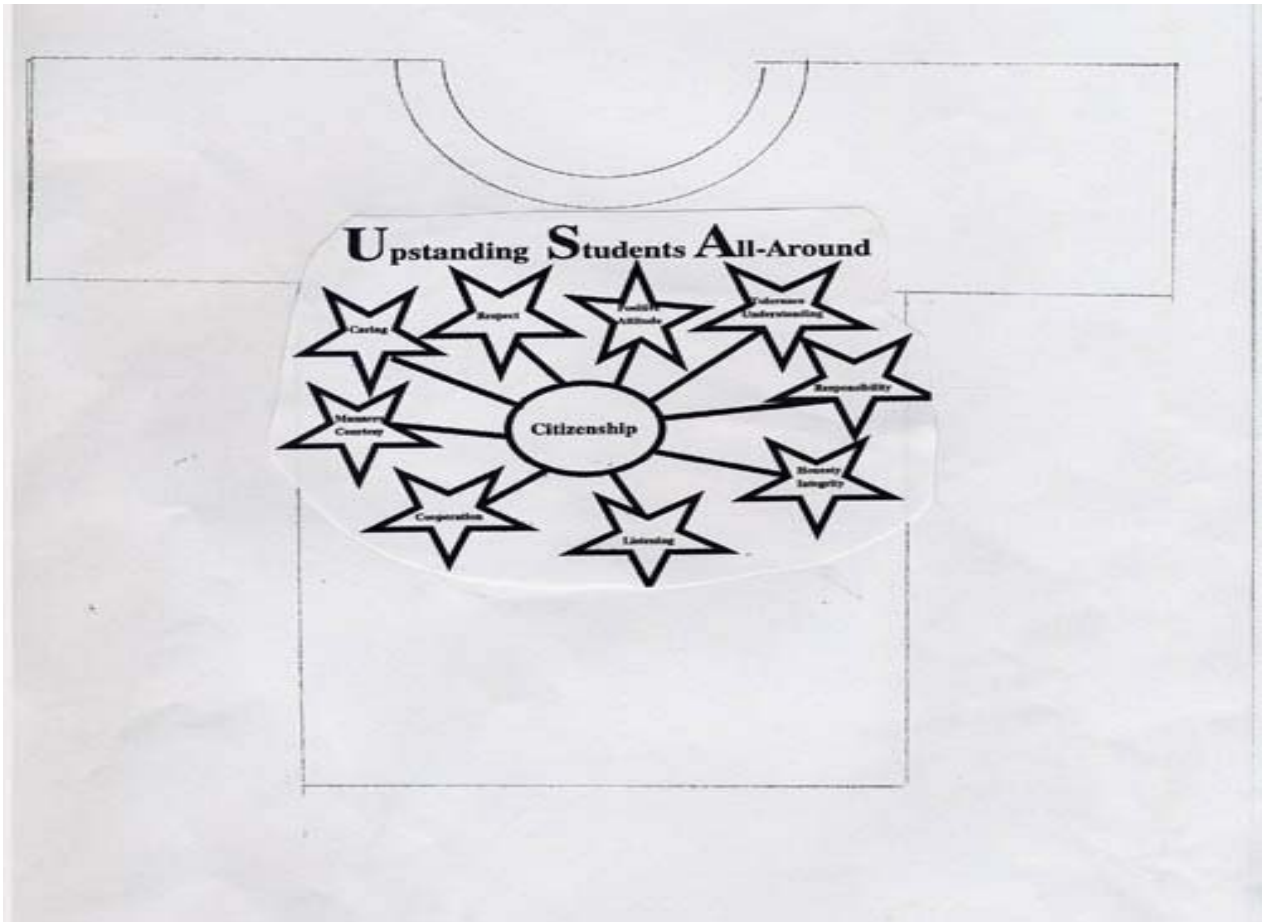
A theme kick off is held at the beginning of each school year. This kick off is a cookout... for the staff and their families. Often new staff members and their families are introduced at the same time the next years' THEME is introduced. It is also a great time to thank the families for their continuing 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.
- **USA** shirt: Royal Blue with USA in white letters and remaining letters in red. On the back of the shirt the word citizenship is centered in white letters. From the word citizenship, lines are drawn to a star at the end of each line.



- Inside the star, character building focus words are chosen. For example, white letters inside each red star, words such as caring, respect, positive attitude, tolerance, responsibility, honesty, listening, cooperation, and manners can be selected. The front of the shirt displays a patriotic symbol with school initials. The staff designs the shirts and selects the character words and activities for the year.
- 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**

- U.S.A. is displayed throughout the building and can be accompanied by a character education word such as Respect.
- U.S.A. theme mural is painted on the wall where student success awards are displayed. The theme mural matches the back of the theme shirts.
- Red, White, and Blue curtains are placed in the office and classrooms.
- Patriotic 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 **USA** theme. Ideal names for the school newsletter include - The Patriotic Press or The Citizens' Sentinel.

## Staff Incentives

- First school year staff meeting: The staff receives teacher supplies such as pens and pencils that contain patriotic 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: Red, White, Blue Star Shaped Sugar Cookies, Red, White, Blue M&M’s, etc.

### ----- 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 **USA** 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 they choose to be responsible for organizing the celebration and providing treats.
- Mailbox Treats:
  - ✓ Patriotic flag pins
  - ✓ Star-shaped bubbles
  - ✓ Star shaped glasses
  - ✓ **USA** flag magnets
  - ✓ Patriotic key chains
  - ✓ Uncle Sam notepads
- Music: Theme day music is played over the intercom to get the day started. Music ideas: Born in the **USA** by Bruce Springstein or any other patriotic song.
- Staff Recognition: Principal places in teacher mailboxes an Uncle Sam 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.

- Paychecks: Theme related gifts can be attached to paychecks, such as:
  - ✓ Big Red Gum
  - ✓ Star balloon stating that the teachers rise above the rest ”
  - ✓ **USA** erasers stating that the staff erases all the learning problems for students with great teaching
  - ✓ Midget Tootsie Roll wrapped in **USA** Flag
  - ✓ Flag magnet stating that the staff is very magnetic
  - ✓ Stars and Stripes Visor stating the staff out shines the rest

**Staff Development Ideas:** Staff reads and discusses the book **How Full Is Your Bucket** by Donald Clifton & Tom Rath. It provides an opportunity for all teachers to take a computerized test to discover their five personal strengths.

### **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.”
- Stick Star sticker on a student when they are displaying good citizenship or implementing the character trait your school is working on for the year.
- Give patriotic pencils to students on their birthdays and announce the student’s name over the intercom.

- Have **U.S.A.** award certificates for students passing levels of academic achievements test.
- Give red, white, and blue suckers, gum, or erasers to positive 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 **USA** 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: “Traveling through the USA Regions”**

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 car cut out and puts their name on it. As the student passes the timed test at each level their automobile moves through the **USA**. The United States is displayed on a wall in which students can view their successes. As the student passes each level of the timed math test the car moves to the United States region matching the fact test. 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 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 cars, 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-** New England Region—Student receives a prize that relates to this region of the United States

**Level 2-** Mid-Atlantic Region---Students receives a prize that relates to this region of the United States

**Level 3-** The South Region---Students receive a prize that relates to this region of the United States

**Level 4-** The Midwest Region---Students receive a prize that relates to this region of the United States

**Level 5-** The Southwest Region---Students receive a prize that relates to this region of the United States

**Level 6-** The West Region---Students receive a prize that relates to this region of the United States

**Level 7-** Alaska and Hawaii--- Students choose from a prize box of several items that relate to these two states

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 **USA** 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 **USA** 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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