

A group of four students, two boys and two girls, are gathered around a book, looking at it with interest. They are wearing white t-shirts, some with 'WALSWORTH SCHOOL' printed on them. The scene is dimly lit, with a blue tint. A large, stylized text overlay is positioned diagonally across the center of the image.

FINDING YOUR THEME

Walsworth yearbooks

Yearbook
SUITE

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FINDING YOUR

THEME

STUDENT WORKBOOK

FINDING YOUR THEME

It's August already, and the pressure is on to find a theme – an all-encompassing thread, a concept for a book that won't even come out for several months. This is the burden of many a yearbook staff forced to settle on a theme just to have one in place. And often those themes have little to do with the school itself, much less the year.

Maybe it's because we put too much emphasis on being cute and clever and not enough on simply telling the story of the year – with a style and personality that makes the book special and different from last year's.

Look at any official "list of themes" and you'll find a lot of expressions that many schools have used. But where can you go to find something original? Something that unifies the story not just of the year, but YOUR year. Something that is specific enough to be definitive, yet open enough to allow the book's production to evolve as the year happens, not as it "needs" to happen to fit into a mold designed before school even started.

Finding a theme that is simple, communicative, flexible and fun should be the goal of every yearbook staff. With careful planning, a little inspiration, and a lot of imagination, you can learn to:

Pull new ideas out of thin air

Develop those ideas into a moldable personality

Carry out that personality in every area of a book

Keep all of your hair on your head

Lesson 1

Think Theme

Objectives – In this lesson, you will learn:

To distinguish between types of themes, in order to determine which is best for your yearbook

Effective methods of yearbook theme brainstorming, in order to maximize your creative potential

A good yearbook tells the story of a year.

A great one tells it with style and flair.

That's where theme comes in. Think of theme as the personality behind the yearbook. It's what makes one book stand apart from another. The best themes help you define the year through any combination of words, phrases, colors, graphics, angles and voices. It's good to find a theme that is specific enough to be recognized and understood, yet open enough to allow the book to evolve with the unfolding of the school year.

TYPES OF THEMES:

VERBAL THEME

A traditional way to approach theme is through the use of catch-phrase expressions. These might be popular phrases or plays on words that allow staffs to carry out the theme in various sections of the book. These types of themes can be especially powerful if they have a direct connection to what is happening at school. For instance, a school that is going from a traditional to a block schedule might play off of a common expression like "Around the Block" and show how the new schedule influenced every area of student life.



"JUST SAYIN'"

Stinger, Wynne High School, Wynne, Ark.



“WHY NOT?”

Wings, Arrowhead Christian Academy, Redlands, Calif.

“THE ODDS”

Tükwe!, Rancho Cucamonga High School, Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.

VISUAL THEME

Colors, graphics and fonts that relate to the year can create a stunning, eye-catching approach to unifying the book without saying a single theme-related word. Bold, vibrant colors with large, hard-edged graphics will project a totally different personality from a book colored in subtle earth tones, simple fonts and understated designs. The first would work for a year that was spirited and “in your face;” the second tells the story of a quieter or more status quo year.

CONCEPT THEME

Often based on some kind of identity or psychological angle, concept themes will only work if students can understand and relate to them. The yearbook is not the place to take things too seriously, nor is it the place where students are going to “discover” who they are. Concept themes can be amazing when done well. When poorly executed, they will leave readers confused or, even worse, bored.



“INDEFINITE”

Wolf's Eye, Oswego East High School, Oswego, Ill.



“IT'S ABOUT TIME”

Decamhian, Del Campo High School, Fair Oaks, Calif.

CALENDAR THEME

Some staffs prefer to tell the story of their year chronologically because it allows them to cover more topics. This could be as simple as arranging events in the order in which they occurred, or it might mean covering several events on a single spread as part of a week-by-week look at the year. The challenge with calendar coverage is to figure out where certain academics might fit in, or where to put the mug shots in terms of weekly organization.

TIME TO BRAINSTORM

Take the theme types outlined in this lesson and start brainstorming for theme ideas. What type makes sense for your yearbook?

Use the following guidelines:

WORK IN SMALL GROUPS

4–7 people is a good number for brainstorming. Individuals are more likely to share that way.

SET THE SCENE

Have pencils, paper, books, magazines and even toys scattered around for reference and inspiration.

COLLECT RESIDUAL IDEAS

Sometimes ideas will pop up after the brainstorming session is over. Record all ideas and meet for a brief time of sharing any new thoughts since the original session.

Your Name:

BRAINSTORMING
NOTES!

Dotted lines for writing notes.

Lesson 2

Date the Year

Objectives – In this lesson, you will learn:

The importance of giving your yearbook a place in time

Clever resources for inspiring a theme with a contemporary personality

Themes should date the year to carve out a place in time so that years from now, there will be no question as to when the book was created.

Does this mean that the theme must specifically be inspired by and relate to whatever is going on at school that year? Probably not.

Often one school year is not significantly different from the next. Students show up. Take classes. Play sports. Join clubs. Go to homecoming. Graduate. And the cycle starts again. Sure, there are some years when something significantly different happens that becomes the driving force behind everything that happens at school. By all means, find a way to make that a part of the yearbook theme.

“UNEXPECTED”

Helios, Sunny Hills High School, Fullerton, Calif.

But for the majority of school years that are not so specific, you should seek to create a personality for the book based on the sights, sounds, colors and happenings that drive the students. Sure, these might be similar to years gone by, but your job as the eyes and ears of the school is to find the uniquely personal ways that those usual sights and sounds played out in your PARTICULAR year.



WHERE TO GET THIS YEAR'S IDEAS

THE MALL

Collect images and notes as you make your way through the barrage of colors and ads that make your year current and distinctive. What are the popular styles and colors? Are things loud and graphic? Or subtle and understated? What slogans are showing up in various shop windows? What fonts? Is it a bold, wildly colorful experience? Or is it quiet? Laidback? Relaxed? What are the trends? What is the Pantone color of the year?

.....

THE LOCAL BOOKSTORE

Write down titles of books, flip through magazines, capture design ideas, clever headlines, trendy colors, story topics, coverage possibilities. Collect a stack of books that the staff might want to have in the yearbook room for inspiration.

.....

THE LIBRARY

Along with visual inspiration, check out the verbal as well. Self-help books are notorious for entertaining chapter titles, which could easily inspire theme ideas. Look for puns, clever expressions, new twists on old phrases — anything that might inspire the verbal aspect of theme and coverage.

.....

TAKE THE PULSE

Make a quick list (no thinking involved) of the top 10 things you can't live without. You'll reveal in an instant a list of possible trends.

.....

ACTIVITY

THE HUNT FOR IDEAS

Your Name: _____

Put the principles from this lesson in action and brainstorm for theme ideas specific to this year by visiting all of the following:

THE MALL

Record everything you see that defines the moment. Document your idea search with a few quick snaps on your phone camera. Look for fonts, colors and other design styles.

.....

.....

.....

THE BOOKSTORE

Search the aisles for ideas. See what catches your eye and how it might play out in the book. Buy a few books or magazines to inspire the staff design team.

.....

.....

.....

THE LIBRARY

Write down all your ideas, to later allow everyone on staff time to ponder. What new thoughts were inspired by this collection of ideas?

.....

.....

.....

TAKE A SURVEY

Survey your readers by asking them to fill out the same "Take the Pulse" top 10 list that you did on page 7. List all the items that repeatedly appear.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

NOTES!

Lesson 3

Make It Work

Objectives – In this lesson, you will learn:

Practical application of theme in traditional areas of the yearbook

Additional ways to incorporate theme throughout the yearbook

There's no need to beat your readers over the head. The theme does not have to be the star of the show; rather it is a vehicle to unify your story of the year. That's what the book is all about. Use the theme subtly and creatively to put a stamp of personality on your book.

WHERE TO PUT THE THEME:

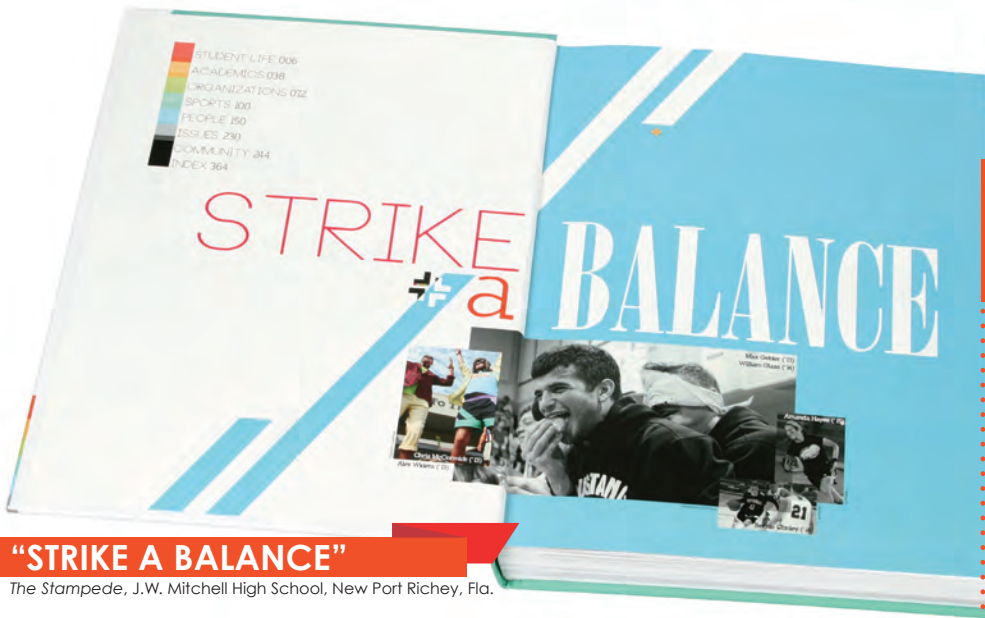
COVER

Depending on the theme and how you intend to reveal it, you could be quite literal and spell it out on the cover. Or you could just give a hint of what is inside and make your readers open the book to figure it out.



“WE KNOW”

Lair, Shawnee Mission Northwest High School, Shawnee, Kan.



“STRIKE A BALANCE”

The Stampede, J.W. Mitchell High School, New Port Richey, Fla.

ENDSHEET

If you print your endsheets, it makes sense to include them in your theme. It could be a continuation of what started on the cover. Or a reinforcement of a theme already stated. Maybe it's just a graphic or a color that connects visually to the theme. Whatever is done on the endsheet should connect to the rest of the book in some way, and theme is a great place to start.



“INDEFINITE”

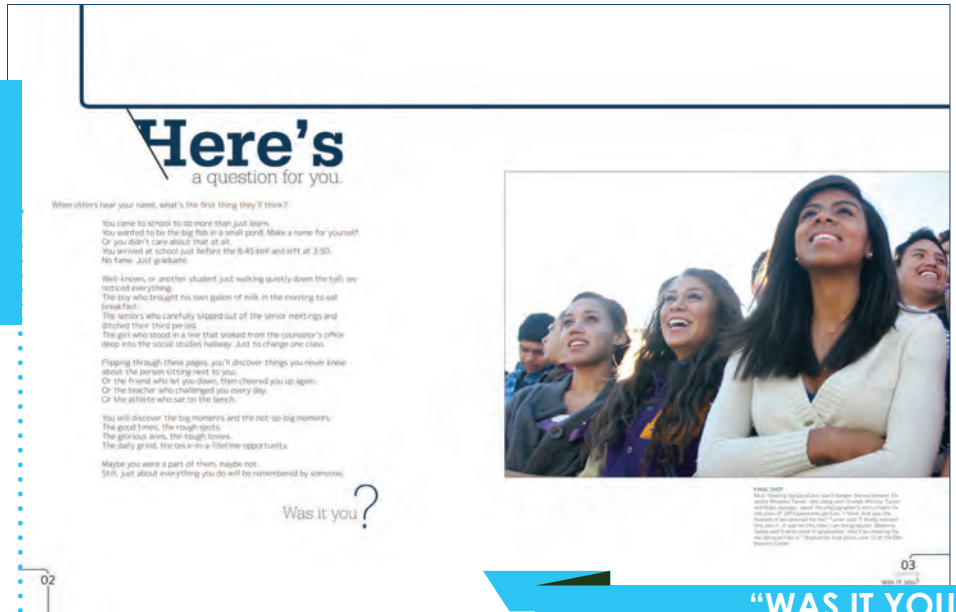
Wolf's Eye, Oswego East High School, Oswego, Ill.

TITLE PAGE

Since the theme is often used as the title of the book, it makes sense to include it on the title page. The actual name of the yearbook should be there as well, but the theme title (if there is one) should take top billing.

OPENING SPREAD(S)

While the theme will continue to unfold graphically on the opening pages, this is also where the verbal expression will begin to take shape. Theme copy should announce, explain or illustrate the theme so the reader can come along for the ride.



CLOSING

This is where it all wraps up and the reader can let out that satisfactory sigh.

"WHY NOT?"

Wings, Arrowhead Christian Academy, Redlands, Calif.

DIVIDER/CONNECTOR/ THEME PAGES

However you plan out the book (sections, calendar segments, or even no sections at all), include some kind of scattered pages to carry out the theme. This is a great way to make sure the book hangs together without necessarily having each and every spread scream theme. Traditional sections will have traditional divider spreads to introduce their content and show how it relates to theme. Calendar themes might have spreads that break up the book into seasons or months that tie those time chunks into the theme. Books with scattered coverage throughout can use similarly scattered theme pages to simply ensure that the theme travels along throughout the book.



“THE SPIRIT WITHIN”

The Legend, El Dorado High School, El Paso, Texas



“IT’S ABOUT TIME”

Decamhian, Del Campo High School, Fair Oaks, Calif.

SPECIAL THEME TOUCHES

Everything is fair game here. And every book will be different in where the theme may appear in finishing touches. Think about the possibilities:

FOLIO GRAPHICS

These give page numbers some personality.

SCOREBOARDS

A theme-related title could make these apply in the sports section.



"THE ODDS"

Túkweť, Rancho Cucamonga High School, Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.



"WE KNOW"

Lair, Shawnee Mission Northwest High School, Shawnee, Kan.

SIDEBARS

In-depth, theme-related mini stories on some pages can effectively reinforce and validate the theme throughout the book.



"WE KNOW"

Lair, Shawnee Mission Northwest High School, Shawnee Kan.

ADS/SENIOR TRIBUTES

Designs, fonts and colors should be a continuation of what is going on in the rest of the book.



“REVOLUTION”

Villa Montemar, Academy of Our Lady of Peace, San Diego, Calif.

COLOPHON

This is a good place to tell your readers more specifics about how you came up with your theme along with the details of how you carried it out, fonts, etc.



“IT’S ABOUT TIME”

Decamhian, Del Campo High School, Fair Oaks, Calif.

INDEX

Whatever content is included in the index can be generated by the theme for a total book look and feel.

“IT’S ABOUT TIME”

Decamhian, Del Campo High School, Fair Oaks, Calif.



NOTES!

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes, extending across the page from the left margin to the right edge of the blue graphic.

Lesson 4

Express It

Objectives – In this lesson, you will learn:

Where to use verbal expression to reinforce the theme

Ideas for using the words creatively, as they relate to your yearbook theme

Remember all that brainstorming you did in the previous three lessons? Now is the time to take out all of those notes again and rediscover what attracted you to your theme in the first place. How much of that has stuck? How much of it is causing you to roll your eyes now and ask “Seriously!?” Figure out where you stand with your theme and then decide where you’re going with it.

EXPRESSIONS OF THE THEME

These might fit into the yearbook any number of places, including:



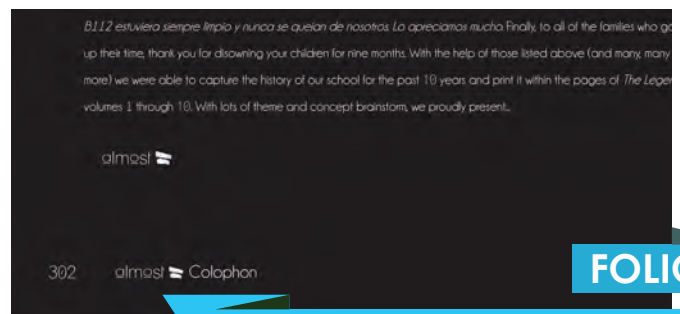
SECTION HEADERS



CAPTIONS



HEADLINES



FOLIOS

“THE SPIRIT WITHIN”

The Legend, El Dorado High School, El Paso, Texas

NOTES!

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes, starting from the top right of the blue banner and extending across the page.



RATE YOUR PROGRESS

- 4.0 I can do all tasks in 3.0 and I can teach others!

- 3.0 I can demonstrate how to engage the audience by developing a theme that both visually and verbally progresses over the course of the yearbook to create a coherent outcome. I can...
 - a. use narrative techniques to develop a sequence of events that clearly communicate the story of this school year

 - b. use precise language and vocabulary to create clear theme copy, section titles, etc., that are appropriate for the task and the audience

I demonstrate an ability to use a variety of techniques to build a theme using the most significant and relevant facts, details and examples.

- 2.0 I understand some basic ways to communicate a theme, but I struggle with how to clearly carry it throughout the yearbook.

- 1.0 I still don't understand how to communicate a theme throughout a yearbook.

Lesson 5

Visualize It

Objectives – In this lesson, you will learn:

Suggestions for inspiring yearbook graphics that are current and vibrant

Collaborative methods of developing visual appeal

By now your theme should be coming into focus. Gather your favorite expressions/spinoff titles/theme catchwords and consider how these might play out visually. Be sure to keep the theme current with colors, fonts, graphics and textures that date the year.

It's probably best to avoid being inspired by past yearbooks from other schools or even your own. After all, those ideas are already a year old – maybe even older if those books were inspired by yearbooks from the year before them. Look at the date of publication of design books that might be inspiring to you. If they are a few years old, chances are they are not current. You want your book to look like 2014, not 2009. The most up-to-date inspiration is on the magazine racks, in the music aisles, on media screens, and all over the Internet.

Curious designers can find an unlimited source of cutting-edge inspiration at their fingertips. Open your eyes and explore the possibilities. Capture the trends and apply them to the presentation of your theme.

The Internet can be a great source for visual ideas to express your theme and define your design style. Here's some places on the web you can start:

- ONLINE CATALOGS
- ITUNES
- ISSUU.COM
- ADSOFTHEWORLD.COM
- PINTEREST



We know...

... we're not really a school known for one thing. It's ironic that we always chant "We are Northwest" when Northwest really doesn't have a narrow identity, but a broad spectrum of things we know we're good at.

We've come to expect Van Rose to lead the cross country team to another state championship, the theater department to achieve another Blue Star award. Even as the year begins, we are looking forward to the Poetry Slam – proud that it is the largest in the state.

We know what classes we can use to finish other homework, which teachers will get mad if we're texting and which ones laugh about something they watch us tweet. We know what happens if we don't complete our work, too.

“WE KNOW”

Shawnee Mission Northwest High School

Shawnee, Kan.

2013 Lair

...

We know that when we go to the snack line, Dr. Harrington is always the one to hand us our ice cream cones. The lunch ladies sometimes have our lunch orders memorized, even if all we get is a piece of cheese pizza and purple Propel. They know us.

Whether we are involved in the school or not, we're all still a part of it.

We started this school year off with a whole bunch of "I don't knows": who were we going to sit with at lunch, when Chipotle would open or whether the Mayan calendar really forecasted the end of the world but we always fell back on the things we knew, the things we all know.

We know.



WE KNOW.



THE FOOTBALL TEAM BATTLED THEIR FIRST GAME

It was a hot day at the stadium, and the football team was ready for their first game. The players were nervous but determined to win. The game was a close one, but in the end, the team emerged victorious. The crowd was cheering and the players were celebrating. It was a great first experience for everyone involved.

THEY KNOW

THEY KNOW FRIENDS AND SPORTS

THEY KNOW THE HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL

THEY KNOW THE TRADITIONS OF THE DISTRICT

THEY KNOW THE VALUES OF THE COMMUNITY

THEY KNOW THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

THEY KNOW THE POWER OF TEAMWORK

THEY KNOW THE JOY OF LEARNING

THEY KNOW THE BEAUTY OF NATURE

THEY KNOW THE WISDOM OF EXPERIENCE

THEY KNOW THE LOVE OF LIFE

a lucky FEAT

AFTER THINKING SHE WAS CUT, JUNIOR CHELSEA WARREN IS CHOSEN FOR STATE ORCHESTRA

Chelsea Warren, a junior at Shawnee Mission Northwest High School, has a unique story. She was initially cut from the school orchestra but was later chosen for the state orchestra. Her journey is a testament to her talent and perseverance. She has worked hard to improve her skills and is now representing her school at the state level. Her story is an inspiration to other students who may face similar challenges.

Chelsea Warren, a junior at Shawnee Mission Northwest High School, has a unique story. She was initially cut from the school orchestra but was later chosen for the state orchestra. Her journey is a testament to her talent and perseverance. She has worked hard to improve her skills and is now representing her school at the state level. Her story is an inspiration to other students who may face similar challenges.

KNOW : NUMBERS

- 62 VIOLIN PLAYERS
- 2 BASS PLAYERS
- 5 NEW STRING PLAYERS IN STATE ORCHESTRA
- 6 NEW STRING PLAYERS IN DISTRICT ORCHESTRA
- 21 CELLETS
- 23 VIOLA PLAYERS
- 108 STUDENTS IN THE FOUR DISTRICTS OF THE NEW DISTRICTS
- 97 MEMBERS OF THE STATE ORCHESTRA

These numbers represent the achievements of our students in the arts and music programs. It shows the growth and dedication of our orchestra and string ensembles. We are proud of the hard work and talent of our students.

Your Name:

MORE WORDS

Now look for more colorful, fun words to replace some of the ordinary words you chose the first time around. Without sounding forced, look for words that will provide a mental picture of the action they represent. For example, did someone sit down? Or flop into a chair? Did students "go" down the hall? Or did they dash? Saunter? Trip? Skip? Substitute specific, image-inducing words for some of the bland ones. Think about how you chat with your best friend. Write in words people will relate to and have fun reading.

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Lesson 7

Carry It Through

Objectives – In this lesson, you will learn:

The importance of keeping your theme specific and detailed to help date the year

Suggestions for brainstorming possibilities to take the theme into each section of the book

Think of ways to carry your theme throughout all of the areas of your book: events, student life, academics, sports, clubs and features. Your theme type may dictate a specific section plan, in which case you should make sure it could apply to each of those.

Ultimately your theme copy should be meaningful and personal as it dates the year and creates a moment in time for your book to occupy. Your choice of theme will determine how the book is organized, designed and written. The perfect theme will invite your readers to relive the highlights of the year and remind them of what they may have missed. Let your theme guide you into presenting your year with enough details to help readers remember and enough heart that they will never forget.



AUTUMN

- >HOMETOWNING 18
- >FOOTBALL 22
- >WORLD LANGUAGES 24
- >VOLLEBALL 26
- >PROFILE: BRUCE MACLEOD 28
- >STEEL MAGNOLIAS 30
- >GIRLS TENNIS 32
- >CROSS COUNTRY 34
- >PROFILE: BRITTANY RAMOS 36
- >PHYSICAL EDUCATION 38
- >GIRLS GOLF 40
- >THIS IS AMERICA 42
- >PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2012 44
- >ENGLISH 46
- >BOYS WATER POLO 48
- >SOCIAL BUTTERFLIES 50
- >MATH 52
- >WILL YOU SIGN MY YEARBOOK? 54



THE RESPECTED SENIORITY
 You might not know it, but you might not believe it. But you do.

You stand out.
 Maybe you walk onto campus every Monday through Friday, and never miss a day. Maybe you gossip with friends and rush to lunch and stress about grades. Maybe you audition for plays and try out for sports, or make friends with the new kid. You do things that appear to be normal, but in reality, it's what makes you stand apart from others.

You stand out.
 You study for CSTs, you study for SATs, you cram for the AP exams. You campaign for junior class President, you volunteer at rally events. You sit in the library during winter and lay out on the hills during spring. You fundraise for field trips that are close to home, and save for somewhere not so close.

You stand out.
 You go to detention, you go to the academic luncheon. You get scolded by your teacher, you become friends with your teacher. You ditch class, you never miss a day. You make plans, you break plans, you love, you lose, you win.

You stand out.
 You may not be famous or popular. You may not be a scholar or an athlete. You may be the first in your family to go to college, or even the first to drop out. You might be a wallflower. You might be a social butterfly. You might feel like you don't fit in or belong. But just being you makes you different from the crowd.

You stand out.

A MAN TO REMEMBER
 Students express their admiration for and share some of their best memories.

KEEP THE
 During his last song, Sage shares the most important message to the students.

SWAN

“STAND OUT”

Beaumont High School
 Beaumont, Calif.
 2013 Live Oak

You stand out.
 You might not know it.
 You might not believe it.
 But you do.

You stand out.

Maybe you walk onto campus every Monday through Friday, and never miss a day.
 Maybe you gossip with friends and rush to lunch and stress about grades.
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 But just being you makes you different from the crowd.

You stand out.

“STAND OUT”

Beaumont High School
 Beaumont, Calif.
 2013 Live Oak

After working at Beaumont High School for five years, security guard Brian Wood retires with plans of moving to a foreign country.

NUMBER 79

N SONG

SOME TWO, THREE, FOUR

GENDER BENDER

CAN'T STOP THE BEAT

106 HAIRSPRAY

SPRING 107

ACTIVITY

THE THEME CHECKLIST

Your Name: _____

Complete the following checklist and see how you can apply your theme to each section of the book.

OPENING

1. List possible ways to introduce the theme to your readers.

.....
.....

2. What is going on in the world that can give your year a setting?

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3. Describe your community to give your school a setting.

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4. How can you tie the school to the year?

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5. Give details of the students — how many? Diversity? Where do they live/come from? How can you relate them to the year?

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6. List current trends, such as music, social media, styles, popular hangouts.

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7. What specific events apply to the theme and illustrate why you chose it?

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8. What other details can you refer to that will give your book a place in time?

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STUDENT LIFE/CLUBS/EVENTS THEME COPY

1. What specific events or activities validate your theme for this section?

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.....

.....

2. List quotes related to specific situations that can only be said about this year.

.....

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.....

SPORTS THEME COPY

1. What are some specific highlights in sports that reflect the theme, such as close games, league titles, bus rides, locker room antics, after-game celebrations or banquets?

.....

.....

.....

2. List quotes from specific players, fans or coaches that help date the year.

.....

.....

.....

ACADEMIC THEME COPY

1. What are some special moments in the classroom, labs, on field trips, in study groups that reflect specifically what the academic school year was all about?

2. List quotes from specific players, fans or coaches that help date the year.

CLOSING THEME COPY

1. How did the theme play out and define the school year?

2. List ways you can make your readers feel a sense of completion, knowing that the theme has come full circle.

3. What are some examples you can use to create a sense of finality or completion, even though you are writing this before the school year is over?

NOTES!

A series of horizontal dotted lines for writing notes, extending across the page from the left margin to the right edge of the blue header area.

NOTES!

Lessons 5-7
SCORE

RATE YOUR PROGRESS

- 4.0 I can do all tasks in 3.0 and I can teach others!
- 3.0 I can demonstrate how to engage the audience by developing a theme that both visually and verbally progresses over the course of the yearbook to create a coherent outcome. I can...
 - a. use narrative techniques to develop a sequence of events that clearly communicate the story of this school year
 - b. use precise language and vocabulary to create clear theme copy, section titles, etc., that are appropriate for the task and the audienceI demonstrate an ability to use a variety of techniques to build a theme using the most significant and relevant facts, details and examples.
- 2.0 I understand some basic ways to communicate a theme, but I struggle with how to clearly carry it throughout the yearbook.
- 1.0 I still don't understand how to communicate a theme throughout a yearbook.



MEET THE AUTHOR

With a background in commercial art, **Crystal Kazmierski** advises the *Wings* yearbook at Arrowhead Christian Academy in Redlands, Calif., and teaches design and photography at journalism workshops and conventions across the country.

In 2000, Crystal was selected the National Yearbook Adviser of the Year by the Journalism Education Association (JEA). She was also awarded a Gold Key award in 2002 by the Columbia Scholastic Press Association (CSPA) and a Pioneer Award in 2007 by the National Scholastic Press Association (NSPA).

Under Crystal's guidance, *Wings* has received multiple CSPA Gold Crown and NSPA Pacemaker awards; including winning a Yearbook Pacemaker 18 times in the last 19 years.

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