

TIMELY TIPS

Design

Theme Planning

OBJECTIVE

A yearbook theme is a verbal and visual message that tells the story of the student body and school year. Begin with the verbal, then move to the visual. You'll want to draft your theme statement first and then begin visualizing what that will look like.

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Projector
- Writing utensils/markers
- Poster/whiteboard
- [Design Trends for 2026](#) training video

PART 1

VERBAL THEME (15 MINUTES)

Project the following questions in the front of the room. Either as a class or split into groups of four to five, discuss the prompts and write **all** thoughts and ideas on one side of the poster board.

- Facts about your school: location, mascot, colors, etc.
- Recent changes at your school: schedule, classes, size
- Clothing styles and trends
- How would you describe a typical school day to a friend who goes to another school?
- What do students at your school look forward to?
- What do other schools say about your school? How does it stand out in your community?
- What one word would you use to describe your school?

So Much Personality

Think of your verbal theme as having a personality. How would you describe it?

- Bold
- Loud
- Fun
- Elegant
- Modern
- Serious
- Light
- Traditional
- Thoughtful
- Intense
- Proud
- Relaxed
- Chaotic

PART 2

VISUAL THEME (20 MINUTES)

Spend time looking at visual inspiration by watching the [Design Trends for 2026](#) training video and searching for inspiration online and in magazines and sample books.

Search for any design inspiration that matches the message and tone you want to verbalize. Ultimately, you want to find what sparks the interest of the staff and build ideas from there. Spend time writing these ideas on the other side of your poster board.

Items to consider:

- Typography (*serif, sanserif, script*)
- Color (*bright, muted, natural*)
- Graphic Elements (*color, type, shapes, line art*)
- Photo Treatments (*black and white, duotone, full or partial cut-outs*)
- Composition (*use white space, alignment, number of mods*)

Sources of Inspiration

- Dribbble.com
- Behance.com
- Pinterest.com
- Ad Agencies
 - InBeat
 - Colle McVoy
 - Pentagram
 - Daniel Brian Advertising
 - 160 over 90
- Advertisements
- Magazines
- Book covers
- Packaging
- Wix website builder

PART 3

CONCLUSION (10 MINUTES)

Place each poster at the front of the room. Document overlapping verbal and visual themes. In the next class period, vote for the top themes. Develop these themes further with concepts for your cover, dividers and layouts.