

# TIMELY TIPS

## Writing

### Brainstorming & Developing Theme Phrases

#### OBJECTIVE

Students will identify potential theme concepts reflecting their school community for the upcoming year and draft initial theme phrases and spin-off words.

#### MATERIALS NEEDED

- Whiteboard or projector
- Notetaking materials
- Access to the Walsworth Yearbooks [Theme Gallery](#) and/or printed yearbook samples

#### PART 1

### DEFINING A THEME'S PURPOSE (5 MINUTES)

Establish what a yearbook theme entails.

- Explain how the theme serves as the unifying concept or narrative for the entire book, going beyond a simple slogan. An effective theme must be relatable, specific and authentic to their school community and that specific school year. It should reflect the unique experiences, feelings and events of the students, faculty and staff.
- Clarify that the theme connects diverse sections (academics, sports, student life, clubs, etc.) and times of the year visually and verbally, telling the school's story.
- Highlight examples from Walsworth's Theme Gallery, the *Possibilities* book and/or other yearbooks in your classroom that incorporate their theme effectively throughout the yearbook.

#### PART 2

### MIX AND MATCH (5 MINUTES)

Take two specific theme examples from existing books and create a mash-up. How would the verbal theme of one mix with the visual theme of another? Discuss:

- Is the theme still effective? Why or why not?
- Did having a different visual theme impact the perception or understanding of the verbal theme?
- What changes could help blend the two together?

#### PART 3

### BRAINSTORMING POTENTIAL THEME CONCEPTS (10 MINUTES)

Facilitate a group brainstorming session aimed at uncovering unique aspects and experiences of your school, recording the ideas on a whiteboard or projector. Use guiding questions to prompt discussion, focusing on:

- **School Identity:** What makes the school distinct (traditions, mascot, location, unique programs, student culture, reputation, lingo, etc.)?
- **Anticipated Future:** What significant events changes or milestones are expected next year (new facilities, anniversaries, curriculum shifts, major projects)?
- **Student Experience:** What words or feelings characterize student life (e.g. fast-paced, diverse, collaborative, innovative, challenging, supportive)?
- **Relevant Narratives:** How do common threads of the student experience manifest specifically at this school?

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#### PART 4

#### CRAFT THEME PHRASES AND SPIN-OFFS (10 MINUTES)

1. Direct small groups of students to develop two or three core concepts or broad ideas that feel authentic and relevant for next year's theme. Emphasize capturing the essence rather than perfecting wording at this stage.
2. Select one or two concepts generated by the class. Model how to develop specific theme phrases and related verbal elements from these concepts, demonstrating different angles or wording possibilities. Phrases should be short, memorable and flexible.
3. Introduce the idea of verbal spin-offs – related words or short phrases derived from the main theme. Explain their function in reinforcing the theme across headlines captions section titles and other copy blocks. Model creating several spin-offs related to the example theme phrase. Show examples from other yearbooks as time allows.

#### PART 5

#### KEEP THE MOMENTUM GOING

Assign a follow-up task (for the next class or homework). Students should:

- Choose one promising concept.
- Draft 2-3 potential theme phrases.
- Brainstorm 5-10 related spin-off words/phrases.

Instruct them to consider how these verbal elements could create a cohesive narrative throughout the different sections of the yearbook, personalizing the story of their school for the next year.