1. Collaborate on word play.

After you decide on the story you're going to tell, start a Google doc or other shared file and have all staffers record at least 10 verbal phrases that could be (or become) your tagline. Set a time and arrange for an online meeting to discuss favorites and imagine how ideas might combine for greater impact. If you don't come up with an idea you love, try again another day.

Here's another option. Once you land on a phrase, test it by creating columns for all of the individual words in the tagline. Have each staffer contribute as many phrases using those words as possible to a new Google doc/shared file. Set a goal in advance. Do you want at least 30 good phrases for each word so you can have a nice library of mods with standing headlines to carry the theme through the book? Work together to consider possibilities and ensure that you have enough different coverage opportunities to commit to the tagline.

2. Do a coverage audit.

Use files from this year to make complete lists of all topics covered and angles used. Discover groups/topics that are over- or undercovered and note ways to do things differently next year. Calculate the percentage of voices based on gender, grade level and other assessments. Check the index from not only this year — but also going back two or three years — to create lists of people the staff needs to seek out to cover and those ineligible for features/dominant displays (because they have already had too many turns).

3. Create a personality for your book.

Using the process Faust described, build an identifying persona for your 2021 yearbook. Or do this for your 2020 book if this is a new concept for you — so that you have a baseline for comparison as you begin to work on next year's theme. Choose at least five defining characteristics and five adjectives to ensure the depth of "character development" and then reflect on how the selected persona affects decisions like color palette, typography, graphic devices, photo styles, coverage strategies and more. This assignment can be expanded to include the digital collection of visuals appropriate for the persona selected.