



Vacation Bible School:

THE 2016 IMPACT SURVEY

You probably started thinking about next summer's VBS the day after you finished your program this year—and that's a good thing! VBS can be an all-encompassing ministry effort that brings out the very best (and occasionally a bit of friction) in your church.

To encourage your head start this year, we've compiled loads of VBS information and tools as well as the results of our 2016 VBS Impact Survey. You'll hear from more than 100 churches that recently hosted VBS. Plus, you'll find resources to help you assess your next VBS program. Also, don't miss our special VBS Guide accompanying this issue of *Children's Ministry Magazine*!

HERE'S AN INSIDE LOOK AT WHY VBS IS IMPORTANT TO YOUR OUTREACH STRATEGY—AND HOW YOU CAN MAKE THE MOST OF YOURS.

2016 SURVEY SAYS...

For the 2016 VBS Impact Survey, 120 churches that hosted VBS in the previous year participated. Churches surveyed are of all sizes and VBS attendances. This year's focus is on uncovering the key takeaways for kids and the overall benefits VBS offers to churches and communities. Read on for the exclusive results.

A SNAPSHOT



How many consecutive years has your church or ministry hosted VBS?

15+ years	52%
2 to 5 years	21%
6 to 10 years	14%
11 to 15 years	8%
1 year	5%

Our VBS includes...

Outreach to our community	79%
Ministry to our church members	60%
Missions outreach to a another community	12%
Other	10%
A traveling VBS ministry	2%

My main role in our VBS includes...

Children's ministry director or leader	69%
VBS director	52%
Volunteer leader	10%
Leader of another church ministry	4%
Volunteer worker	4%
Other	3%

Our average VBS attendance this year was...

201 to 500 kids	22%
21 to 50	20%
101 to 200 kids	19%
76 to 100 kids	16%
51 to 75 kids	14%
0 to 20	6%
More than 500 kids	3%

Our average budget for this year was...

Under \$1,000	20%
Under \$3,000	18%
Under \$2,000	15%
Under \$5,000	15%
Under \$500	13%
More than \$10,000	8%
Under \$7,500	8%
Under \$10,000	3%

WHAT'S AT STAKE

The measurement we're most likely to use to deem VBS a success is...

Parent/child satisfaction	20%
Other	19%
More children attending than the previous year	17%
More faith commitments from children and adults than the previous year	16%
Number of new children/families returning to our church following VBS	14%
More unchurched children attending than the previous year	13%
More volunteers than the previous year	1%
Staying within the budget	0%
Fewer children from other churches attending	0%

Based on the measurement your church uses, how successful was your VBS this year?

A complete success	55%	<div></div>
Somewhat successful	34%	<div></div>
Not very successful	7%	<div></div>
Other	4%	<div></div>

SURVEY TAKEAWAY

For the churches in our survey, the biggest indicator of a successful VBS was parent/child satisfaction. This was closely followed by "other" indicators, more faith commitments from children and adults than the previous year, and more attending children than the previous year. Staying within the budget and recruiting more volunteers than the previous year were not considered indicators of VBS success by any participants.

What is the main reason your VBS was a success?

Overwhelmingly, participants listed the key reasons their VBS was considered a success as:

- Number of children making faith commitments
- Commitment from volunteers
- More non-church members attending
- Positive feedback from children, parents, and church
- Outside-the-box thinking to better reach children and families
- Greater attendance due to creative publicity efforts

“Overcoming these obstacles is hard,” notes Stogsdill. “When the leadership of the church doesn’t see VBS as important, it makes it really hard to promote and get volunteers. Yet while everyone wants lots of kids there, success must not be measured only by attendance.”

If your VBS was not considered successful, explain why.

Of the 7 percent of churches who said their VBS was not successful, here were the main reasons why:

- Low attendance
- Few faith commitments
- Lack of church leadership support
- Lack of volunteers

“With 20 percent saying that success is determined by parent and child satisfaction, this survey shows how important it is to minister not only to the child, but to the family,” says Tony Stogsdill, marketing manager for VBS and children’s curriculum at Cokesbury (cokesburyvbs.com). “More churches are finding success by offering intergenerational activities as well as activities for children to take home and share with parents.”

SURVEY TAKEAWAY

For these churches, VBS is a success. A majority 89 percent said the VBS program was considered somewhat of a success or a complete success according to the church’s measurement.

THE POWER OF VBS

“VBS mixes so many great elements all together—teaching Bible truths to kids, sharing the gospel, bringing the whole church together to serve with a purpose, effectively reaching non-churched or under-churched families, and all the while having a blast!” says Barb Witt, a writer for Answers VBS (answersingenesi.org/vbs).

“Anytime you see the ‘lightbulb’ go on in a child or family, it’s a success,” says Jody Brolsma, executive editor for Group’s VBS (group.com). “That may look different for every person. It may mean that I got a fresh understanding of the depth of Jesus’ love. It may mean that I realized Jesus is beside me in everyday life. Or maybe it’s a family who discovered that the family of God is all around them. Those ‘aha’ moments are transforming—they stay with us and can make Jesus part of our everyday lives. That’s what I look for when my kids or neighbors go to a VBS. Did heart transformation happen? Was there an ‘aha’ faith moment?”

How well does VBS impact the following at your church?

Greater visibility within our community

44%	Good impact
19%	Minor impact
18%	Medium impact
17%	Outstanding impact
2%	No impact

Ministry to families

35%	Good impact
25%	Medium impact
21%	Outstanding impact
17%	Minor impact
2%	No impact

Lasting connections with otherwise unchurched families

33%	Medium impact
32%	Good impact
30%	Minor impact
3%	Outstanding impact
2%	No impact

Opportunities to bring in new volunteers

37%	Outstanding impact
36%	Good impact
18%	Medium impact
9%	Minor impact
0%	No impact

Introducing children to Jesus for the first time

36%	Good impact
23%	Outstanding impact
22%	Medium impact
17%	Minor impact
2%	No impact

Will your church host VBS next year?

81%	Definitely
8%	Maybe
5%	Other
3%	Unknown
3%	No