

VBS 2022 BACKYARD KIDS CLUB CONFERENCE PLAN (1½ HOURS)

Purpose Statement

This 90-minute conference plan is designed to train and equip VBS directors and kids ministry volunteers to plan a successful Spark Studios® Backyard Kids Club.

Needed Resources

- *VBS 2022 Backyard Kids Club Directors Guide*
- *VBS 2022 Backyard Kids Club Kit*
- *VBS 2022 Tablecloths*
- *VBS 2022 String Flags*
- *VBS 2022 Music for Kids CD*
- OPTIONAL: *VBS 2022 Visual Pack* — Use clear packing tape or spray adhesive to mount posters to foam board or large cardboard to demonstrate how they can easily be displayed outside at a Backyard Kids Club.
- Item 1: Handout — Copy one per conferee.
- OPTIONAL: Artificial trees or plants
- Small ball
- CD player

Room Setup

Spread a large flat sheet on the floor at the front of the teaching area (where children would sit during Bible Study) and a hard-top cooler or camping chair nearby (where the Bible Study leader would sit). Arrange chairs in a semi-circle or in rows depending on the number of participants expected. (OPTIONAL: Position artificial trees or plants to either side of the focal area to simulate being outdoors.) Cover the table with a *VBS 2022 Tablecloth* and display the curriculum alongside other outdoor decorations. If using the *VBS 2022 Visual Pack* posters, lean the mounted posters against the table and nearby walls.

Teaching Steps

1. Welcome (5 minutes)

- Welcome conferees. Share your experience with Backyard Kids Club.
- Explain that Backyard Kids Club (BKC) is a special way of taking VBS beyond the walls of your church and into your community.
- Ask: “Why is VBS/BKC worth doing again this year?” Toss a ball to a conferee to prompt her to share her response. Lead her to then toss the ball to someone else. Continue until all or most conferees have a chance to answer.
- Answers might include:
 - **BKC gets people involved in serving who might not otherwise serve.** Backyard Kids Club allows husbands and wives, families, friends, and neighbors to serve together.
 - **Builds relationships and creates lasting memories.** Backyard Kids Club provides an opportunity for church members to intentionally and strategically connect with their neighbors in a way that provides natural opportunities for sharing the gospel. It essentially deploys families as missionaries in their own neighborhoods. BKC uses the same theme, games, food, decorations, and music as a traditional VBS to evoke the same excitement in kids.
 - **It’s completely customizable and totally manageable.** BKC can take place during the day or the evening and usually draws a smaller number of kids. Divvying up the workload by specific tasks means no one is overwhelmed.

- **Research shows that 69% of all American parents would encourage their child to attend a VBS at a church they don't attend if invited by a friend.** When kids invite their neighborhood friends to BKC at their home, parents are overwhelmingly likely to say yes.

2. The Gospel (10 minutes)

- Comment: "Whether it's called VBS or BKC, I think we all agree that VBS is worth it because kids are worth it. And the gospel is worth sharing!"
- Continue: "Most of us do VBS, not just because it is fun—even though it is—but because we agree with Paul when he said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes..." Romans 1:16 (CSB).
- Later in Romans 10, Paul writes, "How, then, can they call on him they have not believed in? And how can they believe without hearing about him? And how can they hear without a preacher? And how can they preach unless they are sent?" Romans 10:14-15a (CSB).
- Suggest that one of the lessons learned during 2020 and 2021 is that there are kids who cannot come to us, so our ministry must embrace a "from anywhere" posture. We must be prepared to be "sent" into our communities and take the gospel where kids are.
- Pose the question: "So where are we being sent?"
- Lead participants to take a minute and write down some locations in their communities where God might be sending them. After a few moments, ask if there is anyone willing to share a location or two. Some suggestions include:
 - Mission trip/project
 - Local park
 - HOA clubhouse
 - Local rec center
 - Your church

3. The Challenges (5 minutes)

- Ask: "What are some of the challenges still facing kids ministry leaders in 2022? Allow conferees to answer with some challenges they have experienced or are experiencing. Answers may include:
 - Some communities still need to be sensitive to gathering restrictions and social distancing.
 - Virtual burnout may be prominent in the community.
 - Some families are still uncomfortable gathering in larger groups.
 - Accommodating the need to limit physical touch points.
 - Registration
 - Hands-on rotations (snacks, rec, crafts)
 - Volunteer recruitment
 - New types of volunteers (from sanitizing crews to streaming media teams)
- Acknowledge that there's not really a cookie cutter solution that works for every church in every community. But Backyard Kids Club is a good solution to address many of these issues.

4. The Solutions (15 minutes)

- Explain that the word *hybrid* is one we've now become well acquainted with. It's a multi-faceted word that when applied to VBS basically just means taking a multi-layered approach to VBS.

- Suggest that even if churches offer a traditional, in-person VBS at church, Backyard Kids Club could be a great addition to your strategy to overcome some of the challenges many churches continue to experience because of the lingering effects of COVID-19.
- Offer the following encouragement to conferees as they plan their strategy for this summer:
 - Start with a solid plan A. But be ready to pivot and have a quickly executable plan B ready.
 - Enlist key leaders now who will be invested in the *why* behind VBS/BKC even more than the *how* of implementing it.
 - Do something! Even if it's still not back to normal. Don't be discouraged by the results.
 - Celebrate successes (families reached, kids involved etc.).
 - Try not to stress.
- Discuss with conferees what exactly is a Backyard Kids Club? Help them realize that it's not necessarily limited to a backyard. Lead them to come up with other places where BKC could occur, such as:
 - Neighborhood
 - Local park
 - Clubhouse
 - Rec center
 - Park pavilion
 - Playground
 - Church grounds
- Remind conferees that any "off-site" environment can be a great setting for Backyard Kids Club. Remember, the question is "where am I being sent to?"

5. The Directors Guide (10 minutes)

- Explain that a successful Backyard Kids Club begins with two key pieces—The Backyard Kids Club Kit and the Directors Guide. Each church needs ONE Directors Guide, even if hosting multiple BKC locations. Each location will need its own Backyard Kids Club Kit.
- Briefly highlight the key sections of the Backyard Kids Club Directors Guide.
 - Content Overview:
 - Note that the BKC Kit is available in different themes (the current theme plus the previous three years), but the Directors Guide is applicable to all themes.
 - The Spark Studios Backyard Kids Club resources follow the same biblical outline as the traditional VBS resources.
 - A one-page summary of the 2022 biblical content is available on page 4.
 - Identify Locations/Timing (pages 6–8):
 - Guide conferees to look back at their list of answers to the question asked earlier: "Where are you being sent?" Suggest that their answers become locations for hosting a BKC this summer.
 - Question to ask: "Will we use all 5 days or abbreviated schedule?"
 - Organize Your Teams:
 - Role summaries (p. 10) — We'll cover more of this in just a moment.
 - Plan, Prepare, Promote
 - Sample schedules
 - Planning checklist
 - Registration tips

- Continue the Connection
 - Just like in a traditional VBS, and perhaps even more importantly in BYKC, do not neglect follow-up!
- Printable PDFs for additional training and preparation include:
 - Clipart
 - Role summaries
 - Sample registration forms
 - Family connection ideas
 - Follow-up prospect cards
 - Prayer calendar
 - Age characteristics
 - Promotional flyer
 - And more!

6. Backyard Kids Club Kit (30 minutes)

- Invite a volunteer to come up and remove one item from the Backyard Kids Club Kit. Talk about that item thoroughly, then invite another volunteer to come up and choose another item. Continue until each item is discussed.
- Explain that each folder in the Kit corresponds with a different role.
 - **Host/Team Leader:** Provides the location and leadership for the BKC. (Show the Host folder.) The host also provides the snacks. (Show the *VBS 2020 Snack Rotation Recipe Cards* included in the BKC kit.)
 - Explain that the Host/Team Leader is the on-site director. Ideally the host does not have any teaching responsibilities, so he/she is available for any needs that arise.
 - Show the top of the first page in the folder and review the difference between a host and a team leader. Explain that the host can also be the team leader, or the team leader can be another person on the BKC team.
 - Mention that the host must have the gift of hospitality—making people feel welcome and loved. Someone who cares more about her flowerbeds than kids is not a good host choice. Whenever possible, recruit hosts that are open to a 2–3 year commitment. It takes time to develop relationships. In some cases, it may take families 2–3 years of participating in a BKC before making a visit to the host church.
 - Main duties: Publicity, registration, snacks, security, follow-up, communicating details back to the church staff. (NOTE: Publicity and follow-up will be addressed in further detail at the end of the training.)
 - Draw attention to page 11 of the Directors Guide for great tips regarding important safety information.
 - Hosts work with the team to set the date, schedule, and any kickoff or celebration dates.
 - **Snacks (Host):** Snacks are usually the responsibility of the host. Plan for snacks to last 10 minutes.
 - Keep in mind that many children have food allergies. Plan for allergen-free snacks (or alternatives).
 - Consider only serving water since BKC is usually outside. Watch for warning signs that children are overheated or dehydrated.
 - Be sure to think through trash pickup. Tie a large bag to a tree or bring a large trashcan outside.
 - Involve the church at large by asking other church members to provide snacks for the teams. Adults who may not be able to participate the week

- of BKC might love to shop, prepare, and deliver snacks to the host ahead of time.
- Remember to take every opportunity to teach. Snack time is a great time to review the Bible Stories and/or applications from Bible Study.
- **Music/Worship Leader:** Leads Opening Rally for 15 minutes and leads Closing Rally for 15 minutes. (Show Music Folder, CDs, and Choreography DVD.)
 - Explain that the Music Folder gives an outline for daily opening and closing rallies. A two-character skit is also provided. This helps tie in the theme each day and sets up Bible study. Consider asking older children or middle school/high school students to perform the skits.
 - Choose leaders with high levels of enthusiasm and energy. The music/worship leader should be familiar enough with the songs and movements to teach them to the children each day.
 - If technology is available at a BKC site, the music/worship leader may choose to show the performance videos on the DVD while leading songs.
 - During Closing Rally, review the music from Opening Rally, the motto, and the memory verse. Use the Connection Questions included on the Closing Rally card to review the lesson. This can have a huge impact. Often parents arrive a little early. By reviewing everything at the end, parents can listen in on what their children learned. Parents who are already believers can continue the conversation with their child as they go home. Parents who are not believers will hopefully ask their children to explain what they learned!
 - **Bible Study Leaders:** Leads Bible Study for 30 minutes. Recruit Bible Study leaders for both preschool and children's Bible studies. (Show the Preschool and Children's Bible Study folders.)
 - Explain that the daily Bible stories and applications are the same for BKC as the main VBS curriculum. Activities and games have been adapted to fit a broadly graded group of children and are easily portable and done outside.
 - Pull out the Day 1 teaching plans for both children and preschool. Show that they are the same Bible story, but use different activities based on comprehension levels and capabilities.
 - Point out that the Preschool teaching plan includes an abbreviated Bible verse (paraphrase) and coloring sheet option on the back. There is also a separate preschool music CD with songs that are incorporated into the lesson.
 - Mention that the children's teaching plans have an "Explore Deeper" activity (usually a game or craft option) to extend the time if needed.
 - Show the kit items (teaching pictures) and activity books (learner pieces) for both preschool and children.
 - Share the following tips for Bible Study:
 - Think through sun versus shade. You do not want kids staring into the sun as they look at the leader.
 - Provide clear physical boundaries. A flat sheet or blanket not only gives them something to sit on but also provides a visual boundary.
 - Provide a cooler for the leader to sit on. Store supplies inside to prevent them from blowing away (other options include a large box, basket, or bag nearby).

- Ask other team members (Music, Rec, Crafts, etc.) to sit with the children during Bible Study time to assist the Bible Study leader and to help the children stay focused.
- Be spiritually and mentally prepared for distractions. Do not be surprised if a neighbor decides to mow the lawn or a hot air balloon goes overhead during Bible Study time.
- **Recreation Leader:** Leads recreation for 25 minutes. Determines early arrival activities 15–20 minutes before starting BKC. (Show the preschool and children’s *VBS 2020 Recreation Rotation Leader Cards*, included in the BKC kit. Explain that the recreation cards for BKC are identical to the cards for VBS.)
 - Instruct leaders to be very familiar with the playing area. Watch for tree roots, little ditches, or other items that might be hazardous or cause safety concerns.
 - Give very clear boundaries on how far kids may go during games. Consider stationing extra adults or student leaders at those boundaries.
 - Determine in advance with the BKC team if recreation can include water or messy games.
 - Select 3–4 games per day. It is better to have more prepared to fill extra time.
 - Share the following tips for BKC recreation:
 - End a game before the kids lose interest. You can always bring it back as an opening or closing game during drop off/pick up the next day.
 - Evenly disperse younger and older children on each team when forming teams with broadly graded ages. For relay games, place the youngest children at the front of the line and older children at the back. This will help ensure that kids compete against others their own age.
 - Give teams theme related names such as “Team Concrete” and “Team Cranes” instead of calling them “Team 1” and “Team 2.”
- **Craft Leader:** Leads crafts for 25 minutes. (Show the Craft folder, the sample craft packs, and the *VBS 2020 Crafts Rotation Leader Guide*.)
 - Explain that the BKC crafts are chosen for their suitability for outdoor use. Additional craft ideas are available in the *VBS 2020 Crafts Rotation Leader Guide*.
 - Mention that Lifeway craft packs are great options because they come in kits that are easy to distribute.
 - Share the following tips for BKC Crafts:
 - Lead kids to stand around tables instead of sitting in chairs. (12 kids can stand around a table where only 6 chairs would fit.)
 - Plan ahead for wind! Place small items/crayons/markers in heavier bowls or cups to keep them from blowing away or rolling off the table.
 - Provide a bucket of soapy water and a towel nearby if doing a messy craft. This will give children a place to clean their hands rather than needing to go inside to find a sink.
 - Keep extra copies of the preschool Bible Study coloring pages on hand for children who finish early. Or have the Recreation Leader stand-by ready to play a favorite game again as kids finish their craft.
 - Lead kids to place their finished craft near the pick-up area so they do not forget them when they leave.

7. BKC Publicity and Follow Up (10 minutes)

- Direct conferees to pages 32–35 of the Directors Guide and page 5 in the Host folder for great ideas on spreading the word about BKC.
- Ask attendees to share with the group some creative and successful ways they have handled publicity for their VBS or BKC. Toss the ball to volunteers who are willing to share. If not mentioned by the group, be sure to share:
 - Yard signs with date/time/ages
 - Hand out fliers or *VBS 2022 Door Hangers* in neighborhoods. If going door-to-door, adults should bring their child or a child from the church with them. It is less intimidating for people to answer the door when they see a child.
 - Enlist the help of neighborhood kids in getting the word out. Kids respond best to other kids.
 - Social media that includes direct links to the registration pages on the church website.
 - Consider using the *VBS 2022 Promotional Banner* at the church to direct people to the BKC page on the church website.
 - Fliers/posters in common areas of neighborhoods/apartments. Be sure to get prior approval if necessary.
 - Mail *VBS 2020 Postcards* to previous church guests listing the closest BKC to them.
 - Distribute info cards to the children who attend your church and challenge them to invite their friends to come with them to BKC.
- Direct conferees to pages 36–44 in the Directors Guide and Host folder pages 6 and 8–10 for great ideas on registration and follow up.
- Emphasize that follow up begins with good record keeping during the registration process. Depending on the setting, it can be easy to miss a parent at registration or fail to get complete information. The host may know the family and think they will capture the information later, but if complete information is not gathered, the church will have a difficult time reaching out to the family after BKC.
 - Remind host/team leaders of the importance of turning in registration information in a timely manner. Following up with families needs to happen quickly after BKC.
- Ask attendees to share their own creative and successful follow-up strategies from VBS or BKC with the group. If not mentioned by the group, be sure to share:
 - Phone call from a BKC team member who worked with the child
 - Postcard from a BKC team member who worked with the child
 - Front porch visit from a team member with additional information about the church or delivering a photo from BKC as a keepsake for the child
 - Letter from the church
 - Email from the church
 - Phone call from a children's leader at the church representing the age of the child that attended (Children's Minister, Children's Sunday School teachers, etc.)
 - Invitation to an end of summer BKC celebration at the church
 - Invitation to a school or fall kickoff party at the church
 - A follow-up event during the year in the same location as their BKC. Families are more likely to continue the relationship with the BKC team than they are to visit a church full of strangers.

8. Closing (5 minutes)

- Thank attendees for coming and acknowledge that this was a lot of information to cover.

- Remind them each BKC is just like a mini-VBS. What they learn from VBS can help in BKC, and what they learn in BKC can help in VBS.
- Pray for the attendees and their BKC's. Pray that God would impress on them the places He wants to send them and that He would already be working to provide the people needed to make it happen.

VBS 2022: Beyond the Church Walls



Where are you being sent in 2022?

Challenges we are facing:

VBS Strategies:

Hybrid VBS and/or Backyard Kids Club?

Team Responsibilities and Tips:

1. Host/Team Leader

2. Music/Worship

3. Bible Study

4. Recreation

5. Crafts

BKC Suggested Schedule

15–20 minutes: Early-arrival
games before BKC starts

15 minutes: Opening Rally

30 minutes: Bible Study

25 minutes: Recreation

10 minutes: Snacks

25 minutes: Crafts

15 minutes: Closing Rally

Publicity and Promotion Ideas:

Follow Up Ideas:

Item 1. Handout