

VBS 2026 DIRECTORS OVERVIEW CONFERENCE PLAN (1½ HOURS)

Purpose Statement

This 90-minute outline is designed to train and equip VBS directors and pastors to plan, prepare, and lead Lifeway's Illumination Station® VBS.

Needed Resources

- *VBS 2026 Directors Kit* (005852878) — Pull the Administrative Guide out and display.
- *VBS 2026 Worship Rally Pack* (005853494)
- *VBS 2026 Preschool Starter Kit with Digital Leader Guides Add-on* (005852870)
- *VBS 2026 Kids Starter Kit: Grades 1–6 with Digital Leader Guides Add-on* (005852872) — Pull and prepare pack items 1–7 from the Grades 3–4 Leader Pack.
- *VBS 2026 Multi-age Starter Kit with Digital Leader Guides Add-on* (005852874)
- *VBS 2026 Supersized Backdrop* (005853614)
- Markers
- Glow sticks (1 per conferee)
- Party cups (1 per every 2 conferees) — Place under conferee chairs ahead of time.
- 6 fluorescent index cards — Write one of the following scrambled words on each card (do not include the answer): *Yarp* (pray), *Tarts Yearl* (Start Early), *Tes Slaog* (Set Goals), *Gatedele* (Delegate), *Culumcurri* (Curriculum), *Getbud* (Budget). Alternatively, you may choose to create these as PowerPoint® slides instead.
- CD player or Bluetooth speaker

Room Setup

Hang the *VBS 2026 Supersized Backdrop* on the focal wall. Cover the display table with a *VBS 2026 Tablecloth*. Display the curriculum, visuals, and other table decorations. Arrange chairs in a semi-circle facing the focal wall. Place a light stick under each chair. Place a party cup under every other chair.

Teaching Steps

1. Welcome (10 minutes)

- Welcome everyone to Illumination Station! Say: "I have exciting news for you! You are the one God has chosen to IGNITE the LIGHT in your church, family, kids and community! You are the LIGHTER! You are Flame Bringer, Spark Starter, and the Shine Maker! You are the DIRECTOR OF VBS!"
- Distribute glow sticks. Lead conferees to sing "This Little Light of Mine" while waving their glow sticks.
- Ask, "Are you ready to let your light shine?" Lead the group to respond with enthusiasm.
- Explain: "Here is why you need to get ready! As the Flame Bringer, Spark Starter, Shine Maker, you are the leader and as the leader goes, so go the people."
- Lead conferees to find a partner and discuss the meaning of phrase "As the leader goes, so go the people." After a few minutes, invite people to share the meaning of the phrase.
- Say: "You are the LEADER! Your attitude, your actions, and your words will become the attitude, actions, and words of your VBS volunteers. And will ultimately set the tone for your entire VBS."

2. Soak Up the Source (10 minutes)

- Remind conferees that the very first step to a successful VBS is to PRAY. Say: “Ask God to help you learn and retain everything you need to know. Ask God what He wants for and from your VBS.”
- Encourage conferees to absorb the wisdom and practical helps that are available to them. Encourage them to get the Administrative Guide (included in the Directors Kit) and read it from cover to cover. Say: “Even if you’ve read it before, read it again—the entire thing!”
- Mention the book, *It’s Worth It*, and encourage conferees to get a copy for themselves and for their pastor or direct report.

3. Ignite the Why (15 minutes)

- Remind conferees of the leadership truth mentioned earlier: “As the leader goes, so go the people.” Mention how important it is to wrestle with this truth and pray about it as you begin to prepare for VBS for the following reasons:
 - As much as you pray, so the people will pray.
 - As much as you proclaim the greatness of God, so will the people proclaim the greatness of God.
 - As much as you exalt His name, so will the people exalt His name.
 - As much as you love the children, so will leaders love the children.
 - As much as you laugh and have fun, so will the leaders laugh and have fun.
 - As flexible as you are, so will the leaders be flexible.
 - As prepared as you are, so will the leaders be prepared.
 - As organized as you are, so will the leaders be organized.
 - As clear as your expectations are, the closer leaders will be at meeting them.
- Ask conferees to ask themselves why VBS matters and what their personal goals are for their VBS. Lead them to share their thoughts with their partners.
- Allow a few volunteers to share their ideas. Offer the following suggestions as potential purposes/goals: *making disciples, loving our community, strengthening the Church, salvation decisions, planting seeds, and so forth.*
- Suggest that a worthy goal is for every child, student, leader, parent, and church leader to come away knowing the VBS Scripture and the motto.
- Lead the group to chant the motto, one side of the room and then the other: “Jesus is the Light of the world.”
- Lead the group to tap their glow sticks to the beat as they say the VBS Scripture together: “And Jesus spoke to them again: ‘I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of the world.’”
- Say: “There is no other light. Jesus is the only one and He is the light for the WORLD!”
- Comment: “In order for children to know who Jesus is, we must teach them God’s Word. As the VBS Director you NEED to know the daily Bible content. Know what kids are learning and what leaders are teaching each day.”
- Overview the Bible stories and main points for each day using the “Bible Story Pictures” (pack items 1–5) and the “Illumination Station Banner” (pack item 6) and “Illumination Station Banner Add-ons” (pack item 7) from the Grades 3–4 Leader Pack. Invite volunteers to tape each add-on in the correct spot on the banner as you overview the content for each day:
 - Day 1— Point/Add-on: “Jesus is God’s Promised Son.” Bible Story: “Jesus Asked Who People Thought He Was”
 - Explain how Jesus asked who people said that He was. Peter explained that He was the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.

- Lead the group to chant, “Promised Son of God,” while pounding their fists.
 - Day 2—Point/Add-on: “Jesus is God’s Perfect Son.” Bible Story: “The Baptism of Jesus”
 - Briefly share the story of Jesus’ baptism briefly and how God said “this is My beloved Son with whom I am pleased.”
 - Lead the group to chant, “Perfect Son of God,” while framing their faces with their hands.
 - Day 3—Point/Add-on: “Jesus is the Powerful Son of God.” Bible Story: “Jesus Performed Miracles”
 - Summarize Jesus’ miracle of feeding thousands of people with only seven loaves of bread and a few small fish.
 - Lead the group to chant, “Powerful Son of God,” while making strong muscle arms.
 - Day 4—Point/Add-on: “Jesus is the Proven Son of God.” Bible Story: “Jesus Died and Rose to Life”
 - Briefly summarize the story and mention that even the Roman officer said that Jesus was God’s Son.
 - Lead the group to chant, “Proven Son of God,” while holding out their hands, palms up (to remind us of the nails in Jesus’ hands).
 - Day 5—Point/Add-on: “Jesus is God’s Plan for Forgiveness.” Bible Story: “Peter Preached About Jesus”
 - Talk about Peter’s preaching and how his words pointed out the proof of who Jesus is.
 - Lead the group to chant “God’s plan for me” while pointing up on the word *God*, clapping on *plan*, holding up 4 fingers on *for*, and pointing to self on the *me*.
 - Lead the group to face their partners to play the Cup Game. To play, partners face each other with a cup between them on the floor. When you say the following words, partners do the action.
 - Promised — Pound fist.
 - Perfect — Frame face with hands.
 - Powerful — Show muscles.
 - Proven — Show palms.
 - Plan — Hold up four fingers, then point to self.
 - Son of God — Grab the cup.
 - Repeat words several times. Whenever you say, “Son of God,” each partner tries to be the first to grab the cup and “win.”
 - Remind VBS Directors that these are the Bible stories and truths for Grades 1–6. Lead people to raise their hands if their VBS also includes preschoolers (even if just for volunteers’ children). Say: “If you have preschool, you **MUST** know those too! The preschool Bible stories may be slightly different to focus on aspects of Jesus’ nature that are age-appropriate for these ages.”
 - Transition by saying: “Now that we know the why, let’s make a plan!”
- 4. Power the Plan (15 minutes)**
- Mention a quote from Benjamin Franklin, “The person who fails to plan, plans to fail.” Explain that there is a lot to plan for VBS, but without a good plan, our efforts will feel challenging and increase our frustration. Fortunately, the Administrative Guide outlines a simple but effective strategy. And best of all, it’s only six steps! Say: “That’s a plan anyone can follow!”

- Walk through the 6-step plan, offering guidance and tips tailored to the level of experience in the group.
- Hand the six index cards with scrambled words to six conferees. Ask them to work with the people around them to unscramble their word. As they work to unscramble the words, show the planning calendar on pages 12-13 of the Administrative Guide.
- Call on the people with the index cards one at a time to share their unscrambled word and talk about each point.
- Yarp (Pray): Ask God to guide your plans.
- Tarts Year! (Start Early):
 - Begin with the end in mind. What is the date of your VBS?
 - Look at the calendar. Lead each person to print the date of their VBS in the blanks.
- Tes Slaog (Set Goals):
 - Ask: “What is your goal? How do you know what goals to set?”
 - Encourage conferees to look at last year’s numbers including:
 - How many total kids and volunteers last year?
 - How many professions of faith?
 - How many baptized?
 - How many first-time guests came to Sunday School after VBS?
 - How many children will attend? (Typically, 10% of children attending will give their lives to Christ.)
 - How many children would you like to see saved?
 - How many new families would you like to join your church after VBS?
 - What ages will you serve? (This affects space, curriculum ordering, budgeting, etc.)
 - What ages will you offer VBS for? (preschool, children, special needs, adults, teens, etc.)
 - Ask: “What is the greatest factor in seeing God move in these areas?” (*Prayer.*)
- Matfor (Format):
 - Turn to pages 19–30 of the Administrative Guide and discuss the following:
 - Date & Time— Always set it a year in advance so that you can announce next year’s dates at the end of this year’s VBS. This will allow you to promote throughout the year.
 - Daytime or nighttime VBS—What works best for your church?
 - How will you group kids—multi-age (broadly-graded) or closely-graded (by specific ages or grades)?
 - How many (and which) rotations?
 - Length of VBS—How many hours each day and how many total days?
 - Explain that all of these factors impact your strategy, budget, and format.
 - Encourage VBS Directors to evaluate what worked best last year and what they would like to do better.
- Gatedele (Delegate):
 - Who do you need to lead each part of the VBS?
 - Discuss the key roles needed: rotation leaders, Bible study teachers, floating volunteers, prayer leader, registration leader, Family Connection leader, Worship Rally leaders, decorating committee, etc.
- Culumcurri (Curriculum):
 - Determine the curriculum you need to purchase and purchase TODAY!
 - Show the different Starter Kits on display and explain what each one is for. (NOTE: Every church needs one Directors Kit and one Worship Rally Pack. They then will need the Starter Kit(s) that matches how they plan to group children.)

- Refer to the Special Friends, Adult VBS, and Student VBS materials as ways to expand VBS beyond just elementary ages.
- Getbud (Budget):
 - Reference pages 14–15 in the Administrative Guide.
 - Encourage VBS Directors to begin by knowing how much was spent last year.
 - Walk through the budget suggested in the Administrative Guide.
 - Encourage them to go through their VBS schedule and determine the cost of each part. They may find it helpful to budget by age groups (Bible study) and then by each rotation. Remind them to budget for both curriculum and supplies.
 - Say: “If your projections exceed last year’s budget, ASK! It’s okay if they say no. You may be planting seeds for next year!”

5. Light Up Our Leaders (15 minutes)

- Remind conferees that as the VBS Director, their primary responsibility is to equip other leaders to lead well during VBS. They won’t be able to personally be everywhere and do everything, so it is important to multiply themselves and their vision and strategy through others.
- This can only be accomplished with intentionality. Suggest they do the following things:
 - PRAY—Pray for specific needs. Ask God to step in.
 - PLAN—Always think the process through to the end.
 - Suggest conferees begin to create a spreadsheet of needs while at this training event. Make a list of all the leaders they will need.
 - Create a system for volunteers to sign up. (Online, in person, QR codes, etc.)
 - SHARE—Get the word out! Talk about VBS and specific ways to get involved early and often. People need to hear about it approximately seven times before they say yes.
 - Ask: “What are seven ways you can spread the word at your church?” Refer to page 43 of the Administrative Guide for answers including window signs, bulletins, skits, video, email or text blast, flyers, social media, and banners.
 - ASK—Create a system to ask everyone in your church. Suggest the following:
 - January—Ask everyone who served in VBS last year.
 - February—Set up a recruiting booth at your church.
 - March—Ask parents and special groups in church (such as deacons, choir, child care, etc.)
 - April—Recruit in adult Sunday School group.
 - May—Hold a VBS Kickoff. Ask everyone who hasn’t already been asked.
 - TRAIN—Stress the importance of training leaders in order for them to experience success and personal satisfaction in their role. People who have a good experience and feel successful are more likely to return next year!
 - Mention the following training methods to equip VBS leaders:
 - Attend a national VBS Preview event with key volunteers.
 - Attend VBS trainings offered by your local SBC Association.
 - Use the ideas on pages 33–40 of the Administrative Guide to equip leaders:
 - Stress that leader training is well worth people’s time. Feed them and they will come!
 - Get EVERYONE trained at least a month in advance, so they feel committed.

- Follow the training outline in the Administrative Guide.
- Give everyone their curriculum well in advance. Show them the helps in the front of the book that will help them be successful.
- Train everyone on how to share the gospel with children and talk through what decision day will look like at your VBS.
- Offer training on following up and connecting with families after VBS. Give specific suggestions on what you want them to do.
- APPRECIATE & COMMUNICATE—Offer the following ideas for making leaders feel valued at VBS:
 - Serve a breakfast snack for leaders each morning when they arrive.
 - Provide snow cone trucks on the last day and give all leaders a free snow cone.
 - Say thank you. Ask how they are doing. Train rotation leaders to appreciate.
 - Lead kids to say thank you to their teachers.
 - Send personalized thank-you notes at the end of VBS.

6. **Spotlight VBS Promote & Publicize** (5 minutes)

- Reference pages 42–45 of the Administrative Guide.
- Lead conferees to turn to their partners and share ways they currently publicize their VBS. After a minute or two, call on a few volunteers to share ideas with the group.
- Mention any additional ideas from pages 42–43 that were missed.
- Point out the information about Lifeway’s Prospect Services on page 42. Mention that this is a great service for identifying new prospects in your community. Extend personal invitations to these families.
- Point out the calendar on page 45. Suggest conferees reference this when establishing their recruiting strategy, training dates, appreciation methods, and registration plan. (

7. **Radiate Registration** (5 minutes)

- Suggest VBS Directors set a goal for their total registration. Say: “You need something to work toward! This will fuel your promotion efforts.”
- Encourage them to enlist a team to be responsible for all of the details related to registration.
- Briefly discuss the following:
 - Pre-enrollment Strategies—Get as many pre-registered as possible. This will help tremendously with planning. This can be both in-person and digital (online registration).
 - Kick-off Events—Use the ideas in the Administrative Guide or solicit ideas from the group. Stress the importance of kick-off events in building excitement as well as identifying prospects who need to be invited to your VBS.

8. **Color the World** (10 minutes)

- Lead conferees to spend a few minutes thinking about their church and their specific VBS. Suggest they talk through the following with their partners:
 - Who?
 - Who are the families we serve?
 - Who can be on the team?
 - What?
 - What is your church like? Describe in 10 words or less.
 - What are the needs of the families you serve?

- What is your goal?
 - What resources are available?
 - When?
 - When is the best time to connect with them?
 - How?
 - How is God at work in your church and in your children's ministry?
 - How can you best meet their needs?
 - How do they best respond? (*Examples: digital, social media, in person.*)
9. **Closing** (10 minutes)
- Ask conferees to tell their partners: "What are 3 things you need to start now if you are a new VBS Director? Or 3 things you want to try differently if you are an experienced VBS Director?"
 - Remind the group: "You are the leader! As the leader goes, so goes the people. This is an awesome opportunity to see many children hear and receive the gospel of Jesus!" Offer the following tips in closing.
 - Have fun!
 - Smile!
 - Be FLEXIBLE.
 - Show grace and see the good in people!
 - Give clear expectations. Say what needs to be done and don't be afraid to say and say it with joy, passion, and purpose.
 - Get ahead of the game! Always be 2-3 steps ahead of the group.
 - Set goals! Begin with the end in mind.
 - And most importantly, shine a light on Jesus. Show kids who He REALLY is.
 - Lead partners to pray for each other, then close in prayer.