

Vacation Bible School

Tips & Tools for Adaptation

During the summer months, many parishes host Vacation Bible School as a fun and interactive way for children to experience their faith. VBS usually consists of a variety of interactive activities, music, prayer, crafts, games and community building that bring faith to life. VBS engages students



in multi-sensory learning which really lends itself to the possibility of providing opportunities for children with disabilities to meaningfully participate with some very minor adaptations. The first essential step in providing intentional accommodations for participants is to know the details of the individual needs of the students. Consider using or adapting this **REGISTRATION FORM** to gather the necessary information during the registration process and come up with an action plan based on the individual needs of the participant. Be sure to communicate this information with your team so that everyone knows the specifics of their role. Provide a sensory-friendly space for students who are overwhelmed by noise, crowds, dancing, etc. Consider the physical abilities of participants while planning games, and make adjustments to the lesson plans for students with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Remember, when you meet the learning needs of one student, you unintentionally meet the needs of others as well!

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CHALLENGE:

What are the individual needs to be met?

Should we require parents/caregivers to volunteer if their child needs accommodations?

What considerations should be made for students who are Sensory-Sensitive?

How can we assist those who struggle with executive function?

How can we adapt activities for varying learning needs and abilities?

SUGGESTED ACCOMMODATION:

Utilize or modify this suggested **REGISTRATION FORM** to assess the needs of each of your participants. Be sure to review the information with your volunteers and come up with an adaptive plan as a team based on each child's individual needs.

Some parents/caregivers may prefer to volunteer with their child, but it is important to discuss this with each set of parents/caregivers. Consider adding a family component to your VBS program. If it is family oriented, then all of the parents/caregivers will be there with their students and no one will be set apart.

Consider offering a **Sensory-Friendly Space** for students who become overstimulated. Set up a quiet space with good lighting (try to avoid fluorescent lights), have comfortable seating options, and make fidgets available. You could also offer a "sensory basket" in your large gathering space including noise cancelling headphones and fidgets for students who prefer to stay with the group.

Create a picture schedule to help your participants know what to expect. Be sure to review the schedule regularly- before you begin and often throughout the event. Provide instructions for your participants verbally and create picture instructions to help break down the activity into steps.

Know your people and be prepared. Take the time to plan out developmentally appropriate adjustments for individual needs. If possible, offer choices for activities to meet a variety of learning needs. Take time to think about physical limitations for games and crafts. There are creative ways to adapt these activities to ensure that everyone can play.

For more information about adaptations, visit www.ncpd.org