AN ANNUAL STRATEGY FOR YOUR CHILDREN'S MINISTRY EVENTS

Events are a pretty big deal for most children's ministries. They're a way to have fun, connect with kids and families, get new people in the door, and create some excitement. Events matter, but we've got to keep things in perspective. That's why we're fans of keeping your event strategy really simple, because **you can make a bigger impact each year if you choose to do fewer events with more intentionality.**

Let's face it — there's *so much* to do in ministry. We can easily fill up our calendars with activities, movie nights, craft days, family festivals, field days, and so much more. **But if we did every event we ever thought about doing, we'd have a few problems …**

- We'd only be **adding to the chaos** of families who are equally busy.
- We'd be **burning out** our of volunteers and staff members who are also pretty busy.
- We'd be giving kids and parents **so many options** we'd probably only see them at a handful of things each year, resulting in lower participation in everything we do.
- We'd be **spending time, money, and resources** on things that aren't always strategic.

With so many potential options, we need a strategy to help us guide which events we'll do when, which is why we suggest doing fewer events for a bigger impact. **We can't do everything, but the events we do can be done with purpose.** Our events will be strategically designed to help kids connect with each other, trusted adults (like you and your volunteers), and with God.

Whether you're an event-planning expert or you're still figuring things out, we hope this strategy we're about to unpack will give you a framework for your annual event strategy that you can replicate and improve year after year. With this Annual Event Strategy, **you'll learn a system for scheduling five key events each year that you can always reinvent to keep things fresh.**

If you're familiar with Grow Curriculum & Annual Strategy, some things in this post might sound familiar to you. That's because everything we do in Grow Kids Curriculum is based on the strategy we're about to break down for you! **But don't worry if you've never used Grow in your ministry before. You can still steal our strategy!** Take the ideas you find helpful, ignore the parts that don't quite fit your context, and combine them with the unique language, vision, and strategy of your church.

Here we go!

AN ANNUAL STRATEGY FOR YOUR CHILDREN'S MINISTRY EVENTS

When it comes to events, it's not just about participation, but it's also about strategy. **Even the most well-attended events can actually hinder our growth** if we're not using them to lead kids (and our ministry) somewhere strategic.

So here's our recommendation for keeping your event strategy simple: do one event each quarter for kids, plus a VBS (that's "Vacation Bible School" if you're unfamiliar) during the summer.

Here's how this could look on your ministry calendar each year …

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1. A FALL EVENT

Every fall, we recommend doing **a big just-for-fun event to kick off your school year!** This event could be anything you and your team find fun at the moment! You could …

- Plan a harvest festival or Trunk-Or-Treat event for your community.
- Host a big game night with a fun theme (like sports, carnivals, candy, or larger-than-life board games).
- Do a back-to-school bash with activities, games, and food for the whole family.

If you're wondering why just-for-fun events need to make it onto your calendar, **think about the relationships a great event can build or strengthen!** Plus, if you're following the Grow Annual Discipleship strategy, you know fall is when we focus on the spiritual habit of Spending Time with Others. It's the time of year we focus on helping kids connect with each other, with their small group leaders, with their families, and with anyone who helps them grow closer to Jesus!

If you're using Grow Kids Curriculum, you know we give you a brand new fun fall event every year, complete with all the instructions and resources you'll need to make it happen!

2. A WINTER EVENT

Every winter, we recommend doing **a simple, fun, and maybe even free Christmasy event** for families that allows them to make some holiday memories together. At a time of year when families are often pressed for time and finances, and maybe a little stressed, your ministry can give them the gift of a fun and relaxing day together. This might be …

- A holiday-themed game night with activities, booths, and competitions.
- A silly gift exchange party.
- A Christmas movie night with plenty of hot chocolate and treats!
- A Christmas play, concert, or production.

And if you're following the Grow Annual Discipleship strategy, you know the wintertime is when we focus on the spiritual habit of Using Your Gifts to love God and serve others. It's the time of year we focus on helping kids think about generosity, service, and sharing what they have. So you might even incorporate a fundraiser, food drive, or service project into your winter event.

If you're using Grow Kids Curriculum, we give you a brand new winter event every year, complete with all the instructions and resources you'll need to make it happen!

3. A SPRING EVENT

Every spring, we recommend doing **an Easter event that helps kids connect with God.** While just-for-fun events are really important throughout the year, the Easter season is a key time to help kids focus on Jesus in a more meaningful way.

Plus, if you're following the Grow Annual Discipleship strategy, you know spring is when we focus on the spiritual habit of Spending Time with God. It's the time of year we focus on helping kids connect with God personally through prayer, worship, memorizing Scripture, and spending time reading the Bible.

With all that in mind, for a meaningful (and Easter-inspired) spring event, you could …

- Plan a prayer walk or a Stations of the Cross experience.
- Organize an Easter craft day where every craft teaches something important about the Easter story.
- Put together an Easter play, concert, or production.
- Do a new spin on a classic Easter experience, like an egg hunt.

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If you're using Grow Kids Curriculum, you know we give you a brand new spring event every year, complete with all the instructions and resources you'll need to make it happen!

4. A SUMMER EVENT

Every summer, we recommend **wrapping up the year with another big just-for-fun event!** This event could be anything you and your team find fun at the moment! You could …

- Host a big game night with a fun summery theme (like water games, the Summer Olympics, summertime snacks, or whatever else you can dream up).
- Do an end-of-the-year field day with activities, games, and food for the whole family.
- Plan an outdoor movie night, pool party, cookout, or block party.

If you're following the Grow Annual Discipleship strategy, you know summer is when we focus on the spiritual habit of Sharing Your Story of faith. So this end-of-the-year event is a great time to consider sharing stories from the previous year about what kids learned, what memories they made, and what God did in their lives.

And yes, you guessed it! If you're using Grow Kids Curriculum, you know we give you a brand new summer event every year, complete with all the instructions and resources you'll need to make it happen!

5. A VBS EVENT

Finally, we always recommend wrapping up your year of ministry with a VBS (Vacation Bible School), day camp, or other big community event over the summer! Great VBS events always do a few things …

- Teaching the Bible in a fun and compelling way.
- Give kids a chance to build relationships and have fun together.
- Connect kids with trusted adults.
- Connect your ministry with parents and families in your community.

Here at Grow, **we create a** totally free VBS **package for you every year**, so make sure you snag at least one for this coming summer! Our free VBS comes with all the teaching, videos, graphics, activities, crafts, and decorating ideas you need for an amazing week of VBS. And yes, it's free!

AN ANNUAL EVENTS STRATEGY

With this there is a way to structure your events calendar so that you do **the least amount of work** for **the biggest impact.** That's what the Grow strategy is all about. In case you missed it, check out this article about planning an entire year of ministry. It'll show you how this event strategy might look on your annual calendar, alongside an annual strategy for your:

- Teaching
- Discipleship
- Weekly Environments
- Volunteers
- Families

We've said this before, but we've got to say it again! These ideas we've talked about are nice … but **these *ideas* only become a *strategy* when you put them on your calendar and turn them into actions.**

When you have an annual plan to turn your ideas and goals into a strategy, you'll make a much bigger impact.

So whether you use Grow Curriculum or not, we **hope you'll** steal our strategy! We developed it over lots of years of ministry, with input from lots of church leaders and lots of trial and error. Take it, tweak it, and make it your own. We really hope it helps you be just a little more awesome at what you do this year!

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For even more resources like this one, try a free trial of Grow Curriculum and Annual Strategy for your children's or youth ministry. It's everything you need for a more strategic year of discipleship, teaching, environments, events, volunteers, and families!

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