

Strategies for School Swimming



Changing

- Valuable time can be wasted here, especially with the younger children.
- Parent helpers: Those that are not happy about helping in the water may well be willing to aid with this. It will save you from tying all the shoelaces and finding who owns the left over knickers!!
- Use the classroom: By getting new entrance children undressed and dressed in the classroom will avoid congestion as the next class arrives. Be aware of school policy though. This also avoids items of clothing getting left behind.
- Older children can be dove tailed. Leave half the changing room free for the next class coming in.

Safety

- The Board of Trustees, school and the classroom teacher all have safety responsibilities.
- RAMS forms: A generic form should be supplied for each teacher taking a class to the pool.
- Rules: Reinforce the rules for the pool by having them clearly displayed and reinforced each time the children head to the pool.
- First Aid: Have a first aid kit and phone at or close to the pool.
- Emergency Procedures: Teachers, helpers and children need to know these and they should be displayed at the pool and kept on record.
- Trained staff: At all times the pool is used, someone should be present that knows CPR and the danger signs for children in the water. There should also be a staff member who has attended the Swim Start course present on poolside.
- It is preferable that there is at least one Swim Start/ASTA trained parent helper in the water at all times with young children.
- Sun Safety: Ensure that there is a shaded area for children to sit in if they are waiting for time in the pool.

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Non-Swimmers

- Make sure that the non-swimmers are kept busy. Perhaps a general fitness circuit or some written aquatic research could be used. Water safety puzzles/activities/stories etc are also a good idea.

Grouping

- Ability Group: By having several small groups working at different times you will achieve greater success. You can do more for a child in a small group in 8 - 10 minutes than for 30mins with the whole class.
- Parent Helpers: Enlist the help of as many people as possible e.g., parents, teacher aids. It is preferable if you can encourage these parent helpers to attend a Swim Start/ASTA course. For young children e.g. Year 0 – 3 this is strongly recommended.
- Movement of groups: Don't be afraid to rotate the groups in the water. Pair up with another teacher or syndicate or have laminated activity cards on the pool side for children to work from.

Maximize Pool Use

- The time which you have in the pool is limited. Maximise it by being well planned and have 2 groups going at once if you have a qualified parent helper.
- Don't be afraid to have a warm up or highlight the main teaching points outside of the pool. This can be done in the classroom before the pool session so valuable in water time will not be lost on this.
- Ensure that there is a pool use timetable to avoid confusion and double ups.
- Think about how the lessons are scheduled – often intensive swim week(s) are better than once a week for a term.
- Laminated, progressive lesson plans are available through Swimming New Zealand at a very affordable price, so use these to start off with and know that you are covering what needs to be covered. These would be invaluable for a parent helper also.

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Incentives

- Just as in the classroom the children respond to rewards. Certificates, wall charts, stickers can all be used to encourage students. These are all available through Swimming New Zealand, so all the work is done for you.
- Make sure that the progressions are small and achievable so that even the most hesitant swimmer has something to work towards.

Routines

- Behaviour in the pool is just as important, if not more so, than in the classroom. We all know that children play up when they are in an exciting & different environment so remember to have pre established rules in place.
- Have a whistle and ensure that all children know what one, two or three beeps on the whistle mean.
- Don't be afraid to get pupils out of the pool if they push the boundaries. Missing one lesson will not have a great effect on their overall progress.

Evaluation

- Keep records of each pupil's progress so that you and/or the next teacher can easily and appropriately group them. The Swim Start evaluation sheet is all done for you and this matches up with the achievement certificates. This means that you do not need to reinvent the wheel.
- Ensure that these records are passed on to the next teacher at the start of the year.

Other Options

- Dry-land practices: This provides get opportunities to physically correct stroke techniques.
- Watch a video: Swimming can be hard to explain. If you are not sure that you can demonstrate correctly, use a video of someone who can.
- Buddies: Use the older, more capable swimmers to help with the junior syndicate. It will be great for their leadership and communication skills. Check with the local High School's PE students to see if they are completing Swim Start as part of their Year 12 programme. They may be looking for some teaching experience.

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- The local swimming club: These are the experts in your area and are always keen to identify new talent. Ask if they can help with an extension group at lunchtime or running the school swimming sports.
- Swim Start/ASTA fits into the Health and Physical Education Curriculum in such a way that there are many opportunities for written projects e.g. on safety/ survival skills.

Equipment

- Don't be afraid to improvise with the PE equipment. Use balls, hoops, lifejackets, flutter boards, buckets, 2 L milk bottles, gumboots or anything that floats. These can all be used as floatation and teaching aids.
- Equipment can be cheap e.g. 2 litre plastic milk bottles make **great** floatation aids.

Planning

- Use a recognised programme such as Swim Start. Why do all the planning when someone has done it for you? Remember to be clear about what you are targeting that day at the pool and remember the key teaching points.
- Routines and organisation are just as important to plan as lesson content.
- Aim to teach the **basics well** e.g. Water confidence, Floating. Streamlining, Kicking and Arm strokes. Don't feel that you need a huge technical knowledge of swimming to do a good job.
- Disguise as many skills as possible as games. This ensures a fun, non threatening learning environment.

For more information please contact:

Arjun Haszard
Regional Education Manager
Swimming New Zealand
03 387 0372
027 291 6107
arjun@swimmingnz.org.nz