



Early-years swimming **FACT SHEET** by Robyn Jorgensen

A Quality Swim Lesson

What should I look for when I am looking for a good swimming lesson?

There is a lot of hype about the value of children swimming, and the study has certainly shown that children can learn a lot more than swimming when they attend a swim school. The problem with saying that swimming is good for kids is that it fails to think about what makes it good. Clearly, the quality of the swimming lesson is very important. You can't expect children to learn much if they are not engaged and not swimming. So one of the key questions arising from the study was what makes for a good lesson.

By thinking about and observing lessons, some very clear practices can be seen in swim schools:

- Children need to be swimming, or engaged at the side of the pool, if they are to learn. The more time that children are active and engaged with their teacher, the more likely they are to learn something. Watch out for how long children are actually engaged. Schools can manage this quite differently. In some schools, the classes are quite small so that there is a lot of one-on-one teacher time. In other schools the teacher may work intensely with one or two children but have the other children sitting on the edge of the pool doing activities so that over the lesson the children are always engaged in some activity.
- The lesson needs to be happy and welcoming so that children will want to be there and engage with the teacher.
- When children are not happy not only do they not engage or learn, but they can distract other students. Many schools have a non-crying policy where if a child is upset, a staff member will take the child out of the lesson and settle them down. This means that the teacher can then focus on the other children in the class and move the lesson along.
- The teacher needs to engage with the students, praise them for good work but also be proactive in seeking to address areas of need.
- Lessons need to be organised so that there is some variety in the lesson and different skills are learned. Well organised lessons also help to minimise off-task time.
- Teachers need to talk with and engage the children. Knowing children's names and making them feel part of the lesson is important to the child's sense of importance and value.
- Teachers have clear goals for the lessons and what children should be learning. This helps with the immediate lesson but also for the progression of learning. Knowing where the children are and where they need to be provides teachers, parents and children with a sense of achievement.