

**Great Lakes Aquatics
Report on “Swim for Success”
January-April, 2010**

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I. Overview

Thanks to generous grants from the USA Swimming Foundation and the John E. Fetzer Foundation, GLA was prepared offer its “Swim for Success” program to 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students of the Kalamazoo Public Schools. Using a combination of volunteers from Kalamazoo College and GLA, along with a staff of paid coaches, the program ran from January 11-April 15, 2010.

The goals of the program were to provide outreach to low-socioeconomic and culturally diverse families by: 1) increasing community water safety awareness; 2) teaching basic water safety skills to all participants; 3) teaching advanced swimming to all participants based on the progression of skills designed by the American Swim Coaches Association (ASCA); 4) improve all participants' level of general fitness; 5) fostering academic achievement in all participants; and 6) incorporating parent participation in the GLA program.

II. Preliminary Results

For the first 12 week “Swim for Success” session of 2010, program fliers were handed out at only a few schools located within a reasonable distance of Kalamazoo College, as participants had to supply their own transportation. These schools not only have a majority of students who participate in the national Free or Reduced Lunch Program, but one of the elementary schools has a majority of students who live in homes that use Spanish as the primary language. We targeted 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade students. The fliers clearly indicated that attendance was mandatory three times per week for twelve weeks. More than 60 families from diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds contacted GLA to sign up; about 40 families registered and participated. The 45 children registered represented three ethnic groups: 21, or 47% African American; 22, or 49% Hispanic American; and 2, or 4% Caucasian American. A video giving an overview of the program is available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ka0KHJJDjhc> (“Swim for Success”).

Participants had an attendance rate of about 90%. In addition to being a “Make A Splash” partner, GLA is also a SwimAmerica program, and the progression of swimming skills used in SwimAmerica was the measure of improvement. All participants were constantly infused with water safety instruction (what to do around and in the water), and initially evaluated for their level of skill. Many of the students needed the basic levels of instruction: exchanging air, floating on both front and back, kicking in a streamline form. Some students were able to do some rudimentary swimming, but needed refinement in body position and breath control. By the end of the session, all students had significantly increased their safety awareness and swimming skill level.

Academic performance and classroom behavior data were gathered at the beginning, middle and end of each session. We are evaluating the following academic performance indicators: report cards, teacher and parent surveys, Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) test scores, Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) test scores, and SCANTRON Performance Series (“edperformance”) test scores. Report card data was available from about 40% of the students, and teacher evaluations were returned

at a rate of 75%. In all, 34 of the 45 participants returned enough academic reports and evaluations to measure improvement (i.e., a beginning and ending teacher survey, and 3rd marking period report card). Positive academic/behavioral gains were noted in 80% of the 34 students, with frequent remarks from teachers regarding positive behavior improvements (paying attention, using self-control, completing work on time) for at-risk students. Two measures we are tracking (MEAP and ITBS) are annual assessments, and therefore are not available for report until next year. The third standardized assessment, “edperformance,” is conducted in the fall and then again in the spring. “Edperformance” data was collected for 31 students: 19 students showed gains in math, and 15 of these improved at a rate better than the district average; 20 students showed gains in reading, and 16 of these improved at a rate better than the district average.

Initial findings from 12th week exit surveys of swimmers and parents indicate a 100% rate of satisfaction with the program, and more than 85% indicated that they wished to continue their participation. Of the initial group of participants, close to 30 families still currently participate in the program. From this group of 45 children, 17 young swimmers registered as USA Swimming athletes and participated in GLA's 16th Annual Summer Solstice Invitational, a USA/Michigan Swimming sanctioned competition held in June. Their parents were instrumental as volunteers for this GLA event.

III. Evaluation of goals

1) Increasing community water safety awareness

By offering the “Swim for Success” program to approximately 500 elementary students, both those children and their parents were notified of the importance of learning basic water safety. GLA has continued its commitment to public awareness by adding two more KPS elementary schools to its list of outreach schools, offering “Water Safety Days” at its summer swim location, and accepting participants into the program on an on-going basis.

2) Teaching basic water safety skills

All children began with the basic instruction: water safety awareness, being comfortable in the water, learning how to float both face down and one's back, and what to do in an emergency. All participants mastered the skills of exchanging air while in the water, floating on front and back, and being able to swim short distances to safety. To the delight of the parents, all 45 children mastered the basics of being safe in the water.

3) Teaching advanced swimming skills

Many of the participants quickly acclimated to the water and were able to work on more advanced swimming skills such as: treading water, swimming front crawl, backstroke, breaststroke, butterfly, sidestroke, and elementary backstroke, racing dives and turns. More than half of the participants were able to swim 25 yards of freestyle and backstroke by the end of the 13 week session.

4) Improving general level of fitness

Instruction in dry land exercises (pushups, situps, pullups, stretches, and other callisthenics) accompanied water instruction. Once participants demonstrated basic swimming skills, they advanced to more refined skill work accompanied by aerobic training. Learning skills, and repeating them over and over, left many participants huffing and puffing, but physical endurance improved and was noticeable: approximately half of the children developed the skill to swim upwards of a half mile during each practice.

5) Fostering academic achievement

Tutors were available for homework help during the hour preceding the daily meeting; on

average, eight to ten students worked on homework and other academic skills each day before swimming. Daily meetings before swim instruction included emphasis on improving classroom skills. Parent and teacher surveys were conducted regularly, and many measures of academic performance tracked as they became available. Improvements noted by teachers on both surveys and report cards included: increased enthusiasm, improved attention, and higher rate of on-time homework completion.

6) Increasing parent participation

Parents were invited to participate in team meetings, parent education meetings, social events, and fundraising events. Parent education topics included: how to positively support children in sports, nutrition, how a swim program operates, and fundraising. Many parents stayed each evening to watch their children as they learned about water safety and swimming. Although no fundraising activity took place directly during this session, approximately two-thirds of the swimmers continued on through the spring into this summer. During the spring some families participated in the GLA Team Banquet, and nearly all families donated their time and energy to GLA's Summer Solstice Invitational (June 18-20, 2010).

IV. Budget Report

Although initially designed for 12 weeks, the Winter 2010 "Swim for Success" program actually spanned 14 weeks and operated 13 weeks.

Expenses	Predicted	Actual
Pool rental: Kalamazoo College	\$6,000.00	\$3,900.00
Coaches' Salaries	\$9,600.00	\$8,309.37
Equipment		
goggles	\$ 600.00	\$ 324.00
swim caps	\$ 600.00	\$ 0.00 (donated)
t-shirts	\$ 600.00	\$ 0.00 (cancelled)
nutrition/snacks	\$ 600.00/wk.	\$ 25.00 (water only)
awards	\$ not included	\$ 127.00
Total Expenses		\$12,685.37
Income		
USA Swimming Foundation		\$5,000.00
John E. Fetzer Foundation		\$3,000.00
Fundraising (Team Lunch May 15, 2010)		\$ 900.00
GLA		\$3,785.37
Total Income		\$12,685.37

V. Future Plans

The robustness of the response indicates that a large percentage of residents, regardless of ethnicity or socioeconomic status, are eager to dedicate their time and resources to attending a structured swimming program.

Periodic evaluations of the above-mentioned performance indicators will continue to be conducted for all program participants, with improvement in data collection. In the fall, GLA will be able to begin compiling multi-year data on a large group of consistent participants. We believe that

swimming's long term benefits will be reflected both in the pool and at school.

With continued support from current benefactors, and with additional partnerships, GLA expects to expand its course offerings and add more participants into its “Swim for Success” program. The “Swim for Success” after-school program already supplies direct academic support. Currently, every part of the program is done at or around the pool, so that program participants are fully integrated into the GLA team structure. Ideally, GLA offers students improved health and wellness education, including gardening, nutrition, music and language. This full after-school approach allows at-risk students and their families access to activities which most middle- and upper-socioeconomic families have long viewed as essential to their children's growth. Because of Kalamazoo Public School's Kalamazoo Promise, GLA is in a unique position to truly offer at-risk youth lifesaving and life skills, the learning opportunities needed to close the academic achievement gap and have children college-ready.

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Attached:

Exit survey results for January to April 2010 “Swim for Success” program

“Swim for Success”Exit Survey April, 2010 (30 respondents)

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4, 4, 5, 5, 5, 3, 3, 5, 4, 5, 4, 4, 4, 4, 5, 5, 2, 3, 5, 5, 3, 5, 5, 4, 5, 3, 1, 5, 3, 3

“That when they start something they need to see it to the end.” “[My daughter] has become a confident swimmer.” “‘Swim for Success’ has helped by giving my children drive, ambition, and self-esteem.” “[Swim for Success] helped keep [my son] focused with school and after-school activities.” “‘Swim for Success’ has been an important goal for me because I’m learning how to swim the correct way.” “Love.” “‘Swim for Success’ has meant a lot to me, I like it because it’s fun and cool, and I can swim fast.” “It was real, real special.” “A great , safe place for the kids to be and always better than being in front of the T.V.” “I loved the responsibility the kids learned from the program along with the swimming!” “Discipline.” “Being able to be a part of a team, positive role models, an understanding of commitment and hard work.” “They both love it and only missed one time due to appointments.” “‘Swim for Success’ has helped by giving my children drive, ambition, and self-esteem.” “I like that it has helped me swim better, especially breaststroke. if I hadn’t done this I wouldn’t have learned freestyle properly.” “[I get to] swim good and a lot.” “To help me get better at it.” “Attaining swimming principles safely.” “Swim a lot.” “It has given our child a new level of motivation and determination.” “She learned self-control and patience.” “We love it[; it] is fun and a great opportunity.” “Enjoying watching my daughter achieve her goals in the pool.” “[This] meant finally seeing my son be excited and motivated about something other than T.V.”

“safety” “experience” “friends” “improvement of swimming skills” “development of more confidence” “confidence” “backstroke and freestyle” “learn to swim” “cool” “confidence” “patience” “patience” “on time” “Determination” “HARD WORK” “Patience with each other (sisters)” “Try harder on things we do.” “Friends” “Focus” “Love” “swim” “health” “love” “responsibility” “stability and self-esteem” “have fun” “Determination” “Respect/fun” “teamwork!” “success”

[illegible]