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The International Swim Schools Association represents a diverse range of leading aquatic educators, who are engaged in providing positive learning experiences for the children and families they serve.

There are a wide range of needs served by these swim schools and individual swimming teachers. The culture and area of the world in which they operate can influence which needs are prioritised.

In regions where paediatric drowning is prevalent, water safety and drowning prevention are often given a strong focus. Other's primary aim may be to develop parent-child bonding and attachment, along with a broad scope of developmental benefits for the child. These areas of focus are not mutually exclusive, and all should be addressed by all programs.

**ISSA Position Statement #2**

## The benefits of swimming and water safety skills in drowning prevention.

Having appropriate swimming and water safety skills is an important element in drowning prevention. They are not, however, a substitute for proper supervision – that being constant, adult supervision in the case of young children. Swimming and water safety lessons can result in becoming 'safer' – never 'safe', 'drown-proof' or the like.

ISSA endorses a 'layers of protection' approach, where all layers should be in place. The layers are based around having (1) constant adult supervision, (2) proper barriers in place; eg, having appropriate fences and gates around home pools, (3) swimming and water safety skills, and (4) an emergency action plan.
Ground-breaking research by the USA's Government's National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), in 2009, concluded: "Participation in formal swimming lessons was associated with an 88% reduction in the risk of drowning in 1 – to 4-year-old children". (ISSA: see Suggested Resource 4). So powerful were these

findings, that it caused the American Academy of Pediatrics to reverse its position against swimming lessons for young children.

To keep this research in perspective, note: “Swimming lessons are appropriate for consideration as part of a comprehensive drowning prevention strategy,” said Duane Alexander, M.D., director of the NICHD, the NIH Institute at which the study was conducted. “Because even the best swimmers can drown, swimming lessons are only one component of a comprehensive drowning prevention strategy that should include pool fencing, adult supervision, and training in cardiopulmonary resuscitation.”
ISSA recognises that Swim Schools have an important role in also:

a. Providing valuable water safety education to students, their parents/caregivers and the local community, and
b. Setting a good example in applying the layers of protection.

**References**


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3. *Association Between Swimming Lessons and Drowning in Childhood.* Brenner et.al. Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Health. 2009 https://australianswimschools.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/USA-Drowning-Prevention-Study.pdf