

Study shows kids are smarter when they swim

VO: Children who learn how to swim from a young age are ahead of their peers on a number of important milestones according to Griffith University research.

Robyn Jorgensen: Swimming children score significantly better than the normal population on a number of measures that are really important for their transition to school, their cognitive development, their language development and their physical development.

VO: The study surveyed 7000 parents from Australia, New Zealand and the US, over three years, as well as individually assessing 180 children.

Robyn Jorgensen: What surprised us as the research team, there are a lot of other things that swimming kids are good at. Surprisingly, their fine motor skills are well developed so they're ahead of the population, they're doing better than the normal population in their fine motor skills. And they're things like drawing, using pencils, using blocks, building towers. All those things that require fine motor skills. One of the reasons we can theorise why that's happening is that when you look at kids that are swimming, the teachers are always saying "1,2, 3 ready". Or what we often see is that the parents are reporting the kids are counting to 10 almost two years ahead of the normal developmental milestone.

Laurie Lawrence – Kids Alive swim program

It's been a dream of mine to prove that children who start lessons early – it builds their, social, emotional, physical and intellectual capital. They're smarter, they're better coordinated, all those things.

VO: The researchers also found that the quality of swimming lesson instruction was important for learning.

Robyn Jorgensen: What we've seen when we've gone and looked at the swimming lessons, when you look at the way the swimming teachers are instructing the children, it's definitely the quality of instruction in those swim schools. So when you look at swim lessons such as today, what you see is teachers will give clear instructions partly because of the swim environment itself but also because of the tools they use, the resources they use, they'll say "go and get the yellow triangle, the blue duck", so it will be "swim through, swim under, swim around." It's a very language-rich environment.

Laurie Lawrence: Swim Australia have been a vital part of this research and I think swim Australia with their conferences etc are looking to lift the standard of swim schools across the country. And for me, that is the biggest thing that has got to come out of this country. Swim Schools across Australia have got to run with this, and lift the quality of teaching of all their teachers.

Robyn Jorgensen: Letting kids come to swimming lessons, it's a fun way to engage in learning, it's an innovative way to engage in learning and in many ways it's a cheap way to engage in learning.

Blurb for website:

Young children who participate in swimming lessons are reaching key milestones earlier than their peers.

Titles:

Professor Robyn Jorgensen – Griffith Institute for Educational Research

Laurie Lawrence – Kids Alive Swim Program