

## CHAPTER 2

# AQUATIC PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

DEFINITIONS -- programs, activities.

*Table 2.1: Aquatic programs and possible activities.*

*Table 2.2: Activities conducted in a small indoor health club pool.*

THE FOUR PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESSFUL AQUATIC PROGRAMMING:

1. Understand the wants and needs of patrons.

*Table 2.3: Essential aquatic programs for various patron groups.*

2. Develop a mission statement to meet these wants and needs.

*Table 2.4: Sample mission statements.*

3. Determine suitable programs and activities for each facility.

*Table 2.5 Activities suitable for \_\_\_\_\_ (facility).*

4. Establish goals and measureable objectives for each activity.

### DEFINITIONS

An aquatic *program* is a broad term that describes a general aquatic category.

**AQUATIC PROGRAMS are:**

1. *INSTRUCTION*
2. *WELLNESS*
3. *COMPETITION*
4. *RECREATION*

NOTE: Competition is a part of the Wellness program category, but the popularity of age-group swim programs is such that here it is considered a separate program.

**AQUATIC ACTIVITIES** are specific classes or segments of programs. See Table 2.1 for examples.

TABLE 2.1

### AQUATIC PROGRAMS AND SOME EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES

<u>PROGRAM</u>	<u>EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES</u>
1. <b>INSTRUCTION</b>	Learn-to-swim (infants, all ages, adults). Specialties such as Scuba, lifeguarding, instructor courses in swimming and lifeguarding, snorkeling, small water craft.
2. <b>WELLNESS</b>	Water exercise, lap swimming, aquatic therapy.
3. <b>RECREATION</b>	All-age free play, family play.
4. <b>COMPETITION</b>	Teams: swimming, diving and synchro.

It might be assumed that only a large pool can offer a wide variety of activities. However, it is possible that a competent

aquatic director and staff could conduct many of the 26 different activities that were actually done in a small indoor pool at

a profit-making health club. See Table 2.2 below. REMINDER: *it is not the quantity of activities offered that is the goal; the*

*goal is to offer excellence and safety in whatever activities are offered.*

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TABLE 2.2

ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED IN A SMALL INDOOR HEALTH CLUB POOL<sup>1</sup>

- |  |   |                                       |
|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Aquatic aerobics  | 2. Bait, spin and fly casting instruction | 3. Boating instruction                |
| 4. Calisthenics (with or without aquatic resistive devices)    |   | 5. Competitive swim (various ages)    |
| 6. Cardiovascular rehab  | 7. Canoeing instruction.                  | 8. Diving instruction                 |
| 9. Family swim   | 10. Flotation, relaxation                 | 11. Handicapped swim and instruction  |
| 12. Hydrostatic weighing (assess body composition)             |   | 13. Jousting events                   |
| 14. Kayak instruction  | 15. Lap swim                              | 16. Parent-child swim instruction     |
| 17. Physical therapy   | 18. Recreational swim                     | 19. Scuba and skin diving instruction |
| 20. Red Cross swim instruction and certification at all levels | 21. Sailing instruction                   |                                       |
| 22. Synchronized swimming                                      | 23. Underwater photography class          | 24. Wading and water play             |
| 25. Water polo   | 26. Water safety instruction class        |                                       |

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1. Tierstan, S. Programming your pool for profit. *Fitness Management*, March-April, 1989, pp. 13.

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## THE FOUR PRINCIPLES OF SUCCESSFUL AQUATIC PROGRAMMING

If the four principles of programming—*understanding participation trends, developing a mission statement, selecting appropriate activities for each facility and establishing the goals and objectives of each activity*—are followed, your total program will to remain viable—and you will remain employed!

### PRINCIPLE 1: UNDERSTAND THE WANTS AND NEEDS OF PATRONS.

•BE AWARE OF NATIONAL PARTICIPATION TRENDS. Surveys show that: *Recreational swimming (i.e. playing in the water, swimming correct strokes, swimming laps, etc.) appears to be on the upswing* after several years of stagnant growth. In 2008, 63.5 million Americans (all ages) swam, up 6.1 % from 2007.

Possible reasons—*increase in fitness interest among the adult population, and the performance of Michael Phelps in the 2008 Olympics*.<sup>1</sup>

*Open water, not the pool, is the preferred aquatic site for most Americans.* The majority of Americans who enjoy water activity choose open water, where they can board sail, jet ski, snorkel, fish, etc.<sup>2</sup>

*Health awareness is fueling the growth of adult swimming.* The participation in swimming as an activity among adults is rising. In 1986, only 16% of people ages 55+ swam, ran, walked, etc. more than 100 days per year. By 1998, this number had increased to 22%. The number of Master's swimmers increased 26% from 1994 to 1999.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Kozen, Kendra. Study shows swimming popularity growing. *Aquatics Intl*, July/Aug 2009, p. 14.

2. No author. Study suggests marked decline in swimming. *Aquatics Intl*, June, 2004, p. 16.

*Swimming is not the teenager's first sport of choice.* Even though the number of age-group competitive swimmers grew 40% for 1989 to 1999, teenagers spend only 9% of their leisure time in swimming (as contrasted to 24% of their time playing basketball and 19% of their leisure time playing volleyball or softball).<sup>1</sup>

- **BE AWARE OF WHAT YOUR PATRONS SAY THEY WANT.** Earlier (Chapter 1, Form O1.6), a patron interest survey form was shown. In general, these surveys show that:

- ✓ Parents and tots want time and space for water adjustment sessions, warm water, small groups, fun atmosphere, and they want space away from boisterous teenagers.

- ✓ Youth want open recreation time, instruction in swimming and diving, and teams.

- ✓ Teens want open recreation, instruction in swimming, diving and specialty sports (e.g. Scuba), and teams.

- ✓ Young adults are interested in fitness, competition, and specialty sports such as Scuba and small craft (especially if they are conducted with a social emphasis).

- ✓ Adults and/or families prefer open recreation time when non-family youth and teens are absent or in another part of the facility. Seniors want basic swim skills (not perfect strokes!), water fitness classes, and perhaps competitive teams. All these activities must have a socialization emphasis.

- ✓ The handicapped of all ages need one-on-one assistance both in and out of the water and plenty of free space. Because of the buoyancy factor, water provides a means of easy movement.

- **BE AWARE OF WHAT YOUR PATRONS NEED.** An aquatic facility is built to serve patron groups—parent/tots, youth, teens, adults, and seniors. Programming, therefore, must serve one or more of these groups. Public facilities generally offer programming for all five groups, whereas some private facilities (i.e. swim schools, health clubs) might restrict their clientele'.

Based upon experience and observation, the competent aquatic director knows what different patron groups need, as shown in Table 2.3 (next page). **However, patron needs are hard to "sell". As will be stressed later in Chapter 16**

**(Marketing), the WANTS OF PATRONS are MORE IMPORTANT**

**than their NEEDS.** *Patrons don't want exercise--they want fun, friendship, and a better body image.* Title your programs with this in mind: "Aquafun--shape up while having fun and losing weight" is more appealing than "Lap swimming for exercise".

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1. Kozen, Kendra. *Study shows swimming popularity growing. Aquatics Intl, July/Aug 2009, p. 14.*

2. No author. *Study suggests marked decline in swimming. Aquatics Intl, June, 2004, p. 16.*

TABLE 2.3

AQUATIC NEEDS AND PROGRAMS FOR VARIOUS PATRON GROUPS

PATRON GROUPS	NEEDS	ESSENTIAL PROGRAMS
INFANT-TODDLERS	Familiarity with water	Parent-tot
YOUTH	Safety in/around the water Motor skill development Fitness	Safety Education Instruction; Recreation Teams
TEENS	Safety in/around the water Motor skill development Fitness	Safety Education Instruction; Recreation Teams
ADULT	Safety in/around the water Fitness	Safety Education Wellness; Instruction; Teams
SENIORS	Safety in/around water Fitness Leisure sports Socialization	Safety Education Wellness; Instruction; Teams Scuba; Small Craft Clubs

NOTE: Chapters 3-6 in this text offer specific advice on the content of the four essential programs, while Chapters 7-10 discuss aspects of programs for special groups.

**PRINCIPLE 2: DEVELOP A MISSION STATEMENT THAT MEETS THE NEEDS AND WANTS OF PATRONS.**

The mission of the organization (a city recreation department, the owner of a private facility, a physical education department, etc.) provides direction to the formation of aquatic programs and subsequent selection of activities.

The sponsor or owner will determine the scope of the programs by formulating a mission statement. The mission might be broad (as at a publicly-funded recreation facility), or restricted (as at a school district pool that serves only students, or at a pool owned by a

swim club). In any case, the mission should be clearly spelled out, thus providing you with parameters on which to build a program.

The mission statement will be like a star in the sky--it provides direction but is beyond reach. Later, the goals and objectives for each activity will give specific directions toward meeting the mission statement.

To begin to formulate the mission statements, consider the sample statements shown in Table 2.4 (below). It might take two or three sentences to completely state the mission.

programs.

To develop competitors who achieve regional/national records in their specialties.

To inspire our patrons to achieve their maximum aquatic skills.

TABLE 2.4

**SAMPLE MISSION STATEMENTS\***

To meet all the aquatic needs of all of the citizens of this county through excellent

**PRINCIPLE 3: DETERMINE SUITABLE ACTIVITIES FOR EACH FACILITY.** Before aquatic programs can be finalized, it must be determined if various activities can be safely and effectively conducted at a site. Not all facilities can offer every activity; for example, mom-tot programs are not suitable

for pools that do not heat their water to at least 86°F.

The ideal requirements for space, depth and equipment for a wide variety of activities are shown in Form 2.1 (below). This information, combined with the results of the earlier safety inspection (Form 1.2) will provide guidance as to facility suitability for various activities.

TABLE 2.5  
ACTIVITIES SUITABLE FOR \_\_\_\_\_ FACILITY  
IF NOT OK, CAN PROBLEMS BE OVERCOME?

	√ IF OK	
<b>SEE FORM 02.1 FOR A COMPLETE AND REPRODUCIBLE COPY OF THIS FORM.</b>		
<i>Leisure Recreation.</i>		
a. Depth from 0 to 4 ½ feet		
b. Areas for adult		
c. Areas for youth		
d. Children's water play		
e. Water temp 84F+		
f. Meets ADA standards		
<i>Children's Play, and Instruction.</i>		
a. Depth of from 0 to 2 ½ feet.		

**PRINCIPLE 4: ESTABLISH GOALS AND MEASUREABLE OBJECTIVES FOR EACH ACTIVITY.**

Goals are broad statements that give direction toward reaching an ideal situation. Example: *The goal of the swim instruction program is to be sure all children can swim.*

The above goal is desirable, but not very precise. What age are "children" —1, 5, 10, 15? Does "swimming" mean going a certain distance without stopping? Is the dog paddle an acceptable stroke? Must swimming be on the stomach? *In short, a goal provides the general direction but it is too vague to be very useful.*

Because goals are lofty statements that can never be reached, they must be broken down into measurable statements called *behavioral objectives*. **Behavioral objectives describe exactly what the learner will be able to do** if he or she meets the objective and can be answered **Yes or No**.

Behavioral objectives describe three things:

1. **WHAT IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED:**  
i.e. *swim 25 yds butterfly*
2. **HOW GOOD IT MUST BE DONE:**  
i.e. *legal stroke*
3. **WHEN IT IS TO BE DONE.**  
i.e. *after 4 hours of instruction.*

### EXAMPLES OF CORRECT BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES

*At the end of five 30-minute lessons, a student will be able to move the length of pool (25 yds) on their back without touching the bottom.*

Evaluation: Did the student meet the objective? Yes? No?

*First -day enrollment in the senior water exercise class will increase 10% over last year's first day enrollment.*

Evaluation: Did enrollment increase 10%? Yes? No?

*After four hours of instruction on the butterfly stroke, 90% of the swim team members will be able to swim 25 yds (non-stop) with a legal stroke.*

Evaluation: Did 90% of class meet the objective? Yes? No?

### COMMENTS

Behavioral objectives are useful in other ways beside the obvious Yes or No answer.

1. If many students do not meet the objective, maybe it is too difficult. Talk to the teachers—get their input.
2. Investigate why most students of Instructor A meet the objective, and yet students of Instructor B do not. There should not be much difference among class achievement. Is it instructor skill level? Different time slots? Different age or class makeup?
3. Use the specificity of the statements to tell a student (and parent!) exactly what must be done to meet the standard.

### SUMMARY:

***BEHAVIORAL OBJECTIVES (STATEMENTS THAT CAN BE MEASURED)  
ARE THE BASIS OF DEVELOPING AN EXCELLENT PROGRAM.***

