
Pools 2 Schools Pilot: A journey of participation, partnership, performance, and pleasure

Teresa Stanley¹, Jan Taylor¹ and Ian Calhaem¹

WaterSafe Auckland Inc.¹

Background

The number of school pools closing is increasing and the access to water space for schools is reducing. Most New Zealand school pools were built in the 1950s and now need financing to upgrade. Some schools fundraise, others close their pools. Low decile schools cannot afford swimming lessons at local pools.

Pilot Project

WaterSafe Auckland took a 10m by 6m portable pool to a school in Papakura for Term 1, 2010. Redhill School is a decile 1 (lowest), full primary with about 250 students, many of which are transitory as they live in Housing NZ homes.

A literacy and numeracy package accompanied the pool allowing the Health and Physical Education activities to become the focus for cross-curricular learning.

Layers of Protection

Several layers of protection were introduced to decrease drowning or injury risk. The first was that the pool height was 1.3m and the sides were not climbable. The steps were removed each night and locked away in a classroom. The pool had to comply with the Fencing of Swimming Pools Act 1987. The end fence had a child-proof gate and was padlocked at night. It did not go around the pool but was fixed to the marquee sides. Compliance was granted by the local council staff.

The whole complex was under the security cameras. As each layer of protection was different this helped to make the pool safer. People had to overcome each one of these barriers if they wanted to gain access.

An unexpected layer of protection was the development of the unofficial neighbourhood watch group. This showed the sense of pride that there was in the school and community. Redhill area has three gangs and is a decile 1a school.

Teaching and Learning

About 900 children per week had lessons and about 700 children a week swam at lunch times. It was very popular. A number of togs and towels were supplied so that those who did not have were not discriminated against. The school taught both water confidence and learn to swim in the pool. Water safety was added for middle and senior students. Teachers were given professional development to be able to teach their own classes.

Pilot Outcomes

There were a number of positives in having the pool at the school. The juniors swam every day, a buddy system was introduced with seniors, there was a pride, excitement, sense of unity; time was saved and because there were no buses required it was much cheaper. Home partnerships were developed and cross-curricular opportunities including maths and science, language, writing and design. There were issues with the depth of the pool, the numbers in the pool, the temperature, clearance and teaching access and water testing. Extra teacher duties were required due to the popular lunchtimes and the school had a lot of interested visitors, local councillors, press and neighbouring schools.

The Future

A new pool has been purchased, and funding has been sought to replicate the model in other areas of Auckland. The new pool is 3.9 x 9.5m which allows side access for teachers. It has a lockable pool cover with isolated fencing. The plumbing and heating is enclosed on a trailer and pool platforms and rubber mats have been sought. Other accessories such as lifejackets and boards have been provided.

Conclusion

The pilot was a definite success. It showed schools without pools can have a facility at their school for a limited time and exceed expected outcomes for both students and teachers. This model is a successful answer for school without pools.

Corresponding Author

Teresa Stanley
Business Manager
WaterSafe Auckland Inc
PO Box 8163 Symonds Street Auckland New Zealand 1150
Email: teresa.stanley@watersafe.org.nz
Telephone: +64 9 3060809