

# Re-Thinking swimming *by Scharenberg, Swantje | Katrin Adler |*

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## Re-Thinking Swimming

Swimming used to be a physical activity, in Germany learned at pre-school-age by parents or in peer groups in an informal way. However, that has changed. A huge number of pupils in the 3<sup>rd</sup> form, when swimming is on the agenda of PE, are not familiar with water at all and are far away from passing the first badge, called seahorse. Yet, that badge indicates that a child can jump into the water and can manage to reach the other side of the pool and should motivate the child to take part in a swimming training. The swimming-style is not taken into consideration for the seahorse.

FoSS, the research centre of PE and sports for children and adolescents, invented a 15-weeks-programm for non-swimmers simultaneously to regular swimming lesson, to train the pupils until they can pass the badge. In Karlsruhe, the evaluated program is running since 2011/2012 successfully (for references see [http://www.sport.kit.edu/foss/Projekte\\_Schwimm\\_Fix.php](http://www.sport.kit.edu/foss/Projekte_Schwimm_Fix.php)). However, now the swimming style - breast-stroke or crawl-stroke - is taking into consideration by the swimming region. This was and is not the aim of FoSS. Simply, we want children to learn the physical activity and prevent from drowning, no matter what style they use in this special scaring situation. Yet, the numbers of German people drowning is increasing, especially when the summer is hot. And this is not a question of swimming or the number of migrants, but of the underestimated conditions. The capability to swim in a pool in a line - as they experience at school - is only the first (important) step in the chain of survival. At the age of eight or nine, when pupil pass the programme of "Schwimm-Fix" a lot of German children have not realized that water is part of their environment and that they have to adapt to the different environmental conditions to survive. After all everyone has to take over the responsibility for his or her own life and have to follow safety strategies - that goes far beyond the re-thinking of swimming.

Bathing rules are only the start. Realizing the current situation and self-estimation of his or her capability is much more important to survive. Concerning water, environmental conditions may change when you bath in a pool without a teacher, or even open water or when swimming is the only physical activity to survive, after you fell into the water when doing stand-up paddeling or canoeing. (In Norway, there are programs to learn swimming right away in open-water conditions. Those are much cheaper and successful! In the

Netherlands, they train children in swimming fully dressed, to adapt to environmental conditions.)

In Germany, we have to re-think swimming to get back to see this as a physical activity like all-day-movements and to focus on water which can be very different, however, it is part of our environment. First ideas of a new program for children in Germany concerning this problem will be presented in this talk.