

Dear Parents,

As a collective body, the Shanghai Swim League (SSL) Aquatics Directors and coaches have made a unanimous decision to adjust the way in which Under 8s will be introduced to competitive swimming. Beginning next year, Under 8 students will participate in their own 'developmental' swim meets that are designed to promote positive first experiences and early enjoyment in this life-long sport. In turn, how we structure our Under 8 training programs within SSL schools, will remain consistent and in line with recommendations from international swimming bodies. We encourage you to read on to gain a deeper understanding of these positive improvements our league has made.

Improvements:

- The Under 8 age category will be removed from Rounds 1-7 of the SSL.
- Under 8 students will participate in a 'Developmental Series' consisting of 3 swim meets organised by the SSL. These swim meets will occur on different weekends to Rounds 1-7 of the SSL.
- Developmental Series swim meets will be morning or half-days only.
- Individual scoring and placing will not be recognized - no medals or ribbons.
- Students will leave each developmental meet with a valid time, token of participation and a big smile.
- Additional 'Friendly' meets may be organised by individual schools throughout the year at a time and location convenient to the schools involved. These meets are not organised or sanctioned by the SSL as a collective body. They are run and organised by the schools participating.

The Why:

All SSL school representatives are in agreement that it is not age appropriate to have Under 8 students spend an entire day at the pool to swim in 3 races that take less than a few minutes to complete. This is not a positive introduction to the sport of swimming for our students or their parents.

With Under 8's having their own exclusive swim meets, waiting times in between events will be significantly reduced resulting in fast, action-packed mornings with active and excited students. Students and their families will then have the afternoon to spend together, engaging in other activities.

By removing the emphasis off performance (medals and ribbons), more attention and focus can be given to stroke development and team building during training sessions. It is also hoped this will reduce the excessive number of training sessions some Under 8 swimmers are doing. Anything beyond 3-4 training sessions per week is not healthy for the long term development and retention of our younger swimmers.

The improvements have been made to align the SSL with international swimming bodies such as USA swimming, Canadian swimming, Australian swimming and UK swimming. The Bangkok Swimming League has also implemented a similar model with positive results. You will find attached two documents for further reading, one that discusses 'long term athlete development' and the other, that addresses those 'burning' questions that many swim parents have. Both, great reads!

In conclusion, the SSL is excited to implement these improvements for the 2019/2020 academic year. We thank you in advance for your support and for your continued commitment to your child's swimming development. Should you have questions or require further clarification, please reach out to the person in charge of swimming at your school. We wish you a successful close to the 2018/2019 academic year and enjoyable Summer holiday.

Warm regards,

SSL Executive Committee