

Gulf Coast Community Foundation

**Kids SWIM Evaluation Report
July 2016**

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Executive Summary

The Kids SWIM Fund at Gulf Coast Community Foundation was created in 2013 by donors Keith and Linda Monda to ensure that children learn how to swim. Gulf Coast Community Foundation partnered with the Sarasota County School District, Girls Inc., and local YMCAs so that every second grader in Sarasota County has the opportunity to participate in water safety training. For the 2015-2016 school year, Gulf Coast commissioned an evaluation of the program to determine the effectiveness and impact of the Kids SWIM model and to document key elements for replication. Impact findings are below:

- Students improved water safety skills. Students were assessed on nine items using a scale of 1 to 4 (minimum 9 points; maximum 36 points). Student skills improved from a 27.5 on the pre-assessment to a 33.4 on the post-assessment. Among non-swimmers (those scoring below a 32 on the pre-assessment), scores rose from 22.3 to 31.9, or a 42% improvement.
- The greatest improvements were seen in the following skills: rolling back to front, recovering from a prone position, and holding their face in the water.
- 100% of teachers surveyed reported that the program had a *moderate or major impact* on students' swim safety skills.
- In addition to water safety skills, 89% of teachers reported that the program had a *moderate or major impact* on students' listening skills; 90% of teachers reported seeing a sense of accomplishment and improved student confidence in *a lot or many* students after the swim lessons.
- Finally, 91% of teachers feel the program is *extremely beneficial* for their students.

Key elements of the program are as follows:

- **Increased access to water safety** classes for a large number of students. Teachers and key informants noted the scope of the program was important: It ensures every second grader has the opportunity to learn to swim
- **The partnership** among the community partners, school district, and Gulf Coast Community Foundation. Each partner commits resources to the Kids SWIM program, such as the time to promote and coordinate the program and the operational cost of the facilities. (Funding is only used for travel and instructors.)
- **The program model.** There is a defined curriculum that is followed that allows a progression of skill attainment. In addition, students are grouped according to skill level and teachers and instructors report this is beneficial.

Introduction

The Kids SWIM Fund at Gulf Coast Community Foundation was created in 2013 by donors Keith and Linda Monda to ensure that children learn how to swim. Gulf Coast Community Foundation partnered with the Sarasota County School District, Girls Inc., and local YMCAs so that every second grader in Sarasota County has the opportunity to participate in water safety training. Students attend lessons for five days and learn skills such as how to get in and out of the pool, safety rules, and water recovery. In the 2015-2016 school year, an estimated 2,350 students participated.

The roles of the partners and key activities are as follows:

- Sarasota County School District promotes the program to the schools so that every second grader has the opportunity to participate in water safety training, collects permission slips, and coordinates the schedule.
- The program is held at six community organization sites throughout Sarasota County. Community organizations such as the YMCA and Girls Inc. provide the facility and secure high-quality instructors.
- Gulf Coast Community Foundation acts as the fiscal agent, works with donors to provide funding for the program, acts as a liaison between the community organizations and the school district, promotes the program, and commissions the evaluation. Funding pays for the instructors and the transportation.

For the 2015-2016 school year, Gulf Coast commissioned an evaluation of the program to determine the effectiveness and impact of the Kids SWIM model and to document key elements for replication. Data collection included a pre- and post-assessment of student swim skills, a teacher survey, and interviews with three key informants. See the Appendix for details on the methodology.

Findings

This section presents the data on student improvement in water safety skills, changes in behaviors outside of lessons, and key elements of the program model.

Did students improve their swimming safety skills?

Yes. As shown in Figures 1 through 3, students' skills improved significantly from the pre-assessment to the post-assessment. Figure 1 presents the mean pre-assessment score and

the mean post-assessment score for all students, and for those who were not good swimmers when the lessons began (defined as a pre-assessment score of under 32).

Figure 1: Mean pre- and post-assessment scores, all students and non-swimmers

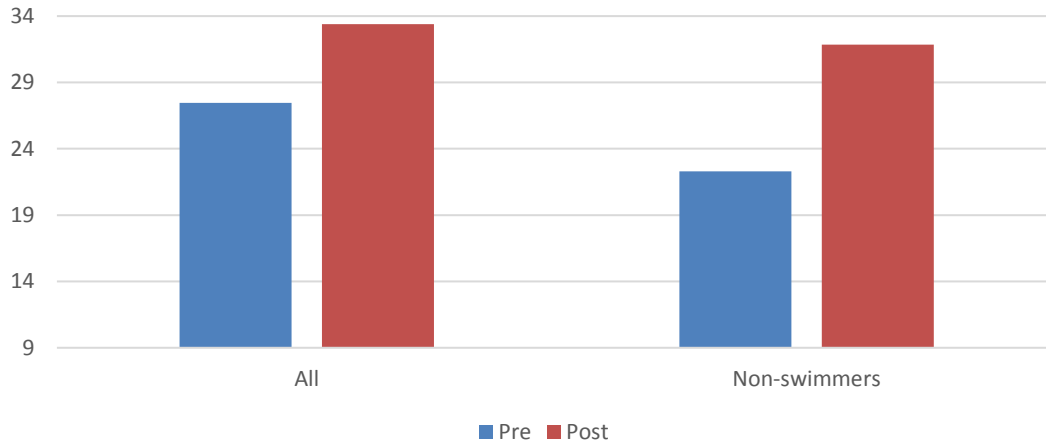


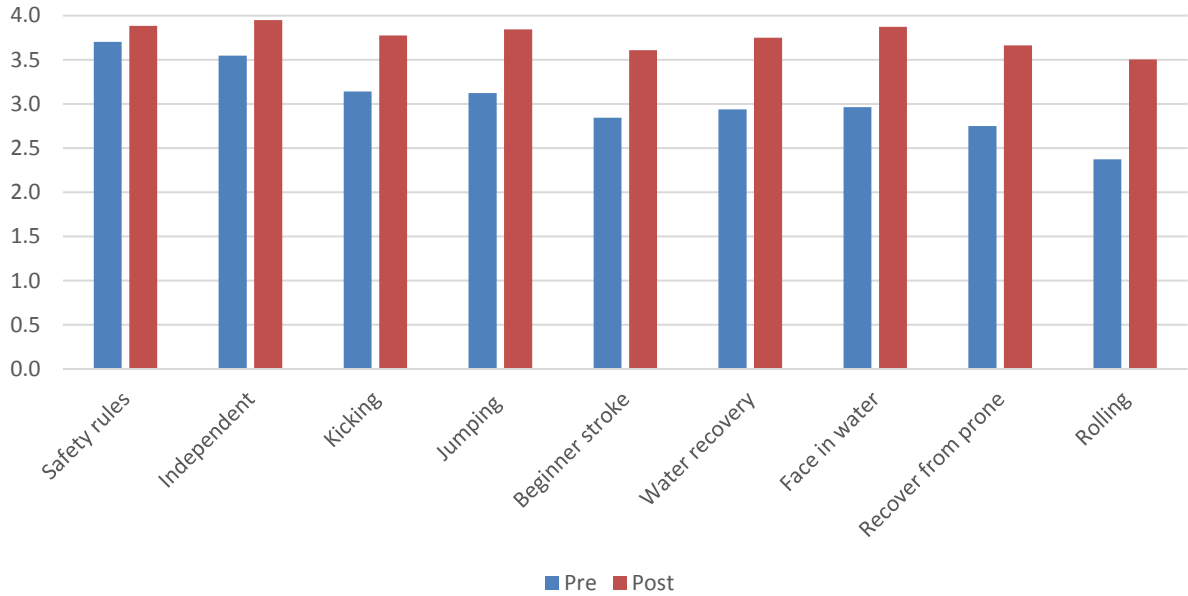
Figure 2 provides the mean pre- and post-assessments scores by participating school where that school was included in the sample. Please note that due to the sampling strategy, some data represent as few as 10 students and that not all schools were included in the sample.

Figure 2: Mean pre- and post-assessment scores, all students, by school

School	Pre assessment score	Post assessment score	Change from pre to post
Gocio	15.1	33.0	17.9
Fruitville	18.8	33.1	14.3
Bay Haven	21.8	34.9	13.1
Tuttle	22.4	33.4	11.0
Brentwood	19.9	30.9	10.5
Alta Vista	26.6	34.4	8.3
Gulf Gate	23.3	30.1	6.8
Southside	24.8	31.9	6.4
Lakeview	25.4	30.5	5.2
Phillippi	31.6	35.8	4.3
Tatum Ridge	29.9	33.8	3.9
Garden	31.9	33.6	2.0
Englewood	33.0	34.3	1.3
Venice	33.3	34.3	1.0

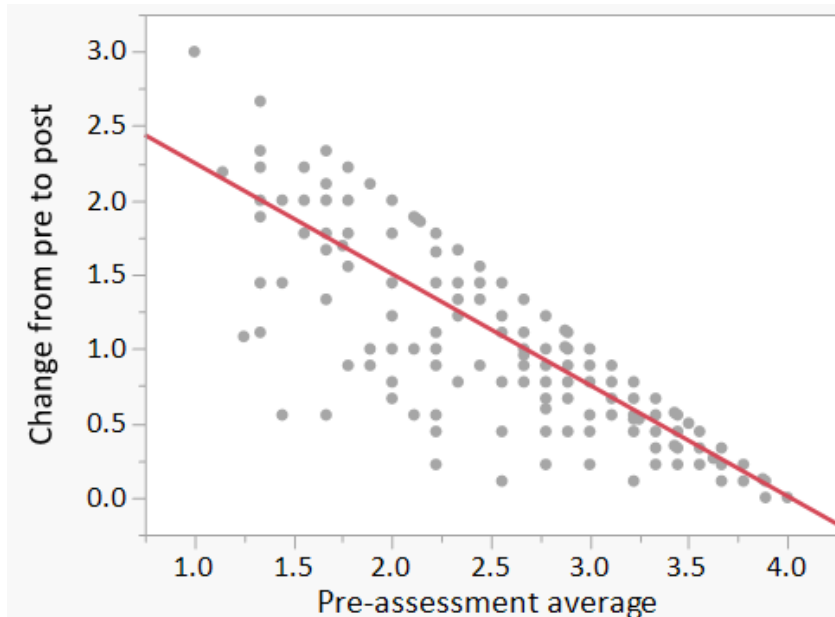
Figure 3 presents the mean pre- and post-assessments scores by skill level. As shown, students improved in all skills with the most improvement in rolling back to front, recovering from a prone position, and holding their face in the water

Figure 3: Mean pre- and post-assessment scores, all students, by skill



Not surprisingly, the students who came into the program with the fewest skills saw the greatest gains. As shown in Figure 4, those with a lowest average pre-assessment score (i.e., 1.0 on the left side of the horizontal axis) had the greatest change between pre- and post-assessment (i.e., 3.0 on the top of the vertical axis).

Figure 4: Average pre-assessment score and change in average score



Teachers were asked about several student impacts. One hundred percent of teachers reported that the program had a *moderate* or *major impact* on students’ swim safety skills. Comments included:

- “10% of my class were non-swimmers. This program could potentially save their life!”
- “This was not only fun, but extremely educational. All students improved their skills regardless of what level they began on.”
- “I had 6 out of my 18 students who were non-swimmers and had spent little time in the water. They definitely felt more comfortable at the end of the week.”
- “It was shocking the number of students who didn't know how to swim. It was also quite amazing to see more confident swimmers by the end of the week. I believe every child should take a program like this to promote water safety.”

What were the behavior impacts on students?

Teachers were asked about the program’s impact on students outside of swim lessons. As shown in Figure 5, 89% of teachers reported that the program had a *moderate* or *major impact* on students’ listening skills.

Figure 5: Level of impact on students’ listening skills

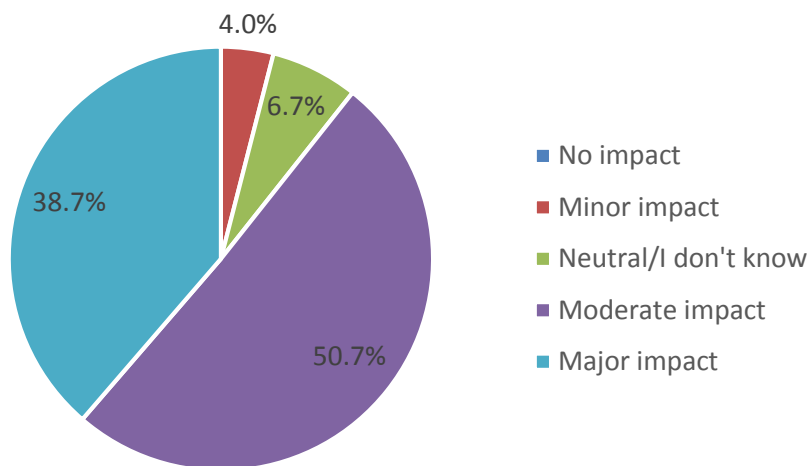
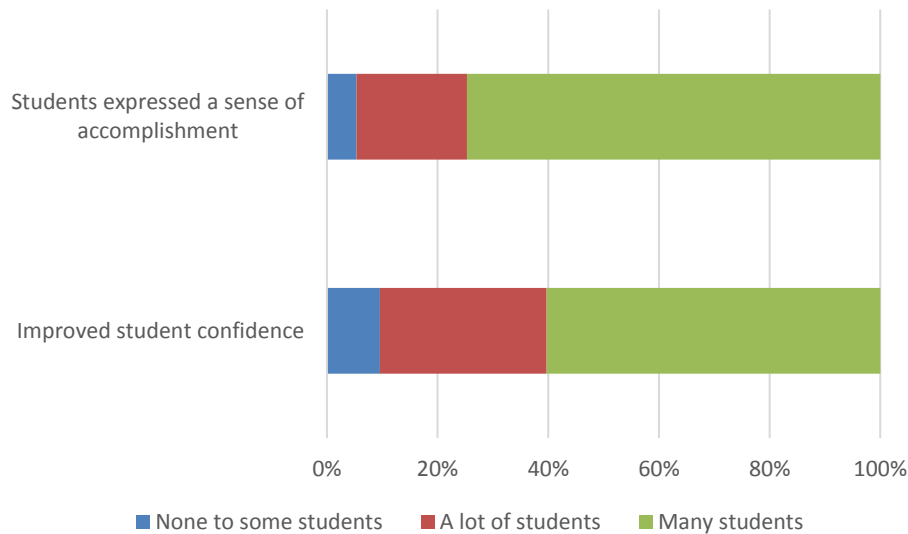


Figure 6 presents behaviors teachers observed after the swim lessons. As shown, 90% of teachers reported seeing a sense of accomplishment and improved student confidence in *a lot* or *many* students.

Figure 6: Observed impacts



Teacher comments included the following:

- “My students absolutely loved the program and I witness[ed] great improvement in ability, safety, and confidence.”
- “I love seeing the students’ faces shine on Friday with a sense of accomplishment and pride when swimming in the pool. They grow so much from Monday to Friday. The instructors do a wonderful job presenting water safety and ensuring that every student feels safe in the water.”
- “As a parent, educator and swimmer, I find this to be the very best program offered to our Title 1 children. The growth in ability and confidence in 5 days is staggering! Thank you so very much for this necessary and worthwhile program.”

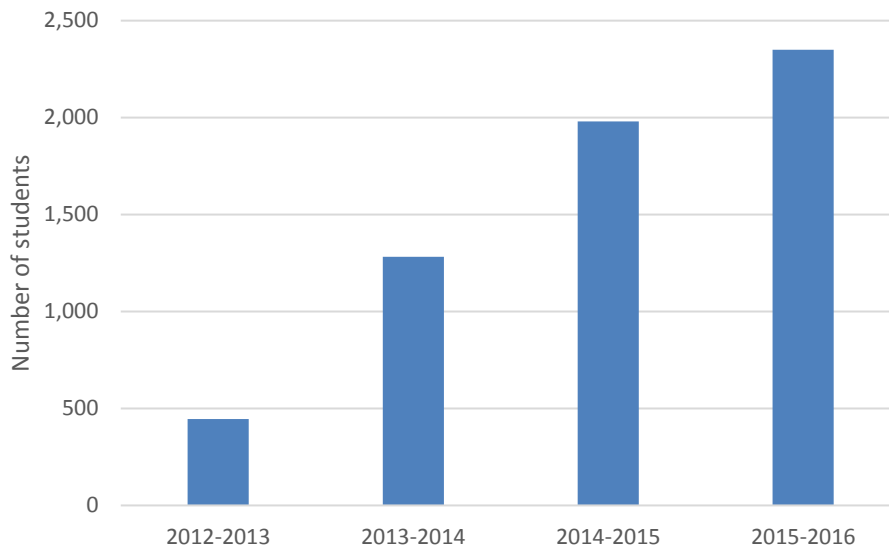
What were the key elements that could be replicated?

Teachers and key informants noted the following elements contributed to the success of the program: increased access to water safety classes for a large number of students; the partnership among the community partners, school district, and Gulf Coast Community Foundation; and the program model.

Teachers and key informants noted the scope of the program was important: It ensures every second grader has the opportunity to learn to swim. Over the past four years, the number of children participating has grown from 445 to 2,350 and the program is now county-wide. This growth is due to several factors: the vision of having a countywide

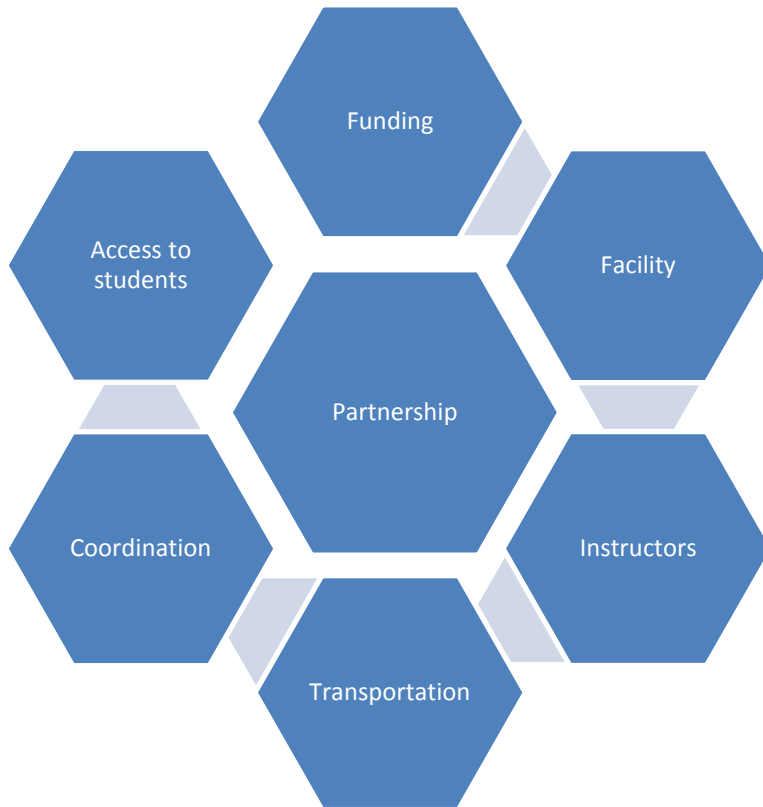
program and recognition of its importance, the willingness of the donor to expand the program countywide, and the ability of Gulf Coast to bring together the partners.

Figure 7: Number of students participating, by year



Representatives from community organizations note that the program allows them to reach students who could not otherwise afford swim lessons or may lack transportation. Through the program, they are able to offer ongoing swim lessons over the summer (through other sources of funding) and reach out to families. Ninety-one percent of teachers reported it is *extremely beneficial* to expose students to the water through this program. Teacher comments included:

- “Out of 33 students, 10 of them were non-swimmers. This program is definitely needed. The fact that 3 of them had never been in a pool was scary to me. I saw them learn to kick, put their face in the water and blow bubbles and gain confidence in and around water. And many of the students who are good at swimming now have an opportunity to join a swim club in North Port. Awesome!!”
- “Students thoroughly enjoyed swimming lessons. Many of the students are not exposed to the water and this was a wonderful opportunity for them.”
- “I think the program for the kids was great and extremely beneficial. I know some of the kids could benefit from how to swim as they may not have the opportunity outside of school. Thank you for the time you spent with my students. We are super grateful!”



A second key element is the partnership and leverage among the program partners: Gulf Coast Community Foundation, community organizations, and the school district. As described in the introduction, each partner commits resources to the Kids SWIM program, such as the time to promote and coordinate the program and the operational cost of the facilities. (Funding is only used for travel and instructors.)

When asked what made the program successful, each stakeholder (community, foundation, and school system) credited the others. For example, community and foundation stakeholders highlighted the willingness of the school system to embrace the program, or noted that it “wouldn’t happen without the great partnerships between school system and the agencies.” School stakeholders, however, credited the foundation and the community partners. This illustrates the strong collaboration: Each partner contributes the time and effort needed to create a successful program and recognizes the value of the other partners.

Finally, the program model contributes to the overall success of the program: There is a defined curriculum that is followed that allows a progression of skill attainment. In addition, students are grouped according to skill level and teachers and instructors report this is beneficial. Finally, the community organizations provide trained and experienced instructors. Teachers noted the impact of the instructors:

- “[Name] does a phenomenal job teaching these students. Her class management and swim skills are lessons the students will use in life.”
- “I was very impressed with all of the swimming instructors and how they worked with kids of all abilities.”
- “[Name] has the nicest way with our little ‘Angels!’”

- “The staff at [facility] were incredibly enthusiastic and supportive of the varying needs of my students.”

Recommendations

As documented in this report, the program has had an impact on students’ water safety skills and on behaviors outside of the swim lessons. When asked for other comments, teachers expressed their appreciation for the program:

- “The program was great! We had one a long time ago, I am glad that it is back!!! I hope that we are invited back next year. Thank you for offering this to our students. They loved the swim lessons.”
- “A great program. We love it and the instructors are fabulous. Thank you for letting us participate in such a worthwhile program.”
- “They do an awesome job! We love the program.”
- “Fantastic program – wouldn't change a thing!”

Teachers had the following recommendations, although each recommendation was only mentioned by a few teachers (5% of respondents).

- Have more instructors so that the groups are smaller and there isn't any downtime.
- Continue to provide access to swimming after the program either through certificates, lessons throughout the elementary years, or engaging the family. (Note: this does occur at some programs.)
- Ensure there are male volunteers/staff to supervise boys in the locker room.
- More time in the water.
- Ensure there are towels available for students or ask them to bring a towel from home.
- Reschedule other classes (i.e., water aerobics) so that students can hear.

Appendix A: Methodology

The evaluation included three sources of data: student assessments, teacher surveys, and key informant interviews. Student assessments consisted of nine items (i.e., recovering from a prone position) rated from 1 (does not/cannot) to 4 (does/can) by the swim instructors. Items were chosen based on prior studies and reviewed by YMCA staff; the tool was pilot tested. Blank assessments templates were provided to each site; completed assessments were picked up by the evaluation consultant (or emailed). Swim instructors completed a pre-assessment on the first day of lessons and a post-assessment on the last day of lessons. Due to time constraints, assessments were completed on one to two classes per week, not all students. Figure A1 documents the number of completed assessments per site. Over 75 additional post-tests were provided, but no pre-tests were completed and so these data are not included.

Figure A1: Completed assessments, by site

Site	Estimated students	Completed assessments
Berlin YMCA	614	92
Englewood YMCA	87	Included with Venice
ESJ YMCA	392	38
Girls Inc.	325	46
NP YMCA	630	23
Venice YMCA	200	121
Total	2248	320

The teacher survey was created based on prior feedback and pilot tested with second grade teachers. A link to the online survey was emailed to teachers and two reminders were sent. Figure A2 presents the number of completed surveys by school. As shown, there is a 53% response rate.

Figure A2: Completed surveys, by school

School	Estimated number of classes	Number of completed surveys
Alta Vista	7	3
Atwater	9	4
Bay Haven	6	5
Cranberry	7	5
EE Booker	7	6
Englewood	5	5
Fruitville	10	5
Garden	7	3

School	Estimated number of classes	Number of completed surveys
Glenallen	8	2
Gocio	6	5
Gulf Gate	6	5
Lakeview	6	4
Lamarque	8	4
Phillippi	8	0
Southside	8	3
Tatum Ridge	7	1
Toledo Blade	9	6
Tuttle	10	7
Venice	6	3
Wilkinson	4	0
Total	144	76

Finally, brief telephone interviews were conducted with a representative from the school district, from the YMCA, and from Gulf Coast Community Foundation.