International Water Safety Day Classroom Lesson Plan – Middle School Ages

Purpose:

To promote water safety and drowning prevention education that equips youth with tools to understand how to behave safely around water and how to react in aquatic emergency and rescue situations.

Objectives:

After completing this lesson, students will be able to:

- Identify actions to help be safer in and around bodies of water, including pools, waterparks, oceans, lakes and rivers.
- Explain how following safety rules can prevent accidents in and around water.
- Describe the features of a safe swimming area.
- Describe hazards that make an aquatic area dangerous.
- Explain water safety concepts to others.

Teacher Resources:

- International Water Safety Day Announcement Script
- Do Your Part, Be Water Smart! Celebrating International Water Safety Day Handout (available in digital format)
- International Water Safety Day Stickers
- *Pool Safely* Pledge handouts (also available in digital format)
- Access to Internet for Review of the Water Safety Rules and the *Pool Safely* Pledge

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Class Time:

25 minutes

Standards and Performance Indicators:

The Water Safety Education Lesson Plans meet several levels of the CDC National Health Education Standards. As indicated on the website, the NHES are written expectations for what students should know and be able to do by grades 2, 5, 8, and 12 to promote personal, family, and community health. The standards provide a framework for curriculum development and selection, instruction, and student assessment in health education (NHES, 2016).

Standard 1	Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health.
Standard 2	Students will analyze how family, peers, culture, media, technology, and other factors influence health behaviors.

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Standard 3	Students will demonstrate the ability to access valid information, products, and services to enhance health.
Standard 4	Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.
Standard 5	Students will demonstrate the ability to use decision-making skills to enhance health.
Standard 6	Students will demonstrate the ability to use goal-setting skills to enhance health.
Standard 7	Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks.
Standard 8	Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health.

Lesson Activities:

1. Distribute the "Do Your Part, Be Water Smart! Celebrating International Water Safety Day" handout to students.

2. Relay the following key points:
   - **Today is International Water Safety Day.**
   - **Did you know that drowning is a leading cause of accidental death for children? We're shining a spotlight on this day so you know the basics for keeping yourself, your family and friends safe in and around the water every day.**
   - **Learning to swim is a great way to begin! Swim lessons teach safety and the swimming skills necessary to safely enjoy the water.**

3. Ask students: **Where do you like to go and what you like to do around the water?**
   Answer: Responses may include the following:
   o *Home pools*
   o *Spas and hot tubs*
   o *Pool parties*
   o *Waterparks*
   o *Lakes and rivers*
   o *Oceans*
   o *Diving*
   o *Boating/Canoeing/Kayaking/Rafting/Tubing*

4. Relay the following key points and facilitate the discussion questions:
   - **Where people drown changes with their age.**
   - Ask students: **What age group do you think drowns the most at home and in what ways?**

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Answer: *Children under the age 4 of drown the most at home. They drown in these places:*
- o *Home pools and spas, including in-ground, above-ground, portable and inflatable pools*
- o *Bath tubs*
- o *Buckets*
- o *Bath seats*
- o *Wells and cisterns*
- o *Septic tanks*
- o *Decorative ponds*
- o *Toilets*

- Ask students: **Where do you think youth your age drown the most?**
  Answer: *Natural environments, such as: pond, river, lake, stream, canal, or the ocean.*

- **Enjoying the water safely is not just about knowing how to swim. You need to be smart, too.**
- **We're going to talk about ways you can do that—in pools as well as around water in natural environments.**

5. Read each safety rule, which is in bold face font. After each rule, facilitate a brief discussion about the rule that draws out the main points in the supporting information.

- **Swim as a pair near a lifeguard's chair.**
  - o Buddy up. Never swim alone.
  - o Only swim in places that are protected by lifeguards—or, if at a home pool, only swim when an adult is actively supervising the water.

- **Look before you leap.**
  - o Check the water and weather conditions to be sure it's a safe place and time to swim.
  - o Always enter feet first unless the area is intended for diving.

- **Follow the rules.**
  - o They exist to keep you safe.
  - o Always listen to the lifeguards. These rules include obeying "No Diving" signs and "No Hyperventilation or Extended Breath-holding."

- **Life jackets save lives, so don't just pack it, wear your jacket.**
  - o Everyone should wear a U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jacket when on a boat.
  - o Anyone who is not a good swimmer should wear one when going into the water.

- **Think, so you don't sink.**
  - o Know what to do if you get in trouble in the water.
  - o The more skills you have, the better you'll be able to deal with scary situations.

- **If someone around you gets in trouble, reach or throw, don't go!**
  - o Use reaching or throwing equipment, such as a reaching pole or a ring buoy with a line attached, to help a struggling person get to safety

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- o Only trained lifeguards with rescue equipment should enter the water to help someone in trouble.
- **Stay away from drains.**
  - o Certain drain covers can create suction and hold you underwater.
  - o No matter the type of drain cover, be sure to tie back hair and avoid loose clothing and jewelry while swimming.
  - o If you see a drain cover is loose or missing, leave the pool and tell the lifeguard or person in charge immediately. Do not return to the swimming pool until you are certain the drain has been repaired.

6. Relay the following key points and facilitate the discussion questions by guiding the responses to frame the discussion:
   - **Because this is where drowning impacts youth your age so much, we're going to spend a few more minutes talking about staying safe in and around natural bodies of water.**
   - **Swimming in a safe place is important.**
     - o **You should always swim in a supervised area with a lifeguard on duty or where an adult is actively supervising.**
     - o **You should always swim with a buddy.**
   - **Even when a lifeguard is present, swimming at a designated swimming area that is part of a natural body of water requires more caution.**
   - **Before swimming in a new area, become familiar with its conditions and hazards. Check with lifeguards or park rangers to find out what to look for.**
   - **Safety equipment should also be at the swimming site.**
   - Ask students: **What are some hazards associated with natural bodies of water?**

     Answer: *Responses should include the following:*
     - o *Changing weather conditions*
     - o *Currents*
     - o *Dams*
     - o *Cold temperatures*
     - o *Waves*
     - o *Obstructions*

   - Ask students: **What are some pieces of safety equipment that should be at a swimming site?**
     Answer: *Responses should include the following:*
     - o *A safety post (a post with rescue equipment attached to it)*
     - o *A heaving line (a strong, lightweight rope, 40 to 50 feet long)*
     - o *A ring buoy (a buoyant ring with 40 to 50 feet of lightweight line attached)*
     - o *A reaching pole (a 10-to 15 feet long pole)*
     - o *A rescue tube (a vinyl foam-filled support with a towline and shoulder strap; usually carried*

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by lifeguards)
- o *Telephone or other means of communication to alert emergency help*

- **Before you swim anywhere, check the conditions to be sure it is safe for swimming.**
- Ask students: **What things should you consider to determine if it is appropriate for swimming?**

  Answer: Responses should include the following:
  - o *If there are currents, fast-moving water or waves*
  - o *Water temperature*
  - o *The depth of the water*
  - o *Plant and animal life*

- **The first time in the water, walk in. Don't jump or dive. Check for objects under the surface.**
- **Never dive headfirst into water unless it is clearly marked for diving.**
  - o **A head-first entry into shallow water is the leading cause of head, neck or back injuries.**
- **Never dive into cloudy or murky (dark) water.**
  - o **You don't know what is beneath the surface.**
- **Don't dive headfirst into waves.**
  - o **You don't know how deep the water is since it changes when waves come in.**
- **Weather conditions can make the natural water environment more dangerous.**
- **Always check the weather before heading out to an aquatic environment.**
- **Leave the water at the first sound of thunder or sight of lightning. If possible, get to an enclosed area during an electrical storm. Do not stay in an open area, under a tree, or near anything metal.**
- **You should wait at least 30 minutes after the last sound of thunder is heard before going back in the water.**
- **Even at a designated swim area, the water may be dangerous after a storm.**
- **Heavy rains and flooding can cause strong currents. The clarity and depth of the water may change, and new unseen obstacles may become hazards.**

7. Relay the following key points and facilitate the discussion questions:

- **A final important rule to cover today is a dangerous activity: hyperventilation then extended breath holding.**
- **Extremely rapid or deep breathing followed by swimming underwater is dangerous and can cause even an accomplished swimmer to suddenly lose consciousness and drown.**
- **Aquatic facilities have rules that do not allow any prolonged breath holding or hyperventilation. In fact, lifeguards are taught to stop any games, contests or activities that encourage this dangerous behavior.**

8. Read each scenario below to students. After each scenario, have students consider the consequences and respond by telling what they think might happen. Then, discuss how the accidents could have been prevented by following the rules.

Scenario 1

You are babysitting and were instructed by the parents to give the toddler you are watching a bath. The phone rings from another room. What should you do? What could go wrong?

Answer: *Responses will vary but may include the following:*
o *What should you do?*
  ▪ *There are two good options: You should either let the phone ring or take the child with you. Never, ever leave a young child unattended in the bathtub.*
o *What could go wrong?*
  ▪ *The child could slip under the water and drown.*

Scenario 2

You and two other friends are exploring in a park on a hot summer day. You come upon a small river. Your friends—who claim that they are pretty good swimmers—say they are going to jump in the water to cool off. What should you do? What could go wrong?

Answer: *Responses will vary but may include the following:*
o *What should you do?*
  ▪ *You should not go in the water and should convince your friends not to either. You should go to a place that is designated for swimming and is supervised by a lifeguard.*
o *What could go wrong?*
  ▪ *So many things could go wrong! There could be dangerous conditions, such as a strong current under the surface of the water or unexpected vegetation or animal life. The water could be very cold. The water quality could be poor. Any of these things could lead to illness or accidents which include drowning.*

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Scenario 3

You and a friend are swimming at a public pool where there are lifeguards on duty. Your friend challenges you to a contest to see who can swim the farthest underwater without taking a breath. What should you do? What could go wrong?

Answer: Responses will vary but may include the following:
o *What should you do?*
  ▪ *You should not engage in the contest, and you should explain to your friend the dangers of hyperventilation and extended breath holding.*
o *What could go wrong?*
  ▪ *You or your friend could lose consciousness and possibly drown.*

Scenario 4

You are at the ocean with your family. There are lifeguards on duty, but you place your beach items kind of far from where the nearest lifeguard station. As the day goes on, the wind and waves start to get stronger. Suddenly, you find yourself caught in a rip current. What should you do?

Answer: Responses should include the following:
- *Call for help.*
- *If the current carries you straight out, try to swim parallel to the shoreline until you are out of the current. Then swim towards shore, away from the current, and at an angle.*
- *If you cannot swim out of the current, float on your back or tread water, and wave your arms for help.*

9. Optional Summary and Evaluation Exit Ticket: Have students log on to the Kahoot! site to participate in an interactive review of the rules for water safety (Link).

10. Distribute a Pool Safely Pledge and an International Water Safety Day sticker to each student. Have students complete the pledge. Collect the completed pledges.

11. Optional variation with school/parent approval: Have students' log-in to computers. Have them go to the following site: https://www.poolsafely.gov/pledge/ and take the *Pool Safely* Pledge.

12. Relay the following key points to wrap up the lesson:

- **Knowing how to swim, making smart choices around the water and knowing what to do if something goes wrong can make a difference between life and death.**
- **On this International Water Safety Day and throughout the rest of the year, DO YOUR PART, BE WATER SMART!**
- **Be sure to share what you have learned today with your family and friends to help them become water smart, too.**

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Do Your Part, Be Water Smart! Celebrating International Water Safety Day Handout

Download the handout at internationalwatersafetyday.org under Shared Resource, and distribute to participants.

Do Your Part, Be Water Smart!

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The American Red Cross wants you to learn the basics for keeping yourself, your family and friends safe in and around the water every day.

It all begins with learning to swim!
Swim lessons teach skills you need to enjoy the water safely.

Swim as a pair near a lifeguard's chair.
Never swim alone.

Look before you leap.
Be sure that it's a safe place and time to swim.

Follow the rules.
They help keep you safe. Always listen to the lifeguards.

Don't just pack it, wear your life jacket.
All boaters should wear U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets. Inexperienced swimmers should wear them in or around water.

Think, so you don't sink.
Know what to do if you get in trouble in the water. Floating or treading can help you think!

Reach or throw, don't go!
Reach or throw an object to help someone in trouble in the water to safety. Never go in the water to try to help.

Stay away from drains!
Flat, outdated drain covers can create suction and hold you underwater. Tie hair back and avoid loose clothing and jewelry while swimming.

Get started today by taking the pledge to *Pool Safely* at **poolsafely.gov**!

To find out how to sign up for Red Cross swim lessons and to learn more about water safety, visit **redcross.org/watersafety.**

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