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## Autism - Teaching and learning through non-typical methods

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Teaching children with autism to swim may provide many benefits later in life

Because we know that children with autism don't always learn in the same way that typical children do, parents need to explore and implement programs that cater to their special needs. Of course there is [Applied Behavior Analysis](#) (ABA) which seems to be a solid choice for reaching children with ASD. There are also many other methods and the use of more [advanced technology](#) as well.

One method that may introduce new concepts and strengthen social interactions to children with autism is called [Adapted Aquatics](#) and has been taught near the Toledo, OH area since 1995. Instructor [Jim Beeson](#) teaches children with autism in non-typical ways to match their needs of learning (which are also non-typical). Children learn both swimming concepts as well as social skills while in the water. Beeson has been teaching children with autism and other disabilities for the past 40 years.

Beeson says, "If the child is a visual learner, we use task cards with and without pictures to develop successful goals. And if the child learns best verbally, we use verbal cues along with the task cards. Each stage of the child's session is aimed at social development, cooperation between adult and child and water safety skills. Once these goals are met, we also introduce more complex tasks, such as independent locker rooms skills and vocational skills in and around the pool."

The Goals of the program are:

- To provide a non-threatening learning environment, and
- To use teaching methods that will enhance the student's learning process.
- To help each student with their fears or non-fears of being in the water.
- To use the warm water platform to help the student achieve.
- To focus not only on the swimming concepts, but on the social interactions that most students are lacking.

Parents may want to look into swimming classes in their area and inquire about any programs geared to children with ASD. Those in areas like [Toledo](#) are fortunate to have [these opportunities](#) nearby. Many children with autism enjoy the water and have "swimming days" as part of the curriculum at school year round. These days, supervised by

school staff, are designed more for the children to play in the water at their own pace, follow directions, and to learn some social skills.

Why are [swimming lessons](#) so important? Drowning is known to be a leading cause of death among people with ASD. Children with ASD certainly love the water most of the time, but are not born with enough skill to prevent the dangers of it. Classes like those taught by Mr. Beeson can improve these skills and the additional social interaction techniques he adds help children with autism learn appropriate ways to behave with others while acquiring lasting and useful basic life skills. All this is done in ways that are not typical and truly created for the learning style that the is the most effective for the child.