

PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE

TO: *MAYOR AND COUNCILLORS*

SUBJECT: SU: LEARN TO SWIM PILOT PROGRAM

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT the report titled “SU: Learn to Swim Pilot Program” dated July 16, 2026, of the Parks, Recreation and Culture Committee meeting, be received for information.

REPORT

The Parks, Recreation and Culture Committee, at its meeting held on July 16, 2026, received and adopted the attached report providing Council with an update on the School Learn to Swim Pilot Program.

On behalf of the Parks, Recreation and
Culture Committee,

Councillor D. Tetrault
Chair

Councillor J. Wang
Vice Chair

TO: PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE (PRCC)
FROM: GENERAL MANAGER PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURE
SUBJECT: **SU: LEARN TO SWIM PILOT PROGRAM**
PURPOSE: To provide an update on the Learn to Swim Pilot Program

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the report titled “SU: Learn to Swim Pilot Program” dated July 16, 2026, be received for information.

1.0 POLICY SECTION

The Learn to Swim Pilot Program aligns with the following Council adopted policies, plans and strategies.

- Social Sustainability Strategy (2011)
- Burnaby Promise (2024)
- Burnaby Strategic Plan (2022)
- Benefits Based Approach (2024)
- *Making Life Better* Parks Recreation and Culture Plan (2026)

2.0 BACKGROUND

In February of 2023 Council directed staff to explore a swim program partnership with the Burnaby School District for elementary students to be introduced in the 2023/2024 school year. Council approved \$206,000 in 2025 and \$412,000 in 2026 of one-time funding for this program. A Grade 5 swim program was developed and delivered in two seasons at Fred Randall Pool at Edmonds Community Centre for schools identified by the Burnaby School District. The third season is being offered in fall 2026.

The goal of the Learn to Swim Pilot Program is to ensure every Grade 5 student in Burnaby has the opportunity to develop essential swimming and water safety skills, regardless of their background or circumstances, creating a foundation for lifelong safety, confidence, and participation in aquatic activities.

3.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

The average Grade 5 class size is thirty students. The swim program consists of eight - 30 minutes lessons over four weeks, with a ratio of 1:6 for swim instructor to students. The students are divided into two groups with one group having their lesson while the other group has an open swim. The groups then switch so the Grade 5 class is in the pool for 60 minutes each time.

Some students require 1:1 support to participate, which increases the need for instructors in the pool. Sessions have been held at Fred Randall Pool, as staffing limitations prevented the use of other pools. The funding is used for staff costs, programming, materials, and transportation if the school requires it. The pilot requested for fall 2024 was executed in the winter of 2025, as it took some time to collaborate with the school district to identify interested schools, and coordinate the program, transportation needs, and staffing requirements.

The table below illustrates the learn to swim pilot program participating elementary schools and student enrollment since Winter 2025:

	Winter 2025	Fall 2025	Fall 2026 (Projected)
Participating Schools	Edmonds Douglas Road	Douglas Road 12 th Avenue Morley	Edmonds Douglas Road 12 th Avenue Morley Cameron
Student Participants	64	184	TBA

To date, a total of 248 grade 5 students participated in the lessons over the last 2 years. The goal is to continue to increase participation rate in 2026 with the five schools identified by the School District. Although additional schools were invited to participate, participation was influenced by each school's scheduling, transportation, staffing, and instructional priorities.

As the program continues to evolve and demonstrate success, participation may expand based on school interest and operational capacity. Most of the children in these swim lessons are not participating in regular lesson programs, the children and the teachers have really enjoyed the program, and we are seeing this with repeat school participation.

While the swim pilot is intended to enhance access for all school age residents, those who may not otherwise be able to participate due to financial barriers can also access the City's swim programs through the *FAIR Play* program, which has seen year-over-year increases in participation.

Year	2024	2025	2026 YTD
# of residents accessing swim programs with FAIR Play	627	797	517

Key Challenges:

- **Lifeguard and instructor availability** remains the primary limiting factor. Despite strong lifeguard recruitment, staffing during the day remains a challenge. Seventy-five percent of the current aquatic team are high school or post-secondary students, limiting their availability during the day.
- **Scheduling conflicts** with school lunch periods and dismissal times restricts feasible lesson hours to between 12:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m.
- **Limited pool space** on Tuesdays and Thursdays (due to lap swimming and aqua fitness programs) further narrows available time slots.

Waitlists for Regular Lessons:

Waitlists for lessons overall have stabilized due to several initiatives including this program. Focus on in-demand levels, increased staffing, space allocation, and registration policies also help improve access to swimming lessons. Waitlists have reduced overall with very few inquiries related to the inability to register for the desired levels of swimming classes. Most clients on waitlists are looking for different days and time options but can register for classes. The future opening of Burnaby Lake Recreation Centre and Cameron Community Centre will continue to improve access to swimming lessons in Burnaby.

Next Steps:

- Staff continue to explore scheduling and staffing solutions that could enable additional schools to participate in future sessions.
- Lessons learned help refine scheduling for 2026, including reviewing instructional capacity.

4.0 COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Not applicable.

5.0 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

In 2025, this Learn to Swim Program received \$206,000 in one-time funding. Of this amount, \$35,000 was used to deliver the program to 248 Grade 5 students from three schools. Transportation costs for Douglas Road Elementary students to Fred Randall Pool accounted for \$9,000 of the total program costs. Excluding transportation, the average cost to deliver the program is \$5,000 per Grade 5 class.

In 2026, Council approved \$420,000 in one-time funding to expand the program. The Burnaby School District identified five schools to participate in the fall of 2026.

Continuation of the Learn to Swim program between the School District and City will be discussed as part of the 2027 budget process.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Morrison-Clark, General Manager Parks, Recreation and Culture

ATTACHMENTS

Not applicable.

REPORT CONTRIBUTORS

This report was prepared by Carol Chard, Manager Recreation Services, and reviewed by David Rose, Manager, Recreation Services and Judy Hamanishi, Director Recreation.