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CERINI & ASSOCIATES, LLP | CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANTS  
PRESENTS

# LESSON PLAN

VOL.24  
SPRING 2021

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WREAKING HAVOC IN SCHOOLS**

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***...AND MORE!***

**BRINGING A UNIQUE UNDERSTANDING OF KEY ISSUES FACING PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS**

## FROM THE EDITOR - SHARI DIAMOND, CIA

It has been one full year since COVID-19 came to town and turned so many lives upside down. Adapting to all the changes has been a challenge for everyone, but as more people are getting vaccinated and the number of cases is on a downward trend, we are starting to see a light at the end of the tunnel. The weather is getting nicer, the days are getting longer, the flowers are starting to bloom, social gathering restrictions are being reduced and/or lifted, and hope is filling the void.

As we wind down the 2020-2021 school year and start preparing for the next school year, we hope that we have a better handle on what the future will bring, particularly from an expense and revenue perspective. The government passed the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 in which \$1.9 trillion dollars will be going to help provide economic relief from the devastating impact of the pandemic. Per the Department of Education, \$122 billion from the Plan will help achieve President Biden's goal to open a majority of K-8 schools within his first 100 days in office. The expectation is for schools to use these funds with the purpose of getting students back in the classrooms for in-person instruction. New York State is slated to receive approximately \$8.9 billion dollars. The Plan also includes \$7.6 billion for special education and children and youth experiencing homelessness. While some districts have already implemented protocols for partial in-person learning, the funds will be much needed to bring everyone back. The biggest challenge is ensuring that these funds will supplement, not supplant, support for education, as that can create a big gap in future funding. Good planning and some creativity will be needed.

In this edition, we will talk about ways to improve the quality of food served to children while also getting a higher reimbursement from the State, best practices for managing inventory of Chromebook devices, providing education about safe swimming practices, and more!

We wish you a happy spring and summer and good luck with the budget!

*Shari Diamond*

# NOTICE!

## SCHOOL BUDGET

## VOTE

## COMING UP!

# MAY 18, 2021\*

*\*Some schools may hold the vote on May 11, 2021 as the 18th is a religious holiday for some.*

**BEST OF LUCK AND  
HAPPY VOTING!**

## IN THE NEWS:

### VACCINATION REPORTING:

On February 26, 2021, Gov. Cuomo issued Executive Order 202.96, which repealed the requirement for school districts to report vaccination data for teachers. Since local health departments have this data, they will be required to report to the State. Governor Cuomo stated that the data of vaccinated staff can help with policy on school re-opening plans for in-person learning.

### STATE TESTING:

Biden administration has announced that it will require all states to administer tests required by federal law despite the pandemic. However, states will be able to shorten tests, delay them and apply for waivers on accountability designations based on them.

### SUFFOLK SCHOOL BUS CAMERA IN EFFECT:

On March 1st, Suffolk County adopted the new school bus camera program to reduce the number of drivers who illegally pass stopped school buses. For the first 60 days, drivers who are caught will get a warning. Fines will start though on May 1st at \$250 and will increase with subsequent violations. The company BUSPATROL is based in Virginia and is likely to be the largest of its kind in the nation, with cameras equipped on about 4,500 buses in Suffolk. Almost all Suffolk school districts have joined the program. The company will pay for all program costs and in return will receive 45% of the fee and penalty revenue while the remaining 55% will go to the County. Buses will have bumper stickers warning that cameras will be recording when the red lights are flashing. The camera is said to be able to capture license plate numbers over eight lanes of traffic.

### SUMMER MEAL PROGRAM:

The USDA extended waivers for some school meal rules through September 30th, allowing schools more flexibility to feed children during the summer as students continue to be impacted by COVID-19. The waiver covers several areas:

- ▶ Allow schools and community programs to serve free meals under the summer food program rules in all areas. That program is usually restricted to areas that meet certain poverty thresholds.
- ▶ Allow schools to serve meals outside of typical mealtimes and group settings, allowing for "grab and go" options that families can take home during remote learning or when it is not safe to eat in a group setting.
- ▶ Allow parents to pick up one or more meals for their children, even if the children are not present.

### NOTICE FROM NYSED:

This is a reminder to all districts that the 2020-2021 Textbook, Software and Library Materials Aid will be frozen **April 30, 2021**. Therefore, districts are encouraged to review the 2020-2021 IMA output report on the Web and submit any necessary ST-3 changes as well as Form A Schedule C changes relating to the Textbook, Software & Library Aid calculations to State Aid via 2020-2021 SAMS by **April 19, 2021**.

### NEW PANDEMIC PLANNING POLICY

On September 7, 2020, Governor Cuomo signed into law Chapter 168 of the Laws of 2020 that requires public employers, including public school districts, to adopt a continuation of operations plan should the Governor declare a public health emergency involving communicable disease. The legislation (*S.8617-B/ A.10832*) amends subdivision 2 of section 2801-a of New York Education Law to require that District Safety Plans include protocols for responding to a declared public health emergency involving a communicable disease that are "substantially consistent" with the provisions of section 27-c of the Labor Law. The date these plans are due are **April 1, 2021**.

Many districts have already created a policy for School Safety Plans and Teams. NYSSBA has created a sample Pandemic Planning policy to meet the requirements of the new laws mentioned above. If your district has not already adopted pandemic planning as a separate policy, you may want to consider including some of the language from the [NYSSBA sample policy](#) into your policy for School Safety Plans and Teams.

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# FARM TO SCHOOL: IMPROVING STUDENT AND COMMUNITY HEALTH



## WHAT IS YOUR ROLE?

Identify what small and achievable actions you can accomplish within your current role.

### As a Food Service Director or Food Service Worker,

- ▶ Are you familiar with what local products are available from your existing distributors?
- ▶ Do you order through the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Program, and if so, have you noticed items that are labelled as “local?”
- ▶ Are you familiar with the small purchase thresholds of your town and state? Have you ever done a geographic preference bid?
- ▶ Are your team members comfortable processing fresh produce and, if not, are there pre-processed products you can source from within your state or region?

### If you are a teacher,

- ▶ What areas of your subject overlap with food studies?

Connections to food systems and farms are relevant in almost any field. New York’s Agriculture in the Classrooms has a wealth of virtual resources with connections to various subject areas.

### As a student, staff, parent, or community member,

- ▶ Identify who within your district could be interested in Farm to School.
- ▶ Is there a wellness committee? For most districts, they are the central starting point for health and nutrition efforts.
- ▶ Is there a school garden? If so, could the garden become more integrated into the school curriculum or accessible to the community?

In a year when school food service departments are facing formidable challenges including emergency meals, nonexistent a la carte sales, and school closures, adding a Farm to School initiative may be the last thing on your mind. But with the supply chain breakdowns and health inequities that have come to the forefront over the past year, Farm to School is more relevant than ever. Not only are there concrete benefits for student and community health, but there are also financial incentives that make Farm to School efforts attractive, especially in such a tight budget year.

Districts with Farm to School programs see an average increase of 9% in meal participation, with additional measurable benefits in academic achievement, fruit and vegetable consumption, and student morale. Supporting local farmers also improves the economic viability of your community, increasing jobs and generating an average of \$2 in economic activity for every \$1 spent on local food. Farm to School is one of the most valuable investments a district can make to improve quality of life for students and families inside of school and out.

Your district may already be conducting activities that fall under the “Farm to School” umbrella, and if not, there are endless resources to make adopting these practices easy and painless.

Based on our own experience on the East End and conversations with state and national partners, we’ve crafted a guide to get you started:

## WHO ARE YOUR ALLIES?

If you are the lone champion within your district, it is important to identify internal and external allies who can support your efforts. Talk with colleagues, students, and administrators. Once you have identified a few goals, reach out to individuals or organizations doing similar work. Usually, they are happy to share resources.

New York State Department of Education has an interactive map that lists all known Farm to School programs statewide. You may be surprised to find that some of your neighboring districts are Farm to School focused.

If you plan to start a school garden, Slow Food East End and Cornell Cooperative Extension both employ Master Gardeners who can consult and provide a wealth of resources for getting started.

If you are ready to incorporate more local food on your menu, Jerry Shulman Produce works directly with school districts on Long Island, sending out a monthly wholesale list and delivering local produce directly to the Office of General Services Warehouse in Brentwood. At East End Food Institute, we work closely with schools on the East End to deliver minimally processed local produce items.

## WHAT ARE THE INCENTIVES?

While Farm to School has many inherent benefits, there are also financial incentives to increase local purchases. Districts can apply for a Farm to School grant from both the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets and the USDA. Both grants can give you the funding needed to hire a Farm to School Coordinator, set up a school garden, pilot locally sourced recipes, and get your program set up for success. Once your Farm to School program is established, you could also consider applying for Farm to Institution NYS’ training program, which provides a small implementation grant to bolster existing Farm to School efforts.

New York State also has an initiative to reimburse schools who purchase 30% or more of their ingredients from within the State at 25 cents per meal (*yes, you read that right!*). So long as schools can document that 30% of their lunch purchases went to NYS growers, they qualify for the higher reimbursement.

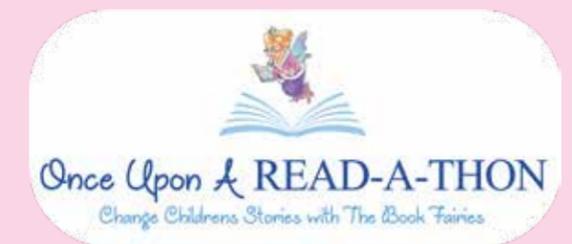
Unfortunately, the 30% reimbursement initiative is more difficult for Long Island schools to achieve since the Long Island School Food Co-op does not receive NYS milk. Since milk is such a large portion of school food purchases, this puts upstate schools who can purchase local dairy at an advantage. However, this reimbursement initiative is now funded for the third year in a row, which demonstrates the Governor’s commitment to making Farm to School financially viable. With all of the schools on Long Island banding together to advocate, we’re confident that there can be an opportunity for a successful NYS dairy bid, or a change in the state policy that makes it easier for Long Island schools to succeed.



**HEATHER C. MEEHAN**  
FARM TO SCHOOL COORDINATOR  
EAST END FOOD INSTITUTE

*The East End Farm to School Project is a collaborative project focused on three neighboring school districts on the South Fork of Long Island -- Bridgehampton School District, Southampton Union Free School District, and Tuckahoe Common School District. We received two grants from the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, in 2016 and 2020. East End Food Institute, a non-profit and burgeoning food hub, joined the project in 2020 under this second grant to support the schools’ procurement efforts and Heather Meehan serves as the Farm to School Coordinator under the same grant. You can reach us at [farmtoschool@eastendfood.org](mailto:farmtoschool@eastendfood.org) to connect and learn more.*

## BOOK FAIRIES READ-A-THON 2021



### ABOUT THE ONCE UPON A READ-A-THON

The Book Fairies ONCE UPON A READ-A-THON 2021, is a unique virtual fundraising event that will allow individuals of all ages to participate, at any level, in a month-long reading event in **MAY**. In addition to fundraising, The Book Fairies are promoting reading as they invite participants to read for 30 minutes each day of the month.

During the month we have amazing guest authors that read their books and answer question on Facebook live. The Book Fairies will also have fun giveaways during the month as well. This year’s event already has about 20 incredible authors – children and adult – who will be participating.

### LET’S CHANGE CHILDREN’S STORIES TOGETHER!

Our goal is to help raise both awareness and funds for The Book Fairies mission of sourcing new and like-new books and distributing them to underserved communities, removing access to books as a barrier to achieving literacy.

[www.thebookfairies.org](http://www.thebookfairies.org)

CHROMEBOOK INVENTORY  
**BEST PRACTICES**



**T**he pandemic left many districts scrambling to provide remote education. When the pandemic hit, many districts did not have a full 1:1 device initiative in place. In turn, districts were forced to react quickly, providing teachers, staff, and students with whatever devices were on-hand, and in many cases, without properly documenting who the devices were given to. As we start to swing back into in-person instruction, below are sample inventory procedures for managing and tracking your Chromebook devices.

**For new shipments of devices:**

- ▶ Obtain the serial numbers prior to the delivery of the devices for insurance purposes and for comparison to devices received.
- ▶ If insuring the devices, the Purchasing department can use the listing of serial numbers received from the vendor to create a purchase order and insure the Chromebooks for accidental damage and theft.
- ▶ Confirm the shipment received agrees to the purchase order and invoice(s).
- ▶ Once the device has been received, its serial number confirmed, it is properly insured (*as appropriate – based on a district's procedure*), and set up with the necessary applications, the **Information Technology (“IT”)** department/the outsourced company responsible for inventory must input the device information (*serial number, asset tag, device type, purchase date, location of device and any other information required per the district's policy*) into the district's Chromebooks for Education Management Console (“*Google Console*”)/other management or inventory system to enroll, track, and later assign the device.

**For all devices:**

- ▶ Once the inventoried devices are ready for dissemination, the IT department/the outsourced company responsible for inventory must update Google Console with the individual to whom the device has been assigned and/or the assigned location of the device.
- ▶ If being given to a student or staff member, the parent/student/staff member should sign an agreement that acknowledges the exchange and notates the serial number and asset tag number of the device being distributed.

- ▶ If a device is assigned to a student, the district's student management system should also be updated to indicate whether the student has a device (*similar to a musical instrument*).
- ▶ If a device becomes lost/stolen, the status of the device in Google Console needs to be updated to “*disabled*” until the device is located and returned. If a different type of management or inventory system is being used, the system should be updated to reflect that the device is lost/stolen.
- ▶ If the device becomes obsolete and is used for parts, the status of the device in Google Console/other management or inventory system needs to be updated to reflect this.
- ▶ If the device becomes obsolete, the status of the device in Google Console needs to be updated to “*deprovisioned*,” presented to the Board, appropriately sanitized, and disposed of in accordance with District policy and procedure. If using another management or inventory system, be sure to update the device to reflect that it has been disposed of.
- ▶ If repairs need to be done, the district's repair management system should be updated to indicate the status of the device, the location of the device and the new device given to the student/staff member.
- ▶ The parent/student/staff member should sign an agreement for the newly assigned device, and the aforementioned steps should be followed.
- ▶ In addition, the repairs should be tracked for internal knowledge of the remaining useful life of the device.
- ▶ An inventory of all devices should be performed at least annually, ideally through physical observation if possible. Otherwise, devices should be pinged (*this requires the device to be on*) regularly.
- ▶ In conjunction, a review should be performed to analyze the inventory of devices against a listing of those active students and employees to ensure no terminated/inactive employees or graduated/inactive students are still in possession of a device.
- ▶ A periodic review of device additions and disposals should be performed by someone in the IT department on a sample basis.

**NICHOLLE MEZIER, CPA, MBA**  
SUPERVISOR



**UNEMPLOYMENT FRAUD  
WREAKING HAVOC IN SCHOOLS**

**T**he pandemic left thousands of people unemployed across the United States. The federal government responded by implementing a new unemployment insurance program under the **Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES)** Act. Shortly after stimulus money began to come out, so did the hackers, filing countless fraudulent unemployment claims. Just search the term “*unemployment fraud*” and pages of news about rampant fraud from all over the country will come up. What's more troubling is that this has been happening at a massive level since last summer. New York State identified 425,000 cases of fraudulent unemployment benefit claims, totaling a whopping \$5.5 billion in benefits. These cases slow down the process for those who truly need it and cost taxpayers billions each year. Back in June 2020, a massive unemployment scheme struck several central New York school districts. In the Syracuse City School District alone, 100 to 150 employees were affected.

Per the U.S. Department of Labor, unemployment insurance fraud can take many forms. Employer fraud may include certain actions to avoid tax liability or establishing a fictitious employer account to enable fraudulent claims against that account. Claimant fraud may include knowingly submitting false information, knowingly continuing to collect benefits when ineligible, certifying for benefits under state law while being able and available to work, or intentionally collecting full benefits while not reporting wages or income. Additionally, identify theft may result in unemployment insurance fraud that is neither the fault of the employer nor the identify theft victim.

*How does the scam work?* **Personal identifiable information (PII)** was most likely obtained from a previous cyber hack and there have been many major attacks within the past 5 years where such information could have come from. The scammers are using the PII to create an unemployment claim and then intercept the money. There are cases where the money was sent to the victim's actual bank account or debit card was sent to the victim's address. Fraudsters, in turn, may then try to contact the victim by phone, email or text impersonating an unemployment official. The scammers are using the identity of people currently employed as well as those who have been retired, making it all the more difficult for HR staff to vet the unemployment claims.

Planning is key in reducing the impact of these situations. Dealing with fraud is not a matter of “*if*” but “*when*.” Having a formal procedure in place with actionable steps is one of the best ways to manage fraud. This should include:

- ▶ **Unemployment claims monitoring:** Human resources staff should perform their due diligence to investigate all claims against their district to determine if the claim is valid or fraudulent.
- ▶ **Data breach analysis:** Districts should verify that the personal information was not obtained through a data breach at their district. If a breach occurred, the district should investigate their liability.
- ▶ **Notify the Department of Labor (DOL):** The DOL must be notified of this false claim for unemployment benefits. Each state has different resources to report unemployment insurance fraud.
- ▶ **Communicate identity theft and unemployment insurance fraud procedures with employees:** Plans are only effective if they are followed. Verify that your employees understand their part in preventing and reporting fraud. *Ex. A letter/e-mail notifying all district employees of the recent unemployment scams that are occurring and advising employees how to handle the situation should they fall victim to an unemployment scam.*
- ▶ **Maintain Records:** Properly record information about the fraud. This includes all communications with government entities, the victim's information, and company employment records.

Employees who are victims should take steps to proactively protect themselves by:

- ▶ Reporting the fraud to the state unemployment benefits agency ([NYS Department of Labor NYDOL.gov](https://www.ny.gov/department-of-labor)), which [can be done online](#) or calling the NYS Fraud Hotline: (1-888) 598-2077. Many have also found it helpful to report the fraud to their local police department.
- ▶ Protecting their credit by either freezing their credit or placing a fraud alert on their credit reports.
- ▶ Reviewing their credit history reports from the three major credit bureaus.
- ▶ Staying alert for new signs of identity theft by keeping a close eye on bank statements and other financial account statements, utility bills, credit card statements, medical bills, and medical insurance statements.

**CAREER DAY INC. – VIRTUAL PROGRAMS FOR SCHOOLS**

**C**areer Day Inc. has modified its in-person program to a virtual platform in response to the pandemic. The virtual program provides schools with an opportunity for their high school and middle school students to virtually connect with individuals from a variety of careers. They will be providing a virtual program at the Hicksville High School on April 7th and at the Robert Moses Middle School in North Babylon on April 23rd.

Career Day Inc.™ is registered at Nassau BOCES (*Board of Cooperative Educational Services*) and Western Suffolk BOCES Arts in Education Exploratory Enrichment program.



**FOR MORE INFO AND TO SCHEDULE A PROGRAM AT YOUR SCHOOL, CONTACT:  
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**LENNY GIAMBALVO**  
STAFF ACCOUNTANT

# SWIMMING SAFETY EDUCATION

It's hard to imagine swimming when temperatures are not yet enticing enough to put on a bathing suit. But, summer will be here soon, and with water to our north and south on Long Island, this is the perfect time to provide education on water safety. Swim Strong Foundation, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization founded in New York by Shawn Slevin, has a mission to reduce unintended death due to drowning and water-based accidents. They are entering their 15th year having met many milestones including teaching more than 10,000 people how to swim and giving more than \$1 Million in free swim lessons to families in need. They have also initiated legislation to mandate the training of water safety in NY schools. To connect with students, they created a water safety educational program that focuses on the potential dangers for different bodies of water as well as providing techniques to make informed decisions about swimming. Their program, "Know Before You Go™" was recognized by the USA Swimming Foundation. Topics addressed in the training include:

- ▶ Definition of Drowning/ Drowning Statistics
- ▶ General Water Safety tips
- ▶ Water Safety at Home
- ▶ Understand the nature and environment of these different bodies of water: Pools, Lakes, Ponds, Rivers and Oceans
- ▶ Dangers of RIP currents...what causes them, how to identify them, and how to navigate safely out of them
- ▶ Safety at Water Parks and while boating
- ▶ Seasonal dangers of Tropical Storms, Hurricanes, Ice and Flooding

Statistics on water-related incidents are staggering. Globally, a person dies due to drowning every 70 seconds, and for every death, 5 more people suffer life-changing brain and spinal cord injuries due to water-based accidents. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates 95% of these tragedies were preventable.

"KNOW BEFORE YOU GO™, The Curriculum" is the educational package for schools which includes:

- ▶ curriculum for PreK-2 including slide shows and activities;
- ▶ curriculum for G3-7 including slide shows, activities and homework assignments;
- ▶ curriculum for G8-12+ including slide shows, activities and homework assignments;
- ▶ pre/post tests for G3-12; and
- ▶ a Teacher's Guide for the educators, which provides more resources per topic and age-appropriate STEM based exercises.



Standards established by the CDC. These standards are also endorsed by the Society of Health & Physical education (SHAPE). Some lessons within the curriculum can also meet select science and ELA standards. So, an English teacher could conceivably use the lessons as a non-fiction writing exercise. The curriculum is designed with schools in mind, and the curriculum program can be used for both in-person and remote learning, K-12. Lessons and activities can be adapted for students with special needs.

The lessons include teacher and student-friendly materials created in various Google applications that can be delivered through Google Classroom or similar Learning Management Systems. Student activities are electronically interactive, so there is no need for printing, scanning or attaching documents to emails. Lessons are flexible. They can be delivered as one stand-alone unit or done over a period of weeks or months. They are adaptable to most subjects, such as Health Education, Physical Education, Science, Advisory/Homeroom, or even in an after-school setting.

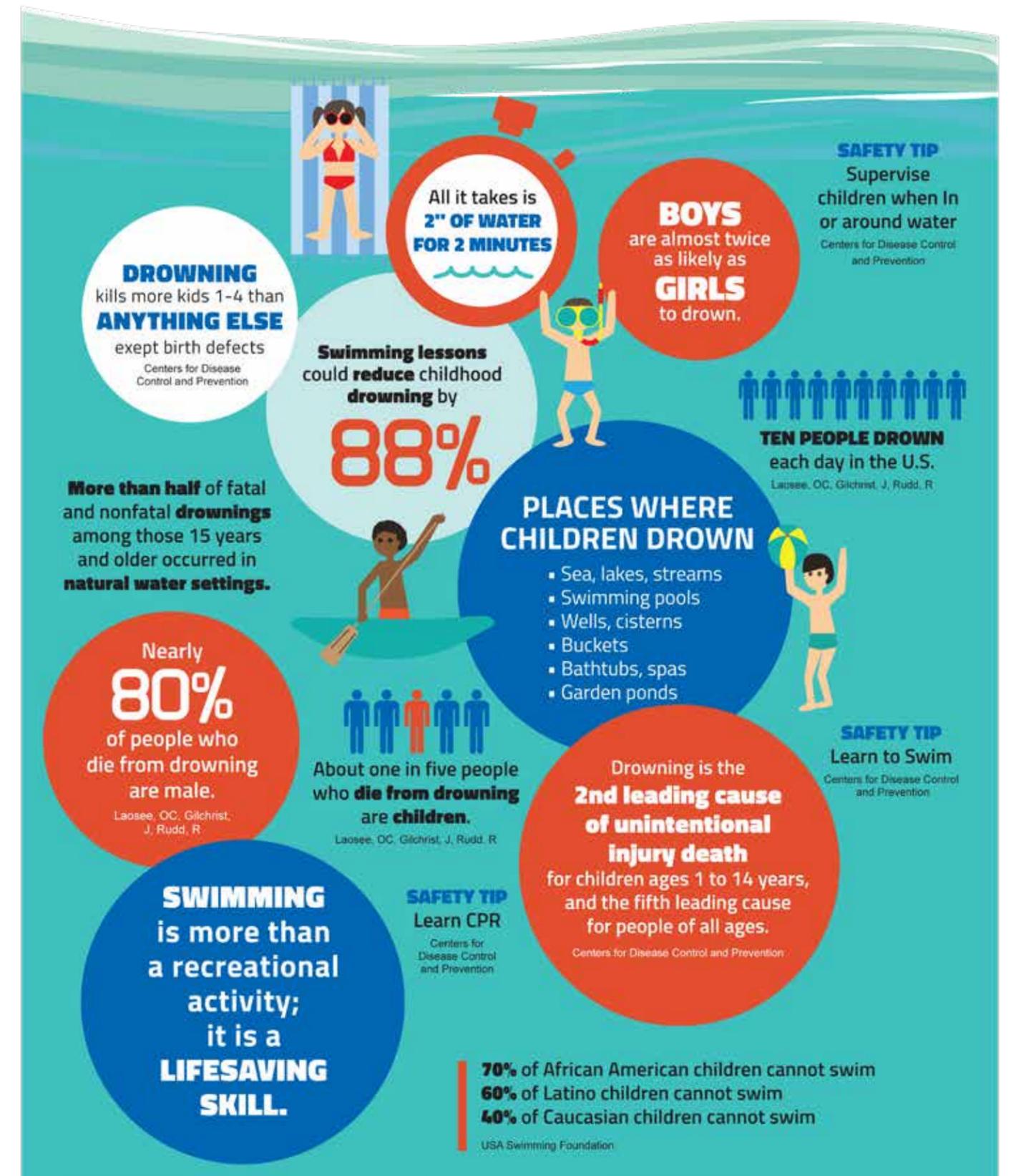
The program offers everything you need to deliver a water safety education curriculum in one complete package. Fees are based on \$15 per student.



**THIS CURRICULUM CAN SAVE LIVES!**  
**FOR MORE INFO, CONTACT:**  
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Visit [swimstrongfoundation.org](http://swimstrongfoundation.org)





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