



Zeeland Age Group Swimming (ZAGS) is a competitive swim team designed to support swimmers at every stage of their development. Whether your child is new to competitive swimming or has prior experience, ZAGS offers a positive, encouraging environment where athletes can build their skills, gain valuable meet experience, and continue growing in confidence both in and out of the pool. Our program focuses on technical development, sportsmanship, and fostering a lifelong enjoyment of swimming.

“Our coaching philosophy is rooted in creating a positive and supportive environment where young swimmers can thrive. We aim to inspire a love for the sport through skill development, enjoyment, and the building of meaningful relationships with teammates and coaches. By nurturing both personal growth and athletic progress, we help each swimmer reach their full potential-in and out of the water.” -Coach Alyssa and Coach Sara

MEET THE COACHING STAFF

Alyssa Zapata, Co-Head Coach

We're excited to welcome Coach Alyssa back for her fourth season with ZAGS! With more than a decade of experience teaching swim lessons and coaching throughout West Michigan, Alyssa brings exceptional knowledge, enthusiasm, and leadership to our team. She began coaching in 2017 and has worked with multiple programs, joining WMS in 2019 and ZAGS in 2022. In addition to her seasonal coaching, she also coaches year-round for WMS, where she especially enjoys supporting the 9-10 age group.

Sara Keen, Co-Head Coach

Coach Sara is back for her fifth season with ZAGS, and this year she's excited to lead the program alongside Coach Alyssa. A lifelong swimmer, Sara brings more than 15 years of experience coaching both competitive and non-competitive athletes. Many swimmers and families recognize her from the Rec Pool, where she leads stroke clinics and pre-season conditioning programs with energy, encouragement, and a strong technical eye. Sara competed throughout high school on both club and varsity teams, and we're fortunate to have her expertise, commitment, and passion guiding our athletes again this season.

Libby Nelesen, Assistant Coach

Coach Libby returns for her fourth season with ZAGS and continues to be a wonderful leader for our youngest swimmers. She has a true gift for helping new athletes build confidence and discover joy in the water. In addition to her role with ZAGS, Libby serves as the head coach for the Unity Christian girls' varsity swim team and teaches math at Grand Rapids Christian High School. Her expertise, patience, and enthusiasm make her an invaluable part of our coaching staff.

Jon Vos, Assistant Coach

Coach Jon has been coaching in Zeeland since 2022, contributing to WMS and to both the boys' and girls' varsity swim programs. His personal commitment to the sport extends beyond coaching, Jon competes in Masters swim events and triathlons and organizes the Mackinac Island Swim, an impressive 8.2-mile race that draws more than 400 participants annually. Jon is excited to bring his experience, passion, and team-first mindset to ZAGS as he helps young athletes strengthen their skills and grow in the sport.

Ava Schepers, Assistant Coach

We're thrilled to welcome Coach Ava back for another season with ZAGS! With more than three years of competitive swimming experience at both the high school and WMS levels, Ava brings a strong foundation in technique and a genuine love for the sport. She is passionate about inspiring younger swimmers as they develop their skills, confidence, and excitement for the water. We're glad to have her energy and dedication on deck again this year.

MEET DESCRIPTIONS

Each season there will be one invitational meet, 2-3 dual meets, and a championship meet. Swimmers must compete in at least one dual or invitational meet to be eligible to swim in the A or B championship meet. Descriptions of each meet is below.

- **Invitational:** Several local swim clubs come to one location for a large meet
- **Dual and Tri Meets:** Meet vs. one (or two) local age group swim clubs
- **A and B Championship Meets:**
 - **A Meet:** Swimmers must qualify for this meet based on their times in duals or invitationals. Guidelines for A meet qualifying times can be found @ <https://www.zps.org/z-recreation/youth/competitive-aquatics>
 - **B Meet:** Open to swimmers who do not qualify for the A meet

MEET SCHEDULE

Invitationals

Sunday, December 28: Wildcat Winter Invite @ Jenison (2140 Bauer Rd, Jenison)
Saturday, January 10: Zeeland Winter Classic @ Zeeland (3390-100th Ave, Zeeland)

Dual + Tri Meets

Saturday, January 17: Zeeland @ Hamilton (4845 - 136th Ave, Hamilton)
Saturday, January 24: Zeeland @ Jenison (2140 Bauer Rd, Jenison)
Saturday, January 31: Holland + Grand Haven @ Zeeland (3390-100th Ave, Zeeland)

Championship Meets TBA

2025 ZAGS WINTER SEASON SCHEDULE

Practice begins Monday, November 24. All practices are held at the ZW Natatorium.

Nov 24-Nov 28: Practice on M/T

5:30-6:15pm: 8 yrs & under
5:30-6:30pm: 9-10 yr olds
5:30-7pm: 11 yrs & older

Dec 1-Dec 5: Practice on M/T/TH

**Practice begins at 6pm on Tues*

5:30-6:15pm: 8 yrs & under
5:30-6:30pm: 9-10 yr olds
5:30-7pm: 11 yrs & older

Dec 8-12: Practice on M/W/TH

**Practice begin at 6pm on Wed*

5:30-6:15pm: 8 yrs & under
5:30-6:30pm: 9-10 yr olds
5:30-7pm: 11 yrs & older

Dec 15: Picture Day

Dec 18: ZAGS Night

Dec 15-19: Practice on M/W/TH

5:30-6:15pm: 8 yrs & under
5:30-6:30pm: 9-10 yr olds
5:30-7pm: 11 yrs & older

Dec 21: Masters Swim Fundraiser

Dec 22-Dec 26: Practice on M/T

5:30-6:15pm: 8 yrs & under
5:30-6:30pm: 9-10 yr olds
5:30-7pm: 11 yrs & older

Dec 28: Wildcat Winter Invite

Dec 29-Jan 2: Practice on M/T

5:30-6:15pm: 8 yrs & under
5:30-6:30pm: 9-10 yr olds
5:30-7pm: 11 yrs & older

Jan 5-Jan 9: Practice on M/T/TH

5:30-6:15pm: 8 yrs & under
5:30-6:30pm: 9-10 yr olds
5:30-7pm: 11 yrs & older

Jan 10: Zeeland Winter Classic Invite

Jan 12-Jan 16: Practice on M/W/F

5:30-6:15pm: 8 yrs & under
5:30-6:30pm: 9-10 yr olds
5:30-7pm: 11 yrs & older

Jan 17: Zeeland @ Hamilton

Jan 19-Jan 23: Practice on M/W/TH

5:30-6:15pm: 8 yrs & under
5:30-6:30pm: 9-10 yr olds
5:30-7pm: 11 yrs & older

Jan 24: Zeeland @ Jenison

Jan 26-Jan 30: Practice on M/W/TH

5:30-6:15pm: 8 yrs & under
5:30-6:30pm: 9-10 yr olds
5:30-7pm: 11 yrs & older

Jan 31: Holland + GH @ Zeeland

Feb 2-Feb 6: Practice on M/T/TH

5:30-6:15pm: 8 yrs & under
5:30-6:30pm: 9-10 yr olds
5:30-7pm: 11 yrs & older

Feb 9-Feb 14: Practice on M/T/TH

5:30-6:15pm: 8 yrs & under
5:30-6:30pm: 9-10 yr olds
5:30-7pm: 11 yrs & older

Championship Meets TBA

SWIM MEET VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AND JOB DESCRIPTIONS

Parent volunteers are integral to the success of the ZAGS program. Below, you'll find a brief overview of the positions that need to be filled for each home meet. By volunteering, we can ensure our swimmers feel supported and encouraged. Volunteer sign-up information will be shared prior to each home meet, and training will be provided as needed. Thank you for your continued support!

- **Announcer (1 volunteer needed per meet):** Announces each heat and event, starts each race, and makes various other announcements during the meet, as needed
- **Awards (1-2 volunteers needed per meet):** Label ribbons, medals, and/or other event awards and sorts them by team (or as directed). Job done during the meet, often as results become available.
- **Heat Sheets and Admissions (1-2 volunteers needed per meet):** Responsible for collecting the spectator entrance fee. At some meets, heat sheets may also be sold at the admission table.
- **Hospitality (1-2 volunteers needed per meet):** This position maintains the food hospitality room where the coaches and officials eat and break. Volunteers set-up, prepare, replenish, and clean up.
- **Lane Timer (20 volunteers needed per meet):** One-three timers work each lane and record the swimmer's time with hand-held stopwatches.
- **Marshal (2-3 volunteers needed per meet):** Supervises the waiting area of a particular age group during the meet, marks the arms of each swimmer with their event/heat/lane, and helps swimmers get to their lane on time with caps and goggles.
- **Team Spirit Coordinator (1-2 volunteers per season):** Organize ways to show our team spirit at home meets; plan and organize the End of Season Celebration for the team.
- **Volunteer Table (1-2 volunteers needed per meet):** Check in volunteers and direct them to the area where they will be working. Help fill volunteer needs at the swim meet when necessary.

EQUIPMENT

A competitive swimsuit (no board shorts), ZAGS swim cap, and goggles are required for all swimmers. Each swimmer will receive one silicone swim cap, with additional caps available for purchase. Team suits (optional) will be available to purchase. Watch for more information soon.

Caps

Each swimmer will receive one silicone swim cap, along with a t-shirt, on the first night of practice. Additional swim caps are available for purchase at each practice for \$5. Please bring exact payment, as change will not be available.

Goggles

- **Stores to Shop:** “Dick’s Sporting Goods” (Holland), or “SwimOutlet.com” (online)
- **Suggested Brands:** TYR Tracer Racing; Aqua Sphere Kayenne; Speedo Speed Socket; Speedo HydrospeX; Speedo Vanquisher

PHOTO USE DISCLAIMER FOR ZAGS EVENTS

Please note that images taken during ZAGS events may be used for promotional purposes, including but not limited to print publications, online content, websites, and social media platforms. If you prefer that your swimmer not be included in these photos, please reach out to Coach Alyssa or Coach Jon to opt out.

PARENT, SWIMMER, AND COACH EXPECTATIONS

As a Swimmer, I will...

- Value and respect all of my teammates
- Cheer for my team
- Give my full effort & attention at all practices
- Respect and listen to all coaches

As a Swimmer I Will Not...

- Take constructive feedback personally
- Disrespect my coaches, teammates, or other teams
- Make excuses for my failures or weaknesses

As a Parent, I Will...

- Encourage my child with positive feedback
- Support our team and our program
- Celebrate my child's success and help them take responsibility for weaknesses leading to constructive feedback
- Conduct myself in a way that positively reflects well on the ZAGS program

As a Parent I Will Not...

- Coach my swimmer or other swimmers outside of practice
- Speak negatively of the coach or other swimmers in my child's presence
- Address concerns with the coach in the presence of other parents or swimmers
- Engage in negative conversation with other parents in the program

As a Coach, I Will...

- Give my full effort to developing my swimmers and invest in my team
- Have a fully developed and focused plan for each practice
- Treat my swimmers and parents with respect
- Encourage my swimmers with praises
- Correct and provide constructive feedback
- Conduct myself in a way that positively reflects on the ZAGS program

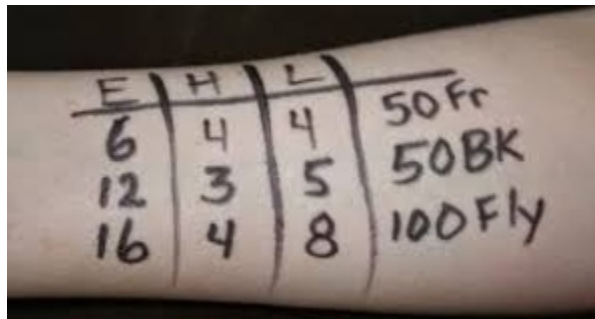
As a Coach I Will Not...

- Degrade my swimmers
- Allow negativity to foster among teammates or families
- Discuss concerns in the presence of other swimmers or families
- Be unprepared for meets and practice

A PARENT'S GUIDE TO SWIM MEETS

Planning for the Meet:

1. Bring cash. You may be charged admission as a spectator (usually under \$5 per head); you may not. It depends on the meet. Most meets also sell "heat sheets", which are a kind of program for the swim meet. More on that later. It can be helpful to purchase one, especially for your first meet, so you can decide whether or not it's useful to you for future meets.
2. Bring a pen to write times on the heat sheet and a highlighter. More on what to do with the pen and highlighter later.
3. Spectator seating is usually in bleachers. If you want or need some cushioning or back support, you'll want to plan to bring yourself a stadium seat.
4. Don't plan for your swimmer to sit with you. Swimmers belong with their teams.
5. Don't plan on going over to where the team is sitting to visit with your swimmer. Only coaches, timers, officials, and swimmers are allowed "on deck" at meets.
6. If you want to take pictures, keep in mind that the flash from cameras interferes with the timing equipment, so flash photography is not permitted at starts.
7. Swimmers need to stay hydrated and fed during meets. Pack protein and high quality carbs. Those bodies are working hard. Water bottles are necessary.
8. You may be walking on wet tile floors; wear shoes that will help keep you surefooted. Keep that in mind for your swimmer, too.
9. It can get pretty warm and humid at meets. Wearing layers is a good idea. Even better! Wear layers in our team's colors, yellow and black! Go ZAGS! Your swimmer needs to have warm clothes to wear between their swim events, too. Don't forget a towel or two!
10. Be prepared for down time between events. If you have children who need to be entertained, you may wish to have sleeping bags or blankets for them to sit on out in the hallway, behind the bleachers, etc. Plan for needing more entertainment than you think.
11. Swimmers don't have heat sheets, so how do they keep track of what events they are swimming in? By writing on themselves, of course. Each swimmer will need to have a grid on either their arm or leg showing the event number, the heat number, the lane number, and the stroke/distance. See below. An event sheet will be sent out before the meet. **If possible, please show up to the meet with the event name and number already written with Sharpie on your swimmer's arm or leg.** This will save coaches a lot of time because we will only have to fill out the heat and lane.
12. Let the coach know if you can't make the meet after you've signed up.



Getting Ready for the Meet to Start

1. Be on time. The coach will send out an email a couple of days before the meet with warm-up times. Please plan to arrive 15-minutes before the scheduled warm-up time. This is so your swimmer will have time to mark their events, find a place for their bag, and get ready to get in the water. The coach will decide if the swimmers will be swimming the entire warm-up period or for a shorter time; whatever the decision by the coach, swimmers should be available to swim when warm-ups begin.
2. Most invitational meets (not dual meets) are generally divided into morning and afternoon sessions. Morning start times are much more dependable than afternoon start times. Afternoon starts often depend on when the morning session wraps up. Be prepared to be flexible if your swimmer is participating in the afternoon session. Also be prepared to be a bit flexible about when the morning session ends... sometimes things can run late.
3. OK, back to that heat sheet and the highlighter. Heat sheets list the individual swim events, the participants names, the heat, what lane each swimmer will occupy, and if the swimmer has a history of swimming that event, what his/her previous best time swimming in that event was. To keep track of when your kid is swimming, going through the heat sheet and highlighting each of your swimmer's events can be useful.

During the Meet:

1. Record the time your swimmer achieves in each of the events they swim on the heat sheet. Your swimmer can use this information to assess their performance in the meet. The scoreboard will show lane number and time. There is also a mobile app (Meet Mobile) which records all meet results. You can search by swimmer name to view all past meets and events.
2. Be prepared for hearing that your swimmer has "DQ'd" or disqualified. The people you see walking around the pool with clipboards wearing white shirts and navy bottoms are swim meet officials. One of their jobs is to make sure the swimmers follow the rules, such as swimmers only are to use dolphin kicks during butterfly events, that the swimmers actually use the correct stroke (i.e. no freestyle during a breast stroke event); the proper turns are performed at the end of the pool, etc. When a swimmer is disqualified, this means the swimmer is not eligible for an award in that event, and their time is not recorded. Usually an official will tell them when they get out of the water and try to explain what happened. Hearing that they have DQ'd can be really tough news, especially for a new swimmer. However, this is very common! Almost every competitive swimmer will get DQ'd at some point in their swim career. Coaches will remind all swimmers that this is a chance to learn what we need to work on in practice.
3. Do cheer on your swimmer and their teammates! Your swimmer probably can't hear you, but a high-energy crowd keeps the team's energy pumping, which is a good thing. Remember, swimmers need to be able to hear at the start though, so shhh at the start, then go ahead and show them your support!
4. At each meet, there are different awards structures. All finishers above a certain place may receive ribbons; those in the top may get medals.