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Coaches are often asked what it takes to 'move up'. This is not an easy thing to nail down to specifics, but let me try to give an overview of our policy.

Generally speaking, we want to challenge each swimmer while we also motivate them to achieve the highest level of swimming for which they are capable. We can never be sure how far a youngster will go in this sport. Too often we see swimmers drop out because of pressure that came from the wrong direction or for the wrong reason.

It is of no interest to a coach to have one swimmer perform better than another. Teams are successful when every athlete is given what they need to improve. This is different for each swimmer. Some need to do more drill work, streamline better, be more flexible, develop certain muscle groups, learn to pay attention, understand rules, be more organized, more self reliant, and so on. Our differences are what make us special, and coaches try to bring out the best in each athlete. For a child to be successful it takes direction from three sources. Each has its own purpose, and should be clearly distinct from each other.

The first is the athlete. Without motivation a child is lost, but this motivation should primarily come from within with the help of the second person in the equation, the coach. Only the coach has a true and unbiased understanding of what the swimmer can be expected to do at any given time. The third person in the equation is the parent. The parent's role is not to motivate, but to support. A child needs a person they can turn to for a hug when things aren't going well. The parent is also responsible for financial support, diet requirements, shelter, and transportation. The support of a loving parent can never be underestimated. The parent is like an oasis in the desert. Swimmers don't need more critiquing of their performance, or training. Inside the gates of the pool the coach should be the authority figure for the child. Before a swim the child often has an expectation of what they will do. The coach also has an expectation for the swimmer. When parents, no matter how well intended, give 'instructions' to the swimmer, they interfere with the swimmer's thought process. No matter how they appear externally, swimmers are under a lot of stress before an event. They should only get race instructions or pep talks from their coach. What they need from their parent is a hug, and a 'good luck' type of send off. Please don't add something else for them to think about.

In evaluating your child we take into consideration:

1. Attendance at practice.
2. Conduct at practice and meets. Paying attention, following directions, willingness to try new drills or exercises
3. Team spirit. (Do they get along with teammates?)
4. Progress. (Are we going over the same things again and again?)
5. Performance. This is where meets are most important. We can only see a true example of how we (swimmer and coach) are doing unless it's under the 'pressure' of the meet experience. Time is only one ruler we use. Skills such as starts, turns, stroke mechanics, and knowledge of rules are also evaluated.
6. Attendance at meets is also important as it demonstrates a commitment of the swimmer and parent to the sport.

We all want your child to have success, but you should also note that there is limited space in the pool for each practice session. Swimmers and space are precious. We have to assign swimmers at the right time and in the right number. Often the movement of one child to another level is all it takes to motivate others to want to do better. This is not like a graduation in school. It is an ongoing process, and we want to avoid moving a child 'back' because they weren't ready.

Thank you for your support of your child, your coach and your team.

Swim-cerely,
Coach Ed