

SCA

small craft advisory

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2012 | VOL. 27 NO. 5
National Association of State Boating Law Administrators

2012 Educators of the Year

What's
new
in paddlesports

**NASBLA
launches
education
standards
panel**



LEARNING *by* DOING

By Kimberly Jenkins
NASBLA Editor

I hear and I forget.
I see and I remember.
I do and I understand."

Often attributed to Confucius, a Chinese teacher, editor, politician and philosopher, this proverb has repeatedly been proven true.

Reading and memorization certainly have their place in the learning process. For example, learning geometry would be impossible without classroom instruction about its postulates and theorems. However, doing is also critical to learning. Imagine how challenging it would be to learn how to ride a bike simply by reading a book or watching a video. In this case, it would be very difficult to understand something you had never directly seen or experienced.

Boating safety officials have long recognized the benefits of hands-on learning and have worked to incorporate it into boating safety education courses. Take, for example, the safety game Jim Roeber, past national educational officer for the United States Power Squadrons, explained in "Make a game of it"

(September-October 2011 Small Craft Advisory). Chairs and a large cooler are set up in the classroom to simulate a boat. Volunteers from the class are instructed to step off the "sinking boat" only after donning the proper life jacket. During the first run of the exercise, the life jackets are at the back of the "boat" in a "storage bin." The next time the students don their life jackets before getting "under way." This hands-on exercise works to prove the importance of wearing your life jacket.

While exercises such as these do help drive home key, individual boating safety messages, boating safety professionals are also incorporating on-the-water training for boaters to teach the mechanics of operating a boat safely. To ensure that these hands-on classes meet a prescribed minimum body of knowledge, U.S. Sailing has launched project, funded by a grant under the Sport Fish and Boating Trust Fund administered by the U.S. Coast Guard, to develop – for the first time – a set of national on-water instruction standards for recreational boaters.

Developing on-water instruction standards

"This new set of standards will represent a consensus of opinions from a wide representation of people and organizations that have vast expertise in boating education and training and skills development, using hands-on and on-water instructional approaches," according to U.S. Sailing.

The purpose of the project is to develop a set of national entry-level, skill-based standards for boaters emphasizing recreational powerboat operation. The standards will identify the outcome skills that powerboat operators will be able to demonstrate as a result of engaging in on-water instruction.

"In recent years, experiential learning has become increasingly recognized as a highly effective approach to teaching recreational boating operation," says Brian Dorval, founding partner of Think First Serve Inc. – a research, consulting and training company – who is facilitating the team's work.

The first step in this project was to create a national team of subject matter experts with on-water instruction experience in the disciplines of sail, power or paddle watercraft. The resulting team represents government, nonprofit association, industry, professional, community and public stakeholder interests.

"We believe that the open application process resulted in a team membership with diverse experiences and backgrounds not dominated by any single interest that will be reflected in the development of the standards," U.S. Sailing government relations committee chairman Jim Muldoon said in a statement.

Each team worked independently to develop standards, and then an

oversight committee reviewed the standards and selected those that were common among the three disciplines. The group then met to select the final powerboating skill standards, resulting in 37 recommended standards.

200 responses with at least 90 percent agreement on 36 of the 37 power standards.

The next phase involves developing rubrics to assess the performance of the standards. A rubric is a standard of performance for a defined population. The group held a workshop June 6-7, 2012, to prepare three specialists for developing rubrics for the project. Over the next several months the rubrics specialists will work interdependently to draft complete rubrics for each of the 37 power standards and then work to reach agreement on these

drafts. The draft rubrics will then be shared with members of the power sub-teams and committees for feedback and eventual confirmation through a formal vote. *

*"I hear and I forget.
I see and I remember.
I do and I understand."*

Next, a survey was distributed to various organizations and instructors to collect input on the core set of entry-level powerboating standards. The feedback was incredibly positive, said Dorval. The group received over

OHIO OFFERS POWER BOATING SKILLS COURSES

The Ohio Department of Natural Resources' (ODNR) Division of Watercraft began offering two new classes this summer: hands-on power boating basic skills and close-quarters boat handling skills.

"Our new courses provide for an exciting and much sought-after learning experience for Ohio boaters," said Cindy Bellar, Public Information and Education section manager for the Ohio Division of Watercraft. "We expect to see this program continue to grow in the future as more boaters learn that we offer these affordable practical skills development opportunities statewide."

The newly developed power boating basics course provides novice boaters with the basic skills needed to properly and safely operate a powerboat. The eight-hour, interactive skills course is aimed at educating boaters in the safe and proper methods of operating a powerboat, while simultaneously reducing their likelihood of being involved in a boating accident. Participants receive hands-on training from certified instructors about how to properly launch and retrieve a boat, basic boat-docking procedures and basic open water powerboat operations.

The second class offered by the Division of Watercraft is a close-quarters boat handling course. This course is designed

to teach boat operators how to effectively and safely operate their powerboats in close-quarter environments such as around docking piers and marinas. The specialized course offers various skill development activities for operators of medium-sized recreational powerboats, including how to navigate in tight spaces during variable water conditions, how to steer, stop and rotate the operational direction of a boat and how to maintain a proper lookout. The course is adapted from a similar program utilized by professional boat operators including state, local and federal marine officers.

For more information on either course, visit www.ohiodnr.com/watercraft/.