

3 Steps to becoming a valued  
member of our education team.

# Pathway to Instructor

Cape Fear Sail and Power Squadron  
Education Department

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In conjunction with education leadership team

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## *Preamble*

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1. As I begin this document I am mindful of the 2<sup>nd</sup> of 3 General Rules of *COLREGS* which gives permission to deviate, when necessary, from all the other 38 nautical rules contained in that international maritime document. Much can be said about this type of endeavor – identifying a rule which may be modified at a later date as circumstances or conditions warrant seems analogous to an academic pursuit.
2. Many individuals within the educational umbrella contributed to this endeavor. I want to acknowledge their involvement and express my gratitude for their valued opinions and thoughtful advice. I asked for their collaboration and the responses were timely, meaningful and expressive.
3. As you peruse through this document you will see that our department is uniquely layered and expressed as a “Team” and not viewed in the traditional vertical hierarchical structure where little communication or feedback flows from the bottom up or from side to side. We pride ourselves in our ability to work in a collaborative way which is characteristic of most high-performing, high-achieving teams. While the Squadron Education Officer (SEO) is writing this document, the tenets expressed within represent a coalescing of many thoughtful, measured and valued deliberations.

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## *Our model . . . “focus on the student”*

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4. Our operational model is simple and direct — “focus on our customer - the student, and any measure of success derived must originate solely from this perspective”.
5. We pride ourselves in meeting this challenge by presenting the finest, most professional learning experience possible. We know that teaching is much more than reciting a fact to a student. Questions that resonate with us, and that we ask of our instructors are: Was the students’ experience positive? Did we inspire and stimulate them? Have we encouraged and invigorated them? And, what impression did we make? With very few exceptions (see managing variance below) our instructors meet or exceed this test.

6. We further believe that our education team is “up front” and “sets the example” for other squadron members to emulate. Our instructors are asked to demonstrate their enthusiasm, zeal and commitment for the USPS educational program by obtaining a personal record of USPS educational achievement commensurate with their position as an “education department representative”.

7. Does this mean that an education representative is asked to do more than someone seeking a position in a different committee or department? The answer is unapologetically yes — and for good reason. Instructors can have an immediate and sustaining effect on a student’s future actions and may be the deciding factor in whether or not they enroll in another USPS course or, for that matter, apply for membership.

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## *Department organization*

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8. The Education team is composed of a Squadron Education Officer (SEO) and an Assistant Squadron Education Officer (ASEO). Serving under this leadership are the Chairs-Local Boards (ChLBs) for Advanced Grades, Elective Courses, Seminars, Training Aids and Guides. Within these divisions are the Lead Instructors assigned to lead our individual courses. Working with the Lead Instructor are an assistant lead or understudy, and finally the classroom instructors that teach a chapter or section of a particular course. We also have a registrar for the public boating course.

9. Complementing this administration are the squadron’s Senior Navigators (SNs) – squadron members who have completed all Advanced Grade and Elective courses and who hold the distinguished grade of SN. They, like former SEO’s, participate in an advisory role.

10. This diverse and layered body of contributors represent the backbone of our department and the reason for the success we continually achieve, a truly remarkable entourage.

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## *The USPS University Curriculum*

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11. The USPS university curriculum is composed of 5 Advanced Grade (AG) courses, 8 Elective Courses (EC) and a variety of seminars on nautical and boating topics.

12. The flag-ship and preeminent module of this system is the Advanced Grade (AG); Seamanship (S), Piloting (P), Advance Piloting (AP), Junior Navigation (JN) and Navigation (N). Completion of an AG course is recognized and is important within our education family, as well as the squadron,

district and national USPS organizations. Advanced Grades are not honorarium, they are earned. For illustration purposes only, someone taking the open-book take-home exams can expect to spend 6-10 exam hours for P, 8-12 hours for AP, 25-35 hours for JN and 30-40 hours for N. These commitments are why AG grades are recognized as being both meaningful and symbolic of a person's enthusiasm and zeal for self-education.

13. The 8 Elective Courses are Weather (WX), Cruise Planning (CP), Sail (SA), Engine Maintenance (EM), Marine Electrical Systems (ME), Marine Communications System (MCS), Electronic Navigation (EM) and Instructor Development (ID). Rounding out the USPS teaching curriculum are seminars - our most popular being "Partners in Command".

14. Finally, we have our Public Boating Course (ABC®) which you may already be familiar with. We have expanded the traditional USPS America's Boating Course® to include Local Knowledge (Boating the Cape Fear waterways) and a 3 or 4-hour On-the-Water teaching cruise. This course has been remarkably successful, graduating 120 students in 2017.

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## 3 Steps to the classroom

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15. A beginning instructor will start in ABC® and be assigned a chapter/section to teach commensurate with their experience, skill level and/or interest, as well as the scheduling needs of the Lead Instructor. From here, successful instructors branch out to their area of interest and work with one or more Lead Instructors teaching a section or chapter, eventually taking on additional classroom responsibilities becoming an assistant or understudy, and finally assume a lead instructor position. This progression can be modified as needed.

16. Understandably, minimum requirements become more stringent and demanding the higher one ascends. SEO, ASEO and ChLBs all have significant Advanced Grade and Elective course minimums recommended by USPS's national education organization (NEO) and addressed in 6.7 of the USPS *Operations Manual*. Lead Instructors, because of their additional leadership position have higher internal education department minimums than classroom instructors who are asked to meet, as a minimum, 3 Steps deemed important enough to outweigh any individual inconvenience. Nonetheless, when put in perspective, with an order of magnitude expressed, these steps are relatively non-intrusive and easily achieved. These 3 Steps are asked of ALL leaders, ChLBs, Lead Instructors and other classroom instructors who will be your peers.

17. Start your journey by letting us know you want to join the team. You can let your sponsor, Membership Chair or Membership Involvement Chair know and they'll assist you or you can email the SEO directly at [educationofficer@capefearsailandpowersquadron.org](mailto:educationofficer@capefearsailandpowersquadron.org). Just let us know and you're in – which is consistent with the USPS's intentionally lower and necessarily less stringent standards that are obligatory to support small or new squadrons that may not have an ample membership base to draw instructors from. However, this does not reflect the environment at CFS&PS where we enjoy a robust, diversified and experienced instructor base.

18. Is this all you need to do? The short answer is no. When selecting assignments, the SEO, ASEO and Lead Instructors will consider several factors, however, the initial question will be - have the 3 Steps been achieved or currently being worked on? Once they're completed, you're on equal footing with your peers and aligned with our higher internal CFS&PS education objectives and goals.

### Step 1 — “Instructor Development (ID)”

*“Under the terms of our agreement with the National Association of Boating Law Administrators, instructors of USPS public basic boating safety courses must be certified. While not obligatory for advanced grade and elective course instructors at this time, the USPS Educational Department feels that all of its instructors should be certified . . . ”* — USPS Education Manual

19. We are decidedly convinced of the benefits of the Instructor Development certification. This, coupled with the trend that many of our courses are now opened to the public, have led us to adopt the requirement that ALL of our education department leaders and instructors will be certified and re-certified every 4 years.

20. In an effort to make this requirement more palatable and to minimize any inconvenience we offer this course at a minimal cost and we have condensed it to a convenient and a non-intrusive 7 short session program. Upon completion of this course you're awarded a 4 year certification. Re-certification requires a 2-3 hour seminar every 4 years.

Why do we feel this step to be important? Since the vast majority of our students are adults you'll want to learn the intricate dynamics involved with teaching adults and the subtleties of managing a classroom. You'll learn how to effectively use teaching aids and you'll perform 5,10- and 15-minute presentations in front of your fellow students. Lesson plans are an important part of your classroom preparation, so you'll develop these, and since MS PowerPoint has become the classroom application of choice, you'll learn about that too.

21. **Special note:** ID will not, in and by itself, satisfy our internal practices for teaching assignments, nor will it guarantee that you'll be a teaching success, but it will provide a foundation to build on (see Managing Variance below).

22. A one-time vetting process, not related to this course was introduced in 2013 and has proven to be of value in helping instructors tune their presentation and avoid falling short. You'll be asked to participate your first time only. Details can be found in the Managing Variance below.

## Step 2 — “To teach a course you have to complete that course”

23. The second internal CFS&PS practice is “to teach a course you have to first complete that course”. This norm or principle has obvious virtue and is found universally in all educational environs. The same principle has merit within the CFS&PS curriculum and is addressed in 6.7 of the USPS *Operations Manual*. We believe it is reasonable to ask that a teacher complete weather before teaching weather; the same for piloting, celestial navigation or marine electronics. The value derived is twofold, first you’ll gain an understanding of the subject from the USPS perspective and secondly, you’ll see how USPS structures and treats the subject.

24. We have sparingly and with specificity extended a “waiver” for an instructor to teach a course without completing it first provided that they take the exam at the end of the course and pass it. A recent example, was an owner/operator of a local diesel and gasoline marine engine repair service being assigned to teach Engine Maintenance. You should set your sights on a subject or course that you would eventually like to teach and complete that course.

25. **Special Note:** As mentioned above, we begin our instructors with an ABC® assignment, therefore you must complete the ABC® course. However, because Seamanship is a more detailed and expanded treatment of the same fundamentals, we waive this requirement for ABC® if you have an AG of Seaman (S) or higher.

## Step 3— “Obtain an Advanced Grade of Seaman (S)”

26. This requirement has as much to do about you being a representative of education department as it does with fortifying and building on your boating fundamentals that you may be required to know to answer a student question. Remember, this is a boating club and we’re teaching boating related subjects.

27. Could a question arise concerning marlinspike, anchoring, slow speed maneuvering, or any topic from the 8 Seamanship chapters? Yes, and frequently does. Instructors must have a solid and reliable comprehension on these boating fundamentals for immediate recall – Seamanship (S) will provide that ability.

28. As mentioned in the beginning, we value the importance and significance of what an AG designation signifies. So much so, that for all 38,000+ USPS members the only two designators that are recognized and awarded – are your rank and your grade. Without knowing anything more than the simple letters S, P, AP, JN, N or SN you already know quite a bit about a member’s commitment to, their enthusiasm for, and their zeal about personal self-education. These are same factors that we strive to emulate, promulgate and endorse. As representative of this department we accept the fact that we set the example and before we can ask others to “take a class” or “build on their grade” we have to demonstrate our willingness to do the same.

29. A quick look at the current instructor list demonstrates this phenomena. Of the 21 certified instructors 10 are SNs, 3 are JNs, 5 are APs, and 3 are Ps. Very impressive achievements.
30. These levels may suggest a more stringent standard than needed. In light of the fact that an AG of S meets the requirement for becoming a Bridge Officer we have reduced our minimum AG requirement to S. We have also removed the “1-over concept” for teaching AG courses further simplifying our process.
31. Therefore, obtaining an AG of S will allow you to be a classroom teacher in our ABC<sup>®</sup>, Seamanship and all of our elective courses and seminars. The vying process for a Lead Instructor will most likely favor a higher AG achievement. As an education representative you should continue to enroll in additional courses and pursue your self-education quest.

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## *Managing variance*

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32. *“Ok, I’ve completed the 3 steps and I want to be a Lead Instructor now and teach Cruise Planning, Sail or Marine Electronics immediately”.* The natural progression would be (1) successfully teach sections of ABC<sup>®</sup>, (2) become an assistant instructor or understudy teaching a chapter or section and working with the Lead Instructor to expand your involvement, and (3) wait your turn until an opening occurs in a Lead Instructor position, and (4) vie with others who may also be interested. While this may appear bureaucratic, it is strictly courtesy and consideration for the team framework.
33. *“Ok, I’ve completed the 3 steps but I did not met the challenges posed in our goal; Was the students’ experience positive? Did we inspire and stimulate them? Have we encouraged and invigorated them? And, what impression did we make?”* Unfortunately, someone can graduate from ID but, for a variety of reasons, not perform well in front of students. Recent conversations have suggested reformatting or revising the ID course to be more stringent or to serve as a more discerning filter. However, the new vetting process, has proven to be effective without placing more demands on the ID program.
34. As mentioned earlier, a vetting process introduced in 2013 has proven useful because it was structured and presented as “instructor helping instructor”.

Here’s how it works. The new instructor is assigned an ABC<sup>®</sup> section and given the USPS PowerPoint slides, instructor manual (lesson plan) and a time requirement. They are given time to prepare and rehearse and when ready they present to 3 or 4 Lead Instructors who will offer immediate feedback and constructive comments. If, the group believes the presentation is ready for the classroom the instructor is

assigned. If not, the instructor is told of the presentation shortcomings. They are given an opportunity to continue to work on it and present again at a later date.

**Special note:** Because of the SEO's dual role, the SEO will participate but not vote.

35. The vetting process will effectively work going forward but what about someone who wants to teach but has not performed well in the past. This is a difficult situation since we are a volunteer organization and no one wants hurt anyone's feelings. In the past, the instructor was not reassigned or simply not ask to teach again which, I believe, was not productive and resulted in hurt feelings. This vetting concept may have value in resuscitating an instructor who just fell short. This in conjunction with the 4 year re-certification process may be key to rehabilitate someone who wants to teach but has not been successful.

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## *Fair • Impartial • Unbiased*

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36. The 3 steps identified in this document are asked of ALL education leaders and instructors equally and fairly without preferential or privileged treatment extended to one over another.

37. We are fortunate in that every member comes to CFS&PS with a storied, diversified and truly remarkable background. Occupationally, we have retired owners of successful companies, vice-presidents of national companies, senior military officers, senior and mid-level managers of government and business, teachers, CPAs, Lawyers and all other types of employments including many regular people with regular job backgrounds. The same can be said scholastically, with many advance degrees, undergraduate and associate degrees and very competent and talented high school degrees represented on our team. Every one of them, is equally welcomed and valued by our team.

38. This is the environment that we hope you are interested in joining and that you are ready and willing to embrace the objectives and principles we promulgate. And, that you accept the practices that have consistently and repetitively allowed our department to perform at its highest level — not because we say it – but because our students say it.

With a warm welcome,

*Ned*

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