

OCEAN GATE CURRICULUM

Purpose and Basics:

Sailing is the tool. Connection is the purpose.

Our program with incarcerated children and children on probation is not concentrating on creating good sailors as much as demonstrating to the children that adults care enough about them to show them the beauty and challenge of sailing. Usually from homes without fathers, usually never having graduated from any school, the success of achieving our basic sailing certification can be extremely important to them and judges have asked to see the certificate in determining length of sentence. The excitement and beauty of sailing on the Bay entrances them as well as the pride in mastering a skill that most are quite quick to learn.

The graduation certificate states they have passed Basic or Advanced Sailing Skills, depending on whether it is their first or second round.

For those students not in the juvenile probation system, we still seek connection and understand that while their situation differs from the children on probation, the underlying needs are often the same. The same curriculum is appropriate.

The typical course is six to eight classes with a graduation ceremony at the end. If the student is returning for a second (or third) class, the curriculum is expanded and a different graduation certificate is awarded.

Sailing is all about Plan B. Weather, boat repair, events at the facility, changes in personnel can alter the standard curriculum. It is up to the first captain in charge of the sail to determine if the planned class must be altered to conform to circumstances. This is a guideline of what we would like to accomplish, subject to the changes inherent in the adventure nature of the program.

The usual class consists of four to eight students. Depending on events at the facility, it can be as low as two on some days or as many as ten. We tell the facility that we require three as a minimum class. Often a new student arrives midcourse, and he or she should be integrated into the sail with a mentor told to begin with the basics.

We utilize the mentor system, described in detail in the document section of our website, www.bluewaterfoundation.org. Ideally, the same mentors or mentor is usually assigned to the student to create a closer bond.

Probation officers should be included in the class if they are agreeable to it. At times, the volunteer, student and probation officer form a "team" on the sail.

If possible, limit instruction on the way back to the berth. The students like to just sit and watch/experience the Bay. Some may want to stay on the wheel, but most will just enjoy the peace.

We try to use more than one boat, mixing Benjamin Walters with Golden Bear and/or Aleta on at least a third of the sails.

The students are fully outfitted in float coats, rain pants, gloves and hats.

At the end of each sail, after pizza, a “round up” is held in which each participant briefly describes what they like, what they learned, what bothered them.

The classes described below are normally in the order presented though this, again, can be altered based on circumstances.

FIRST CLASS: Basics of sailing

Introduction to sailing. Longer safety talk than usual (they will remember it well by the second class), assignment of mentors, and start sailing as soon as possible. No classroom work or theoretical approach...hands on and the sail should have very little vocabulary until actually needed.

1. Leaving and returning to dock drill (including deploying fenders and rigging dock lines)
2. Raising all sails
3. Tacking and gybing
4. Reefing both main and jib.
5. Moving about the boat when heeled.
6. Points of sail practice
7. Turning engine on and off
8. Dropping main and furling jib.

SECOND CLASS: Model boats; Overboard Drill

1. Mentor and mentee build model boats and label them; take them back to facility.
2. Live overboard drill. (This binds the crew together better than any other practice and demonstrates our trust in their growing skill set.) It also gives them much practice in dropping and raising sails. There should be at least three jumps and five if possible.
1. Review tacking, gybing, reefing and leaving and returning to dock.

THIRD CLASS: Aleta or Golden Bear

1. Basic rules of the road
2. Learning the basic differences between the offshore racer and the cruiser.
3. All the basic skills in the First Class are now transferred to the offshore racer.

FOURTH CLASS: Night Sail

1. Meet at boat 2 hours before sunset, dinner at dock.
2. Special safety talk as to night sails

3. Make sure lights on all floatation and test them.
4. Discuss navigation lights and buoy lights.
5. Leave at sunset, back by 1030.
6. Easy on the lessons...the students are entranced by the experience. Let them enjoy it.

FIFTH CLASS: Basics and Navigation

1. Discuss crew/team dynamics of vessel; role of crew and captain; this after safety talk.
2. On Aleta if available, go over basics of charts, GPS and radar navigation.
3. Select course and plot it.
4. Use hand bearing compasses and discuss tides and currents.
5. Go over the basics from First Class.
6. Knots on way back (four knots, cleat hitch, figure eight, bowline, reef hitch)

SIXTH CLASS: Expansion of sail plan; safety: Alternative, small boat practice

1. After safety talk, basic first aid; bleeding control; calling for Coast Guard
2. Gennaker and staysail on Benjamin
3. Sailing without main
4. Safety training; discussion of fire drill, water entry drill, singling and VHF drill
5. ALTERNATE COURSE: deploy inflatable (as chase boat) and pull-out kayaks for small boat practice.

SEVENTH CLASS: Maintenance

1. Divide group into the following, training as we go:
 - a. Engine maintenance
 - b. Safety gear check and update (fire extinguishers, signals, etc.)
 - c. Medical kit check out
 - d. Rigging check
2. Use both Aleta and Benjamin if available.
3. Short sail after check out, fly gennaker if light winds.

EIGHTH CLASS: Graduation

1. Potluck celebration with as many invited as possible.

2. Giving out certificates in ceremony. (Including advance certificates for those who are taking it over)
3. Kayak races with prizes.
4. Throwing contests with prizes
5. Using inflatable and dinghy for both chase boats and to let the students try them out.

ADDITIONAL COURSES (Captain and crew can choose any of the possibilities below if weather or inclination suggests)

As stated previously, flexibility is often required and at times the department may want some additional classes or a returning student wants to learn additional aspects of sailing. The following are some approaches:

1. **Race practice:** using Bear and Aleta or Devine Wind versus another boat.
2. **Anchoring practice:** Angel Island, Aquatic Park, Clipper Cover.
3. **Courses in tides and currents.** Captain David has an excellent model to use
4. **Electronic Work: Working** with Radar, GPS, hand bearing compasses.
5. **Advanced Safety Drill:** Checking through hulls, practicing abandon ship drill.
6. **First Aid:** Practice splint work; bleeding control
7. **Advanced Maintenance:** Using bosun's chair to check rigging; taping rigging; changing filters on engine; checking all cotter pins, etc.
8. **Docking and maneuvering under power:** Let students bring boats in and out of berth. Practice reverse maneuvering.
9. **Small boat work:** kayaks, inflatable, row boats
10. **Abandon ship drill:** deploying life raft, grabbing ditch bags, choosing what gear to take, calling for help, etc.
11. **Fire Drill:** Downwind, call for help, ready life raft and dinghy, ditch bag, fight fire.
12. **Water inflow drill:** Thru hull check, plugs, life raft and dinghy prepare, ditch bag, call for help.
13. **Rig Failure drill;** Dropping sails, boat course, cutting standing rigging, calling for help, etc.

ADVANCE COURSE:

For those students returning, if we have a racing program and they are interested, we should consider trying to get them into that. If not, after the review of the first class, their additional classes should include the additional courses listed aside from overboard and night sail. For overboard, put the advanced student(s) at the wheel once.