Beyond the nuts and bolts of actually teaching students, the ASA team realized that too many new sailors fall off the map simply due to a lack of opportunity. They have the interest and ambition to sign up for classes and enjoy the experience, but then with no boat and perhaps no friends with boats, they drift away to an activity that has more possibility for access. And, on the other side of the coin, there are so many people with boats who are starving for energetic crew.

“One of ASA’s most used phrases is ‘practice practice practice,’” said ASA founder Lenny Shabes. “One of ASA’s core objectives is to keep people sailing after the training is over. You’ve finished your 101 or 103 course and now you’re by yourself. The thing is, there are plenty of boats that need crew - all that’s missing is communication – this app bridges that gap.”

Although websites and other ideas have been developed to try to address this dilemma, GO SAILING shows a lot more promise for all involved. It has been building a following in the San Francisco sailing community for years under the name Kroucial before ASA got behind it. There, in the bustling sailing community of San Francisco, the bugs were worked out and developments implemented.

The app allows skippers to create trips and for sailors to apply for those trips. The skippers have the ability to peruse the bios of applicants and decide if this potential crew has the experience and sensibilities to be a solid fit.

The app is simple to use and provides for a pleasant experience even for the less-smart-phone-savvy person. There are pictures of the boats and a list of all the info potential crew would need – contact information, skill levels, amount of crew needed, smoking/non-smoking, amount of time they plan to be out, suggested donation – these kinds of details. It’s a well thought out virtual meeting place that offers private messaging or public outreach depending on what is needed.

The app is doing well on the West Coast with racers and cruisers alike and now Shabes and the ASA team are rolling it out to the entire nation. The idea is that anyone traveling on a vacation or for business can sneak in a day or two of sailing when they never could have before.

“My favorite part about [the concept of the app] is the idea that I can, let’s say, be up in Seattle visiting some friends and if I have a free day – I can pull up the app and find someone who needs crew and get out on the water,” said Matt Kepner who owns a sailing school and helped beta test the app in San Fran.

The app is free to download and use and there is no membership or subscription, which begs the question: Why would ASA invest the time and money in developing this app? According to Shabes, making strides to keep sailing accessible to those who want to learn is at the heart of what the organization is about.

“It’s our gift to the sailing community,” said Shabes. “We saw something that we felt the community needed and we stepped up. I really believe something like this can maintain and grow the energy and participation we all want in the sport of sailing...besides I’m always looking for crew on Saturdays!”
Video Series “Docking Made Easy” Wraps in Los Angeles

The fourth and final instructional video in the Docking Made Easy series was completed this past month with the release of "Returning Under Power," an instructional aid that demonstrates through live action, illustrations and animation all that’s involved in bringing a keelboat back to the dock under power.

ASA, in association with several marine industry partners, began the series with Docking Under Sail which teaches and demonstrates the techniques of making an upwind landing completely under sail.

From there the team concentrated on creating an in-depth three-part tutorial that comprehensively addresses handling a sailboat under power. The scripts were written and narrated by two-time America’s Cup winner Peter Isler who is also a founding board member of ASA.

"Handling a boat, particularly a bigger one, under power is something that can make people anxious," Isler said. “These videos walk you through the process and will definitely reduce that anxiety and give you the confidence you need to handle your boat competently.”

The Under Power series begins with a video teaching open water drills aimed to provide confidence in boat handling, then a second installment on pulling out of a slip and lastly, the aforementioned lesson on returning back to the dock.

Raising the Bar on Educational Methods

The American Sailing Association is committed to a never-ending pursuit of teaching methods and materials that make the act of learning to sail as effective and efficient as it can possibly be. Through the use of current technology, updating texts and creating courses that match students’ sensibilities, ASA continues to forge the path in the world of sailing education.

In that respect, ASA is announcing that they will not be issuing cross certifications for other associations including US Sailing, RYA, CYA, IYT or ISPA.

“We have gotten to a point where we were starting to see the so-called equivalent courses from other organizations were not up to our standards,” said Elbert Ashbaugh (Ash), who manages affiliate relations.

"The quality of our educational texts and other materials has improved so dramatically over the years, it no longer seemed realistic or proper to accept these other certifications.

"At the end of the day we’re looking for people to have solid fundamentals and be safe, solid sailors," Ash said. “We want to be proud and confident that anyone who possesses ASA certification is a 100% authentic product of our educational system.”