

Northern Rockies Blacksmith Association (NRBA) Blacksmith Education Program Overview

NRBA Blacksmith Curriculum

The basis for the education program of the Northern Rockies Blacksmiths Association (NRBA) is the National Curriculum of the Artist Blacksmith Association of North America (ABANA). NRBA's curriculum education program also contains ideas and information taken from the California Blacksmith Association's curriculum program implementation and individuals involved in ABANAs and CBAs education efforts, especially Mark Aspery and John McLellan. David Osmundsen and Frank Annighofer have adopted the program for NRBA.

NRBA's curriculum certifications are meant to assure the same quality levels as defined by ABANA nationwide. This means an NRBA level 1 certificate is equivalent to a Californian CBA level 1 certificate. NRBA's education program resembles the ABANA and CBA programs, but it is NRBA's own program and may be adjusted as needed and as the national program is implemented on a broader basis.

There will be 3 levels of certification once the program is fully implemented: Level 1 – Novice, Level 2 – Apprentice, and Level 3 – Journeyman Blacksmith. Currently (September 2016) only Level 1 of the curriculum implementation has been defined in detail by NRBA. Level 2 details should be ready by May 2017.

Management of the Program

This program will be managed by an Education Committee appointed by the board of directors. It will be made up of three NRBA members. At least one of them has to be a board member and one has to be a senior instructor. A senior instructor is a member holding the currently highest instructor certification with NRBA. This committee will take responsibility for the education program and be accountable to the board of directors.

Skill Levels

The NRBA Education Program will be divided up into three skill levels. Level 1, Apprentice; Level 2, Advanced and Level 3, Journeyman. Any NRBA member can work at achieving these certifications. The training should be accomplished in numerical order to get the most from the program as each level builds on the previous one.

Instructors

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One of the first things needed to run a teaching program is certified instructors to teach the program. This was accomplished May 2014 by inviting Mark Aspery to come and conduct a five day training and evaluation class in Roscoe, Montana. NRBA currently has six Level 1 and two Level 2 instructors. Level 1 instructors can teach Level 1 curriculum only. Level 2 instructors can teach Level 1 and 2 curriculum. Level 3 instructors can teach all three levels. A Level 2 instructor can certify a Level 1 instructor to become a Level 2 instructor and a Level 3 instructor can certify a Level 1 or 2 instructor to the next level. Since we have no Level 3 instructors at this time Mark Aspery has agreed to help with our first Level 3 certification when somebody meets the requirements.

NRBA instructors need to be members in good standing and need to follow our safety policy.

Voluntary Teaching

In return for a subsidized instructors certification we will require each instructor to teach or be actively involved in a NRBA teaching program, a minimum of 40 hours a year. This can be accomplished by conducting NRBA classes in the instructors personal shop, coaching a student in their shop, teaching or demonstrating at a NRBA conference or being involved with the NRBA Education Committee. The number of hours may be reduced as more instructors are certified. This is to be done on a voluntary basis, however if an instructor conducts NRBA classes in their personal shop they can charge a reasonable fee for supplies and materials. The amount of time each instructor commits to the NRBA Education Program a year will be on the honor system, however there are some checks and balances built into the program for the Education Committee to monitor an instructors involvement.

NRBA instructors will be allowed to teach the curriculum on a commercial basis if they meet their voluntary teaching goal as described. NRBA will require each student to be a member in good standing in order to receive an official certificate. The board might require a certification fee to be paid to offset costs of the program.

Student Responsibility

Each student, upon inquiring to the Education Committee, will receive a packet of information including a NRBA membership form (in the event they are not already a member), a description of the program, an instructors contact list, a check list of skills and any technical drawings appropriate to the level they are inquiring about. After that it is the individual's reasonability to follow through with the program.

All NRBA instructors will be provided with the same packet to facilitate any personal contacts.

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Location of Teaching

It is assumed that many people wanting the Level 1 instruction may not have their own shop set up. Instructors may conduct instruction at their personal shop. For students having a shop, instructors may teach at the student's facility. NRBA assumes no responsibility for any liability at an instructor's or student's shop. Safety is the first skill on the check list and should be part of every session.

In addition to an instructor's or student's shop for teaching, NRBA will commit time at conferences to the teaching program. NRBA instructors will conduct teaching programs, either hands on training or demonstrations of the curriculum.

Certificates

Accomplishment of a certain level has to be approved by two instructors or a board member and an instructor. At least one of these has to have seen the student work through part of the curriculum exercises. The final work piece is part of the evaluation. The education committee will recommend a student for certification and certificates will be issued by NRBA, signed by the chairman of the education committee and the president of NRBA. Certificates will be issued two times a year at the conferences.

David Osmundsen,
Chairman Education Committee

Frank Annighofer
President NRBA