
An Overview of PSIA and PSIA-E

PSIA is a professional organization of full-time and part-time ski instructors who are dedicated to reaching the highest levels of professionalism and performance within the skiing industry. The national PSIA organization is an alliance of its nine geographical divisions, and its affairs are governed by representatives of each of those divisions. When you pay your dues each year, you are billed once for membership in two associations, your local division of PSIA and PSIA itself.

PSIA's nine divisions differ from each other in size and geography. They range from a few hundred members in a single state, to several thousand in a multi-state area. Some divisional offices are part time operations, with budgets of only a few thousand dollars; others are fully staffed, year-round business offices with budgets well over \$1,500,000.00.

Divisional dues are used locally to fund such administrative functions as staffing and maintaining an office, keeping membership records, board of directors and committee activities, publishing a newsletter and manuals, marketing, and supporting educational functions. In general, the divisions provide most of the direct membership services of both associations because they are PSIA's membership base. In addition, they maintain a personal touch through their events and communications. All divisions generate revenue from sources other than dues. Clinics, exams and educational material sales are examples. Some divisions, such as PSIA-E, have tax-exempt, non-profit education foundations that bring in funds from grants, sponsorships, and corporate or private donations.

In contrast to the divisions, with their local focus and high visibility, PSIA's focus is national and international, and its efforts are often not readily visible to the membership. Dues represent roughly only 37% of PSIA's total revenue; the remainder is largely generated through advertising and the sale of accessories and educational materials. PSIA also has a non-profit education foundation and a capacity to procure grant money. National has a full time Marketing Director who works continually to bring in money from outside the organization and to market PSIA and its members to the public. Like the divisions, part of PSIA's total revenue is used to support administrative functions, such as running an office, computer systems, funding a board of directors and various committees, and supporting educational projects. After this, PSIA's focus diverges from that of the divisions.

PSIA publishes teaching manuals and produces instructional films and other materials. PSIA's dollars have underwritten the development of ATS, assuring teaching consistency across the country for instructors and ski school customers alike. PSIA has been the catalyst in the adoption of uniform certification standards and membership categories in all nine divisions. This has led to reciprocity, which means that you, as a PSIA member, can transfer your credentials to any part of the country.

PSIA funds the selection and training of the Alpine Demonstration Team, as well as the Nordic and Snowboard Educational Teams. Members of these teams represent the U.S. internationally, and also train divisional clinic leaders and examiners. That process is designed to assure consistency in the delivery of our message to every ski instructor, from the international forum to your local ski school. Every four years, members of our demo and educational teams represent this country at INTERSKI, an international ski-teaching symposium, where they have earned us world-wide respect and a leadership role.

Your PSIA dollars are also used to represent the interest of ski instruction to legislative bodies and other national ski industry groups, such as the United States Ski Coaches Association, the National Ski Patrol System, the National Ski Areas Association, and Ski Industries of America. Risk management materials, including manuals and films developed in cooperation with NSAA, have assisted in promoting consistent, professional, and visible risk awareness programs.

Communication with the membership is one of PSIA's highest priorities. Each year they produce three issues of *The Professional Skier*, a comprehensive journal for ski instructors. National committee meetings also help to facilitate a healthy exchange of ideas and information among the divisions. Ongoing research and development activities assure this country's place as a leader in international skiing. Children, seniors, and the disabled are examples of populations being given special consideration. Nordic Downhill has grown tremendously in popularity. Snowboarding has grown and evolved to where PSIA has founded a subsidiary organization, the

American Association of Snowboard Instructors (AASI), to represent that discipline and its members. PSIA continues to play an increasing role in the entire ski industry.

Members pay dues both divisionally and nationally. The divisions conduct and administer regional events, provide membership services, and day-to-day administration. PSIA provides unity and a means of achieving unification; it focuses on those areas where it is necessary to rally the collective talents and resources of the entire country and to speak with one voice. Both associations exist because ski instructors, ski schools, lesson customers, the ski industry, and the skiing countries of the world require it.

PSIA-Eastern, to whom your divisional dues are paid, is a not-for-profit organization, governed by a Board of Directors, and serving 14 states, from Maine to North Carolina. There are currently over 11,000 active members, served by a full time, year round administrative staff of 8, located in Albany, NY. In addition, there are several part time/seasonal employees, and a per-diem staff of over 175 Alpine, Adaptive, Nordic, and Snowboard course conductors and examiners who conduct the educational programs and certification exams. Operating on a \$1.5 million budget, PSIA-E provides numerous member benefits and services. They publish five divisional newsletters (*Snow Pro*) each year, offer a job placement service, consulting and in-house services, educational resource materials, and a diverse menu of over 400 events to satisfy the needs and goals of members in all the disciplines. In addition, development and administration of certification programs is a divisional responsibility.

A Brief History of the Ski Teaching Profession and PSIA

(Compiled and edited from several sources)

The history of skiing goes back thousands of years. It provided a means of transportation over snow and was useful in both hunting and warfare. There are many accounts to indicate that it has long been viewed as a sport, as a basis for competition, and as skill that required instruction.

The “Modern era” might be said to have begun when skiing evolved to more closely resemble our current sport; when it became more organized and publications on the subject started to appear. The first organized ski teaching occurred in 1713 in Norway within the military, and a handbook for the Norwegian troops was written in 1733. The first “ski club” was founded in 1813, also in Norway.

Some of the more notable early pioneers of skiing and ski teaching were:

- Sondre Nordheim, Norwegian. Developed jumping; developed the Osier binding; exhibited first Telemark turn in 1868.
- Mathias Zdarsky, Austrian. Considered the “Father of Alpine Skiing”. Founded one of the first organized ski schools and taught thousands of new skiers. Developed equipment and a technique. (1890’s-early 1900’s).

Hannes Schneider, Austrian. Most responsible for the phenomenal growth of skiing. Founded his school in 1910-11. Developed the Arlberg technique, which dominated into the 1930’s. Pioneer filmmaker. Author. Influenced skiing in Japan and the United States. The Association of Tyrolean Professional Ski Teachers was founded in 1925, and conducted the first ski teacher exams.

The Swiss and French, who had also been involved with skiing, developed their own techniques and organizations, and began to promote the sport within their respective countries. Sir Arnold Lund of Great Britain wrote many books on skiing and developed the concept of slalom racing. Skiing started to become popular in the U.S. in the early 1900’s. The first instructors were all European, and there was a large influx of them in the 20’s and 30’s. While there was instruction earlier, the first formal U.S. ski school was founded in 1929 at Franconia, NH.

Many of the Europeans that came at that time became major players in the development of skiing and instruction in this country. Otto Schniebs was one of the first, influencing USEASA to adopt the first organized ski teacher’s training program (club instructor’s workshops). The first rope tow in the U.S. began operation at Woodstock, VT in 1934. In 1937 USEASA developed a plan for certifying professional ski teachers, and in 1938 the first ski teacher’s exam was held at Woodstock, VT. Seventeen applicants took the exam, seven passed. World War II halted the development and expansion of skiing for several years, but post-war demand was phenomenal. Both before and after the war, major innovations in equipment were developed. After the war, the main three

techniques were still the Austrian, French and Swiss, though each had evolved considerably. Other areas of the U.S. formed organizations for professional ski instructors.

- In 1951 the first Interski was held in Zurs, Austria.
- In 1953 the National Council of Ski Instructors of America was formed by Western instructors.
- In 1961 PSIA was founded.
- In 1962 PSIA sent a team to the 6th Interski in Italy. 11 of 14 attendees were from the East. All were good skiers, but did not ski alike, and this brought to a head the fact that there was no official American ski technique.
- In 1964 PSIA published “The Official American Ski Technique”. This was embraced by the Divisions, and became the standard for exams and the vast majority of ski schools. With its international unveiling at Interski in 1965, the U.S. was finally recognized as a major ski country, in its own right. The East produced the first movie of this technique, *The White Badge*.
- In the period, 1968-71, political upheaval within PSIA ushered in a new group of people, most notably Horst Abraham, who forged major change within the educational/technical realms and developed ATM. PSIA became involved in investigating such things as biomechanics, sport psychology, and learning theories. Somewhat “outside” the official establishment, GLM was enjoying success and popularizing the sport even further. Advancements in snowmaking, grooming and ski equipment impacted the sport.

Soon after, the “Skills Approach” to ski teaching became an integral part of ATM. The U.S. became a world leader in ski teaching. In 1973 the first National Academy was held. Our National Demo Team has, from this period, been a highly visible group, playing a major role in disseminating the latest information throughout the country. 1973 was also the year that the eastern professional instructors broke away from USEASA (United States Eastern Amateur Ski Association) and formed their own corporation, EPSIA, which has subsequently become PSIA-E.

Since then, PSIA has published numerous manuals and videos. In the late 70’s/early 80’s a process of more standardization among divisions was begun that has led to a stronger national organization. In 1987 ATM became ATS (American Teaching System), PSIA’s current educational framework for ski teaching.

In the period 1987 through the ‘90s, advancements in equipment, hill grooming, snowmaking, trail contours, etc. made parallel skiing a reality in the short term. Powder, crud, moguls, terrain/snow changes, and other difficult conditions are greatly reduced at most areas. These changes lead to the development of new methods of teaching tactical skiing and producing the skills and sensation guests are taught. The new American Teaching System (ATS) encompasses all elements of teaching/learning, mechanics, etc. and reflects students’ needs, abilities, and desired outcomes. The Center Line was developed to supply a framework for application of skill development concepts and to supply structure/organization for the use of experimentation, lateral learning and versatility in the lesson plan. The Center Line standards provide the instructor and the student with an image of what constitutes good technical and functional skiing. The Center Line also addresses the reality that skiers of all abilities share common functional movement patterns and skills.

In 2001, PSIA/AASI introduced a new line of innovative educational materials and the American Teaching System once again adapted itself to the changing needs of the ski industry. The *Core Concepts* manual is the centerpiece of the AASI/PSIA educational system. It contains topics relevant to all teachers and coaches of winter sports. The *Core Concepts* manual emphasizes the core of successful sports instruction: creating meaningful relationships, memorable experiences, and lifelong learning. The *Alpine Technical Manual* focuses on contemporary technical aspects of skiing and ski teaching. The book maintains the heart of the skills concept while expanding on the movements leading to acquisition of proficient skiing.