

Building Trades Instructor Training Programs: The Key to Educational Quality in Apprenticeship

The 14 affiliated unions that make up North America's Building Trades Unions (NABTU) have a long and deep commitment to the quality of their members' job performance. Leaders of these unions believe that the instructors and coordinators in their registered apprenticeship programs are key to maintaining the high level of achievement for which these unions are known. Simply put, the ability to create high quality craftsmanship comes from high quality instruction.

Putting this philosophy into practice, each of NABTU's 14 affiliated unions have developed rigorous teacher training program for their Apprenticeship Instructors and Training Coordinators. These programs are designed to increase instructors' proficiency of instructional techniques and materials; acquaint instructors with the philosophy and principles of education, especially trade, industrial, and technical education; provide learning experiences in the principles and the fundamentals of the applied knowledge and to expand the understanding of the Trades' instructors in the technical aspects of their crafts and the latest developments in these industries. Many of these training programs have been assessed for higher education credit and some are the equivalent of an undergraduate Bachelors' Degree in Education.



The United Association Journeyman and Apprentices of the Plumbing and Pipefitting Industry offers a 200-hour Instructor Certification Program, with classes available at their annual Instructor Training Program (ITP) held at Washtenaw Community College in Ann Arbor MI, as well as online. The week-long ITP provides the opportunity for approximately 2,000 instructors and coordinators to convene and complete up to 40 hours of classes, with the goal of a 5-year timeline for completion (one week a year for five years). Courses include Using the Multi-Craft Core Curriculum (MC3), Basic First Aid & CPR, New/Emerging Technology, Adapting Apprenticeship to 21st Century Students, Interactive Teaching Tools, Lean Construction, and must include 100 hours each of technical and professional courses. The professional courses, which were developed by both the University of Michigan and Washtenaw Community College, are designed to provide instruction on preparing lesson plans, validating test questions, dealing with challenging students and other courses all relating to providing instruction in both the classroom and online. The UA also offers an additional three-year certification program for Training Directors & Coordinators. The UA Instructor Training Program recently received accreditation by the Council on Occupational

Education (COE) as a higher learning institution as determined by the U.S Department of Education.



The Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers' Instructor Certification Program requires at least 200 hours of credits through their International Masonry Institute. This five-year core curriculum provides annual one-week training sessions for participants to convene and earn up to 40 hours of credit. These sessions cover teaching fundamentals (writing, communication, mentoring, technology), as well as trade-specific topics (teaching blueprints, building codes). In addition to this instruction, completion of a CPR/First Aid course is mandatory.



The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers' (IBEW) National Training Institute (NTI) offers an annual Professional Education Program to certify their instructors and coordinators. Each summer approximately 2,000 instructors and coordinators take NTI classes at the University of Michigan. This program consists of four week-long instruction sessions over the course of four years (one annually), with topics ranging from effective teaching methods to an overview of instructional technology. Each class builds on the content disseminated during the previous year's training. Additionally, for those who wish to continue beyond the Professional Education Program, there is a three-year Advanced Studies Professional Education program available.



The Heat and Frost Insulators and Allied Workers Union has developed a 225-hour Trainer Enhancement Program, which their instructors and coordinators can complete over a five-year period (45 classroom hours per year). This program includes courses in OSHA and construction safety delivered in conjunction with the Center for Construction Research and Training (CPWR), Fundamentals of Building Green and adult education courses. Participants are also required to attend the Insulators' annual Joint Apprenticeship Committee (JAC) Conference.



The International Association of Bridge, Structural, Ornamental, and Reinforcing Iron Workers offers a Qualified Ironworker Instructor Certificate through their training fund. With the program now in its 33rd year, the Ironworkers train about 700 trainers and coordinators annually, and they have

partnered with Washtenaw Community College in Ann Arbor, Michigan to facilitate this instruction. Their five-year, 200-hour program requires 100 hours of professional courses, including lesson planning, communications, and evaluation strategies. The program also requires 100 hours of technical courses, such as safety, instruments, and courses on each of the craft specific sub-categories (welding, rigging and structural ironwork).