



# Snowsports Are for Everyone

LET'S MAKE SURE EVERYONE FEELS WELCOME

By Nicholas Herrin, PSIA-AASI Chief Executive Officer

**A**s educators, we strive to create an amazing learning environment for every student we work with. We have a similar opportunity to create an amazing instructor environment by making sure PSIA-AASI reflects a broad cross section of society.

PSIA-AASI is committed to embracing a culture shift that brings about broader inclusion and equity in our association. After all, snowsports are for everyone, so it makes sense to make sure everyone – regardless of race, gender, age, disability, or other identity demographics – feels welcome being a part of PSIA-AASI programming.



As skiers, snowboarders, and teachers, we build our skillsets by spending time on gaining a better understanding of our sports and the students we engage in the learning partnership. This year's protests for racial justice, as well as discussions I've had with members and other educators confirmed for me that embracing diversity, equity, and inclusion more fully is an important element of personal growth.

I started my educational career as a school-teacher but have worked most of my life in the snowsports industry. I've had the privilege of never being made to feel left out of our industry – or the sport I love and love to teach – because of the color of my skin or my gender. Others in our community and the broader snowsports industry haven't been so fortunate. I'm optimistic, however, that we're taking real and meaningful steps to change that. I'm proud of the commitment our board of directors, task force members, and other educational leaders are making to raise awareness and drive progress on the DEI front. I'm also proud of members throughout the country who've reached out to voice support and share their stories.

## CRITICAL CONVERSATIONS FORGE PROGRESS

In my Fall 2020 column in *32 Degrees*, I touched on how the Women's Initiative Task Force and DEI Task Force are so instrumental in challenging our organization's status quo to forge greater understanding for how we can support different demographics of our membership through snowsports education. I've enjoyed listening to and learning from the passionate members of both groups. Their conversations affirm that inclusion in education and taking a just and equitable approach to learning – and teaching – benefits us all as we strive to create safe, fun, and welcoming environments for all members and all guests.

I'll be the first to admit these conversations can be uncomfortable. For example, it can be hard to call out – or recognize in yourself – instances of implicit bias. But having these critical conversations at all levels of leadership is a good thing, and when it's done correctly it will move our organization forward. PSIA-AASI's Learning Connection<sup>SM</sup> – particularly the people-skills fundamentals – provides something of a roadmap (see sidebar).

Now more than ever I thank our educational leaders for the years of hard work they've devoted to developing the people-skills fundamentals within our Learning Connection<sup>SM</sup> model. The following fundamentals allow us as instructors to better evaluate and learn how we are part of inclusion on the slopes; a means of promoting the philosophy that snowsports are for everyone.

1. Develop relationships based on trust.
2. Engage in meaningful two-way communication.
3. Identify, understand, and manage your emotions and actions
4. Recognize and influence the behaviors, motivations, and emotions of others.

## GAIN MORE INSIGHT ON INCLUSION

Spending time hearing other stories and understanding diverse perspectives can help build educators' comfort in this arena. For more information, I encourage you to read this "Inclusion on the Slopes" article by Dr. Gerilyn Davis at [tiny.cc/DavisInclusionOnTheSlopes](https://tiny.cc/DavisInclusionOnTheSlopes) and watch this four-part town hall series hosted by Snowsports Industry America ([tinyurl.com/y62279ty](https://tinyurl.com/y62279ty)).



Like any new skill we learn on the hill, nothing comes smoothly or instantly. How often do we hear that the new move we teach to a student doesn't feel comfortable to them? Learning a new skill only begins to feel comfortable when we put in the time and practice to make it automatic. Similarly, comfort within an organizational context only comes from spending time on critical conversations and becoming more aware of all facets of the topic.

## LEADERS PARTICIPATE IN DEI WEBINAR SERIES

In her column on page 4, PSIA-AASI Board Chair Eliza Kuntz describes a webinar series that gave examiners and clinicians tools they'll use to enhance your understanding of new certification standards in the works. Similarly, I'm excited to share the news that leaders from all corners of PSIA-AASI (a group of more than 280 people, including national and division board members, PSIA-AASI National Team members, national task forces, and staff) will participate in a three-part, interactive webinar series on DEI training – which will help inform programming the association develops for you.

Together, when we commit to advancing our *personal* awareness on these topics, we commit to driving *organizational* awareness and unity through education. This will truly make a difference that's felt and seen, not just at our leadership level but throughout our entire membership. **32**