



## DF95 Radio-Controlled Model Sailboat STEM School Racing Program



Thanks to Sam Gervais of LMS, the *US Sailing 2025 Community Sailing Innovative Program* award winner, 150 middle schoolers, since the 2024-25 school year, have taken their first step into a lifetime sport, with 70 more to come in 2026-27. The private, public, Montessori, and Title I schools involved represent schools anywhere in America. Each week, 10 students meet for a 1-hour activity class. Afterwards, *Charleston Model Yacht Club* then invites students to race their boats on Saturdays, with adult members as mentors.

Bob Johnstone (J Boats), recalling a sailboat model he'd built in 8<sup>th</sup>-grade shop and inspired by the neutral age-gender-weight-strength-mobility aspect of racing DF95 sailboats, dreamed of students having fun building & racing their own boats. But tackling the US Education system seemed insurmountable until meeting Sam of LMS, who, for 10 years, had 200 students building 18 rowboats in 6 middle schools. Sam liked the idea of student excitement building and racing DF95s, the world's fastest-growing sailboat class of any size... and had the established school connections Bob sought. It was a GO!

**STEM Learning** integrates the 10-lesson curriculum of US Sailing's successful REACH program that aligns with South Carolina educational standards (*learning the science and math of sailing, weather forecasting, aerodynamics, electronics, water quality and tidal currents, etc.*) with **Project Focus** on building, and racing their own boat, learning about the maritime history of the region, and being exposed to other sailing craft on Charleston Community Sailing's 23' J7s and on the 140' classic pilot schooner, *Spirit of South Carolina*.

**Leadership & College Credits:** Students are instilled with soft skills of patience, determination, decision-making, teamwork, leadership, and sportsmanship. Each school forms its own sailing club with officers to arrange regattas and to later assist teachers, thus acquiring mastery and self-confidence. In later high school years, student DF95 sailors can earn college credits by becoming activity period teacher-leaders.

**Breakeven Program:** The \$500 total over 2 semesters to acquire a world-class boat and competence in a lifetime sport is unparalleled in school athletics and a bargain compared to multi-year equipment & uniform fees for a varsity athlete. Schools contribute to LMS regional overhead expense and any interim in-class teacher training by LMS.

**Global Reach:** Australia's SailLAB Olympic development program adopted our strategy of reaching out to schools, but with their own fleet of DFs, rather than engaging students building/owning their own boats. The Charleston middle-school program thus has greater potential to double the sport of sailboat racing and USA performance at Olympic/World levels... and be of great community relations value to a major sponsor, because DF95s can be raced anywhere in the USA where there's a 150' x 225' pond.

