Improving Learning Outcomes in Police Academy Training

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COPS
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IADLEST
Standards & Training
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Letter from the Director of the COPS Office

Colleagues:

An important part of the mission of the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) is to support the development and testing of innovative policing strategies and provide training and technical assistance to community members, local government leaders, and all levels of law enforcement to develop best practices for the field. In 2020, the International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training (IADLEST) led a COPS Office–funded project to explore content quality, delivery method, and content dosage in academy settings: to identify the best ways to conduct law enforcement academy training, where new recruits have a lot to learn quickly and need to remember it for the rest of their careers.

Specifically, the project studied five U.S. police academies: Baltimore Police Academy; Collin College, Texas, Law Enforcement Academy; State of Nevada Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Academy; New Mexico Law Enforcement Academy; and Ulster County, New York, Police Academy. The study aimed to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of various training modalities on recruit knowledge and retention of critical communication skills lesson content. This report describes the study, provides an overview of related literature, outlines findings, and offers recommendations for applying best practices in police academies. It is an important part of the current conversation about the roles and responsibilities of modern law enforcement.

Sincerely,

Hugh T. Clements, Jr.
Director
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

Introduction

When performing official duties, law enforcement officers rely heavily on knowledge and skills learned during basic academy training. Entry-level law enforcement training is typically delivered in topic-centric classes with little or no connection between concepts, despite significant content overlap. For example, an understanding of search and seizure law is applicable across many contexts, including in lessons about motor vehicle stops, arrests, investigation, use of force, and interview and interrogation. Similarly, communication skills are needed across the board to be effective at interviewing people, de-escalating violent situations, and building relationships with the community.

Existing research from other professions recommends integrating or reinforcing foundational and overlapping content consistently to help people retain critical knowledge and skills. The concept of integrating and reinforcing training content consistently has not previously been tested in law enforcement. The Academy Innovations project evaluates the results of reinforcing a critical foundational skill across multiple topics through use of an integrated curriculum in a basic academy setting.

In this guide we will

1. introduce and define the concepts of integrated curriculum and retention interval;

2. explain a groundbreaking study that examined the effects of integrated curriculum on retention interval in five law enforcement academies;

3. present eight best practices for integrating curricula in law enforcement academies.

Key Concepts

Integrated curriculum

Integrated curriculum generally describes a broad set of innovations that relate, correlate, or combine the content of disciplines typically taught separately (Mohr and Welker 2017). These innovations include the organization of teaching matter to unify previously independent courses (Harden, Sowden, and Dunn 1984), the combination of separate courses into a single unit (Brauer and Ferguson 2015), the bringing together of various curriculum aspects into meaningful association (Shoemaker 1989), and the use of faculty collaboration to develop subject matters that support and supplement one another (Panitz 1997).

Integrating curriculum provides learners with beneficial problem-solving skills, encourages critical thinking, and positively impacts performance on knowledge measurements. Wolfe and Brandt (1998) concluded that participation in an integrated curriculum can result in greater intellectual curiosity, improved attitude toward schooling, and higher achievement in college. Similarly, Snyder (2001) stated that integrated curriculum units encourage students to develop a deeper understanding and critical thinking through comparing and contrasting ideas. Tarr et al. (2013) evaluated the effects of an integrated mathematics curriculum and found that students who participated in the integrated curriculum significantly outperformed others on a test of problem-solving and concepts. Overall, the literature suggests that blending content to connect concepts and skills among topics and areas can advance problem solving, systems thinking, and innovation (Loepp 1999; Kysilka 1998; Meadows 2008).

Retention interval

Retention interval refers to the period between an individual's exposure to information and their being tested for retention of that information. Long retention intervals produce worse performance than short retention intervals, with the longer delays between information acquisition and retrieval enabling interference and forgetting (Driskell, Willis, and Copper

> **Integrating curriculum provides learners with beneficial problem-solving skills, encourages critical thinking, and positively impacts performance on knowledge measurements.**

1992). This effect is supported by various experiments testing the effect of interval length on skill sustainment. For example, Schendel and Hagman (1980) assessed whether the long-term retention of procedural skills depended on how periodic refresher training sessions were scheduled. Using a learned skill, the disassembly of the M60 machine gun, Schendel and Hagman employed a control group where initial training continued until each soldier achieved an errorless performance, a massed sessions (MS) group where initial training was extended 100 percent beyond criterion performance, and a spaced sessions (SS) group where 100 percent overtraining trials were provided midway through the retention interval. The authors found that participants in both experimental groups outperformed the control group, demonstrating 65 percent (MS) and 57 percent (SS) fewer errors.

The literature indicates interval length impacts skill sustainment (Schendel and Hagman 1980; Goldberg, Drillings, and Dressel 1981; Van Dusen and Schlosberg 1948; Leonard, Wheaton, and Cohen 1976; Cotterman and Wood 1967). For example, Leonard, Wheaton, and Cohen (1976) studied skill retention in six groups of Army members by measuring performance of a learned skill immediately upon training (group 3), six weeks after initial training (group 1), 17 weeks after initial training (group 2),

six weeks after refresher training (group 5), and 17 weeks after refresher training (group 6) and comparing these results to an untrained control group (group 4). They concluded that longer retention intervals were associated with poorer performance, while refresher training improved performance on some but not all tasks compared to those who did not have the refresher training.

The literature also suggested that long retention intervals produce worse performance than short retention intervals with respect to knowledge sustainment, particularly of recall-related information (Semb, Ellis, and Araujo 1993; Semb and Ellis 1994; Halpin and Halpin 1982; Glasnapp, Poggio, and Ory 1978). In a meta-analysis of 56 knowledge retention studies, Semb and Ellis (1994) observed that knowledge type significantly impacted retention; specifically, they found that more than 70 percent of recognition studies showed loss scores of less than 20 percent, while only half of recall studies showed loss scores below 20 percent, suggesting better retention for recognition task types than for recall task types.

The concepts of integrated curriculum and retention interval are critical to this study. The study applied an integrated curriculum within a defined retention interval to evaluate whether integrated content delivered at predictable times improved knowledge. Based on the broad definitions of "integrated curriculum" presented in the literature, the study employed a type of integration called fusion, which describes the injection of select themes and subject matter areas into an existing curriculum (Drake and Reid 2018). This fused content was delivered within a set retention interval, which enabled the study to examine participants' ability to retain study information for a defined time.

The Study

The study started with the premise that police academy training provides the foundational content and tactics that officers will use throughout their careers. Recruits are expected to absorb critical information and retain it indefinitely. It is common for officers involved in serious situations to be held responsible for information they learned during their police academy experience many years earlier.

Recruits' ability to retain all the material in these basic training courses—ranging from 400 to more than 1,000 hours, depending on the state—is a genuine concern for academy directors, police administrators, other officers, and the community. Because the curriculum is so condensed and there is a genuine agency need to deploy officers on the street as quickly as possible, most academies have relied on a traditional siloed lecture-style delivery despite concerns that this method may not be the most effective way to teach adults. It is critical to understand how instructional methodology impacts recruits' ability to retain information.

Questions

The study sought to answer two questions:

1. Does knowledge improve if recruits are exposed to integrated content at predictable intervals at the basic academy level?

2. Does integrated content delivered online, rather than in-person, impact knowledge at the basic academy level?

Participants

The study's participants came from five police academies in the United States, including two state academies, two community college academies, and one municipal academy.

1. Baltimore (Maryland) Police Academy

2. Collin College (Texas) Law Enforcement Academy

3. New Mexico Law Enforcement Academy

4. State of Nevada Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Academy

5. Ulster County (New York) Police Academy

Participant academies were chosen based on geographical diversity, anticipated class size, existing communications-related curriculum, and interest.

Methodology

The Academy Innovations project was a randomized control trial (RCT) that examined participants' retention of knowledge on a baseline law enforcement communications curriculum. The 152 participants were randomly assigned to four groups:

1. **In-person traditional.** Participants received only baseline communication skills content via traditional in-person lecture delivery.

2. **Online traditional.** Participants received only baseline communication skills content via traditional online delivery.

3. **In-person integrated.** Participants received baseline communication skills content and supplemental lessons via in-person integrated curriculum delivery.

4. **Online integrated.** Participants received baseline communication skills content and supplemental lessons via online integrated curriculum delivery.

In-person and online **traditional** groups only received an initial baseline communication skills training with no supplemental lessons, simulating a traditional siloed instructional method.

In-person and online **integrated** groups received supplemental lessons in an integrated method. These supplemental lessons reviewed previously presented content, applied that content in the context of

responding to a person in crisis and a motor vehicle stop respectively, and provided opportunity for students to practice learned concepts.

The baseline communication skill training and supplemental integrated lesson on communication skills in the context of responding to persons in crisis and communication skills in the context of motor vehicle stops are available on the Academy Innovations project web page (https://www.iadlest.org/our-services/academy-innovations).

All groups completed a pre-test on communications skills and then received baseline training on a law enforcement communications curriculum (wave 1).

Approximately 30 days after the completion of the baseline communications training, **in-person integrated** and **online integrated groups** received a supplemental lesson focused on applying communication skills from the baseline training in the context of responding to a person in crisis. All groups (traditional and integrated) were then tested on retention of concepts from the initial baseline communications skills lesson (wave 2).

Approximately 60 days after the completion of the baseline communications training, **in-person integrated** and **online integrated** groups received a supplemental lesson focused on applying communication skills from the baseline training in the context of motor vehicle stops. All groups were then tested on retention of concepts from the initial baseline communications skills lesson (wave 3).

Approximately 90 days after the completion of the baseline communications training, all groups were tested on retention of concepts from the initial baseline communications skills lesson (wave 4).

Table 1 documents the RCT's design.

Findings

Results showed that in-person and online groups that received integrated content performed better on written tests than in-person and online groups that received content via traditional lecture. In addition, in-person and online integrated groups demonstrated continual knowledge retention and gain, with the in-person integrated group performing higher than all other groups throughout the experiment and the

Table 1. Academy Innovations experimental design

ACTIVITY	IN-PERSON TRADITIONAL	ONLINE TRADITIONAL	IN-PERSON INTEGRATED	ONLINE INTEGRATED	INTERVAL
Pre-test & communication skills	✓	✓	✓	✓	Week 1
Integrated persons in crisis			✓	✓	+30 Days
Integrated motor vehicle stops			✓	✓	+60 Days
Post-test	✓	✓	✓	✓	+90 Days

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online integrated group demonstrating continued material retention. Conversely, in-person and online groups that received a traditional lecture demonstrated a significant decline in knowledge retention over time. In both settings, traditional groups performed highest immediately following the delivery of lesson content, and performance declined as the interval between lesson content delivery and testing increased. Table 2 documents median percentage scores per test, with wave 1 representing pre-test performance, wave 2 representing performance immediately following initial instruction, and waves 3 and 4 representing performance at 30 and 60 days post-instruction. Note that traditional in-person and online recruits had lower average scores on wave 4 than on wave 2.

Figure 1 documents the average group performance using a post-stratification weighted sample over time.

Overall, the application of integrated content appeared to impact average performance more significantly than how the content was delivered (online vs. in-person). Because of the design of the experiment, online and in-person results could not

Table 2. Median scores per test

Group	Wave 1 (pre-test) %	Wave 2 (post-test) %	Wave 3 (post-test + 30 days) %	Wave 4 (post-test + 60 days) %
In-person traditional	47.2	64.2	60.4	51.5
Online traditional	40.5	53.8	54.1	39.4
In-person integrated	42.7	64.4	72.6	72.9
Online integrated	40.4	53.6	59.8	63.8

Figure 1. Group performance (median)

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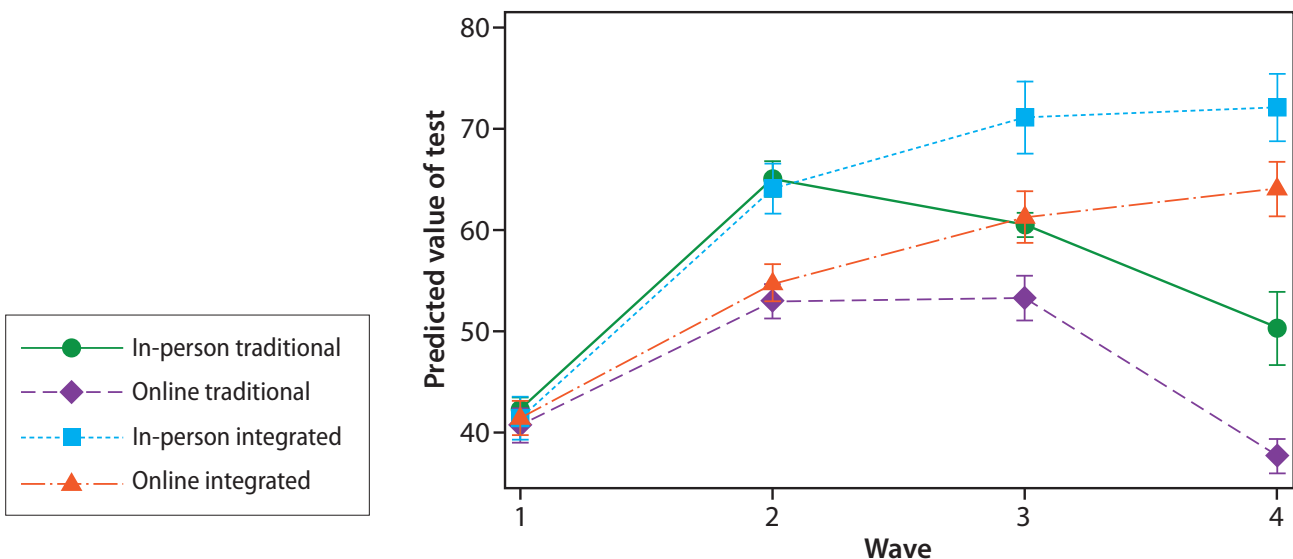
easily be compared on their own. However, with both in-person and online integrated groups outperforming both in-person and online traditional groups, results suggest integration positively impacted retention irrespective of delivery type. From wave 2 to wave 4, in-person integrated median scores improved from 64.4 percent to 72.9 percent, while online integrated median scores improved from 53.6 percent to 63.8 percent. Conversely, median scores for both in-person and online traditional deliveries decreased from wave 2 to wave 4, with in-person scores declining from 64.2 percent to 51.5 percent and online scores declining from 53.8 percent to 39.4 percent. These results indicate that integrated groups gained knowledge over time, while groups that received a traditional lecture and no additional integrated content lost significant knowledge during the experimental interval.

Study results suggest two clear implications for the field.

1. Integrated curriculum approaches enhance a recruit's ability to learn and retain information, regardless of delivery method. In-person and online groups that received an initial lesson and additional integrated content performed better than in-person and online groups that did not receive integrated content. In addition, both groups that received integrated content

Recruits receiving integrated content performed better than recruits who received content only once, regardless of whether they received content in-person or online.

demonstrated continual knowledge retention compared to groups that received only an initial lesson. These results suggest that an integrated curriculum helps recruits learn and retain more of that information through time. Basic police academies instruct recruits on dozens of topics over a multi-month time frame. Incorporating curriculum integration into this experience will likely improve recruits' ability to learn and remember the materials they are taught. With much of the academy experience devoted to high-risk content—including search and seizure, firearms usage, and patrol techniques— increasing recruits' ability to learn and retain information will improve understanding and recall of critical content recruits and new officers need to operate safely and effectively.

"Like everyone else, we have traditionally offered blocks of instruction. To some extent, it is inevitable. But it's also true that we want recruits to remember in week 30 what they learned in week 2, and not just remember it, but be able to recognize when it is applicable, and then actually apply it correctly. Just hoping that will happen isn't good enough. Unless we integrate topics and themes and reinforce them periodically throughout the academy, we aren't preparing new officers as well as we should."

— Gary Cordner, Academic Director, Baltimore Police Department

2. Traditional instructional methods may not ensure recruit knowledge upon graduation. Groups that only received the initial lesson without subsequent integrated content, a traditional instructional method used in many basic police academy curriculums, demonstrated declining knowledge retention over time. In both an in-person and an online setting, traditional groups had their best results within weeks of lesson content delivery. However, performance generally declined as the interval between lesson content delivery and test increased. For traditional in-person and online recruits, this decline resulted in lower average scores in wave 4 than in wave 1. While scores of recruits who received integrated content increased as the distance between lesson content delivery and test increased, in-person traditional student median scores decreased by 19.8 percent, and online traditional median scores decreased by 26.8 percent in the same interval. This decline has significant implications for police training, especially during the academy and field training officer (FTO) stages. With academies requiring hundreds of training hours throughout multiple months, providing traditional, nonintegrated content significantly increases the likelihood that recruits will not retain learned material from their academy experience. For traditional participants, this trial demonstrated a significant knowledge loss in one subject during a 90-day period. As the typical basic academy students are exposed to dozens of subject matter areas in a multi-month training process, study results suggest these recruits' ability to retain this information decreases as the time from content delivery increases. This trend likely continues following graduation, which suggests that students who participate in a traditionally instructed basic academy may not be able to retain significant amounts of basic academy training through the lengthy basic academy and FTO process necessary to produce a fully functional law enforcement officer.

Traditional instruction . . . demonstrated declining knowledge retention over time.

Integration Best Practices

The findings from the study support a growing knowledge base of integration learning theory and application. In addition, this study has shown for the first time in a police academy setting that integration strategies can increase knowledge retention and improve curricula. As a result, several academies that participated in the study have begun working toward integrating their curricula. However, integrating a curriculum requires time and planning, and the following best practices can assist in academy integration efforts.

Best practice 1.
Engage

Integrating a curriculum will require input, participation, and support from key stakeholders like academy staff members, instructors, POST boards and other oversight entities, and FTOs. Therefore, when implementing an integration strategy, first engage with key staff members and other stakeholders. Next, articulate the benefits of an integrated curriculum, identify how integration can support existing POST or other oversight body requirements, and gain buy-in before moving forward.

Best practice 2.
Start small

Integrating an entire curriculum will be time- and labor-intensive. Your academy may not have the staff, infrastructure, or facilities to integrate fully. Consider limiting integration to only a particular subject matter area or portion of a curriculum. Starting small and considering infrastructure, staffing, development of time requirements, and stress on staff will help implement gradual change and ensure your team is not overwhelmed with an integration project they are not ready to execute.

Best practice 3.
Select subject matter areas

Select subject matter areas for integration. Subject matter areas and concepts that should be included in every lesson are great candidates for integration. Some common subject matter areas that are applicable throughout a basic police academy curriculum include the following:

- Communication skills
- Community engagement
- Decision-making
- Ethics
- Law
- Peer intervention
- Problem solving
- Report writing

Selecting subjects like these and other core skills or processes that contribute to policing approaches makes integrating the subject or skill easier throughout an entire curriculum.

Choose a strategy

Next, choose an integration strategy. Identify which of the following you want to do:

- Combine once separate courses into a single unit. You can combine separate courses by identifying overlapping concepts and ideas and building units of study based on these shared items.

  For example, controlled substances, law, and patrol techniques are often taught separately. Combining these courses into a single unit would result in a controlled substances lesson that introduces and defines controlled substances, discusses patrol and investigative strategies related to controlled substances cases, and examines specific laws relevant to controlled substances investigations.

- Make connections between previously separated content. This process is often called "fusion;" you can make connections between previously separated content by adding themes and new subject matter into existing curriculum.

  For example, you can "fuse" ethics content into multiple subject matter areas by including topic-specific ethical dilemmas in lesson plans. This could result in an interview-focused ethical dilemma during interview and interrogation lesson delivery, a communication-focused dilemma during patrol procedures or motor vehicle stops, and other context-appropriate dilemmas throughout a curriculum.

- Ensure instructor collaboration so their subject matter areas support one another and integrated or overlapping content is delivered consistently. You can ensure collaboration by ensuring that teachers responsible for different courses consult and communicate together.

  For example, plan and host instructor meetings before content delivery. Emphasize connections between instructors who deliver complementary or integrated content, such as ensuring instructors who teach introductory communications skills can discuss key concepts with team members supervising interview, patrol procedure, and motor vehicle stop content where students will apply these communications concepts. Collaboration between instructors will ensure concepts are taught and reinforced consistently over time.

- Evaluate staff, resources, curriculum, and assessment strategies before determining the best integration strategy. Also, recognize that type and level of integration may differ between subject matter areas within a curriculum.

  For example, choosing Peer Intervention as a subject matter area for integration and specifying that the integration effort will focus on making connections between previously separated content could allow you to integrate by delivering an initial active bystandership lesson and then including applicable scenarios in all subsequent lesson plans. Scenarios should be subject matter—specific (e.g., a peer intervention dilemma faced when assisting a person in crisis call) and provide recruits with multiple opportunities to apply principles in context-appropriate situations.

Establish working groups

Successfully integrating subject matter requires collaboration between the instructors who build, deliver, and maintain the curriculum. To facilitate information sharing and gain support from staff and instructors, establish working groups and use these groups to lead integration efforts. Consider establishing groups by subject matter area. For example, when integrating "Ethics" throughout a curriculum, the working group should be staffed by instructors who deliver ethics-related content and instructors who deliver subject matter areas where ethical dilemmas or other ethics-related content could be integrated.
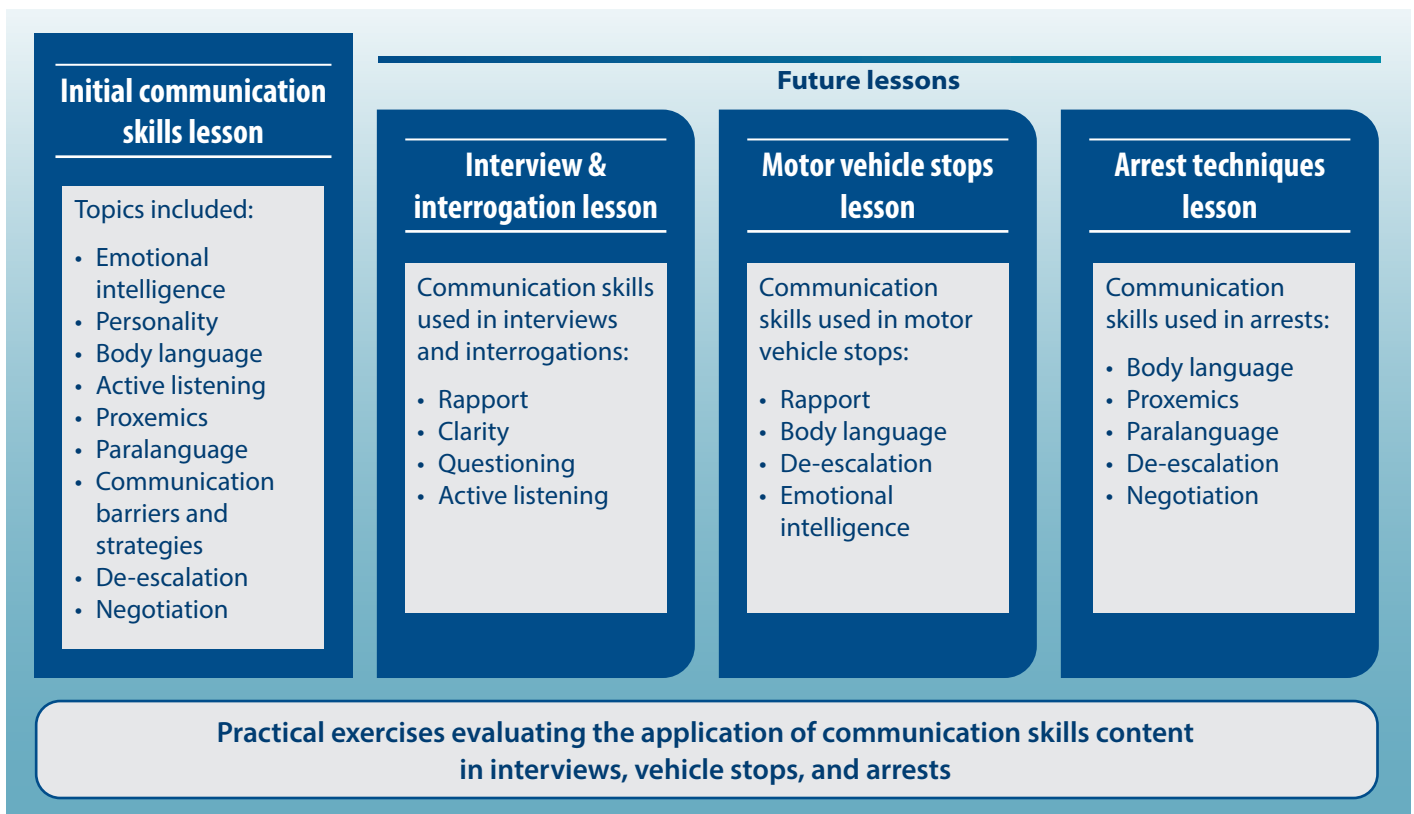
Best practice 6.
Plan and build connections

Assign working groups to identify and develop connections between subject matter areas. Create charts or diagrams that show common goals, skills, or objectives shared by subject matter areas, and high-light specific locations within lessons where integrated content could reside.

Ensure content is consistent when integrated through-out a curriculum. Use the same concepts, terms, models, and definitions, and create opportunities for recruits to use these concepts in subject matter—specific ways throughout the curriculum. Figure 2 documents a simple integration diagram for communi-cation skills content.

An integration diagram aims to identify topic areas that can be reinforced throughout an academy. Figure 2 lists the main topics delivered during an initial communication skills lesson and highlights areas that can be reinforced during future lessons. To integrate communication skills throughout the academy, instructors can reinforce these highlighted skills by presenting them in the context of inter-views, motor vehicle stops, and arrest techniques. In addition, practical exercises in the related content areas should include evaluating the application of communication skills.

Figure 2. Integration diagram—communication skills

Initial communication skills lesson

Topics included:

- Emotional intelligence
- Personality
- Body language
- Active listening
- Proxemics
- Paralanguage
- Communication barriers and strategies
- De-escalation
- Negotiation

Future lessons

Interview & interrogation lesson

Communication skills used in interviews and interrogations:

- Rapport
- Clarity
- Questioning
- Active listening

Motor vehicle stops lesson

Communication skills used in motor vehicle stops:

- Rapport
- Body language
- De-escalation
- Emotional intelligence

Arrest techniques lesson

Communication skills used in arrests:

- Body language
- Proxemics
- Paralanguage
- De-escalation
- Negotiation

Practical exercises evaluating the application of communication skills content in interviews, vehicle stops, and arrests

Best practice 7.
Identify and develop assessment methods

"The success of integrated curriculum depends on the implementation of integrated assessment. Having a mismatch between teaching/learning strategies and assessment methodologies is an effective recipe for failure of implementation of any curriculum." (Malik and Malik 2011, 103)

Develop testing and assessment methods that evaluate recruit understanding, interpretation, and decision-making skills. Rely on working groups to develop written questions and practical application exercises that evaluate all aspects of an integrated curriculum. For example, integrating "Decision-Making" throughout a curriculum requires developing and using test questions and scenarios with decision-making components for use in multiple instructional areas. In practice, this means that some test questions and practical application exercises in handcuffing, defensive tactics, motor vehicle stops, and other disciplines must force recruits to apply decision-making principles while demonstrating subject matter–specific knowledge or proficiency.

Best practice 8.
Train staff and instructors

For an integrated curriculum to be effective, staff and instructors must understand the benefits of integration and be aware of their specific roles and responsibilities. For many instructors, this requirement means they must be familiar with multiple lessons outside their specific instructional blocks and be prepared to teach integrated curriculum components.

For example, suppose "Ethics" is an integrated subject matter area. In that case, the Motor Vehicle Stops instructor must be familiar with foundational ethics content and prepared to reinforce and evaluate this content in the specific context of a motor vehicle stop. Of course, this reinforcement may already be happening informally among instructors at your academy; however, assigning staff and instructors to specific working groups to identify and develop integrated content and then providing training to ensure all members know their roles in delivering integrated content will dramatically increase the integrated curriculum's effectiveness.

Conclusion

"We immediately came back and started looking at our curriculum. . . . We've applied for a state grant to try to bring in some subject matter experts to help us fully integrate our academy curriculum. We have a tendency to look at our schedule and not always present courses in the correct order or a building block–type presentation order, and often one particular topic won't always relate to previous topics. So we did very much appreciate the information shared with us, and we looked at our curriculum and said, 'Hey, we could be doing this better.'"

— Chris Carter, Deputy Director,
Nevada Peace Officers Standards and
Training

The purpose of the basic police academy is to prepare recruits for duty as law enforcement officers. The results of the Academy Innovations project suggest that integration as an instructional methodology could increase a recruit's ability to learn and retain information, and academy staff should consider integrating their content to better prepare officers for duty. Participation in an integrated curriculum resulted in higher performance and continued knowledge retention than traditional instruction. However, with traditional instructional approaches likely forming the basis of most police academy training, project results demonstrating median score declines of 19.8 percent (in-person traditional) and 26.8 percent (online traditional) during the experimental interval suggest that current academy training may not be fully optimized for recruit learning and retention. Police academies have the shared goal of producing competent and qualified officers through education and training, but the Academy Innovations study suggests that the current instructional model used by many academies is not the best strategy to achieve that goal. The best practices in this report provide academy staff and leadership with foundational integration knowledge; employing these practices will develop a more integrated and effective academy curriculum.

Additional Resources

Academy Innovations project web page (including Communication Skills, Persons in Crisis Communication Skills, and Motor Vehicle Stops Communication Skills curricula)
https://www.iadlest.org/our-services/academy-innovations

Academy Innovations References and Resources
https://www.iadlest.org/Portals/0/Files/Documents/Academy%20Innovations/Grouped%20References.pdf

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About IADLEST

The mission of the **International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training (IADLEST)** is to support the innovative development of professional standards in public safety through research, development, collaboration, and sharing of information to assist states and international partners with establishing effective and defensible standards for the employment and training of public safety personnel.

We are a nonprofit organization dedicated to transforming policing by promoting excellence in training and professional standards. Our membership comprises key leaders in law enforcement training, including the Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) Directors of every state in the United States, as well as state and local training academy directors. With these two influential groups, we directly impact 664 basic law enforcement training academies and approximately 900,000 police and correctional officers in the country. Because we believe in learning from and sharing our experiences with other countries, we are proud to have international members and thus have a worldwide perspective and dialogue regarding public safety standards and training.

Learn more about IADLEST and our services at https://www.iadlest.org.

About the COPS Office

The **Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office)** is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, territorial, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.

Community policing begins with a commitment to building trust and mutual respect between police and communities. It supports public safety by encouraging all stakeholders to work together to address our nation's crime challenges. When police and communities collaborate, they more effectively address underlying issues, change negative behavioral patterns, and allocate resources.

Rather than simply responding to crime, community policing focuses on preventing it through strategic problem-solving approaches based on collaboration. The COPS Office awards grants to hire community policing officers and support the development and testing of innovative policing strategies. COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government leaders, as well as all levels of law enforcement.

Since 1994, the COPS Office has been appropriated more than $20 billion to add community policing officers to the nation's streets, enhance crime fighting technology, support crime prevention initiatives, and provide training and technical assistance to help advance community policing. Other achievements include the following:

- To date, the COPS Office has funded the hiring of approximately 136,000 additional officers by more than 13,000 of the nation's 18,000 law enforcement agencies in both small and large jurisdictions.

- More than 800,000 law enforcement personnel, community members, and government leaders have been trained through COPS Office–funded training organizations and the COPS Training Portal.

- Almost 800 agencies have received customized advice and peer-led technical assistance through the COPS Office Collaborative Reform Initiative Technical Assistance Center.

- To date, the COPS Office has distributed more than eight million topic-specific publications, training curricula, white papers, and resource CDs and flash drives.

The COPS Office also sponsors conferences, roundtables, and other forums focused on issues critical to law enforcement. COPS Office information resources, covering a wide range of community policing topics such as school and campus safety, violent crime, and officer safety and wellness, can be downloaded via the COPS Office's home page, https://cops.usdoj.gov.

Recruits' ability to learn and retain material presented during and after basic police academy is a genuine concern for academy directors, police administrators, recruits, officers, and the community. Because much information is delivered relatively quickly, police training professionals must understand and employ instructional delivery methodologies that help recruits learn and retain information.

This report describes the results of the Academy Innovations project, a COPS Office–supported initiative aimed at studying ways to improve the methodology for delivering basic police training content. Led by the International Association of Directors of Law Enforcement Standards and Training (IADLEST), the project conducted a randomized controlled trial (RCT) in five U.S. police academies to determine if students who participated in an in-person or online integrated curriculum performed better than those who participated in a traditional in-person or online lecture.

The report briefly reviews the literature on integrated curricula and retention intervals, discusses implications for the field, and provides eight best practices to guide the implementation of integrated curriculum elements in the police academy.

![COPS logo] **COPS**
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U.S. Department of Justice