

Improving the Quality of Training through Targeted Instructor Development:

*A Replicable Training Model
from the
Portland Police Bureau*

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Introduction

Training is an essential component of the continual evolution of policing. In 2023, the need for additional police training continues to be a contentious refrain both within agencies and the communities they serve. However, as Former NYPD Training Chief Kenneth Corey explains, “We hear so much about needing more training. Well, more training is better. But better training is better still.” (PERF, 2022)

The question then becomes: How can an agency enhance the quality of its training?

This paper outlines the approach taken by the Portland Police Bureau (PPB) in Portland, Oregon, to improve the quality of training through an instructor development pilot program focusing on the bottom-up development of instructors’ adult education acumen. While “adult learning” is often assumed to be relegated to classroom learning, the skills taught through formal instructor development are equally transferable to motor-learning and scenario-based training.

There are components of this program that are unique to Portland. However, the overall design is based on support from various other agencies, including the po-

lice departments in Baltimore, Los Angeles, and New Orleans. The hiring of an academic dean, for example, was inspired by comparable efforts in Los Angeles. Despite these previous efforts, comprehensive documentation of existing instructor development programming in policing is limited. Thus, this paper serves to provide a potentially replicable template for other medium-to-large agencies throughout the country.

Before outlining the program, the paper will discuss the current state of instructor qualification and development, as well as identify research undergirding the importance of instructor adult education proficiency and Law Enforcement Officer (LEO) collaboration with non-sworn education professionals.

State of the Field

A robust body of research underscores the need for professional training generally, and police officer development specifically, to utilize evidence-based adult education practices, including participatory learning, high-fidelity scenarios, interleaving, and an integrated learning program (Armstrong, 2020; O’Neill, et al., 2019; Lewinski & Albin, Professional Police Training, 2022; Presi-

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dent's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015; Lewinski, 2019; sd 2019; Lewinski, 2019). However, the research on *how* LEO instructors teach is limited. Gaps in the literature include the identification of standardized requirements, the amount and frequency of instructor development, recent data on adult education principle implementation in police training, and continuing education beyond initial specialized certification.

The most common prerequisites for LEOs to become instructors are subject matter expertise, years of experience, and POST certification (Department of Justice, 2018). These qualifications are undoubtedly important. Yet, they presuppose that a skilled LEO will naturally be an effective teacher. Research indicates this is not always the case, as many POST-certified instructors lack proficiency in adult education theory and methods (Birzer, 2003). Furthermore, a significant portion of academy training relies on instructor-centered lectures, which have limited transferability to policework in the field (McCoy, 2006).

Instructors at PPB and elsewhere make commendable efforts to maximize the impact of their training by seeking external training, researching independently, and engaging in peer learning within the instructor cadre. However, formalized training could significantly reduce the stress on new instructors, standardize expectations, and ultimately improve learning outcomes among recruits and in-service training participants.

Moreover, the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015) and the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF, 2022) emphasize the benefits of combining law enforcement and civilian expertise to enhance police training quality. These collaborations can support the adoption of best practices in adult education from other fields, leveraging the knowledge of non-sworn experts and their LEO counterparts.

Agencies around the country have recognized the need for improved quality of instruction, and many have hired education specialists to support sworn instructors. Additionally, some agencies require a base-level instructor certification for instructors to teach at academies. For example, California's POST organization requires new instructors to complete the California POST Academy Instructor Certification Course (AICC) to qualify as instructors. Prospective instructors from across California's law enforcement agencies attend the course.

Some agencies have also made strides toward greater

collaboration between sworn and non-sworn experts. In New York, professors from New York University, the City University of New York, and other institutions have visited the New York Police Department to provide targeted instruction, review curricula, and provide other types of support to the department. Additionally, PPB and the Baltimore Police Department, among others, have hired in-house curriculum and instructional design specialists.

The Portland Model

The approach outlined here was developed and adapted based on visits and input from other agencies, including the Los Angeles and New Orleans Police Departments, but is potentially unique in its commitment to embedding a culture of best practices in adult education among law enforcement instructors. This is achieved through collaboration with a non-sworn Curriculum and Instructional Design Unit (CID), including two full-time instructional designers and a Director of Police Education (DOPE), as well as the support of command staff, including the Captain of the Training Division. The program fosters a culture of effective adult learning and instruction throughout the agency.

The approach is threefold: First, instructors work with the CID to co-develop curricula and materials that blend subject matter expertise with educational best practices. Second, the Bureau is formalizing its instructor development programming, including instructor certification courses. Lastly, instructors will receive continuous support, including non-punitive feedback and growth opportunities.

This model also includes proposed policy language, which adopts the requirement of attendance to an Instructor Development Course (IDC) within 180 days of selection as a full-time PPB instructor. Inherent in the desire for systemic enhancement, policy language is essential to the success of ensuring the sustainability of such organizational efforts.

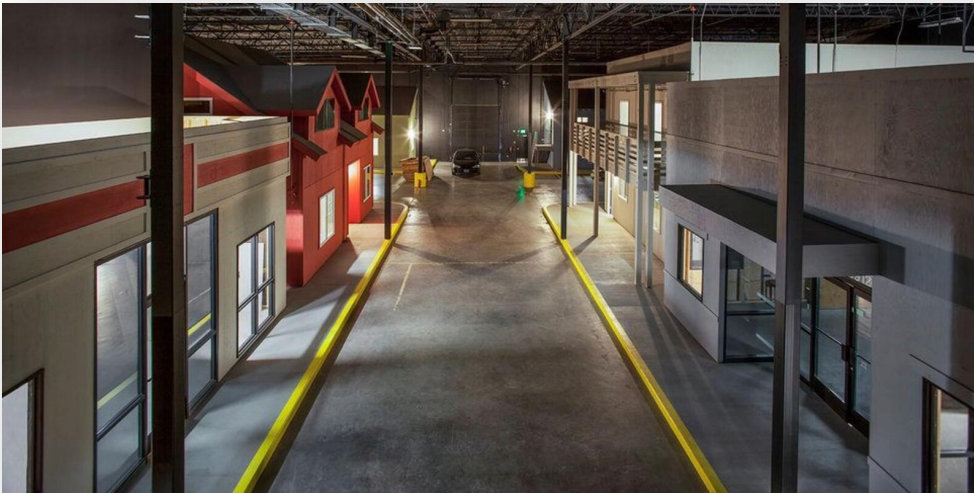
Previous Instructor Development Efforts

The process of enhancing skills and knowledge among full-time instructors in the absence of formal, in-house training programs was significantly influenced by expertise, which predated the formal hiring of education specialists. Since at least 2005, civilian employees have supported instructor development, even when that was not formally their role.

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Post-2005, the influence of civilian instructional design continued to shape training programs. The focus on lesson plan design and the incorporation of adult learning activities became more pronounced around 2010. This period also saw the introduction of a standardized template for lesson plans, fostering consistency and enhancing the quality of instruction across various disciplines.

High-fidelity scenarios and table-top exercises have been a long-standing feature of the training programs. However, there has been a notable shift towards interdisciplinary collaboration, breaking down silos between different training modules. This collaborative approach has been crucial in integrating Crisis Intervention Training (CIT) into Patrol Procedures (PP), a process that gained significant momentum around 2014. The current instructors continue to seek opportunities to expand this integration, ensuring that training remains relevant and effective.



Moreover, scenario-based training has seen an increased emphasis on high-fidelity simulations across all disciplines. The Advanced Academy incorporates a wide range of interdisciplinary training scenarios, which are instrumental in simulating real-life situations. The Training Division has been innovative in combining various disciplines like control tactics and crisis communication, thereby creating training scenarios that closely resemble actual field encounters.

Finally, sworn staff of existing training programs offer extensive training for new instructors, including practical teaching exercises. This approach ensures not only a thorough understanding of the curriculum but also its successful delivery. The involvement of non-sworn adult education specialists has further enriched these

programs, integrating adult learning principles and coaching into the core disciplinary content.

The post-2021 CID unit and IDC training are not necessarily a transformation, but rather a formalization and standardization of processes in response to a desire for formalized training by sworn instructional staff. The goal is to build on the informal, and at times inconsistent, instructor development efforts and thereby lift the overall quality of training at PPB.

LEO and Non-Sworn Collaboration

Beginning in the Summer of 2021, LEO instructors at PPB's Training Division have worked directly with full-time instructional designers to advance adult education practices in police training. The first major iteration of this effort was crowd management training for all sworn members during in-service training. Given Portland's robust history of free speech events, activism, and the

protracted protest movement in 2020, the successful implementation of this training was an important early step for overcoming strained relations between the community and the Bureau.

All-sworn in-service at PPB generally includes a combination of classroom learning, high-fidelity scenarios, and skill practice. One noted growth area is in the quality of classroom training, which tends to rely on instructor-centered lectures from subject matter experts

(SMEs). Through collaboration with instructional designers, LEO instructors co-developed lesson plans for the training, which included a revised suite of tabletop activities, high-fidelity scenarios, and practice activities that reinforced material presented in the increasingly participant-centered classroom modules.

Although the format of the training represented a step forward, participant and observer feedback indicated additional areas for improvement. The lead SMEs for this project processed these responses and continued to work with the CID to further develop their educational skillset.

In the Fall of 2023, the same SMEs worked independently on the second iteration of the crowd management

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training. The materials the LEO instructors produced included interactive activities that directly supported the learning objectives, and much of the content was presented through participant-centered discussion, high-fidelity practice, and tabletop exercises.

This anecdote mirrors the grassroots cultural shift the Training Division aims to promote by empowering LEO instructors with an enhanced educational skillset. Since this initial project, SMEs at the training division and other divisions at PPB have collaborated with the CID to improve the quality of their training, independently seeking out support because of their individual desires to improve the quality of their instruction.

1500.00 Training, Policy, 3. ... training shall encourage creative thinking, proactive problem-solving, community engagement, and techniques for dealing with quality-of-life concerns. ...

Formal Instructor Development

In line with industry standards, most LEO instructors at PPB are selected for their expertise in policing rather than their instructional skills. Despite limited training, the quality of instruction, especially from full-time lead instructors, remains commendably high. However, many instructors report relying on trial-and-error as their main method of learning to teach. They have expressed a need for more support in developing a skill set tailored to the instructional environment.

In 2021, PPB began creating an in-house instructor development program. As an initial step, PPB's first instructional designer, along with a select group of LEO instructors, participated in the Academy Instructor Certification Course (AICC) conducted by California's POST organization. This week-long course served as a template for developing LEO instructors and was seen as a model that could be replicated and customized to fit PPB's specific needs.

The AICC course spans five days, encompasses theory, presentation skills, facilitation techniques, learning activity creation, and culminates in delivering a brief practice lesson. While the PPB course follows a similar structure, the needs of PPB instructors differ in several critical aspects from AICC content. Notably, PPB's LEO instructors often have the additional responsibilities of

modifying, adapting, or creating lesson plans, curricula, and training materials — advanced skills not covered in the basic AICC course. Furthermore, even new instructors at PPB are frequently tasked with developing and implementing entire courses. Recognizing these specific requirements, the PPB instructor certification course places a greater emphasis on instructional design.

The 40-hour PPB instructor curriculum is structured as follows:

- **Day One: Instructor Expectations and Presentation Skills:**

Day one introduces the role and expectations of a PPB LEO instructor, focusing on the verbal and non-verbal presentation skills necessary to engage participants in learning. Participants are also introduced to core theories in adult education and are required to prepare and conduct a 10-minute presentation on a given theory's applicability in the context of police training.

- **Day Two: Facilitation, Debriefing, and Feedback**

Day two prepares instructors with fundamental skills in facilitating classroom discussions and debriefs, providing opportunities for participants to practice guiding discussions toward a set of pre-determined learning objectives. Additionally, participants discuss the role of feedback and learn to conduct effective debriefs for learning activities and scenarios.

- **Day Three: Basic Instructional Design**

Day three introduces basic concepts of instructional design. During this session, participants discuss an abbreviated ADDIE format, practice facilitating learning activities, and co-develop lesson plans for the final practicum.

- **Day Four: Group Instruction Practicum**

Day four of the program provides an opportunity for participants to demonstrate skills developed across the first three days of instruction. Participants receive peer and instructor feedback.

This instructor development course described here has been piloted across several divisions, including the Records Division, the Behavioral Health Unit, and with field training officers. In January 2024, the complete course will be available to new instructors or those aspiring to become instructors within the Training Division.

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While PPB's efforts are commendable, it's important to recognize that they are part of a broader trend of innovation in law enforcement training across the country. Many agencies are exploring similar strategies to enhance the quality of their training programs. The PPB model stands as a valuable example of how focused efforts in instructor development and collaboration with educational experts can lead to meaningful improvements in police training.

In summary, the PPB's approach offers insightful lessons for other law enforcement agencies. It highlights the potential benefits of adopting a systematic and collaborative approach to police training, one that balances practical policing skills with effective teaching methodologies. As the landscape of law enforcement continues to evolve, such initiatives become increasingly vital in preparing officers to meet the challenges of modern policing effectively. ~

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Ben Steiner is an instructional designer with a decade of experience developing curricula and leading instructor development efforts across the globe. Beginning as a Peace Corps education volunteer in Indonesia, Ben continued working in education development and instructor training in Myanmar, Egypt, Guyana, and Mexico. In his current role, Ben serves as an Instructional Designer on the non-sworn Curriculum and Instruction team at the Portland Police Bureau. Ben also holds a master's in international educational development from Teachers College at Columbia University.



Rehanna Kerridge is a police officer with 14 years of experience in law enforcement, including 7 years serving as an instructor at the Training Division. Prior to becoming a full-time instructor, Rehanna served on the Gang Enforcement Team, Human Trafficking Unit, and Rapid Response Team. As a lead instructor, Rehanna manages the Patrol Procedures program, where she specializes in content development, learning design, and high-fidelity scenario-based training. Rehanna also supports training in a variety of other programs, including AR-15 Carbine, 40mm less-lethal launcher, Control Tactics, Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement (ABLE), and Taser. Rehanna is currently pursuing her master's in Learning Design and Technology from the University of San Diego and holds a bachelor's in Psychology from Portland State University.



Dr. Rebecca Rodriguez is an experienced educator, training facilitator, and administrator. She has served 19 years as an educator, 16 of those years in adult education. Primarily, her work has been in teaching and designing curriculum for high stress professions. She also has 19 years of experience at a clinical social worker thereby using her practice experience in a high stress profession to design effective instruction for settings which require complex and dynamic skills. She has held various leadership, supervisory and mentoring roles. She holds a bachelor's degree in Justice Studies, a Master of Social Work and a Doctor of Philosophy in Social Work and Social Research.

