

POLICE PBL

BLUEPRINT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY



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COPS
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Blueprint for 21st Century Policing

Problem-based learning (PBL) offers instructors and trainers an entirely new way to help new officers learn the complicated business of police work. It also represents a dramatic shift in how instructors deliver training and education in the profession. PBL offers a dramatic step forward from traditional command and control teaching, mimetic learning and uniform performance expectations. In places where PBL has been successfully implemented over the past decade, we see the beginnings of a new kind of critical-thinking, problem-solving police officer. This book will help those who want to learn lessons of success and recipes for failure as they modernize training approaches for 21st century policing environments.

This book is a blueprint of our research and development of problem-based learning within police training over the past seven years. We intend this as a guidebook for those who are new to the advanced training and educational method called problem-based learning. We hope command staff, supervisors, instructors, curriculum writers, academy personnel, in-service trainers, and other decision-makers find the material herein a useful tool for any teaching or learning changes they wish to make in their agencies.

Twenty-first century policing bears little resemblance to its younger self of a few decades ago. While basic values like honesty, fairness, and service to others remain foundations in policing, how the competent cop practices those ideals has changed considerably. Today's policing services demand a bewildering array of skills, knowledge and competencies unknown in bygone years. Unfortunately, the majority of our academies and training sites remain rooted in obsolete and counter-productive practices long ago abandoned by educators and other occupational and professional communities. It is as though we are still using the 19th century police truncheon, call box, and emergency whistle instead of pepper spray, cell phones, computers, and GPS. In the pages below, we outline the shape we believe police education and training must take to properly and professionally prepare the 21st century police officer.

The origins of “Police PBL”

We owe the future of PBL reform in policing to some key change agents. Our work would not be successful if not for the funding and on-going support of the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services at the Department of Justice – the *COPS* Office. As well, the success of *Police PBL* and PBL-driven initiatives,

such as the new field-training program called *Police Training Officer* (PTO), relies on the pioneering work of some courageous practitioners. They include academy instructors, field trainers, and command staff who learned PBL in our classes and continually strive to improve their craft with new approaches. Finally, we recognize the police jurisdictions that first implemented PBL: the Royal Canadian Mounted Police academy in the mid 1990s, the Maryland Police Corps, the six original PTO police agencies since 2000¹, particularly the Reno Police Department, and more recently a small handful of pioneering academies. Domestically, Kentucky and California led the way; internationally, academies in Sweden and Mozambique are noteworthy. The list of contributors grows daily. This is the story of the birth of *Police PBL* as we have come to know it over the past seven years. We hope the diligence, courage, and cooperation of those involved in PBL resonates with readers thirsty for changes in police training. We owe the future of police education to their early efforts.

The readers should also note that we wrote *Police PBL* from decades of successful experimentation by others. We modified the original PBL method to suit the unique demands of the police profession. However, the phenomenal success of PBL is well researched. For readers interested in the technical side of educational evaluation, we refer you to research studies over the years in many different fields².

The COPS Office continued funding research and development of both PTO and PBL for a number of years. By 2006 the COPS Office funded the expansion of PBL into the nation-wide network of Regional Community Policing Institutes. This book is part of that program. We also certified instructional staff from a number of institutes using PBL and mentored a curriculum-writing team that then developed specialized PBL courses. Those courses are part of this book and information about them will appear on the website of the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (<http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/>).³

The myth of *tabula rasa* or “Blank Slate”

Imagine this: a young person⁴ joins a police agency expecting an exciting career with interesting challenges. She is intelligent and educated. Perhaps she has worked in challenging jobs and has plenty of applicable experience. Perhaps she is well-traveled and knows much about different cultures and peoples. Service to the community rests comfortably on her mind, but she feels enticed mostly by the adventure of police work. She wants to prove her mettle and use her mental abilities and physical skills to make a difference in the community.

Envision her first experiences in a traditional police academy. She stands obsessively still—obedient—while her instructors roar directives. In some of the more discipline-focused academies, she will stand smartly and say her name

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before sharing comments, answers or ideas. Instructors remind students that failure is never an option for learning, only for being dismissed. Our recruit then dons a uniform and “fits in” to the learning of a new self, and the unlearning of a former one. Intent to “rebuild” her thinking, the instructors promise to erase the unnecessary “bad habits” of the former self, and draw anew for her the habits of a cop. Her transformation to passive acceptance of her new role becomes her first learning victory.

As time moves forward, she sits in academy lectures, month after month, *PowerPointed* to death. She ignores her natural learning inclinations and listens to her well-experienced instructors, hoping that exhaustive book study will somehow translate into passing marks on written tests. Recalling her school days, when she excelled in group settings and “hands-on” learning situations, she now fears failure due to her lack of participation in her own learning. She knows her performance will languish. Unaware that modern educators would describe her as a *body-kinesthetic, interpersonal learner*,--and with no one to facilitate her educational needs—she needlessly endures long hours of classroom lectures.

On a positive note, she loves shooting her weapon, practicing vehicle skid control, and learning self defense skills, but she does those activities much less frequently than attending lectures. Occasionally, she may try out the details of her classroom lectures during scenario training or role play exercises, but these are rare adjuncts to the lectures.

Finally, she meets her training officer upon successful completion of her training. The very first day on the job, the training officer turns to her in the patrol car and says those infamous words repeated by police trainers everywhere: “*Forget everything you just learned in the academy. This is the street – the real world. This is where your learning really begins.*” The raw assumption behind the trainer’s comments is the worthlessness of the academy lessons AND her pre-academy life. The field trainer instructs her to disregard her past, just as the academy trainers did, and re-learn policing according to the trainer’s standards.

Tabula Rasa

This crude, but generally accurate, overview highlights the *tabula rasa* philosophy of much police training. *Tabula rasa* is a Latin phrase for “blank slate” and it infers that trainees are blank slates trainers will fill with new knowledge. Modern educators know that there are logical and educational flaws in this over-utilized and under-achieving approach. First, if we truly think the skills and experiences a learner brings to the police profession do not count, then hiring selection matters little. Since trainers plan to rebuild trainees in the image they prefer, prior knowledge becomes, by definition, irrelevant. Clearly, that is absurd. Police agencies hire the most talented, educated, and experienced people

precisely because their unique backgrounds can positively inform the police profession.

Another problem with the *tabula rasa* philosophy is the enormous loss trainers suffer in the classroom. Imagine the value of having input from a student who may be an experienced former accountant during a discussion on criminal fraud. Imagine during a class on policing the mentally ill the benefit derived from having input from a former social worker or hearing from a student who has a family member suffering from paranoid schizophrenia. Students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, or with extensive life experiences, provide the instructor with an invaluable teaching resource. Too often, police instructors and trainers who use the *tabula rasa* philosophy fail to recognize student expertise. We certainly do not advocate instructors stepping away from the leadership of the class. Instead, the best instructors act as facilitators of learning and invite their students to step forward and share leadership when appropriate. Police recruits, after all, should become community leaders. The *tabula rasa* philosophy devalues the very ingredients of unique personal background and proper instructor facilitation that nourish recruit leadership.

The myths of high stress teaching

The *tabula rasa* approach of education produces high-stress learning environments. Well-intentioned but misguided instructors employ primary school disciplinary methods, such as yelling, to forge a sense of pride and belonging. Unfortunately, *screamers and yellers produce screamers and yellers*.

We want to be very clear about our message concerning discipline. Instructors should discipline only when necessary and appropriately carried out. Military discipline may work well for a traditional battlefield. Military discipline may even inspire pride in very specific, and narrow, circumstances, such as a well-practiced drill squad moving as one unit in crisp uniforms during a police graduation ceremony. But while the stressors of military discipline may have their place in war zones and drill parades, they do not belong in the modern classroom. Today's urban streets provide very different problem solving challenges for academy recruits than 19th and 20th century battlefields.

We also want to be clear that self discipline has an important role in learning. Recruits will not succeed without self discipline; they must remain in control of their emotions during high-stress situations. Chaotic events demand focus; they also demand professionalism and compassion in the face of abhorrent behavior. Self discipline best exemplifies the sort of restraint a police officer needs on the street. Self discipline relates directly to the Emotional Intelligence (EI) competency called self-awareness. For that reason, EI is a major part of the *Police PBL* program. We discuss the research and other training benefits of Emotional Intelligence in Chapter 4.

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Additionally, we are not suggesting that stress has no place in an academic setting. Often, stressful conditions promote learning. For example, Olympic athletes induce stressful training situations to mimic actual competition conditions. Learning how to effectively use and learn from stress creates better athletic performance. Similarly, the *Police PBL* program mimics many policing conditions. Verbal abuse however, is not one of the stress-inducing tactics in PBL. For those who say, “we have to get them ready for someone screaming at them on the street” we have two observations. First: if street preparation represents the reason for yelling or threatening recruits, then the *training time-to-task ratio* seems remarkably unbalanced. In twenty years of our policing experience we rarely experienced someone screaming at us directly. People do yell and scream, but they are generally in crisis. Emotionally intelligent officers know not to take the behavior personally. Teaching EI skills in the academy will far more effectively enhance a recruit’s response to provocations such as yelling. Yelling at a recruit for no reason other than to create an external, instructor controlled sense of discipline will only degrade and frustrate the recruit.

Secondly, if trainers decide they must yell at or denigrate recruits to prepare them for the street, why do this in a classroom rather than on a parade ground where it makes more sense? Recruits won’t be yelled at in classrooms during their careers unless they plan on spending their life as resource officers in badly-disciplined schools. Instructors who yell, like those who rely upon the *tabula rasa* philosophy, fail as teachers. Unsurprisingly, many of the instructors who scream do not teach students how to effectively respond to screaming. Rather, the instructors insist upon obedience, acquiescence, compliance and acceptance.

If we create a learning environment in which we demean recruits and ignore their prior knowledge, or we fail to give them the power to choose their own personal learning style, then we cannot expect them to practice creative, independent, assertive, problem solving when they begin their solo work as police officers.

Educational psychologist Ellen Langer reminds us that “the way the information is learned will determine how, why and when it is used...we as individuals get locked into single-minded views [and] we also reinforce these views for each other until the culture itself suffers the same mindlessness”⁵. Clearly, practices such as the *tabula rasa* philosophy and “high stress” teaching fail to meet the training needs of the 21st century police officer. Teaching methods must allow students to self-discover the knowledge and skills they require in a way that builds on the gifts they already possess in a context that is relevant to them⁶.

Some may argue that police officers on the street today went through traditional training approaches and turned out pretty well. We ourselves went through this traditional system when we were police officers. But there is surprisingly little evidence supporting the success of those methods. More likely, officers became

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successful *in spite* of that training, not *because* of it. As well, much evidence suggests post World War Two training methodologies have, at best, had minimal impact or, at worst, actually contributed to some of the discord emerging in police behavior on the street⁷.

To review, what we now know from educational research is that the conditions of a learning environment impact what we acquire and what we can transfer to other circumstances. In *Police PBL* high internal and group stress environments have a place, unlike yelling and screaming. There may be street situations when discipline may be appropriate. Yelling at trainees during drill on a parade ground may be appropriate if situational discipline is the desired outcome. However, to carry on in a classroom using fear or punishment as motivators where we want people to learn in the style that best suits them and where they need to take risks makes little sense practically or scientifically. The proof lies in what every reader already knows. Ask yourself if you learn new material that you need to know for your current job best with someone standing over your shoulder and yelling at you. Very few of us could answer “yes” to that question. This absurd practice of *stress teaching* material in classrooms represents a practice best honored by its abandonment. We would never consider doing it to a group of police executives or in-service personnel. Why then do we do it to our newest members?

The proper role of training

In *Policing a Free Society*, Herman Goldstein reminds us of the fundamental contradiction of police behavior in a democracy. He suggests that the concepts of agents of the state using coercive force, restraining a person’s liberties, and searching someone’s house occur in spite of a prevailing notion of liberty for all. What keeps this use of force in balance with individual liberty? Put another way, what keeps the police in check?

Laws and regulations for police accountability certainly protect the citizenry from the police, but consider how most contemporary police officers deliver services. Generally, they operate as individuals in patrol cars answering radio calls while well removed from the view of supervisors.

Police professionalism also comes to mind as a restraint on police powers. Typically, professionalism involves standards of hiring, training and accountability. Unfortunately the professional model of policing has been historically associated with the narrow enforcement of laws. That model of policing has been under attack for decades. Under its rule, agencies have found themselves removed from the community to varying degrees and insensitive to the wide variety of services - beyond enforcement - that police should actually deliver⁸.

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Goldstein argues that to a large extent quality police services are determined by the judicious use of police discretion – making quality arrests, addressing the needs of the community, and using “common sense” to resolve community crime and disorder. In particular, discretion, it turns out, is one of the single most important, and most studied, police tools. Arguably, judicious and equitable use of discretion remains the linchpin of good policing.

After decades of research we know that discretion is determined largely as a product of what happens within police organizations and between police officers. Scholars call this the police subculture. Much has been written about the influence of subculture on every major aspect of the job⁹. We believe this subculture may well offer the best opportunity to transform the current police training practices.

Climbing the Blue Wall

Police subculture, known colloquially as the “blue wall”, has a major influence over an individual officer’s discretion, common sense, decision-making, and willingness to employ one tactic over another. Police scholars document many forms of this influence¹⁰. Some scholars claim police subculture is the basis for resistance (or willingness) to change, the source of (or defense against) job stress, and the basis on which police cooperate (or not) with the community to solve crime problems¹¹.

Whatever the impact of the police subculture, we can be certain that attitudes and behaviors begin during the early inculcation of employees into the profession. Who we hire and who we select to train those new employees determines career-long attitudes and beliefs about their role in the agency and within the community. The vital and long lasting importance of the training period cannot be overstated.

Training provides two main gateways into the police subculture. One is the academy instructor. The other is the field trainer who coaches the recruit upon graduation from the academy¹². These two gatekeepers have tremendous influence over a new officer’s introduction to the norms and values of the profession. We believe that the behavior of these gatekeepers – particularly the manner in which they train new trainees – has a critical role for establishing a young person’s attitude toward the profession. Philosopher Marshall McLuhan once said that *the medium is the message*. In policing the ‘medium’ of training, and the process of learning, becomes as important as the content or the test scores. Did we treat the recruits with respect and honor their input? If not, perhaps regardless of what we say in our mission statements and at our community meetings, we are demonstrating to new employees that our dishonoring and disrespecting of them implies a generally tolerated practice for those with power.

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If any common denominator in discretion, performance, or common-sense in policing¹³ exists, we believe it to be the inculcation of police trainees as they learn their craft. As a result, changing the learning and teaching methods in our training programs has been the crux of our work in the *Police PBL* program for the past seven years.

Police PBL provides the means by which we will help new officers learn how to work safely, think critically, adopt problem-solving as a daily part of their job, and partner more readily with residents to tackle crime. Already we have seen PBL trained officers emerge more competent and confident at these tasks much earlier in their careers¹⁴.

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The PBL Program



The founder of PBL, Dr. Howard Barrows, describes the origin of PBL in the following way:

“The original problem-based curriculum at McMaster University, featuring small learning groups with a faculty tutor, was established thirty years ago... Those teachers who have undertaken the change to problem-based learning usually have done so on the basis of a personal educational philosophy that was in line with problem-based learning or out of concern for their school's curriculum and teaching methods. To many faculty, medical students seem bored and dissatisfied with their experience in medical school and consider the basic science years as a difficult and irrelevant hurdle that has to be passed to become a doctor. There is too much emphasis on memorization of facts for their own sake, and students seem to readily forget what they were taught later in their clinical years (Barrows, 2000).

There are a number of sources that describe problem-based learning; thousands of websites, in fact, provide a partial overview. After its invention in medical schools, PBL proliferated in engineering, dentistry, the military, education, and many other professions. Each of those professions has modified PBL to fit its particular environment, and each provides supportive resources such as books, websites, associations, and PBL training programs.

The COPS office hired us to write and publish two training documents that disseminated basic information about problem-based learning. The first was the PTO training manual. Titled *A Problem-based learning Manual for Training and Evaluating Police Recruits*, we researched and wrote this with assistance from members of the Reno Police Department and the Police Executive Research Forum.¹⁵

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We researched and wrote the second as a result of lessons learned during the PTO program. We discovered that instructors who were deficient in problem-based learning had difficulties conveying PBL principles. They also had problems facilitating cohort learning groups. We wrote the *PBL Instructor Development Manual* to teach PTO trainers and academy instructors how to properly use PBL.

We provide the *PBL Instructor Development Manual* during the PBL Instructor Development certification course. It is also available in hard-copy format from the COPS Office.

What is PBL?

There are some basic principles that characterize PBL.

PRINCIPLE 1: Relevant and real life, ill-structured problems

PBL employs a variety of adult learning techniques to engage learning. These may include individual exercises, lectures, guided discussions, cooperative learning, role plays and other teaching methods. But at the core of PBL, students work in groups to solve ill-structured problems¹⁶. These problems mimic real-life situations that affect the learners. Problems are “ill-structured” in that they are not easily solved and have numerous possible answers. For example, a class of trainees may practice a car stop with uncooperative occupants, the presence of drugs and an unsafe environment. Unlike scenario training, there is no single correct way to respond to the problem. Instead there are many different possible responses, each which could solve the problem.

PRINCIPLE 2: A variety of responses

Just as every call on the street may require a different solution, PBL problems require learners to consider a variety of responses to use in solving their group problem. Because the problems are not easily solved on the first encounter, they become a challenge for the learner. Ill-structured problems promote creative thinking and, because learners work in *cohort* learning groups and follow a five-step process, they also learn and apply positive communication and organizational skills. Each of these performance skills – teamwork, effective communication, creative problem solving - are essential in good police work

PRINCIPLE 3: A five-step system for learning

The **five sequential steps** of the Police PBL program used by learning cohort groups are as follows:

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1. Create a cohort group. In an academy setting, use members of the class. On the street in the PTO program, use members of the community related to the problem. Then generate a list of **ideas** as to how the group thinks the problem may be solved. In the classroom, the instructor facilitates the groups. On the street, the training officer assumes the role of the facilitator.
2. Discuss and list all **known facts** related to the problem.
3. Generate a third list of **learning issues** based on the question: "*What do I still need to know in order to resolve this problem?*" Once they create this list the learners need to find appropriate resources, some of which the facilitators provide; then, they must learn the new material. How they learn it is up to the cohort group and the individual learners. Facilitators offer guidance and support during this phase and suggest areas of learning that the group may overlook. The members then review all the material they collect and revisit their original "ideas". On the street, in the PTO program, the trainee discusses what he knows with each of the community cohort members as well as his training officer. The group decides if they have any more **known facts** or further **learning issues** to deal with concerning the problem. If not, they move on to the next stage.
4. **Action Plan:** The cohort group determines a response to the original problem using the material they learned during the **learning issues** phase. Born from cohort work, the responses are carefully selected and informed by group research. Action plans, then, are not only oriented towards problem resolution, but group collaboration and initiative, as well.
5. **Evaluation.** Good teaching starts by providing the learner with a copy of an evaluation chart called an "evaluation rubric". Too many of us make the mistake of giving the test or the evaluation at the end of the learning. By offering a description of the evaluation at the beginning of a learning episode, instructors provide their learners with a road map for both success and failure during the discovery process. The group uses the rubric to monitor their learning and performance objectives. Peer and facilitator evaluation continues throughout the training. Self-evaluation also plays a significant role in the entire learning experience. The trainee records his strengths and weaknesses in a learning journal (we describe journals in chapter 4).

PRINCIPLE 4: Self directed learning

Adult learners construct their own learning in PBL. With the support and guidance of the trainers and facilitators, the students discover what it is they need to know to function properly in their job. The self-discovery process means that the students become directly responsible for their own learning. Accordingly, instructors must learn the skill of *letting go* of classroom control, while still maintaining responsibility for the learning environment and teaching process. We discuss this in more detail in Chapter 4.

Additional principles

Due to the unique needs of policing, Police PBL utilizes the four basic principles of PBL plus an additional two principles: Modified cohort learning groups and Emotional and Multiple Intelligences. Thus, we have found success with a modernized version of traditional PBL that meets the current standards of both policing and contemporary educational research.

PRINCIPLE 5: Modified cohort learning groups

Ill-structured problems provide direction in Police PBL, but they have no inherent ability to generate buy-in, or “ownership” of the problem. Rather, group dynamics provide the necessary [individual and group] buy-in for cohort success. Problem ownership is critical in Police PBL, and success is largely dependent upon how well groups, rather than instructors, “own” the problem. Generally, the cohort group comprises five students¹⁷ who collaboratively research the problem, develop and implement solutions, and evaluate their own learning throughout the process. In our experience we find that groups perform better when randomly selected from the class rather than assigned based on some specific requirement.¹⁸

In the traditional PBL classroom students compose the cohort groups. In an academy setting, students follow this five-member cohort structure to solve ill-structured problems.¹⁹ However, in the PTO program, we modify the cohorts to include members of both the trainee’s agency and the surrounding community where the trainee is working on the problem. These cohort members work with the trainee to address the ill-structured problem in each phase of training.

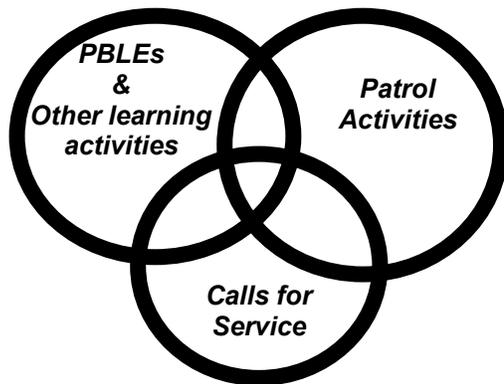
In PTO, the training officer acts as a facilitator, ensuring that the trainee seeks a wide variety of community and departmental resources to solve the ill-structured problems. The PTO program identifies ill-structured problems as “Problem-based learning Exercises” (PBLEs). The trainee and trainer must work within the confines of their patrol vehicle and in their patrol area while answering daily calls for service. The calls for service are essential learning tools. The training officer must help the trainee recognize that calls for service are an integral part of the problem solving process.

We note that some new trainers treat PBLEs as extra activities for trainees to jam into their week when the radio goes quiet. In fact, radio calls are the *raw material* of everyday policing. They are the means by which trainees meet residents, other agency personnel and community members who know something of the problem for which the trainee must find a solution. When a trainer tells us he does not have time to do PBLEs with his rookie because of a busy call load, we know that trainer does not understand the PTO program. Agencies moving to PTO and PBL must take the time to train their training officers. One of the early mistakes we

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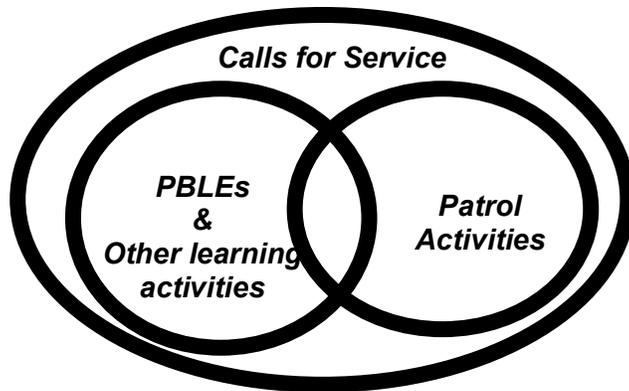
made in the PTO program was not stressing strongly enough the importance of having as many radio calls as possible during training. Calls provide the trainee with access to community members who in turn become the learning cohort that trainees use to solve the PBLE.

Another advantage to the PTO form of cohort group lies in the relative inexperience of today's training officers who were themselves trained on a steady diet of radio calls. As noted above, the inexperienced or misguided PTO trainer may have a tendency to treat the PBLE as an unnecessary additional activity for the trainee. Consequently he cannot, or will not, find enough time during regular calls for service to address the problem set out in the training manual. We portray this incorrect relationship of PBLEs and calls for service in the figure below:



Here, the calls for service, PBLE, and patrol activities briefly intersect during a small amount of time. They appear as discrete activities, as though policing is somehow composed of discrete calls unrelated to community problems or what an officer sees on patrol. Nothing is further from the truth.

Every call for service provides an important learning opportunity for the trainee; each, at a minimum, can reinforce command of the PBL process, and at a maximum, solve a community problem. Before the end of each PTO learning phase (in most PTO programs each learning phase lasts 3 to 4 weeks), the trainee has the opportunity to speak to dozens of community members about the learning problem. The trainee also seeks out additional community members she considers specifically relevant to solve the problem. The figure below portrays this relationship.²⁰



PRINCIPLE 6: Emotional Intelligence and Multiple Intelligences

PBL emerged in the early 1970s before many modern learning concepts, such as emotional intelligence (EI)²¹. During the PBL instructor certification course concepts such as emotional intelligence are not taught as specific rules, but rather as general guidelines for learning.

Emotional intelligence serves as a foundation for all PBL training. As discussed further in Chapter 4, EI competencies are developed through self-directed learning activities and journaling.

Educators and trainees must also utilize multiple intelligences (MI) during training. MI is a theory of human intelligence stating that people have at least eight distinct ways of perceiving and understanding the world. These include verbal, kinesthetic, logical/mathematical, spatial, individualist (intrapersonal), group-oriented (interpersonal), naturalist, and musical intelligences. People possess all eight in varying degrees, but, have dominant intelligences that affect how they learn²². One of the first learning activities in Police PBL is for each learner to self-assess his or her own learning style and dominant multiple intelligence. Given this valuable information (or “self-knowledge”) facilitators then use as many teaching styles as possible to appeal to the variety of learning styles in the room. More importantly, because group members are responsible for their own learning, they must coordinate their different learning styles within group activities. For example, if one member of the group is an independent, intrapersonal learner, she may contribute to the group through individual activities. Others may wish to research in teams or prepare and deliver results in concert with others. Group tasks are matters of negotiation and wonderful opportunities for developing group ownership of problems. Unfortunately, these learning opportunities never arise when PowerPoint lecturing, for example, is the only offered learning methodology

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Assessing your status



Where are you now?

Over the past seven years we have learned a great deal about success and failure in PBL implementation. We gleaned invaluable information from all of our PBL and PTO courses, discussions and interviews with hundreds of police trainers and instructors. We have monitored the path of PBL in academies, regional community policing institutes, field training programs, and in criminal justice training programs.

We have seen many new educational technologies emerge across North America. Gun-shooting programs that help officers in crisis situations, e-learning and on-line programs provide technological assistance in ways we never before imagined. Beware of the technology seduction. Allow it only as a supportive means to the ends of effective teaching. Technology cannot replace educational methods, only supplement them.

Master instructor and effective presentation courses have become popular in police training. These courses introduce adult learning techniques and other strategies to make classroom teaching more interesting to the adult learner. However, few of these courses foster a truly different approach to learning that Police PBL offers. Instead, they perpetuate mid-20th century teaching methods.

To assess your progress towards a more advanced learning environment, such as the one generated through *Police PBL*, here are four assessment questions you can ask your training director, supervisor, or yourself.

1. *Do all of our agency training programs reflect adult learning methodologies where the learner makes decisions about how he or she is to learn?*

If, in response, your training department speaks of dutiful uses of PowerPoint, discussions and group work, it may be time for a new training administrator. Group work, Socratic lecturing and the PowerPoint presentations, by themselves, certainly DO NOT comprise the sum of adult learning practices and principles. Sadly, if you walk down most academy hallways across North America you will generally hear the singular drone of lecturing emanating from classrooms. The only audible accompaniment to the instructor's monologue will be the hum of the PowerPoint projector. Socratic lecturing is fine in carefully prescribed situations. But even the instructor-student *give-and-take* of this traditional lecturing method remains instructor directed and dominated.

No one should suggest the total elimination of lecturing. As a teaching style it has its limited place in preparing learners with a small amount of basic information prior to beginning a PBL exercise – what is known as *front-loading* knowledge. But too much lecturing shuts down rather than stimulates learning. As well, lecturing too often fails to challenge our learners to move into higher order thinking levels.

Many lecture-biased instructors suggest that trainees just cannot be trusted to learn the material sufficiently well unless they are being told and shown by instructors. Though often well-intentioned, these instructors are simply wrong. Adult learners, no matter how smart or how educated, need to discover the material and engage in their own learning processes. The best test for this *anti-lecture* approach is also a simple one: Ask **yourself** if **you** learn best by sitting quietly—passively listening—while another person dominates the conversation. Or would you rather engage in a problem solving event in a classroom or patrol car where your input is sought and previous experience valued? Would you rather listen for hours to the “expert”, with little chance for mutual exchange, or learn through active involvement facilitated by your instructor and your co-learners.

Our experiences indicate that most police officers prefer engagement and participation. We find that learners today of the “Y” generation, raised on the scripture of co-operative, action-based learning, certainly believe they have the right to speak up and be heard in learning situations in which they find themselves. If your staff wants to do all the talking with these learners, they may well find themselves facing an unresponsive audience. Police agencies that perpetuate conventional teaching strategies are at risk of losing their most active and engaged members—the very men and women most able and willing to positively represent their agencies and proactively address community ills. Thus, police agencies that adopt Police PBL have a greater chance of retaining and attracting high quality personnel.

2. *Does our agency have a focus on Multiple Intelligences (MI) and Emotional Intelligence (EI)?*

Ask your trainers if they have developed curricula to teach to different types of learners so that student involvement becomes assured rather than just assumed. Ask your trainers how trainees and in-service participants engage in and practice effective *Emotional Intelligence* skills such as conflict resolution, self-awareness, social awareness and empathy? These are not “touchy-feely” values to be scoffed at and lightly dismissed; they are the indispensable skills that police officers must exhibit on the street and in the police station every day. Both EI and MI should be a critical part of every teaching and learning environment in your agency. If your training director stares back at you with terrified uncertainty, it may well be time to redeploy.

3. *Where on Bloom’s Taxonomy are you focusing your training for your learners?*

Benjamin Bloom and his team created a pyramid of learning levels for higher thinking practices. The list begins with the simple *knowledge* level and moves through *comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation* and finally to the most recently added level, namely *creation*. In policing terms, the thinking level you achieve during training suggests how you foster, encourage and support problem solvers. If your academy or in-service training programs focus on simply providing “knowledge” to new trainees or other in-service participants, then your training operates at the bottom end of the thinking ladder. Police officers must analyze, synthesize and evaluate dynamic circumstances at many calls for service. They are called upon daily to *create* responses instantly and accurately to meet the needs of the communities they serve. What better place to begin this process of higher-order thinking than in your training programs? If your trainers are still just regurgitating “lessons for a day” through very well-used lectures in command and control classrooms, students will struggle to realize creative methods of inquiry and problem solving. At a minimum, if you have trainers in your agency who are unwilling to give away some classroom control to the learners, or turn off their PowerPoint presentations, then you should at least make them aware that they are training our new employees by using the equivalent of a *thinking revolver* in a 9mm world.

4. *Do training staff have instruction in creating dynamic learning environments and do they recognize the key elements in the transmission and acquisition of new information?*

Adult-focused learning is now popular in policing. Be wary of the education “experts” who produce 200 PowerPoint slides and lecture your staff on “engaged” classrooms. If your instructors respond that they have been to a

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train the trainer or *master instructor* program, also, be wary. The litmus test for adult learning is simple: Does your staff, and the people you hire to teach them, practice what they preach when they teach? If all you hear is their voice leading the discussion in the room and the droning of the PowerPoint machine, then you have your answer.

Ask your trainers or consultants to explain what they know about *learning* rather than *teaching*. Often, police trainers know a great deal about the latter and not enough about the former. Some police trainers claim, “I’m a cop, not a teacher.” We contend that when anyone takes the job of helping a student learn how to do a very difficult job, they are no longer simply a “cop” – they are a police instructor. That means they must master the concept of how people learn.

Like policing, teaching is a learned skill. It does not spontaneously emerge through desire alone. A high level of commitment to learning new job strategies must be expected of anyone who assumes the formidable responsibility of teaching. They must discover as much about **learning** as possible before taking on this most valuable role. Too often, our trainers simply default to lecturing because that is all they remember from their own educational experiences.

It is our experience that unless something comes along that disrupts the habituated practices of trainers, many will soldier on doing as they have always done. There is an adage that applies: “*If you always do what you’ve always done, you’ll always get what you always got.*” This is certainly true of police training, but by asking the questions above and demanding educational excellence from your instructors, police leaders may well find some new answers to old and troubling questions.

4

Emotional Intelligence

Psychologists Peter Salovey and John Mayer gave the first formal presentation of emotional intelligence (EI) in 1990. Their work emerged from years of psychological research challenging the efficacy of IQ and personality tests as legitimate measures of intelligence – the very measures still used to hire and select police trainees. They argued for other relevant forms of “intelligence”. Among the most important of these was the controversial notion that human emotions played a significant, perhaps primary, role in determining just how someone was “smart”.

Emotional Intelligence was popularized in Daniel Goleman’s best selling book by the same title in 1995. Following nearly two decades of scientific inquiry and practical application, EI has arguably reached a standard of legitimacy similar to other psychological approaches²³. EI has come of age and it is a tool trainers can offer to students to help them learn about themselves.

EI is the ability to interpret, understand, and manage our own emotions as well as the emotions of others. Emotional Intelligence theory suggests that police officers are not better off being emotionally detached. We now know officers are better served by receiving instruction in practices that will help them to become emotionally prepared for, rather than detached from, the challenges of policing. Self-awareness and regulating one’s own emotions is one of the most profound EI competencies emerging from the research. In a later version promoted by Goleman, EI includes:

- ❖ personal competencies like self awareness, accurate self assessment, and self-control
- ❖ Social competencies like conflict management, empathy and leadership.

EI competencies in police training

Emotional intelligence training plays a major role in the *Police PBL* and PTO programs. It takes the form of what psychologists Mayer and Cobb²⁴ call “socio-emotional learning”, and teaches police instructors and students how to examine their own EI competencies. Among many others, these *self examinations* include:

- ❖ Awareness of emotional “triggers” – Officers must discover why they may overreact to being called “pig” or express anger following a vehicle pursuit – and how their emotional response can instigate an inappropriate response.

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- ❖ Attentiveness to the impact of daily emotions on long-term moods and attitudes toward others or, equally important, toward colleagues at work.
- ❖ Learning tactics to manage the physiological and emotional states arising during stressful situations.
- ❖ Dealing with ‘emotional hijacking’ that occurs in many in-service classes, something police instructors will certainly encounter. Guidance through this area of study occurs through the maxim, “he who angers you, conquers you”.
- ❖ Learning strategies to share classroom power and control by allowing trainees opportunities to discover material on their own terms. Many instructors struggle with letting go of control, especially when the students are not initially successful.

In the *Police PBL* instructor certification program, the concept of EI competencies first appears during an on-line web course. Each student – all of whom are police instructors – then embarks on an individual field project about real-life learning and teaching in other professions in their own community. For example, a police instructor may research how nurses from a local hospital use patients’ symptoms and treatments to teach other nurses. They then bring their research to an intensive two week course to share their research with their colleagues. This allows them to compare various teaching practices in a non-police environment with what goes on in police academies.

In the PBL Instructor Development course students practice a variety of skills for two weeks. Students learn how to self-direct their own EI skill development by practicing mindfulness exercises each day and using self-reflective journaling to track their own EI development. Facilitators review the results of their EI skill development during one-on-one interviews, always encouraging the students practice EI awareness both during the course, after its conclusion, and as future teachers and leaders of PBL. Not surprisingly, many of the *Police PBL* students continue to journal, correspond with course facilitators and with members in their cohort groups. They also have access to a non-profit website bulletin board established for the purpose of helping each other with PBL instruction. (www.pspbl.com).

Does Emotional Intelligence (EI) Training work?

Research suggests EI programs work if they are carefully delivered by competent instructors²⁵. A recent preliminary study by Fabio Sala shows workshop interventions can improve EI competencies. These include conscientiousness, self confidence, conflict management, and communication²⁶. It stands to reason that more intense, long-term efforts will have even greater impact.

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EI also shows success in stress management. One study incorporating EI into stress management programs reveals that “those front-line operational police officers who were able to understand and manage their emotions, reported lower levels of stress and were, according to their reported lifestyles, at less risk of suffering from stress in the future. These results were evident across the sample with no real differences evident regarding the age, gender rank or length of service of the officers involved”²⁷. In other promising studies, EI awareness training reduces officer burnout²⁸.

Can we train for EI?

Emotional competencies can change, but only through experiential learning, habitual self reflection, and long term EI practice. EI competency will not change through intellectual exercises or extensive academic investigation. Emotional responses do not emerge – as reasoning and language do – from the neo-cortex part of the brain where higher level mental functions occur. Instead they materialize from the interior limbic system, deep within the brain, where emotions like anger and fear are generated. Goleman calls this area the “primal brain” and human beings – especially when under stress – often act reflexively and habitually in accordance with primal emotions. We call this *negative habituation*. Clearly, without positive, habitual, self-awareness training programs, officers and instructors will find it very difficult to change EI competencies.

Most training workshops typically target performance at the cognitive, exterior level, but skills at that level are highly perishable if not reinforced through practice. Students will not generally become positively habituated unless they learn and practice long term strategies for change. Officers need to learn how to practice emotional self-awareness with the same intensity that they practice street survival skills.

The learning journal

One method for enhancing EI self awareness is the use of learning journals. Students in *Police PBL* training programs make daily entries into their own personal learning journals. They record their learning strengths and weaknesses, and also how their learning relates to them personally. Instructors must review these journals on a regular basis and offer written comments in the margins about the students’ personal reflections of their learning. In our classes we comment in the journals as well as discuss the contents during individual interviews. Without constant feedback, the journal becomes a monologue rather than the written dialogue that we intended.

We have found that initially police officers will be reluctant to “own up” to their own feelings about their learning. They will say they know these feelings, but do not have to write them out to be aware or competent to address them. Unfortunately, that is not the case. The sheer quantity of thoughts and emotions the typical person processes in a day is too overwhelming to recall with any reliability. Even those emotional triggers we respond to habitually are more often than not completely invisible to us. Regular journaling helps instructors, and learners, track patterns of thinking and behavior. Journals, then, are an indispensable tool for sharpening EI competencies.

As Blum and Polisar note, “training police officers to effectively manage stress exposure events will require different methods and content than has been traditionally applied to police trainees and trainees. Officers must possess adaptive expertise in managing their minds, emotions, and physiological reactions in real time.”²⁹

Lessons for success

There are many areas where EI can make significant inroads. Leadership training and recruit selection procedures are two. Already some new EI-based police command courses have materialized. Further, there are a bevy of emotional intelligence tests – EQ tests – that offer recruiters additional screening methods for use in conjunction with traditional systems.

The most promising area for making fundamental changes in police behavior is training and education. Training with EI competencies is already underway in the *Police PBL* program for academy instructors. Other programs are certain to emerge in the years to come. For the course designers and academy administrators unfamiliar with EI theories, much work remains to be done. Here are a few curriculum tips that include EI training.:

1. **Students need to feel that they have a variety of options for developing their EI skills.** They also need to decide to what extent they want to develop their skills. You cannot force someone to become EI aware. You can only point the way by helping them recognize how they personally respond to different situations.

2. **Students need plenty of time to practice their new skills.** Facilitators need to create a classroom environment where time is set aside to practice. Facilitators much encourage students to practice daily both at home and on the job. When it comes to negative habituation, avoiding a relapse to old habits occurs only with patience and a great deal of practice.

3. **Employ PBL as the main method of delivering EI skills.** Lectures and guided discussion with PowerPoint make little sense for instructors wanting to address “affective” (emotional) concerns. To use a baseball metaphor, lecturing people about emotional performance corresponds roughly to pitching a ping pong ball to a batter. They are two very different activities and they just don’t mesh! Instructors who use PBL can facilitate hands-on problem solving by presenting real life, relevant EI problems. PBL reinforces emotional skills development much more effectively than traditional training environments.

4. **Feedback from facilitators is crucial.** Personal interviews and journaling are regular features of the Police PBL course. In the PTO program feedback happens through the journaling process. Feedback helps students get back on track if they relapse into bad emotional habits.

5

Overcoming obstacles



In this chapter we consider implementation obstacles and ways to overcome them. We have italicized in ***bold*** some effective strategies. As well, we discuss many other ideas we discovered over the years.

In the first chapter we outlined the resistance to change in law enforcement and the role of the police subculture. Consider, for example, problem-oriented policing. In Mike Scott's summary of problem-oriented policing over the past twenty years he concludes that, "Police agencies often resist long-term change, but remarkably respond to many short-term programmatic innovations...A number of the agencies...have, for all appearances, abandoned their efforts to implement problem-oriented policing and are no longer strongly associated with the concept...When one goes to visit agencies renowned for their problem oriented policing efforts, these visits often prove disappointing."³⁰

Without question, we can expect resistance to the PBL movement in policing. Simply blaming all resistance on an abstract notion called "subculture" is not entirely productive either. Police reformers need to intensify their efforts on those specific practices where PBL implementation can have the most positive impact. In the *Police PBL* program that began with the field training officer program (FTO).

Upgrading FTO

There have been unsuccessful attempts to upgrade the FTO program and align it with community oriented policing and problem solving (COPPS). Our research revealed disappointing results. In a 2000 Police Executive Research Forum survey, 417 police agencies across the country responded to dozens of questions

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about FTO. Two questions concerned the status of current FTO training systems. One asked: “Do probationary officers in the FTO program receive training or evaluation in community policing and problem solving?” Another asked: “Does your current FTO program measure performance areas with regard to community policing or problem solving?”

Responses varied slightly from police agencies to Sheriff’s Offices. However, between 30-45% of responses indicated they did not provide any training nor measured trainee performance with regard to COPPS. This does not necessarily mean that the remaining 55-70% of agencies provided training and evaluation in COPPS.³¹

The survey then asked: “Do FTOs receive FTO-tailored community and problem solving training prior to supervising recruit officers in the FTO program?” Responses to this question revealed that 66-78% of all agencies provided no such training.

Clearly, traditional field training was not supportive of a COPPS philosophy. Could this training deficiency account, at least in part, for the disappointing problem-oriented policing implementation results that Scott reported? We think so. In fact, this training deficiency became one of the rationales for modifying the FTO program towards a PBL framework.

Recent attempts to upgrade FTO towards PTO have met resistance. In our 2007 web-survey of PBL instructors³², one instructor opined, “We are in a heavy FTO area... The traditional FTO system is seen as successful and there is very little in the way of statistics to refute that ‘success’ or show the PTO model as more efficient”.

In spite of the comment above, the national FTO survey finds many flaws in the FTO program, particularly its inability to teach COPPS. A growing number of research studies provide preliminary support for PTO³³. Further, considerable research support exists regarding PBL, as indicated in this book’s bibliography. Keep in mind that evaluation research is fraught with intricate methodological challenges. Rigorous samples are difficult to find in any police training program³⁴. However, we believe some trainers unfairly apply a double standard to police training programs in that they insist upon statistical proof for PTO success, and not for FTO outcomes.

Clearly, resistance to change has pathologies far beyond the empirical evidence of statistics. However, contending with resistance to change means two things: First, we must be vigilant regarding those who demand certifiable standards of proof for PBL, while not challenging the training methods used over the past fifty years. Second, we must strongly support properly administered evaluations. *All evaluations should employ rigorous educational evaluation methods that also focus on attitudes and perceptions about training and learning*³⁵.

Upgrading academies

We assessed the obstacles to instruction in our 2007 PBL web survey. Training coordinators and instructors had implemented PBL into many different parts of their academy curricula: the basic academy, leadership courses, telecommunications courses, crisis intervention, legal courses, homeland security, firearms training and defensive tactics to name just a few.

Some academies had previously shifted to PBL. Asked how long the agency had been involved in PBL, one training coordinator commented, “Really, since before it was set out and recognized as PBL. In essence there has been a legitimate effort to make the training and skills learned in courses applicable to real life and to use information acquired to application in other areas and problems.” This statement suggests something we suspected: *Advanced training academies already employing student-driven, adult-based teaching methods, tend to discover PBL naturally as they strive to improve performance.* Though we have not conducted independent research to confirm our suspicions, we do expect fewer obstacles in such academies.

The obstacles we have identified through our experiences, and those mentioned in the survey, fall into two categories: technical obstructions and implementation taboos.

Technical obstructions include not enough time, lack of resources for implementation, and a lack of PBL training in academy staff. However, the greatest implementation obstacles were not technical; they were attitudinal and perceptual. Lack of PBL understanding and staff “buy-in” about learning and training practices were definitive *implementation taboos*. Implementers should make themselves familiar with both categories of implementation obstruction.

Technical obstructions

1. *Group work is inherently flawed. Many people do not enjoy working in groups. One or two people dominate the discussions and take over making group work useless for learning.*

Ironically, there is some truth in that statement. Group work *is* difficult. But there are many benefits in using group work. Much of a police officer’s career involves dealing with and communicating with groups of people. Group skills need the type of training not afforded by lecture-heavy learning, but actively encouraged in PBL.

PBL instructors should construct a “group participation evaluation rubric”³⁶ to help group members organize their activities. Recruits can see the learning expectations in the rubric. Using the same rubric, facilitators can keep the group on task and moving through the PBL five-step process. Occasionally, the facilitator must speak in private to a group member, but that occurs rarely because generally the group handles its own internal problems. Generally, the facilitator provides the group with the skills at the beginning of the program and then allows them the opportunity to practice conflict resolution when group issues arise. The process may be much messier and disorganized than a well-ordered and controlled lecture, but without doubt, it mirrors the real world of conflict the rookies will face in the community. As Wanda Townsend – a division manager tasked with implementing PBL into her academy in Washington State - noted, ***“the key to success is proper PBL training of instructors.”***

2. *There simply is not enough time to teach my curricula if I use PBL*

As with the previous obstruction, there is some truth in this idea. PBL classes take time simply because group work takes time. In our experience it is unrealistic to have learning groups move through the five PBL steps so quickly they have no time to truly absorb what they are learning. A class of a few hours, or even a few days, barely provides enough time to allow students the proper time to proceed through all five PBL learning steps and conduct the required research for more demanding topics. It is possible to conduct full PBL courses in 3 days, but that requires some PBL teaching expertise. With qualified instructors, the five-day PTO course can be conducted using PBL. The PTO course the recruit undertakes extends over 15 weeks and functions as a PBL learning experience by way of the completion of the PBLEs.

We recommend combining subjects and extending the learning periods. For example, traditionally academies run blocks of classes. They might conduct three 2-hour classes once a week for a month for a total of 24 hours. One important person (the instructor) talks throughout the allotted time to students with breaks for the occasional exercise or scenario and a test at the end. In the PBL format it is possible to combine that month of classes to create a three day teaching block of 24 hours. With that change of structure, students can work in cohort groups on their PBL project and teach each other what they learn along the way. This method allows the most important people, the learners, to learn on their own terms according to their own learning style, discuss the material and share research with classmates. No better way exists to empower the learners than to create an environment where students teach students and instructors step back and facilitate the process.

Lectures are a very efficient, if not sometimes painful way to deliver material. If the object of the lesson is to simply provide brief, introductory material at a very low level of comprehension, then a lecture, web-based reading course, or other reading assignment may suffice. But lectures rarely produce mastery. As Bloom’s

taxonomy and educational research show, memorization is a poor substitute for functional learning. However, lectures can play a limited but vital role. Twenty-minute bursts of lecturing can both initiate learning and re-focus distracted learners. With 10 or 15 percent of the course material taught through lecture (or individual reading exercises and on-line web courses), instructors can then facilitate PBL groups and judiciously employ lectures when needed. We sometimes ‘pulse’ lectures throughout our courses to prepare – or *front load* - students for a PBL exercise or to highlight high liability learning areas.

Implementation Taboos

The most frequently mentioned implementation taboo in the web-survey was misperception about PBL. We have heard many incorrect assumptions about problem-based learning over the past few years in our PTO and PBL courses. They include:

1. *It is unnecessary to implement PBL fully into field training. It is adequate to incorporate as little as 30 percent PBL curricula in order to get successful results.*

In fact, studies actually show PBL students typically outperform those in non-PBL or partial PBL classes. “PBL students generate explanations that are more accurate, coherent, and comprehensive than non-PBL students. They transfer the reasoning strategies that they are taught...This effect is stronger for the full-time PBL students.”³⁷ Educational studies on partial PBL classes do not show better learning results.³⁸ In addition, we have successfully trained hundreds of PTO officers over the past seven years employing PBL throughout both the 5 day PTO class, and the longer 15 week PTO training program.

Instructors un-trained in *Police PBL* are at a serious disadvantage. Ching notes, “Preparation of facilitators is vital that they are aware of the philosophy of PBL, that students are active self directed learners, and the facilitator's role is different from the teacher's role” (2002). With COPS support, we created the PBL Instructor certification course to help academy personnel gain the skills and practice they required to implement PBL in their agencies.

The need for PBL certification was also reinforced in our PBL web-survey. In that web-survey, Wanda Townsend, from an academy in Washington State, commented that “not training our academy instructors” made PBL implementation more difficult. She noted that “***if you don't have any subject matter experts who understand PBL, I recommend sending them through the PBL certification course prior to starting the project.***” Scott Saltsman a supervisor at the Kentucky Department of Criminal Justice Training agreed. “Make sure your staff receive training from a qualified trainer in the area of

problem-based learning,” Saltsman suggested. ***“It is vital that all staff receive some basic information regarding PBL and how it will be used within the organization.”***

2. *Evaluation in policing must correspond to numerical, and objective, scores on tests. Checklists, and pass performance standards, provide a good way to check off a trainee’s daily tasks and evaluate whether they are successful.*

We struggle to imagine a statement more at odds with contemporary education research. Most numerical scores in police training are far from “objective”. Daily checklists provide nothing more than a tally of observations by the evaluator while saying little or nothing about whether a student actually learned to apply a concept or task in real life.

Educational evaluation research is expansive, and far beyond the scope of this book to summarize in detail. Much of it focuses on the difficulty of quantifying parts of the social world that are inherently qualitative, such as evaluating trainee behavior. Even with descriptive guidelines, there can be nothing more subjective than writing a “5” or “3” on a daily observation checklist. In fact, we were told repeatedly by field trainers in the national FTO survey and during our work on the PTO program that the daily observation checklists were one of the primary reasons why trainees would tend to do less as the training program proceeded. Recruits did not want to be evaluated poorly on that day’s activity, especially when they didn’t yet have time to practice and learn how to do that activity.

To avoid learner detachment or fear of failure, the Police PBL program encourages evaluation rubrics, learning journals, and self-evaluations. The evaluation rubrics in particular are an excellent way to help guide learning and monitor success³⁹.

- *Aren’t trainers proficient in adult learning already doing PBL?*

Many adult learning instructors are great teachers. They may choose to employ different teaching methods for different learning styles. They may decide to direct students one way or another. But that is not PBL. That “choosing” and “deciding” is done by the instructor, not the student. Arguably, in adult learning models other than PBL, teachers retain the decision-making power and remove the opportunity for students to truly take ownership of their own learning. Many adult learning classes do not give decision making power to students as to what and how they are learning. For that reason, trainers proficient in adult learning methodologies are not engaged in PBL in spite of their belief to the contrary.

PBL instructors know that if students are to master the material, apply it competently and confidently once they graduate, and learn how best to accomplish their tasks without specific direction from a supervisor, then those

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students must be in charge of their own learning. In PBL the student holds the position as the important person in the classroom, rather than the instructor and his predetermined schedule. The *Police PBL* message is this: ***the sooner we have police officers who are not lectured “to” or taught “at”, the quicker the profession will develop a better balance between traditional policing skills and COPPS problem solving strategies.***

- *If we test for learning styles at the start of the course, do we need to change teaching styles for each learner?*

This is where instructors get confused about multiple intelligence concepts. The question implies that instructors “control” all the decision making about how the learning occurs. Consider the question carefully. Who is testing the learning and changing the teaching? If the instructors make all the decisions for the learners, you are not running an adult focused classroom.

The teacher needs to know each students’ learning style but the individual students must themselves take the initiative to learn the material in a manner that best suits his or her needs. This self-selection of learning behavior benefits students by reinforcing that they must take control of problem situations. In policing we want officers to understand how they acquire new facts and concepts whether it be collecting evidence at a crime scene, developing new informants, or learning new department policies during an in-service class. They, not the instructors, must take charge of their own learning.

To do so, officers must recognize their own learning strengths and weaknesses (a key component of emotional intelligence). Once on “the street”, long after the instructor is gone from the front of the class they will need this essential ability to be self-aware and to act independently. If we want this sort of behavior on the street, then we must prepare them in our academies. Making them sit up straight, row on row, and passively listen to instructors’ lectures is hardly the environment to foster such independence. ***When instructors let go of the classroom authority and allow students to practice taking control of their own learning, we do them a great service.*** By allowing them to hone their personal and group leadership skills in the safe environment of an academy classroom, we better prepare them for the leadership role they are obliged to play every day, at every call, once they begin their solo careers.

PBL exemplars

We conclude by providing an overview of academies where PBL implementation is underway. We do this to respond to another frequently mentioned implementation taboo: *lack of exemplars.*

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Sgt. Darryl Plude of the Virginia Beach Police Department outlines this in his response to the web-survey: “Surprisingly we have encountered far less resistance than we anticipated. Of course everyone wants to see examples of it working somewhere else. ***Because of the high volume of information sharing going on in the PBL community we are able to point to several other jurisdictions that are leading the charge.*** Another obstacle is just *blocking change*. We are overcoming that problem very slowly ***by providing solid examples of what we are doing and the successes we are having.***”

Sgt. Plude’s two suggestions are excellent strategies to overcome a lack of exemplars – networking with other agencies or PBL certified instructors, and celebrating PBL success.

There certainly are available exemplars. While not yet a common event in police training, PBL is emerging in a variety of jurisdictions. For example, there are currently over 70 police agencies using, or in the process of implementing, the PTO program⁴⁰. Furthermore, in addition to the RCMP academy and the Swedish National Police Academy⁴¹, there are now a number of other academies implementing PBL. Two training agencies in the U.S., in Kentucky and California, provide excellent lessons for all of us working in this emerging field and it is to those agencies that we now turn.

California POST and Kentucky’s Department of Criminal Justice Training

Below, we include two short summaries, submitted as part of the web survey, with a status report on two of the leading academies where PBL curricula redevelopment is currently underway. The first is a smaller academy, part of California POST’s initiative to introduce PBL across the state. The summary begins with experiences of a PTO officer from Richmond, CA, briefly assigned to the Napa Valley College Criminal Justice Training Center in Napa, California. The second is a larger academy making significant PBL strides. Supervisor Scotty Saltzman writes of efforts to change the style of training at the Department of Criminal Justice Training in Richmond, Kentucky.

PBL in California: Five Years of Implementation

Sgt Roger Buhlis, Richmond Police Department

Richmond, California, police implemented the PTO Program in January 2002 as the last of six national pilot agencies, and the first in California. Five years later, this change has made a lasting positive impression on California POST, other California police agencies, and at least one regional police academy.

The obstacles to implementation were not the high volume of calls for service. Time management was one of the more obvious concerns during implementation. Supervisors

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*and management became concerned about training teams working on training projects rather than responding to calls. Conflict arose and confusion ensued. This was the case until a critical question was asked: Do the calls on the street drive training – or can the service calls become training tools used at the discretion of the training team? Eventually it became obvious that taking time to work on training problems was parallel to time for working on community-oriented problems (a fundamental philosophy of Richmond since the late 1980's). **Though PTO was designed to promote community policing and problem solving, when personnel in the agency came to realize how closely the two philosophies complimented one another, conflict subsided.***

During this time I was assigned to the Napa Valley College Criminal Justice Training Center for a six-month period in June 2002. I introduced a key component of PTO, the Learning Activity Package, to the academy to replace the standard disciplinary essays previously used there. This transformed trainee's behavioral issues and turned them into learning opportunities through facilitated self-discovery. Academy students benefit most from learning why their behavior wouldn't be acceptable in the law enforcement profession, and from using this information to develop plans for career success.

The goal of the Napa Academy and of California's Police Officer Standards Training branch, is to move away from PowerPoint-fueled lectures and encourage active learning. The Director of the Napa Academy, Greg Miraglia, and the Academy Coordinator, Todd Dischinger, were already incorporating adult learning concepts into the academy classroom. Over time the academy incorporated a number of components of the Police PBL program, including journaling, self-evaluation, and a portfolio project as staples in the academy learning experience.

***Because Napa academy now uses PBL techniques applied in the PTO program, police trainees transition more easily to training on the street.** Even agencies which have not implemented PTO benefit by having engaged, self-evaluating, problem-solvers entering field training from an active academy environment.*

PBL in Kentucky: Transitioning a Large Academy

Scotty Saltsman, Section Supervisor, Department of Criminal Justice Training (DOCJT)

*The administration at the DOCJT in Kentucky saw the need to move toward a problem-based Learning environment. **In July 2005 three instructors attended a two week course on PBL/PTO in Kansas City. They returned and met with the administration and developed a plan to implement problem-based learning.***

In March of 2006 the DOCJT co-hosted with the Kentucky Regional Community Policing Institute a two week PBL/PTO training course to train 16 DOCJT instructors. In August of 2006 the DOCJT co-hosted with Louisville Metro PD another two week PBL/PTO training course to train another 15 instructors from DOCJT along with trainers from Louisville Metro PD.

*Between March of 2006 and July 2006 the basic training curriculum was re-written to include a PBL format and meet the requirements of a newly updated Job-Task Analysis and Needs Assessment. **To provide a buffer and allow for a variance in the time required for a class to accomplish the objectives of a course, academy management***

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decided to integrate various courses by allotting longer blocks of time that covered a broader group of related topics. For example, in the 2006 curriculum there were 2 hours dedicated to Ethical Standards and 2 hours to Ethical Decisions. In the new curriculum a 4 hour block is dedicated to Ethics in general, while at the same time integrating ethical decision-making throughout basic training.

In April 2006 the academy instituted a journaling project with the basic training classes. This helped us to obtain a better understanding of what journaling provided and how the recruits perceived their training experience. The project greatly assisted preparation for the PBL format that would begin in January 2007.

In September 2006 we participated in the International Police Society for Problem-based learning Conference in Folsom, CA, to learn from other colleagues introducing Police PBL across North America.

All this set the stage for re-writing lesson plans in accordance with PBL. The re-writing and curricula design began in November 2006. Additionally, to assist implementation, we conducted three in-house training sessions during November and December to expose an additional 25 instructors and one supervisor to the PBL methods.

Although eventually overcome with patience and perseverance, the implementation roadblocks included:

- * Passing inaccurate information around the agency*
- * Supervisors and Administrator misunderstanding the PBL process*
- * Determining how many and which topic areas should be converted to PBL based on staffing, training and resource levels*
- * Incrementally training a large staff while recruit training rotation continued at full speed*

As of January 15, 2007 PBL is now incorporated into the basic training curriculum. At this point, we have completed approximately 40% of our curriculum in a PBL format.

DOCJT has also implemented the PTO program for the law enforcement agencies in Kentucky. As of 2006 we no longer offer the Field Training Officer (FTO) program as a training option. Beginning in 2007 law enforcement agencies across Kentucky will be encouraged to develop a PTO program as their post academy training program. Wherever possible, DOCJT has designed the new curriculum along the lines of the PTO program. This includes a requirement for graded (pass/fail) practical exercises in both the Patrol and Investigations phases of training.

The Department of Criminal Justice Training will monitor the progress of these changes throughout 2007 and make adjustments as necessary. One way we will do this is to maintain close contact with the graduates and their agencies to track, at least anecdotally, the effect(s) of the transition.

Final thoughts

Police leaders throughout the world, especially those focused on community policing, have begun to recognize the evolution of employee development and training as a key tool to develop problem solving skills in new employees. Police leaders must incorporate the best practices available so that recruits have the tools to carry out their difficult tasks in the community. We would not consider sending employees on to the street with out-dated equipment, yet we continue to use outdated teaching methods such as number-grading systems and constant PowerPoint lecturing.

Leaders always have a choice. For those in police executive roles, the choice is clear. We can continue to teach new recruits with traditional lectures and command and control classrooms. We can tell ourselves it worked well for us, so it will work with today's recruits. This is a safe, short term option. In doing so, we avoid upsetting those in our agencies who fear and resist change.

Alternatively, leaders can adjust their training regimes to offer the 21 Century police officer emotional intelligence and problem-based learning skills. By doing so, we prepare our policing students for the challenges they will face throughout their careers. Like all professions, policing faces changes, and the move towards *Police PBL* will make us more receptive and more valuable to the communities that we serve.

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ENDNOTES

¹ The Police Training Officer program began when we were hired by the Reno Police Department, funded by the COPS Office, to write a new PBL program for field training and then teach trainers with the Reno Police Department. Chief Jerry Hoover, Deputy Chief Ron Glensor, Commander Steve Pitts, and Officer Dave Ponte were the original Reno officers on the project. The Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) was also instrumental with research, particularly by distributing surveys to 400 agencies across the country. Personnel instrumental at PERF were Jim Burack, Lisa Carroll and Lori Fridell. Police Scholar Michael Scott at the University of Wisconsin's Law School also provided critical assistance as an advisor. From 2001 to 2003 we trained five additional police agencies as pilots in the PTO program. Their ideas, suggestions and modifications were critical to enhancing the original model. These agencies were Charlotte-Mecklenberg, NC; Colorado Springs PD, CO; Lowell, MA; Richmond, CA; and Savannah, GA.

² A small sample of this research includes the following studies: Albanese and Mitchell, 1993; Eisenstaedt, Barry, and Glanz, 1990; Gallagher, Stepien, and Rosenthal, 1992; Martensen, Eriksson, and Ingelman-Sundberg, 1985; Needham, and Begg, 1991; Vernon and Blake, 1993.

³ Selected members of some Regional Community Policing Institutes participated in a PBL curricula writing exercise during this project. We supervised this group and helped them produce a number of courses based on the PBL method. These courses include: Safe Schools Across the Nation - A PBL Approach for School Safety Officers; 21st Century Instructor Skills Development; and Police Leadership. Access to these courses will be made available through the COPS Office website (<http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/>) and through the Regional Community Policing Institutes.

⁴ To avoid gender bias in our language, we intersperse "he" and "she" pronouns throughout.

⁵ Ellen Langer, 1997, page 3.

⁶ Lieberman and Langer, 1995.

⁷ The research on police attitudes, training and subculture is extensive. It ranges from popular novels to personal biographies and social research studies. Some of the latter group includes: Stamper, 2005; Peak and Glensor, 2004; Haarr, 2001; Frewin and Tuffin, 1998.

⁸ Scholars note that professionalism helped minimize police corruption and improve basic standards. However the professional movement also had negative implications for community policing and problem solving reform. For texts on this see: Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990; Peak and Glensor, 2004.

⁹ Research on the specific impacts of police subculture extends back decades. For example: Keppeler, 1995; Reuss-Ianni and Ianni, 1983; Neiderhoffer, 1978; Skolnick, 1966.

¹⁰ The concept of the police "working personality" was an early theme. Some claim this resulted in cases of corruption at worst, or rule-bending at best. A few samples include: Skolnick, 2002; Van Maanen, 1975; Regis et al, 1973.

¹¹ We do not mean to suggest resistance to change is reserved to the policing environment. It is common in many professions. Some studies documenting examples in policing include: Hafner, 2003; Haarr, 2001; Metcalf and Dick, 2000; Ericson, 1982.

¹² It is no surprise that we selected the decades old field training program as the first place to introduce PBL. The revised model, the national PTO program, specifically aims to help trainers employ basic PBL methods

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during the recruit's first weeks on the job. PTO was followed by the PBL certification course, a much more intensive program designed to teach academy instructors basic PBL instructional skills.

¹³ Of course there are many possible sources for each of these factors and we don't dismiss any of them. But in our PBL classes we are told one message consistently by hundreds of instructors: subculture and inculcation to that subculture lies at the root of them all.

¹⁴ For direct information on specific cases, see the website of the Police Society for Problem-based learning (www.pspbl.com). In particular, PTO coordinators in some of the more experienced PTO agencies can provide examples of success. For example police agencies in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Richmond, California, Folsom, California, and Edmonton, Canada are all good sources of information

¹⁵ It is available on-line at www.cops.usdoj.

¹⁶ In professions where PBL is fairly advanced, instructors develop a library full of ill-structured problems on a variety of topics. They also collect these problems in a variety of formats, for example written descriptions, videos, and role-plays. Since Police PBL is still in early development, such a library has yet to emerge. However, eventually we envision a central repository in each agency, possibly a national on-line PBL library, of ill-structured problems that trainers can use or modify for their own training.

¹⁷ Some debate occurs in group dynamics research regarding the number of students for an ideal working group. In our experience we find that three students is too small, while seven or more too large. We ideally aim for five per group, but accept four or six if needed in a particular circumstance. There is group research that supports the 5 person group model. See Brookfield and Preskill, 1999; Bruffee, 1993.

¹⁸ Considerable group dynamics research exists regarding random selection of group members. There may be a tendency for students to want to select those with whom they are familiar, or who may live nearby so they can collaborate more easily after class hours. We find it is far more useful to randomly select group members so students work with others with whom they may not be familiar. This has a two-fold benefit that students can take with them throughout their police career. First, it requires students to learn methods of time management and collaboration with people they meet for the first time. Second, it allows students to gain the perspective of others with whom they are unfamiliar and who may hold different views.

¹⁹ Debate among academy instructors during our PBL certification courses often arises concerning whether cohort learning groups should extend beyond the classroom into residential academies. For example, in residential academies employing PBL the cohort learning group might also be used in other parts of academy life, such as in intramural sports or in residence living arrangements. Our initial – and unresearched – impression is that imposing groups on students into these activities is not advisable. For academies switching to PBL, more research needs to be done on this topic.

²⁰ We are indebted to David Maddox, a talented and PBL-certified police instructor from Virginia. David developed this diagram during his work to introduce PTO to the Virginia area.

²¹ Some interesting studies on emotional intelligence include: Chernis and Goleman, 2001; Mayer and Cobb, 2000; Goleman, 1995; Salovey and Meyer, 1990. The best source of information on Multiple Intelligences is the work of its founder, Howard Gardner: 2004

²² For a more in-depth description see Gardiner, 2004 or Fogarty, 1997.

²³ Mayer, Caruso and Salovey. 2000.

²⁴ Mayer and Cobb, 2000

²⁵ Chernis and Goleman, 2001

²⁶ Fabio Sala has conducted some preliminary research on this question showing positive results. His study can be downloaded at the website of the EI Consortium titled "Do Programs Designed to Increase Emotional Intelligence at Work - Work?" (2005). See www.eiconsortium.org. [Accessed September 2, 2006]

²⁷ Chapman and Clarke, 2002.

²⁸ Ricca, 2003.

²⁹ See Lawrence Blum and Joseph M. Polisar. Why Things Go Wrong in Policing. *Police Chief Magazine*. (July, 2004).

³⁰ Scott, 2000.

³¹ The full survey was mailed out to over a thousand police agencies in the summer of 2000 by the Police Executive Research Forum. The total responses totaled 417 agencies who were members of PERF, resulting in a response rate of 42%. Survey results were tallied by large agencies (those policing populations over 300,000), small agencies (those under 300,000), and Sheriff's Offices. In total this included 281 large and small police departments and 136 Sheriff's Offices. On the two questions we mention, the range of valid responses of those who said "no" ranged from a low of 29%, (for police agencies of all sizes) to 45% (for Sheriff's Offices). The average for all negative responses to these two questions for all three groups was 36%. In other words 36% of all police agencies did not evaluate or train recruits in COPPS methods or techniques in the traditional FTO program in 2000. One might think this is good news; it means 66% of all police agencies did provide training, or measure performance, of COPPS. However, as indicated earlier, most trainers were not themselves provided with any COPPS training prior to their FTO assignments. Further, the survey did not examine how agencies defined COPPS, nor the extent to which COPPS training occurred when it was taught.

³² Our web-survey was a small, exploratory PBL questionnaire sent out to 40 different PBL trained academy instructors and PTO trainers who had completed our PBL certification course over the past few years. The survey was administered in January, 2007. Respondents came from regions across the country and from both large and small agencies (academies ranged from 35 to 200 employees). All but one respondent had been certified in PBL.

³³ An emerging body of empirical research has begun to emerge regarding both PTO and PBL in policing. See; Croal, 2006; Queen and Kooi, 2006; Conway, 2002.

³⁴ We are frequently asked for rigorous evaluation data regarding the PTO and PBL programs from previous years. Our response is three-fold. First, we are struck by the absence of rigorous evaluation data – or demands for it – in regards to other police training programs, for example in the traditional field training officer program which, in spite of wide-spread adoption, to our knowledge has never been subject to rigorous evaluation. Second, a simple literature review will uncover numerous examples of PBL evaluations in other fields. (We include a few in our bibliography.) Third, both PTO and PBL are of recent vintage and evaluators have only recently turned their attention to them. However, both surveys and case study reviews exist from early research and development for the PTO program. The former we report in this document and the latter is published on the COPS website: <http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/default.asp?Item=966>.

³⁵ Education evaluation has a gold standard we rarely see in police training, but strongly recommend. It is Kirkpatrick's four levels of evaluation. See: <http://coe.sdsu.edu/eet/articles/k4levels/index.htm>

³⁶ See endnote #34. Also see <http://www.teachervision.fen.com/teaching-methods/rubrics/4522.html?detoured=1> [Accessed January 5, 2007]

³⁷ C. E. Hmlo. *Teaching and Learning in Medicine* **10**: 92-100, 1998. Similar results were found by Blake, R.L., Hosokawa, M.C. and S. Riley. *Academic Medicine* **75**:66-70, 2000; and Rideout et al, *Advances in Health Sciences Education* **7**(1):3-17, 2002.

³⁸ There are many studies on this topic. See Anderson WL, Glew RH. (2002). Support of a problem-based learning curriculum by basic science faculty. *Medical Education Online* [serial online] 2002; 7:10. Available from URL <http://www.med-ed-online.org>; See also Ching, Milly. (2000). Teaching Family Health Care Using PBL. Available from URL <http://pbl.tp.edu.sg/PBL%20Subjects/Articles/ChingMilly.pdf>. [Accessed January 5, 2007]

³⁹ There is insufficient space to describe the mechanics of evaluation rubrics, however they are a well established and widely used evaluative tool in the education profession. In short, they are charts with rows

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and columns with tasks on the side and evaluative quality on the top. The charts contain cells in which clear word descriptors for specific behaviors and outcomes correspond to each task. The descriptors are constructed using Bloom's Taxonomy, outlined in Chapter 3 above.

⁴⁰ A summary of agencies using PTO, and new academies employing PBL, is found on the website of the Police Society for Problem-based learning at www.pspbl.com

⁴¹ An English language description of the Swedish PBL academy is available online at <http://www.polisen.se/mediaarchive/1685/4881/engpolisprog.pdf> [Accessed January 7, 2007]