Using Formative Assessment Techniques to Gauge and Support Student Learning

By Gigi Marshall, RN, Chair of ECNS Curriculum Committee

The score on a final exam is an important indication of student understanding. This is particularly important when a score is needed to certify competency in learning and is crucial when a certification score is used to demonstrate competency in fulfilling a public safety role, such as certifying emergency dispatchers and Emergency Communication Nurses. Still, some of the most important assessments of student understanding should occur on an on-going basis, during the class.

Types of Learning Assessments

In addition to pre-assessment (such as a test or survey conducted before teaching begins to assess baseline knowledge and used to compare knowledge growth when compared to the student's score/responses at the end of the class), there are two other types of assessment that occur before a class ends. One of these is summative evaluation is to determine what the student knows at the end of the instruction, the goal of formative evaluation is to collect information in order to improve student learning “while it is happening.”

Effective instructors use formative assessment techniques—perhaps, some without realizing it. This is because formative assessment techniques include things as simple as observing students (their level of engagement, responses, and facial expressions) to more concerted efforts to ascertain student knowledge acquisition. Natalie Rigert, an education and instructional expert, offers 60 different types of formative assessment strategies for instructors to consider in her publication “60 Formative Assessment Strategies.” I have selected a few strategies that might be effective in a protocol-teaching environment:

Examples of Formative Assessment Techniques

1. Examples/Non-Examples - “Encourage your students to provide you with examples and non-examples of a topic being studied. The examples and non-examples provide you with information regarding the depth of understanding of your students. For example, during a unit on recycling, ask your students to provide you with examples of recycling and examples that do not involve recycling.”

In teaching the protocols, you could ask for examples of Pre-Arrival Instructions versus examples of other protocol categories (e.g., DLS Links, Chief Complaints, etc.). The key to this exercise is to have students explain their reasoning for each example and non-example. Challenge the students to think about their thinking.
2. **ABC Brainstorming** - "Using the ABC brainstorming strategy with students midway through a unit provides you with information about what students have learned about a particular topic. Working individually, in pairs, in small groups, or as a class, students brainstorm words or phrases that begin with each letter of the alphabet and are related to the current unit of study. Midway through a unit on fire safety, students may write ‘meeting place’ next to the ‘M’ and ‘stop, drop, and roll’ next to the letter ‘S.’ A glance through the brainstormed lists helps you determine what information is lacking and provides direction for planning opportunities that focus on these gaps in your students’ learning." 

Interactive exercises such as this allow students to mentor other students, which is a beneficial relationship for both mentor and mentee.

3. **Concept Maps** - “Concept maps are a type of web that provides a visual representation of student understanding about a particular topic being studied… Students print the topic or main idea in an oval in the center of the page. They then write supporting details in the spaces surrounding the center oval. Depending on the age and ability of the students, they can also group similar supporting details together. Using concept maps is a skill that must be taught to students. Once students are familiar with concept maps, they can be used as a formative assessment strategy in any subject area.”

This is a particularly beneficial exercise for visual learners and in teaching interrelated concepts.

If you desire more information on ways to change up your teaching and assessment techniques, the sources to the right and others related to teaching and evaluation strategies are readily available.

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**Sources**


2. See note 1.


4. See note 3.

5. See note 3.

6. See note 3.
It has recently come to the Academy’s attention that there is some confusion amongst instructors regarding the odor of rotten eggs changes to FPDS® v6.1a. As explained in the FPDS v6.1a Update Rationale document: “While using FPDS v6.1a, the foremost Chief Complaint of a ‘rotten eggs or sulfur’ odor should be handled on Protocol 60: Gas Leak/Gas Odor (Natural and LP Gases).” This is because the most telling sign of a natural gas leak is the familiar sulfuric or “rotten egg” odor intentionally added to the gas as a warning signal. While rare, natural gas line leaks can be extremely dangerous. When natural gas builds up in an enclosed area, it becomes extremely volatile. A gas buildup has the potential to explode or to make those in the area very sick. The Post-Dispatch Instructions on Protocol 60 are designed to specifically address these concerns.

As further explained in the FPDS v6.1a Update Rationale document: “Formerly, Protocol 66 had a gray shunt for ‘Rotten eggs/Sulfur (HAZMAT)’ to Protocol 61: HAMZAT, but this shunt has been modified in FPDS v6.1a to remove the description of “Rotten eggs/Sulfur” and now appears as ‘Chemical/HAZMAT’ to prevent incorrectly shunting to Protocol 61.” The intent of the former shunt was to address potential chemical suicide situations. However, it has been determined that: “For chemical suicide, the foremost Chief Complaint is usually an unresponsive person in a vehicle or small confined space—such as a closet or bathroom—with warning signs taped up. The odor of rotten eggs or sulfur may also be present; however, the odor is secondary to the foremost Chief Complaint of a chemical suicide.

To further clarify this change, two new Rules were added to Protocol 66 in FPDS v6.1a.

As you are likely already aware, the FPDS Quality Assurance Guides™ (QA Guides™) were not initially reprinted to account for the v6.1a changes. This means that the QA Guides you have may not match the graphics in the v6.1a PowerPoint. The Academy is in the process of sending out stickers to resolve this inconsistency. Be aware, however, that both the scenarios and the certification exam work equally well with v6.1 or v6.1a. This means that you can continue to use the QA Guides you have for any courses scheduled before you receive your stickers.

Finally, be aware that your cardsets and the Instructor PowerPoint should be correct. Slides 3-8 and 3-9 in the PowerPoint should contain the correct Protocol 66 graphics. Please take a minute to make sure that you have the correct version of the PowerPoint and the correct Protocol 66 cards in your cardsets. If you do not, please contact the Academy as soon as possible to get the correct materials.

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Reports from the Curriculum Boards

All Instructors Please Read!
Sinking Vehicle—This applies to all disciplines

By Mike Thompson, EFD Board of Curriculum Chair

If the beginning of this article looks familiar, it should. I initially produced this article early in 2015. Since that time up until now, I have reviewed two more sinking vehicle cases where essentially the calltaker/dispatcher continually asked the caller (inside the car) about an address/location until the car sank and the person(s) died. No instructions about exiting the vehicle were ever given, and in one of the cases the calltaker actually told the soon-to-be-deceased person “I can’t help you unless you tell me where you are.” I have decided to re-run this article yearly to “raise awareness” (spelled: badger you) about this. From the article early in 2015, since that time up until now, I have reviewed two more cases where essentially the calltaker worked on the address/location with the caller until they died in the background. Any viable escape time was completely used up trying to ascertain an accurate location. Interestingly enough, in two of the cases, the calltaker was given an address/location immediately upon asking, but apparently that location didn’t rise to the level of a geo-verified location and the calltaker(s) either didn’t trust it or hear it clearly and kept asking. In the other case, a location just didn’t come.

When something like this happens, a lot of “blame assigning” starts, with many times the news media and/or elected officials involved and also players in this industry. With the cases above, the calltaker was blamed directly in one; in another, the state of the wireless locating infrastructure; and in the other, the caller themselves. There is usually enough responsibility (or blame, if you will) for these things to go around. With these cases did the calltaker, caller, and/or wireless system all play a part? Very likely, but the problem with “blame” is, it typically does little or nothing to fix the problem. To truly fix it, you have to carefully study the problem, determine a workable solution, and then actually apply it (that seems to be the hard part). The wireless issue needs work, and we as an industry need to be heavily involved in that. But is it going to happen tomorrow? Not likely. The scared-to-death caller—can we always fix that? In my humble opinion, probably not. The person who is in a car that is rapidly and forcibly filling up with water is going to be justifiably freaked out. There are some things we can do to help their emotional state or at least not make it worse, but the best help will be helping them escape and live.

As for the not giving instructions issue in a time frame that can help the caller, I believe we CAN change that, and we can do it right now. After listening to these calls, I’ve come to the conclusion that spending any time at all getting an address/location, or worse yet, getting one and then verifying it endlessly, is just using up precious escape time that these people DO NOT have.

The solution we need to be teaching to our students is this: if you get an address or location immediately, great. Put it in and start processing the call with some urgency. If you don’t get a location immediately or the location doesn’t verify, then override or force or use an intersection or something close (most CAD systems will do that), open ProQA®, get to the instructions, AND GET THEM OUT OF THE VEHICLE. You don’t have time to do much else. I’ve tested it with ProQA, and once ProQA opens, you can be at instructions in 10 seconds or so with the knowns you have. I know in some circumstances at the outset you may have units that won’t know where to go, but trust me, your dive team or your Fire Department/Police Department would much rather go looking for these people wet on the bank somewhere as opposed to fishing their dead body out of a submerged car. To help with that, there are also frequently subsequent calls on these events from second- and third-party callers. The personnel that use this protocol need to be very, very aware that with these calls in particular, there is a clock ticking in the background that WILL stop very quickly if something is not done.

I fully realize this is counterintuitive to absolutely everything else we do in this industry. Every other call type relies on an address/location to be able to ultimately do something about it. From what I can see, however, this one is a different animal and needs to be treated
differently to get some successful results. The other problem this presents is that it doesn't happen every day. You could go your entire career and not get ONE of these calls. The solution for that is to train, train, train again, and then train on it some more. We should be teaching our new students that the location is secondary on these calls. (There's another call type where it applies also. Care to guess what it is?) I have been doing it with Fire (and more recently Medical) for a couple of years. I know a few other instructors that are doing it also, but everybody needs to be doing it and also emphasizing the need for frequent re-training on the protocol and the process (everybody is looking for CE subjects...). Low frequency, high acuity events like this, and especially ones where processes are different than anything else, require that kind of training concentration. I am going to be looking for some curriculum additions and maybe some Academy language to help this process.

You may hear arguments against this, most of them (I suspect) based around the fact that we don't do anything else that way, or if we could just spend a little time to get a location AND there's a police officer close MAYBE they could effect a rescue, or what if they're out in the boonies somewhere and we never find them... (I actually heard that one). Negative—you only have to listen to a couple of these calls develop to realize the only viable option is getting to instructions and getting the caller out of the vehicle as quickly as possible. Anything else will likely result in their death by drowning.

As always, I welcome your input and suggestions. Until next time!  

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What is the Party of the Caller?

By Jaci Fox,
EPD Board of Curriculum Chair

Greetings, EPD Instructors. It has come to our attention that not all of you are teaching the concept of caller party in a consistent manner. We further discovered that not all Qs are Q-ing this the same way. It is critical to the calltaker's and agency's success that we all understand the concept and apply it the same way. This article is a review of this concept.

In PPDS v4.1 we removed 1st party callers and replaced it with Victim and Suspect callers. These people are at the scene and involved in the incident.

The following calling party definitions remained unchanged:

2nd party caller – At the scene, but not the victim or the suspect
3rd party caller – Not on scene or in the immediate area
4th party caller – Reporting agency

It was the 4th party caller where the inconsistency was found—specifically calltakers reporting an alarm situation. Some instructors and Qs were treating callers from alarm companies as 3rd party callers; others considered them 4th party callers. This inconsistency made it difficult for calltakers and agencies. Since the concept was not taught the same way, the agency was in conflict about which was the correct understanding of caller party.

In ETC, EMD, and EFD, alarm companies are 4th party callers. At the end of the day, we all want to maintain consistency between all disciplines of the protocols. This is important for the calltaker so that the concepts they apply when using the protocol(s) are the same. This consistency encourages strong, solid habits, which in turn promotes successful calltakers. In respecting what the other disciplines support, and to ensure that all instructors are teaching this the same way, the Police Council of Standards has changed the definition of 4th party callers to “Reporting agency or alarm company” in the upcoming PPDS v6.0. This change removes any ambiguity or misunderstanding for EPD instructors or Q and is in line with all other disciplines of the protocols.

You may ask yourself what difference it makes in the call process if the calltaker evaluated a call from an alarm company as a 3rd party or 4th party caller. The simple answer is that for PPDS Protocol 104 it would not make any difference in how the call was processed since the questions and instructions would be framed the same way regardless of the party. Rather, this became a Q issue when calltakers received contradictory Q evaluations. In other protocols, the difference in caller party would dictate how certain Key Questions are framed. In ProQA, a calltaker would ask “Are you or anyone else in immediate danger?” for suspect, victim, or 2nd party callers, but they would ask “Is anyone else in immediate danger?” for a 3rd party caller.

The other issue regarding the party of the caller concerns PDIs. We teach that PDIs are to be provided when possible and appropriate. Instructors must ensure that this concept is clearly communicated to our EPDs, and we must remind everyone that the protocol does not take away their ability to consider what is possible and appropriate. Some PDIs are marked for specific caller party, while others require the calltaker to determine if they are possible and appropriate. The delivery of PDIs may vary from call to call, but at the end of the day, the EPD must decide which are possible and appropriate.

Here is an example of a scenario that could be used to teach the differences between caller parties:

A family is having a BBQ in their back yard and has invited several of their friends and family to attend. At the BBQ, the husband becomes angry with his wife, starts yelling at her, and slaps her in the face. The husband would be the suspect, the wife is the victim, and all the others in the backyard BBQ are 2nd party callers. If the wife went in the house and called her friend and told her what had occurred, and the friend called in to report the situation, the friend would be a 3rd party caller. Or, if a neighbor across the back lane had seen or heard the fight and called in to report the situation, they would be a 3rd party caller. If the wife had gone inside and pushed her panic alarm, this call would come in from an alarm company, which would be a 4th party caller.

It is therefore important as instructors that we teach the protocol concepts consistently so that the calltaker and agency apply the protocols in a manner that prevents calltakers from contradicting each other.

As instructors, we are the face of the protocols—and students and agencies regard what we teach as the correct application of the protocols. In order for the calltaker and agency to succeed, it is very important that we represent the concepts of the protocol with consistency.

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What to Expect in the 4th Edition

By Susi Marsan,
ETC Board of Curriculum Chair

Boy, do we have great things in store for you as an ETC Instructor! As many of you know, the ETC Curriculum Board has been working hard for the past year plus on updating the ETC curriculum. This includes redesign-
ing all 12 chapters of the course manual as well as the corresponding PowerPoint presentations.

I wanted to let you know what you can expect in the future as the 4th edition will be released at NAVIGATOR 2017 in New Orleans.

The PowerPoint presentations have a new look and feel with new backgrounds, text colors, and video/audio icons. There are new optional links to relevant YouTube videos that have been added to enhance classroom instruction. The number of discipline-specific call classifications covered in the PowerPoint presentations for classroom use has significantly been reduced; however, all of the discipline-specific call classifications are still covered in the student manual.

The student manual's end-of-chapter student exercises now match the formatting of the examination to better prepare the students for success on the exam, which offers multiple choice and true/false questions. Additionally, a glossary has been added with key terms and their definitions.

In both the PowerPoint presentations and student manual, images and graphics have been updated throughout. Some of the content has been rearranged to improve the instructional flow and has been updated to include new technologies. New additional content was added throughout the course to provide more robust information regarding important topics.

Both the initial ETC certification exam and the ETC recertification exam have been updated as well. Questions have been changed to correspond with the updated course materials.

So we are going to unfold all of this and more at the upcoming NAVIGATOR 2017 conference in New Orleans, LA, in April. There will be two courses offered, one a three-day ETC Instructor course with all the new, latest and greatest curriculum.

Additionally, we will be offering an eight-hour workshop for any and all currently IAED-certified ETC Instructors. This workshop will provide the participants to receive and become updated with the latest and greatest 4th edition of the curriculum. Join us for this workshop that will provide an in-depth look at the recently updated Emergency Telecommunicator Course (ETC) curriculum, including the new student manual and instructor presentation. We will also offer tips and tricks to help you succeed with instructing adult learners. This workshop will fulfill your next recertification requirements.

Lastly, I would also like to thank the ETC Curriculum Board, Larry Latimer, Patricia B. Jones, Michael Smith, John Beltran, Nancy Lockhart, David Massengale, Chris Bradford, Jay Domsseif, Greg Spencer, and Zilpha Bradshaw for working so hard on this project during the past year plus. We certainly couldn't have done it without you!

Please let me know if you have any questions. I can be reached at thedisasterqueen@aol.com.

Hope to see you at NAVIGATOR, Susi Marsan. Thedisasterqueen@aol.com

Teaching Adults—The Core Learning Principles to Recognize

By Deanna Mateo-Mih, ED-Q Board of Curriculum Chair

Teaching adults is very different from teaching children. When you teach a child, the child typically takes the information without questioning its validity. A child's thought process is because an adult said it, it must be true! Children view new learning this way because they have no other experiences by which to judge the information being imparted to them. They are essentially a blank slate.

Adults learn very differently. They measure new information against past training, experiences, and knowledge. An adult does not typically take what is told to them at face value; instead, they judge new learning against what they already know and decide whether the new information is valid. When an adult judges new information and deems it to be invalid, the information is discarded. This occurs whether the information is actually invalid or not. This tendency can make teaching adults a challenge.

Malcolm Knowles spent years researching and investigating how adults learn. He developed the adult learning concept most commonly known as Andragogy, "the art and science of helping adults learn" (Knowles, M. The Modern Practice of Adult Education, p.43). In his book, The Adult Learner, Knowles discusses Andragogy and the core principles of adult learning behavior in detail. The principles that govern adult learning as identified by Knowles are what we use to determine whether we're going to engage in the learning process and ultimately be able to assimilate and use the information presented. Therefore, when we are teaching an ED-Q course, it's important to keep these principles in mind. As ED-Q Instructors, our goal is not to present information, it's to facilitate understanding of information by helping the students discover it through discussion and call review. This increases the likelihood that the students will be able and willing to accept the new information.

When speaking to a group of children, it may be acceptable to be very direct and limit discussion. Adults don't respond well to this style of teaching. In fact, most adults learn best from a facilitative teaching style. Our goal is to lead the students through the course materials in a way that allows for discovery and open discussion.

Our students are, in some cases, still evaluating whether they agree with the concepts of Quality Improvement (QI) and Quality Assurance (QA). They tend to approach the course material with a more investigative mindset. They're not quite sure what QA is all about or whether they are willing to participate in the call review process. This tendency triggers their skepticism and increases our need to motivate them through mind mapping and identification of corollaries between the information being discussed and their past experiences.

The ED-Q course material allows facilitated learning, keeping in mind the Core Principles (See Figure 1). As we work through the course, there are opportunities for students to work through call reviews on their own, discuss the results as a group, listen to the instructors' examples of real-life situations as they relate to ED-Q, measure...
them against their own experiences, and understand why QA is so important and how it will help them to improve performance in their agencies. By following the curriculum, instructors are able to lead the students through all 6 core principles.

Understanding adults’ motivations in the learning process can significantly affect not only the students’ experience in class but also the instructor’s. The more instructors understand about adult learning, the better able they are to ensure a positive experience for all involved. Instructors are highly encouraged to pursue continued studies in adult learning. A place to start would be to read works by Malcolm Knowles. Other very good resources are the American Association for Adult and Continuing Education (AAACE) at www.aaace.org and local colleges and universities that have a variety of courses on education. There are many resources available to continue refining skills and learning new techniques. Investigate and enjoy!

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Medical Board of Curriculum Report

By Vicki Maguire,
EMD Board of Curriculum Chair

Last year I wrote about the challenges of getting through the new v13 curriculum in the amount of time we have. I received emails and feedback on that article from many of you expressing your concerns about the challenges with the time and not being able to get through everything. Some of you shared ideas on what you do to save time. I am going to utilize this article to share ideas that have been sent to me in hopes that one or two of these ideas might help in saving some time in your next class. Keep in mind that none of these will save you hours of time, but using some of them might buy you a little more breathing room.

Time Saving Suggestions:

1. If you have a representative of the course location welcoming the students to the course, bring up the housekeeping slide and have the representative talk about the relative things on housekeeping list. After they are done with welcoming the students, finish up whatever is on the housekeeping list that was not discussed.

2. When doing the student introductions, keep it as brief as possible. It is easy to lose track of time here and spend as much as 45 minutes on introductions with a large class. One suggestion is to NOT have students do individual introductions if you have more than 15 students in the course. Instead do an informal “polling” of the group to get an idea of how many have dispatching experience or medical experience.

3. When introducing the textbooks, have the students turn to the last two pages of the EMD course manual and ask the students to fill out the application in their spare time (not in class). Also ask them to fill out the evaluation throughout the course and not wait until the end of the course. This can save as much as 15 minutes at the end of the course. Remind them from time to time after a lecture to turn to their evaluations and jot down any comments they might have to keep them from forgetting to do it.

4. If you have time prior to the course beginning and are comfortable with the actual count of how many students you have, then adhere the CD into the cover of Principles and fold and put the instruction sheet inside the sleeve so that this does not take up time in class.

5. When introducing the Universal Course manual, mention that there will be suggested reading assignments out of this book after day one and day two. At the end of day one, suggest they read chapter one in the Universal Course manual, and at the end of day two, suggest they read chapters two and three. This will help when you have to speed lecture through this material on day three.

6. On the response time exercise on slide 1.20, select one student for each element of the response time and ask them to give their opinion on what they believe the time is for that piece of the exercise. This saves time by limiting the discussion, and of course be ready to make any corrections if the answer is way off.

7. There are all different kinds of suggestions for saving time for breaks and lunches:

• Limit breaks to one fifteen-minute break in the morning between the introduction and structure and function chapters. Break for lunch at 11:30 a.m. to allow students to arrive at fast food places prior to the noon rush. Allow two ten- or fifteen-minute breaks in the afternoons. Always be done by 5:00 p.m.—don’t hold students over unless it is day three and they are doing the test. Try to be to the test by 4:00 p.m. to allow a whole hour of class time to take the test, and the slower test takers will then have the time after 5:00 p.m. to finish their tests.

• Give students a five- to ten-minute break every hour and an hour for lunch.

• Have lunches brought in for students, especially on the third day. A significant number of instructors said that they purchase pizza on the third day and have a working lunch to give them more time. They also said to make sure and announce that was the plan to have a working lunch on the day before so all students knew what to expect.

8. Most instructors agree that the ability to use the EMDory game as a review process is really limited now due to the lack of time on the third day. The following are some different suggestions that were shared for doing reviews:

• At the end of days one and two, do a “recap” or “review” of key points covered during that day. Spend five to ten minutes only.

• At the beginning of days two and three, do a fifteen-minute review of the preceding day covering key elements, and before starting the exam on day three, do a ten-minute review of final lectures.

• Offer students an option to either come in fifteen minutes before class on days two and three to participate in a review session: “I have to be there early to set up anyway, so I review prior to class beginning and then do no reviews during class time. It saves me 30 minutes easily over the three days of class time.”

9. As we all know, it is very difficult if not impossible to get four breakout sessions covered in class due to time. Here are some suggestions that might be helpful:

• In small classes (six or less students) I do one big group breakout session. This allows me to participate with the group and make corrections as needed. I keep everyone involved by having all students not playing either the dispatcher, caller, or helper be responsible for giving feedback to the dispatcher after each call. This also allows me to control the time better and keep the students on track.
Thoughts from the Instructor Academy

**Tiffany Good**

Remember when you were younger and you had to try something new or go somewhere by yourself for the first time? Remember that feeling of “what the heck was I thinking?” That was our group day one of the Instructor Academy. Fourteen people, around the room, pretty much sat there in awkward silence.

Pam Stewart and Bonni Stockman were all smiles, engaging and even tried to crack a few jokes. And what did we do? We just sat there, in silence. Why?

I learned rather quickly that we were a group who loved what we did, had high expectations of ourselves, and wanted to do well. We came from all over—the United States, Canada, and even Vietnam! We all had a passion for helping others and a desire to ensure we had a complete understanding of what these protocols were all about and how to make sure our future students would understand them.

How did this silence end? In one word—support. We realized early on how supported we were by both the people from the Academy and by the students in the class. Our instructors guided us through the week and gave us all the ins and outs of the protocols and training material, which helped us grow in confidence. Everyone wanted the best for each other, and we became closer as a group.

The Academy did an amazing job at welcoming us and giving us all the tools we needed to be successful. So much so, many of us wanted to move to Utah and start working for Priority Dispatch!

Silence was changed to laughter, fun times, tons of messaging, and lifelong friendships. We relaxed and joked around. We even ended up with a mascot we named Harry, who is currently in Canada with our French Canadian friend!

**Allen Siorek**

What makes a good training course? Was it the curriculum? The networking prospects? The instructors themselves?

If you were to think back over the years, you can probably remember one class that stuck with you, cementing your love of teaching and carrying forward the positive moments that you strive to share with your students. In my 20+-year fire service career, I've been blessed with the opportunity to attend a host of educational seminars, conferences, and train-the-trainer sessions.

Some met my expectations, others exceeded, while still others fell short. Without a doubt, though, the recent EFD/EPD Instructor course taught in Salt Lake City ranks as one of the best courses I've ever had the privilege to attend!

Was it because of the curriculum? How a class is organized and presented can make a huge difference between success and failure. In this case, group dynamics focusing on big-picture concepts, complemented with breakout sessions for each discipline, created an atmosphere that fostered a fantastic learning environment.

What about networking? Any adult learning should include this opportunity and IAED/PDC didn’t disappoint. Providing lunches and one of the dinners was a perfect way for students, staff, and instructors to mingle in a low-key setting. Learning from each other and getting to know one another = friendships that will last long after the week concluded. The occasional (playful) jabs from Fire to Police and vice versa didn’t hurt, either!

From my perspective, though, it was the staff from IAED and PDC that were the gems of the entire experience. Everyone was extremely friendly, knowledgeable, and—most of all—more than willing to help in any way possible to ensure that we succeeded. If that wasn’t enough, what struck me most was getting to meet literally everyone that worked in the building; this really showcased their desire to make you feel part of the family.

My only regret for the week was that it had to end so soon. The flight home had me reminiscing about the new colleagues I’d met and dreaming of the opportunities that are ahead of me. I’ve never had an experience quite like this one, and I truly look forward to “being the face of the Academy” for many years to come!