



Making sure a soldier's basic skills — like shooting an azimuth — are kept sharp is one way leaders can prepare subordinates for NCOES courses such as PLDC.

Leadership Development

A top NCO priority for NCOES

By SFC Darrin M. Adams

Far too many soldiers report for Noncommissioned Officer institutional training who are either overweight or who don't meet the minimum Army Physical Fitness Test (APFT) requirements to enroll in Noncommissioned Officer Education System courses.

Now more than ever, special consideration must be given to soldiers who are selected to attend their next level of NCOES training.

Local commands must assess soldiers' abilities to complete the course for which they have been selected. The decision to send a soldier depends on the educational aptitude of the soldier as well as demonstrated leadership potential.

Unit leaders must make subordinate development a high priority at all levels of training. NCO Professional Development classes should include classes on preparation for NCOES training such as APFT testing procedures, drill and ceremony (FM 22-5), common leader training and MOS-related subjects which benefit training soldiers will receive at NCOES schools.

Many soldiers about to attend NCOES courses believe they will learn everything they need to know during the course. The fact is, soldiers attending the various levels of training should already possess certain common leader skills such as map reading or MOS-related tasks for the track portions within the prospective course.

Ideally, leaders should be able to perform tasks expected not only at their current skill level but of those at lower skill levels as well. If soldiers can do this, they stand an excellent chance of completing any level of NCOES training.

Soldiers should have the ability to use publications, manuals and other appropriate systems to research and find material needed to pass examinations. Many students can't use a publication index correctly. These soldiers then find it more difficult to get the information needed to choose the correct answer on examinations. The ability to properly use manuals is a critical skill needed for all students at all levels.

DA Pam 351-1 covers in-depth regulations for attendance at NCOES schools. Some additional suggestions that should be considered include:

- Soldiers attending PLDC, BNCOC and AN-COC must have at least six months' time in service remaining after completing the course. Leaders must ensure that this is covered through assistance from unit re-enlistment well in advance along with having the updated identification card prior to reporting to class.
- The Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE), which assesses a soldier's reading comprehension level, is currently a requirement for attending NCOES courses. If your soldier has an education center with TABE tests available and you choose to ignore it, you're gambling with that soldier's career. However, a soldier won't be denied admission to a class for not arriving with TABE results due to some remote assignments where these tests are not always available to the soldier. Attendance in a Basic Skills Education Program (BSEP) may be a necessary step prior to your soldier's NCOES report date. There are computer-assisted training programs available and college English classes that can improve writing skills. Check your post libraries for self-improvement materials. Soldiers need to know their weaknesses and it's the responsibility of the leaders to identify and counsel their soldiers on weaknesses as well as strengths.
- Inventory basic issue items and advise selectees on the necessity of having enough funds to defray the cost of attending the course. All soldiers are responsible for maintaining their basic clothing issue. But it's the supervisor who must

ensure that soldiers not only have their issued items, but that they are also serviceable.

- Weigh soldiers frequently and counsel them in accordance with AR 600-9. Soldiers should be monitored closely as their report date draws nearer. Soldiers found to be overweight when reporting to NCOES courses will be immediately sent back to their units. When this happens, it's humiliating to the soldier and paints a less-than-favorable picture about the command. In addition, it expends valuable funds needed for a slot that could be used by a qualified, well-deserving soldier.

- The APFT is now required for enrollment in all NCOES courses and is no longer just a requirement for graduation. A strictly-graded APFT should be administered at the unit by an unbiased NCO not more than 30 days prior to a soldier's reporting date for the course. If a soldier fails during this time or marginally meets the minimum requirements, chances are he won't pass the APFT when he arrives for NCOES training. Encourage soldiers to achieve the highest possible score on every APFT for the following reasons: 1. The higher their fitness level, the better their chances are for completing the APFT at their school; and 2. NCOs are expected to exceed minimum standards by superiors, peers and subordinates alike. A minimal-standard leader achieves minimal-standard results.

- Profiles. Soldiers with temporary profiles (except shaving profiles) will not be enrolled. Soldiers with permanent profiles must report with documentation supporting their profile through a medical review board. These soldiers must complete all training requirements within the limitations of their profile. Soldiers who develop profiles during the course will be evaluated by medical personnel and the commandant on an individual basis.

AR 351-1 stipulates that soldiers who are removed from NCOES courses for academic reasons may resubmit an application for re-enrollment when the commander verifies that the soldier is retrained, ready and stands a better chance to complete the course. The commander must send this verification to the school's commandant who will notify MILPERCEN of eligibility for re-enrollment.

Leadership development should be paramount in preparing soldiers for NCOES training at all levels. It's the unit leadership's responsibility for training their subordinates for wartime and peacetime requirements—to include education levels.

Unit leaders carry most of the burden for ensuring success or failure of their soldiers at NCOES schools. Without caring leadership, soldiers are certainly more susceptible to failure, humiliation and, ultimately, removal from military service. We as leaders must fulfill the obligation we accepted when promoted to the rank and title of a leader.

Mission accomplishment and taking care of soldiers, our two basic responsibilities, have not and will not change. NCOES instruction and committed unit leadership working together will perpetuate an even greater NCO Corps that will sustain our Army today and tomorrow. ■

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Delegate, yes. But... Follow Up Follow Up Follow Up

By SGM Donald Brumfield

PVT Jones was preparing to go to the field on a training exercise the next day. SGT Smith, his team leader, conducted a pre-combat check of Jones' equipment to ensure his soldier was fully prepared for the upcoming mission. SGT Smith noted the problems during the inspection and instructed PVT Jones to take corrective action by 0600 the next morning. At 0600, Jones arrived and loaded his equipment on the vehicle for transportation to the field. At 0630, the unit departed for the field without anyone bothering to check the private's gear.

In a TDA unit, a section NCOIC was told by the unit sergeant major to clean the snow from his military vehicles in accordance with the unit policy. The section NCOIC in turn told his soldiers to execute the mission. He noted his team depart the building and later return, reporting that all vehicles had been cleaned. The next day the sergeant major passed this same section NCOIC and asked, "Are all of your vehicles cleaned?" The sergeant major already knew that three of the section's vehicles still had snow sitting on them. The section NCOIC stated, "All my vehicles are clean." The sergeant major checked the bumper numbers and found out whose vehicles weren't properly cleaned.

Do these examples sound like things you've seen in your unit? Is this proper leadership? Does the standard line of "trusting your subordinates" cover this issue? Do you see anything wrong here? Are these basic fundamentals that we're taught by FM 251-101, **Battle Focused Training**, and FM 22-100, **Military Leadership**?

With 21 years in the Army, I'll be the first to stand up and praise the professionalism of the Army's current crop of NCOs. On any given day, on any Army installation, you can walk down the street and see NCOs following the four major factors of leadership: the led, the leader, the situation and communications. I'd like to spend a little time on the first of these—"the led."

Anyone with any leadership ability knows no two soldiers are alike. All soldiers cannot be led the same way. Some soldiers need close supervision while others need very little. We as leaders must correctly assess our soldiers' competence, motivation and commitment in order to accurately lead our soldiers. I feel this is where we as leaders all too often fail our soldiers. Most leaders are very good at issuing orders or providing guidance; however, I've noted a weakness across the Army in our ability to follow up, properly supervise, or spot check our soldiers. All too often, we stop at these stages. *(continued next page)*