



# Austin Police Department

Report of Independent Evaluator - APD Training Academy

May 23, 2022

# Role of Independent Evaluator

APD Training Academy

## Objectives:

**Independently assess whether Academy staff is sufficiently:**

- Implementing the Kroll recommendations.
- Developing a transformational police academy that openly and honestly addresses issues of racial and gender equity.
- Emphasizing de-escalation tactics that minimize the use of force.
- Incorporating diverse perspectives through community partnerships.
- Producing a dynamic learning academy that promotes resilient officers through effective and inclusive adult learning instruction.

**Develop a Transformational, Best-in-Class Police Academy**

# Summary Assessment

## 144<sup>TH</sup> Cadet Class

- 66/100 Cadets successfully graduated
- Positive messaging from APD leadership
- Overall training was excellent – but improvement needed
- Military-style culture predominates
- “Buy in” lacking among some staff
- Lack of coordination and planning/illogical sequencing of some courses
- Siloed course content/lack of interconnectedness
  - De-escalation/use of force
  - Community engagement
- Academy Leadership pro-actively addressing



# Summary Assessment (cont'd)

## 144<sup>TH</sup> Cadet Class

### Positive Additions to Training

- Added community engagement programming.
- Successful two-week community orientation program (Community Connect).
- Groundwater Analysis Racial Equity training for Academy staff and cadets.
- 8-hour course on the History of Police and Race in America.
- Expanded physical fitness/health and wellness training.
- Community and academic input to ensure that racial equity and procedural justice are paramount considerations in all aspects of cadet training.
  - Academy Curriculum Review Committee
  - Community Video Review Panel

# Setting the Tone

144<sup>TH</sup> Cadet Class

## Pre-academy Messaging

- **The mission of the Academy is to train future APD officers to:**
  - Serve the community
  - Treat everyone with dignity and respect
- **Increased sensitivity to**
  - Community concerns
  - Cultural competency
  - Critical thinking
  - Adult learning
- **Cadet surveys:** Most cadets perceived that instructors positively emphasized community concerns.

# Increased Community Engagement

144<sup>TH</sup> Cadet Class

## Community Connect Project



- Provided cadets with valuable community perspectives.
- Prioritized community concerns.
- Encouraged cadets to embrace their role as guardians by meaningfully engaging with members of the Austin community.

# Increased Community Engagement

144<sup>TH</sup> Cadet Class

## Community Engagement Programming

- 25 hours of community engagement and lived experience programming.
  - 12 hours less than stated commitment
- Community-focused content led by community leaders and activists from a wide variety of community organizations.
- Reinforced the importance of empathy when interacting with the diverse communities that cadets will serve as sworn officers.
  - Life Anew
  - Refugee Services of Texas
  - Jail to Jobs
  - Mothers Against Drunk Driving
  - Aging Services Council of Central Texas
  - Measure Austin/Data Integrity
  - Settlement Home for Children
  - National Alliance on Mental Illness
  - Just Liberty
  - Texas Association of the Deaf

# Racial Equity Training

144<sup>TH</sup> Cadet Class

## Groundwater Analysis of Racial Inequities

- Two-day workshops for all cadets and Academy staff (Joyce James Consulting LLC).
- “APD is moving towards making systemic change as evidenced by their willingness to be intentional, deliberate, transparent, and vulnerable in recognizing the long history of racism in all helping systems and by inviting the community to engage in every step of the process.”\*
- Visibility and involvement of APD leadership provided “credibility to the effort to engage APD officers, staff, and community in new and different dialogues essential for addressing racial inequities.”\*
- Feedback from cadets and APD officers “conveyed appreciation for the community members’ stories and perspectives.”\*
- “[I]t is possible to bridge the communication gap and strengthen relationships between the community and APD.”\*

\* - Report of JJC to Office of Police Oversight



# Increased Cultural Competency/DEI Training

144<sup>TH</sup> Cadet Class

## Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

- History of Police and Race in America
- Multiculturalism and Human Relations
- Transgender/LGBTQ+ Community
- Basic Spanish and Role Plays
- Victims of Crime/Family Violence and Sex Crimes
- Interactions with Deaf Individuals

## Ethical Policing

- Professionalism and Ethics
- Racial Profiling
- Professional Policing
- Sexual Harassment
- Constitutional Law



# Increased Community Input

144<sup>TH</sup> Cadet Class

## Academy Curriculum Review Committee

- Reviewed lesson plans and course materials for 21 Academy courses
- Engaged in positive dialogue with Academy instructors
- Recommended improvements to course curriculum

## Community Video Review Committee

- Developed process and criteria to guide selection and use of training videos
  - How are videos introduced and framed in the context of each course?
  - How balanced are depictions of various demographic groups, community members, and good vs. bad policing techniques?
  - Do the videos avoid an “us vs. them” depiction of policing, emphasize de-escalation, and address community concerns?

# Use of External Subject Matter Experts

## 144<sup>TH</sup> Cadet Class

### Co-facilitated Teaching – 144<sup>TH</sup> Cadet Class

- History of Police and Race in America
- Interacting with Transgender Individuals
- Policing and the LGBTQ+ Community
- Basic Spanish Training
- Victims of Crime
- Interacting with Individuals who are Deaf
- Data Integrity
- Mindfulness and Resiliency
- **Some staff remain reluctant to embrace the co-facilitated teaching model. This remains an area needed for improvement.**

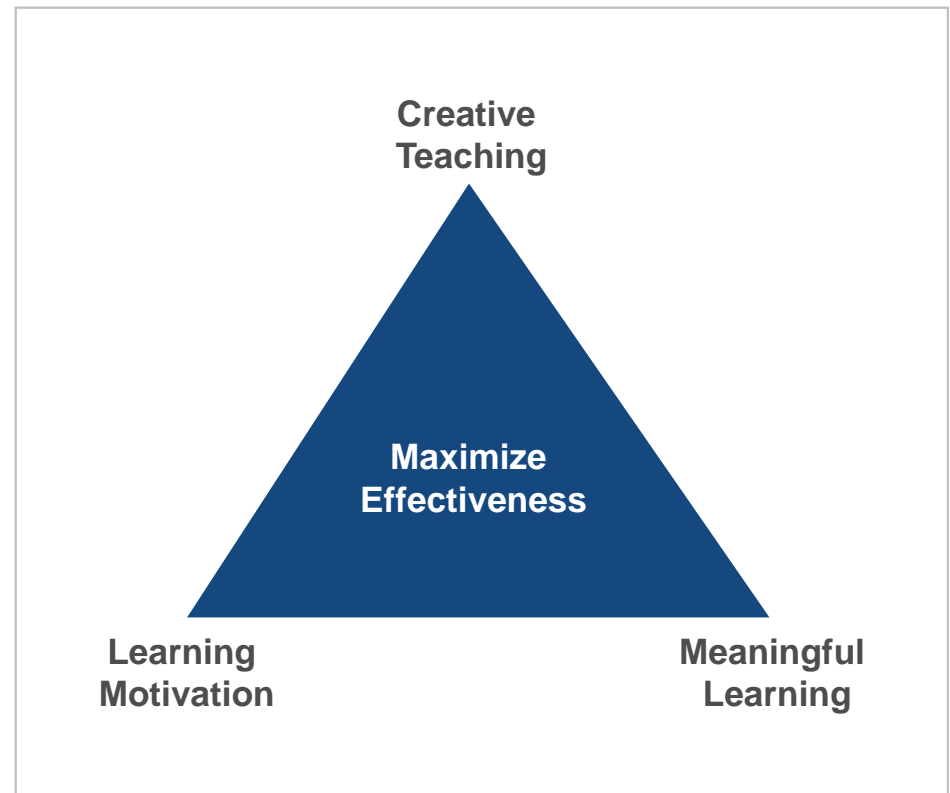


# Adult Learning Teaching Model

144<sup>TH</sup> Cadet Class

## Improved Focus on Adult/Active Learning Concepts

- Less emphasis on verbatim reading of material.
- Good use of:
  - Visual aids and handouts
  - Class discussion
  - Q & A encouraged
  - Case studies
  - Role plays
- Inability to use instructional videos was noticed



# Academy Culture

## 144<sup>TH</sup> Cadet Class

### Military-style Culture

- Important to:
  - Establish clear lines of authority
  - Discipline
  - Collective Accountability
- Some concerns with mixed messaging

### Academics and Adult Learning

- Classroom – based learning
- Community engagement
- Study sessions/weekly exams



# Academy Culture

144<sup>TH</sup> Cadet Class

## Resistance to Change

- Some counter messaging to initial emphasis on community and procedural justice
  - Performance Accountability sessions – mocking “reimagined” process
  - Community engagement is not “actual” police training
  - Some messaging on Academy grounds remains “Us vs. Them”



# De-escalation Training

144<sup>TH</sup> Cadet Class

## De-escalation Training

- Academy instruction included an emphasis on de-escalation training and tactics, including:
  - ICAT (Integrating Communications, Assessment, and Tactics), an evidence-based best practice designed by the Police Executive Research Forum.
  - Verbal communications as a de-escalation tactic.
  - Crisis Intervention Training (CIT)/mental health awareness
  - Instructors knew the material and exhibited a positive attitude toward the subject matter.
  - More integration needed in other course content.



**ICAT**

**Integrating  
Communications,  
Assessment,  
and Tactics**

*Developed by the Police Executive Research Forum*



# Defensive Tactics/Stress-induced Training

144<sup>TH</sup> Cadet Class

## Team-building Exercises (TBX)

- Well-planned and executed.
- Created a physically and mentally stressful environment through exercise and problem solving.
- Emphasized the importance of teamwork and leadership in a positive and controlled environment.

## Defensive Tactics

- Self-defense exercise (formerly “Will-to-Win”) occurred after cadets were properly trained on defensive tactics.
- Instructors were professional, displayed highly competent self-defense skills, and effectively conveyed pertinent information.
- All cadets successfully completed.





# Skills Training

144<sup>TH</sup> Cadet Class



# Health and Wellness

## 144<sup>TH</sup> Cadet Class

### Physical Fitness

- Academy expanded physical fitness training.
- Program did not serve all cadets well, depending on pre-existing fitness and abilities.

### PT Assessment Standards

- Academy staff has been evaluating historic data to determine how fitness standards within the Academy relate to working as an officer in the department.

### Mindfulness and Resiliency

### Mentorship Programs



# Division Manager/Training Supervisor

## Roles, Responsibilities, and Authority

### Division Manager

- Role is crucial to long-term sustainability of reform measures.
- Oversees academic side of Academy – instructor development and preparation, lesson plans, adult learning, community-focused mission.
- **Revised Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**: Provides much needed clarity concerning the role, responsibilities, and authority of the Division Manager to enhance Academy teaching methods, curricula and instructor development, and meaningful academic and community input into Academy instruction.

### Training Supervisor

- Provides valuable assistance with curriculum development and standardization of lesson plans and course materials.
- Moderates Academy Curriculum Review Committee meetings and ensures that recommendations are properly considered.

# Cadet Separations

Injuries, Test Failures, Resignations

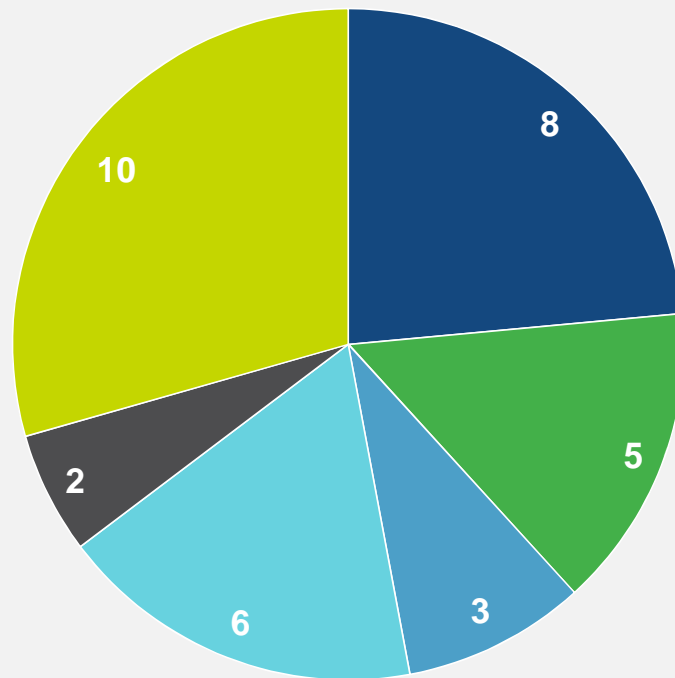
## Impact On Class Diversity

- 34 cadets separated from the 144th cadet class due to injuries, academic failures, Covid-19, and other reasons.
- 34% attrition rate exceeded all but one cadet class from 2015-2020.
- **Impact on diversity:**
  - Black cadets declined from 17% to 13.6% of the cadet class.
  - Female cadets declined from 18% to 15% of the cadet class.

	Asian/ Pacific Islander	Black	Hispanic	Other	White	Total
Female	0	2	3	0	5	10
Male	1	7	24	2	22	56
Total	1	9	27	2	27	66

# Exits by Reason

144<sup>TH</sup> Cadet Class

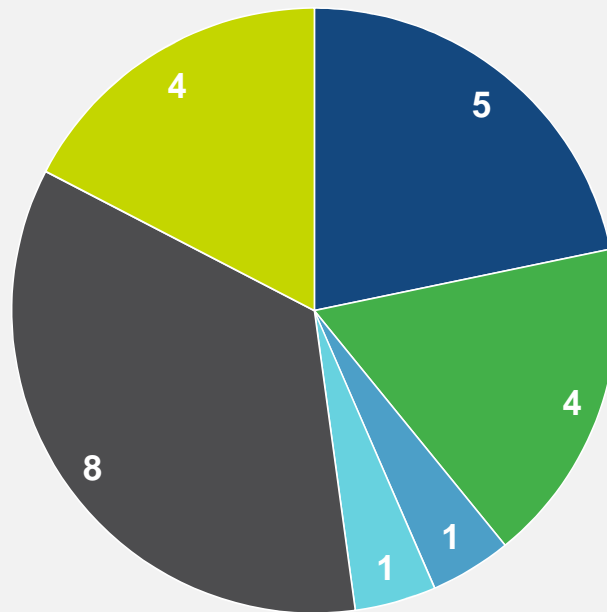


- Injury
- COVID
- Physical Training Assessment Standards
- Academic Standards
- Termination
- Personal

# Cadet Injuries

144<sup>TH</sup> Cadet Class

## Major Injuries Training Academy

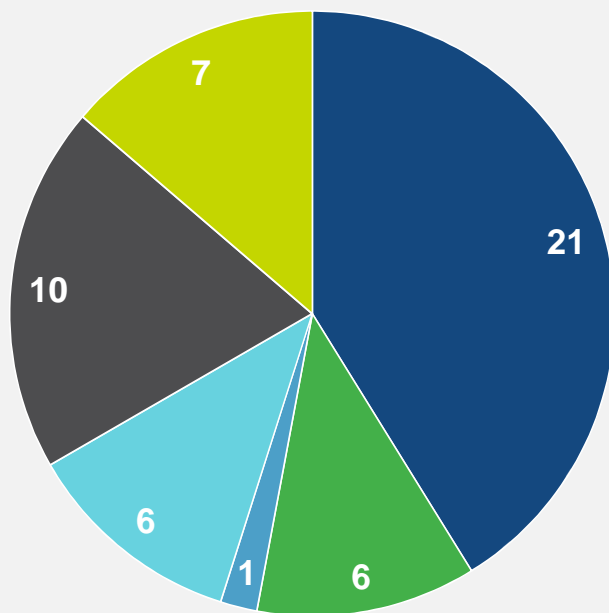


- Performance Accountability Exercises
- Physical Training
- Physical Training Assessment
- Team Building Exercises
- Defensive Tactics Training
- Other

# Cadet Injuries

144<sup>TH</sup> Cadet Class

## Minor Injuries Training Academy



- Performance Accountability Exercises
- Physical Training
- Physical Training Assessment
- Team Building Exercises
- Defensive Tactics Training
- Other

# APD Implementation (1/2)

144<sup>TH</sup> Cadet Class

## Implementation of Kroll Short-Term Recommendations

- Civilian leadership – Division Manager/Training Supervisor (completed)
- Purchase and implement a Learning Management System (completed)
- Academy Curriculum Review Committee (completed)
- Separate physical stress-inducements from academics (completed)
- Expanded community participation/engagement (completed)
- History of Police and Race in America (completed)
- Incorporate Racial Equity Training (completed)
- Increase use of external content experts (in progress)
- Formalize exit interview process for cadets who separate from Academy (completed)
- Develop and expand mentorship programs (in progress)



# APD Implementation (2/2)

144<sup>TH</sup> Cadet Class

## Implementation of Kroll Long-Term Recommendations

- Consult with Media Literacy Expert (completed)
- Increase diversity of Academy staff (in progress)
- Evaluate physical assessment standards (completed)
- Build recovery time between cadet classes (completed)
- Develop and incorporate additional content on procedural justice (in progress)
- Collaborate with mental health experts and advocates (completed)
- Research effective peer intervention training programs (in progress)
- Research ways to incorporate more training on cognitive decision-making and emotional intelligence skills (in progress)
- Field Training Officer program recommendations (12-15) (in progress)

# Recommended Adjustments/Improvements

## 144<sup>TH</sup> Cadet Class

### Implementation of Kroll Interim Report Recommendations

- Improve review process for instructional training videos (completed)
- Adjust how performance accountability measures are administered (completed – revised SOPs)
- Adjust timing/scheduling of Community Connect (completed/with qualification)
- Re-institute Cadet Ride-Out Program (completed)
- Clarify role, responsibilities, and authority of Division Manager (completed – revised SOPs)
- Improve scheduling coordination (Learned Skills Unit and Cadet Training Unit) (completed)
- Address staffing needs of Learned Skills Unit (in progress)
- Address needed improvements to Academy facilities (under consideration)

# Recommended Adjustments/Improvements

## 144<sup>TH</sup> Cadet Class

### Additional Kroll Recommendations – Further Adjustments and Improvements

- Develop and expand Academy video library
- Add cadet survey question(s) on de-escalation
- Additional criterion for FTO selection
  - Commitment to community-oriented policing building community relationships
- Modified Physical Training program
- Assess time management



# Questions?

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