



Sierra Training Associates

24645 Foresthill Road, Foresthill, CA 95631

530-333-3349

<http://www.sierra-training.com>

Classroom Training and Field Performance

By: Bob Harrison

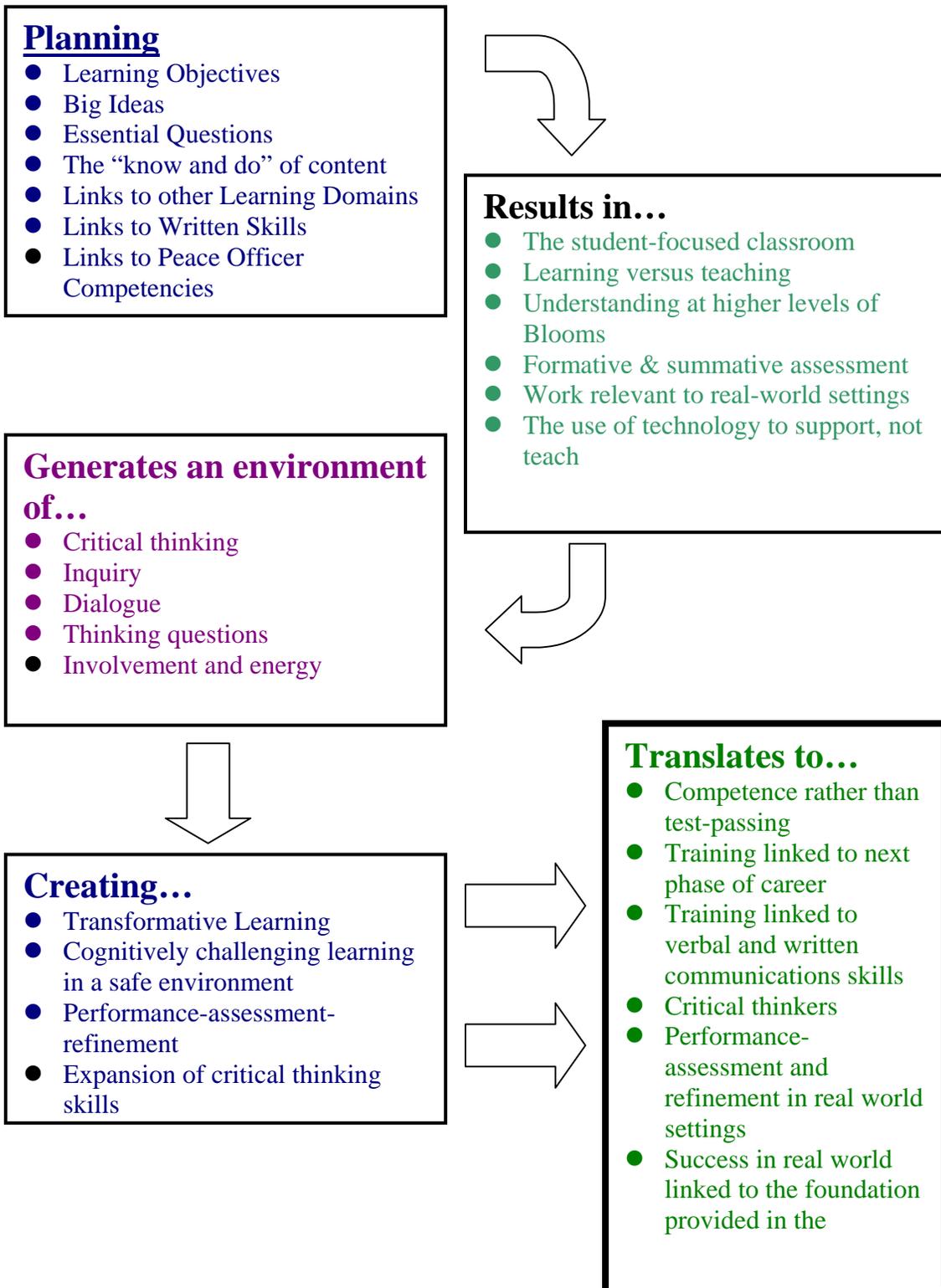
All too often, there is a gap between an adult's training experience and their performance once in real world environs. In police settings, a time-worn story sees a rookie officer on his or her first day in a patrol car. The crusty veteran who will train them turns and says, "Alright, kid, forget all that stuff they taught you in the academy. Now you're going to learn how to do police work." Well intended, perhaps, but a sad refrain when one considers the hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars spent to complete the police academy and move to field training.

How can we maximize the hours devoted to basic training in policing or any other adult training setting? One way is to consider it as a cycle, with success only being achieved if the cycle is completed, not if one or two elements meet their internal standards. Back to policing, one can hear some field trainers bemoan the lack of quality of recruits and the irrelevant nature of much of the academy's "busywork." Academy directors and trainers contend they are only teaching to the standards set by state agencies and experts in the field, and that it is not their job to do everything. As the recruit is tossed back and forth between these two camps, they might wonder who they are really supposed to listen to...

Take a look at the cycle on the next page. As an instructor, whether in the academy or in the field, success may only be measured by transferring the skills and understanding to those trained in a manner that allows them to work independent of the trainer. It is not enough to "train to the test" in academic settings and be unconcerned with how that knowledge might translate to the field. Field trainers complaining about the lack of context taught at their academy should take the time to devote energy to bridging that gap instead of griping about it.

The most critical time in a peace officer's career is when they are "imprinted" through their academy and initial field training experiences. They learn the true norms and values of their profession, and learn also how "things are done." In a profession with obvious elements of danger, and with less-obvious dangers of misconduct, to give short shrift to either training setting is to fail the agency, the academy, and ultimately, the public we serve.

The Trainer's Learning & Performance Cycle¹



¹ Reprinted from the *Advanced Facilitation Skills Course for Instructors Student Workbook* by Bob Harrison and Kendall Zoller. CA Commission on POST, 2007.