



Command Sergeant Major of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, Command Sgt. Maj. David Davenport, shares his experiences with cadets during a recent visit to the U.S. Military Academy. (Photo by Staff Sgt. Vito T. Bryant / U.S. Military Academy Public Affairs)

# Master Leader Course's Launch is One Step in Overhaul of NCO Education

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**A** new Master Leader Course pilot begins this week as part of a revamping of NCO education and professional development.

“As you may or may not know, the Master Leader Course is now official,” said Command Sgt. Maj. David S. Davenport Sr. of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, speaking Oct. 14 during a forum at the Association of the U.S. Army Annual Meeting and Exposition.

The first pilot of the course for sergeants first class is now being taught at Fort Bliss, Texas. The new course will eventually be required for promotion to master sergeant and is part of a renewed emphasis across the Army on NCO education.

There’s a push to eliminate the current backlog of over 14,000 NCOs who have not gone to their required professional military education, or PME, Davenport said.

“Deferments are causing a huge disruption,” Davenport said. In the future, instead of just saying that an NCO can’t go to school due to an operational conflict, commanders will need to say when that NCO can go to school, Davenport said.

PME requirements for promotion will no longer be waived for NCOs, he said, beginning next year.

Enforcing education requirements comes as a widening of STEP, which stands for selection, training, education and promotion. It was first used to require master sergeants and first sergeants to attend the

Sergeant Major Academy to get promoted and now it's expanding to all NCO ranks.

It's simple, but everyone must understand, Davenport said, "You will not be promoted until you attend the appropriate level of PME."

Other upcoming changes include:

- Establishing the NCO Professional Development System (per HQDA EXORD 235-15)
- Renaming of the Warrior Leader Course to Basic Leader Course
- Using a Digital Job Book that documents all training for Soldiers as part of the Digital Training Management System, or DTMS
- Redesign of the Sergeant Major Academy
- Establishment of the Institution for NCO Professional Development, or INCOPOD
- Development of an Executive Leader Course for command sergeants major
- Publicizing more broadening opportunities for NCOs
- Providing a "Digital Rucksack" to students that includes course materials, apps and technical manuals
- Requiring Army Service School Academic Reports or DA 1059s to include date of a Soldier's last physical fitness test, along with a height and weight statement

The effective date of the last change and others may be determined by a proponent conference taking place this week, Davenport said.

The changes will be "revolutionary," not just "evolutionary" like past changes to NCO professional development, said Davenport and retired Sgt. Maj. of the Army Kenneth O. Preston, who served as moderator for the panel discussion.

"Noncommissioned officers and their Soldiers must be ready to perform (their) missions in an increasingly complex world in which they find themselves today," Preston said. "This is an opportunity for the NCO Corps to take charge of NCOES, of how we educate our non-commissioned officers," said retired Command Sgt.

Maj. John D. Sparks, who is now director of TRADOC's Institute for Professional Development.

"You've got to own NCOES," Sparks told NCOs in the room about rebalancing the NCO Education System.

"Training is the fulcrum for manning and equipping," said Command Sgt. Maj. Scott Schroeder of U.S. Army Forces Command.

"We must develop systems and policies" that enable PME to sync with deployments and operational missions, Schroeder said. He and retired Lt. Col. Ernie Boyd of FORSCOM discussed the new Sustainable Readiness Model, or SRM, which will be used for Army Force Generation.

Many broadening opportunities for NCOs exist in the Army today that are not used to full advantage, Sparks said. Davenport said there will be a "shaking up" of broadening opportunities, to ensure all of the opportunities are widely known.

"We've got to define what broadening is," Schroeder said, explaining that the term is used for everything from fellowships to drill instructor assignments.

A "hybrid solution" needs to be developed to meet both operational and educational requirements, Schroeder said. More frequent classes might be one solution, he said.

Leveraging technology might be another, Davenport suggested.

One thing is certain, Schroeder said: "We can't go back to where we used to be. We can't continue to do business as usual."

The solutions can't be made "in a stovepipe," Schroeder said, and must be discussed "across our staff sections." While G3 (operations and training) is usually the proponent for schools, G1 (personnel) and other sections also need to be involved.

More guidance on NCO professional development is expected in December, Davenport said, with a third fragmentary order to be released in the spring. ■



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