

More from The Town Hall: What's next from TRADOC

By Clifford Kyle Jones - NCO Journal

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Sgt. Carlos Del Los Santos, Comanche Troop, 4th US Cavalry, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 25th Infantry Division, receives his Expert Infantrymen Badge at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii. TRADOC Command Sgt. Maj. David Davenport is working on creating a similar badge, the Expert Action Badge, to signify proficiency at Soldier skills. (Photo by Spc. Patrick Kirby)

Command Sgt. Maj. David Davenport, command sergeant major of Training and Doctrine Command, detailed progress in several aspects of the NCO 2020 Strategy and Noncommissioned Officer Professional Development during the second State of NCO Development town hall June 23. But he mentioned several other initiatives that Soldiers should watch for.

The Expert Action Badge

When town hall moderator Master Sgt. Michael Lavigne posed a question about the Expert Action Badge, Lavigne noted “this is a new term to me.”

The EAB, though, started with work Davenport did in Europe as command sergeant major of

U.S. Army Europe, said Aubrey Butts, director of the Institute for NCO Professional Development.

Davenport “looked at other badges that indicate excellence — the [Expert Infantryman Badge], the [Expert Field Medical Badge] — and he tied it to readiness and to every Soldier in the Army qualifying and doing the critical tasks, along with tasks from the commanders, to earn the badge,” Butts said. “We’re still working on it right now. We’re probably at 70 percent solution.”

Davenport said some of the Army’s previous strategies to evaluate those core competencies, such as the Common Task Test or the Skill Qualification Test, were outdated and no longer appropriate for today’s Army.

The EAB “is really a way to certify Soldiers in their core tasks,” he said. “If we’re saying the Warrior Tasks and Battle Drills are the foundation of what we want Soldiers to know, it’s important that we have something to test them on.”

Davenport called the work on the EAB “preliminary” and said no formal plans have been presented outside TRADOC, but he said, “We really want to empower commanders and leaders at the organizational level to really validate and certify their Soldiers on their core tasks. And this is just a way to do that.”

Armywide training?

The possibility of Armywide training came up from several commenters in the town hall’s accompanying online chat, including to re-enforce core competencies for Soldiers, but Davenport said he saw no indications of that.

“I’m not aware of any movement to direct sergeant’s time training from higher levels,” he replied. “That is a commander’s program to use. It’s a training venue, of course, that we would like to see commanders do to exercise those young noncommissioned officers in training their Soldiers. After all, that is the job of noncommissioned officers, to train Soldiers. ...

“What we are doing in PME is that we are going to teach noncommissioned officers how to be trainers. We’re going to teach them the 8 Step training model, we’re going to teach them how to identify a critical task, develop a lesson plan, come up with some performance-orientated testing to make sure that the Soldier gets that task,” he continued. “So if we’re going to invest all that in PME, of course, we would like units to be able to allow their NCOs to do that.”

Professional development program

Lavigne posed a question submitted by U.S. Army WTF! Moments: “Understanding that every unit is different, is there ever going to be a push from the top down for units Armywide to maintain an NCO DP or ODP and conduct professional development for officers and for

The first, which Dailey will start discussing this month, is Orson Scott Card's "Ender's Game," a science fiction novel about a young boy's military training to face an alien enemy.

A representative from INCOPD announced on the chat accompanying the town hall, "It's expected there will be an SMA Book Club-related website available in July 2016 that will allow Soldiers to make such recommendations, and to also house a discussion guide, links to library resources, the SMA's book review, and online discussion sessions."