

Meeting Minutes

Meeting: IT Advisory Board / Instructor Training Program Review

Date: August 20, 2025

Time: 2:02 PM – 3:15 PM

Location: Virtual Meeting Teams

Recorder: Stephanie Honeycutt

1. Attendees

- **Advisory Board Members:** Amber Revels Ward (Chair), Andrea Hyson, Amy Snider-Wells, Patricia Brown
- **Speakers:** Amber Revels Ward, Michelle Schilling
- **Speaker 1 (Chair/Amber) –** Meeting facilitation
- **Speaker 2 (Michelle Schilling) –** Commission updates
- **Participants:** Joseph Birchett, Brandon Bishop, Jessica Bullock Cook, Erin Long, Glenn Mitchell, Jennifer Fisher, Joseph Birch, Logan Kerr, Mark Coan, Milton Harless, Nathan Mizell, Pamela Pope, Paul Phillips, Keetra Sturdivant, Jesse Swartz, Terry Canton, Thurman, Whisnant, Tim Fuss, Tony Losada

2. Agenda

- Commission Updates
- Curriculum Revision Proposal
- Q&A with Advisory Board Members/Guests
- Discussion on Implementation Logistics
- Next Steps & Closing

3. Commission Updates

- Administrative code review nearly complete (218 rules reviewed).
- Instructor Renewal Rule: Grace period for 1-hour renewal course ends Dec 31, 2025. After this date, instructors who fail to complete will be revoked.
- Passing Scores: Specialized, radar, and LIDAR instructor courses now require 80% minimum (no retests for radar/LIDAR). Effective Feb 1, 2026.
- Firearms Qualification Rule: Updates pending; draft available upon request.
- Professional Standards: Concern raised about inappropriate instructor-student relationships.

4. Curriculum Revision Proposal

- Proposal to split program into two tracks:
 - Presenter Course (~1 week)
 - Curriculum Designer Course (~1 week at Justice Academy)
- Existing instructors will be grandfathered into both certifications.
- Lesson plans to be provided for specialized areas.
- Changes to be posted online with revision highlights.
- Pilot scheduled for May 2026; full rollout January 2027.

5. Q&A Portion

1. What will the revised curriculum look like, and how will it differ from what is currently being taught?

- a. The revised curriculum is based on the template that was shared with everyone on the call. That template is not final—it's a working draft that has already gone through several revisions and will continue to be adjusted as we move forward.

The idea behind it is simple: if we do move forward with a split, the content we currently have naturally divides into two areas, the presenter portion and the curriculum designer portion. What this means is that existing material is being reorganized rather than completely rewritten. For example, presenter-focused content will be consolidated into one week, while curriculum designer content will be grouped into another.

The revisions I'm making now are largely updates and refinements to the strong foundation that was already built by Jessica Bullock and her advisory team. Their work remains highly valuable and relevant, so the changes are focused on bringing the material current and making it more streamlined, rather than creating something entirely new.

In short, the revised curriculum won't feel unfamiliar. It will be the program we are already accustomed to but organized more clearly and tailored to serve two distinct purposes.

2. Will lesson plans for Juvenile Justice, Probation/Parole, Corrections, Telecommunicators, and Detention be included, so students have content relevant to their fields?

- a. My background in instruction includes experience in areas such as probation, parole, and corrections, so I had already started thinking about

how this would apply to different groups of students. For example, if I were running a class made up entirely of probation officers, correctional officers, or another specific group, what lesson plans would I need to provide so they could still deliver quality instruction without creating their own plans?

With the revised approach, students will no longer be developing their own lesson plans. Instead, we'll need to provide them with plans that are ready to use. The answer is yes—we are already collecting lesson plans that fit the different fields within our expertise, as well as broader topics that apply across all areas. Examples of these broader topics include mental health and resiliency, ethics, and other subjects that are relevant no matter the discipline.

In addition, we're pulling in more specialized lesson plans, including some familiar in-service topics, because they work well as one-hour facilitated practical. Right now, I have a solid number of lesson plans in progress, and my goal is to ensure we have at least six. This way, every student will have a distinct plan to teach from in the classroom without duplicating another student's assignment, which keeps the process fair and balanced.

3. What proposed changes are coming to IT training, and when will an official outline or document be shared with the field?

- a. The proposed changes were included in the template I shared by email, which outlines the potential split between the two programs. That template is still a draft—an official outline and documentation will come later. Right now, I'm in the process of reviewing each lesson plan, making revisions, and evaluating how those adjustments affect the hours so that everything fits within the parameters we've been given.

These changes will be fairly straightforward, and once finalized, they'll be uploaded in the same way they are currently available on the Justice Academy website. To make the updates easier to navigate, I plan to mark the lesson plans with a guide that highlights exactly what changes were made. This will allow you to quickly see what's different without needing to reread the entire lesson plan, especially when the revisions are minor. That's the goal with the proposed changes—to keep the process clear, efficient, and transparent.

4. How can the field be better informed of what the Revision Committee is doing (e.g., minutes, updates, timelines)?

- a. I understand that whenever changes are introduced, it's natural for people to feel concerned—I feel the same way, as I'm not a big fan of change myself. That said, I'm a strong believer in clear and upfront communication. That's one of the reasons we held this meeting now, rather than waiting until the School Directors' Conference. I didn't want this to be the first time anyone heard about the proposed changes, especially when we'd only have a short window of time to discuss them.

My hope is that we can continue having open conversations about what this template might look like over the next year. By using advisory group meetings and their minutes as a record, we can be transparent about the discussions and decisions taking place throughout the process.

At this stage, the template itself is the main update, since I'm still actively working on the lesson plan revisions. That's what we've been focusing on for the past few months—to ensure there's agreement on moving forward with the template and to see how it takes shape. Moving ahead, you can expect meeting minutes from today's discussion to be posted, along with additional engagement strategies to keep everyone informed and involved.

5. Will there be opportunities for instructors to participate in a training or “train-the-trainer” session for the new program?

- a. I touched on this a bit in my earlier answers. If we were introducing an entirely new program, it would absolutely make sense to have a train-the-trainer session. However, since this is the program we already know, trust, and value—just with a few additional tweaks—it will be relatively easy to implement.

Given that the core content remains the same, I don't anticipate a need for a full train-the-trainer session. Of course, we can revisit and discuss that further when the time comes, but I believe that knowing the foundational content hasn't changed will help ease any concerns about implementation.

6. Since it says the curriculum course will be taught only by NCJA staff, will this require students to travel to NCJA or specific locations for that block?

- a. Yes, the curriculum course will be held at the Justice Academy. One of the primary reasons for this is that we have the necessary facilities and resources to support it, including the library and the expertise of Michael Cummings, who is dedicated to assisting students with lesson plan

creation. This support will be particularly important given that students have only a week to complete their activities.

That said, we expect enrollment in the curriculum course to remain relatively low. Current instructors will be grandfathered in, so only future participants who either have a strong interest in the material, whose job requires it, or whose school director requests it will be enrolling. Consequently, we anticipate a significant decrease in registration for the curriculum course, while enrollment for the other course is expected to increase.

- **Question was asked by guest Tony Losada - Is that still going to be prerequisite for someone to teach instructor training? Are they going to have to have both pieces like we do now? Just going forward, I know orientation is geared towards a lot of grading lesson plans.**

- Answer - At this point, it's still under consideration, but it is my strong belief that in order to teach in the instructor training program—once it's divided into the two distinct tracks—an individual should have completed both courses. I believe holding this standard is essential to maintaining the highest caliber of instructors in the program. From my perspective, it's a clear requirement: completing both curriculums ensures instructors are fully prepared to teach in either track.

I recognize that this may not be universally agreed upon, so I can't guarantee this is how it will ultimately be implemented. However, that is my goal. Additionally, once this program is fully established, I plan to update the Instructor Training Officer (ITO) course. While the current ITO course is effective and serves its purpose, these changes present an opportunity to refine it further, ensuring it remains as clear, polished, and effective as possible. This update is planned for the future, but it is not immediate.

7. What is the process for requesting consideration to deliver the May 2026 pilot?

- a. That is a great question. We know there will be a pilot process, but at this time it's still unknown exactly how many schools will be included. Naturally, we want to include a representative number, and we will be reaching out as that process develops.

I've already heard from several individuals, some of whom may be on this call—who have volunteered their schools for the pilot, which is very encouraging. I'm excited to see that level of interest. However, we are not yet in the pilot selection phase, and the specific process for choosing schools has not been finalized.

While I will have input, the final decision will likely rest with my chain of command. Once the selection process begins, I will send an email to all school directors with more information. At this point, we expect the pilot to occur around mid-year next year, and I will provide updates as soon as more details become available.

8. Does the program require classes to start on Sundays, or can colleges begin on Mondays to align with campus operations?

- a. This is an excellent question. For context, I developed the template in about eight or nine days. I took some time to reflect on the request and consider how we could make the program as effective as possible. The template was created quickly as a “plug-and-play” model, drawing on my experience with several academies.

The subsection labeled “set schedule, no deviations” was intended to ensure classes are taught sequentially, as each session builds on the previous one. It does not mean the program must run strictly Sunday through Friday. There will be flexibility to accommodate logistical challenges, such as weekend limitations or security concerns at community colleges. This approach mirrors what we currently do in our existing programs.

Currently, courses allow 15 days to complete the content. In the revised program, this will be condensed to roughly seven or eight business days, representing one week of content. How those days are scheduled will be up to each facility and could include business hours, after-hours, or weekends, depending on local needs.

Evening sessions were intentionally excluded. Students will be absorbing a significant amount of information in a short period and will have expectations to prepare for the following day. Extending classes into the evening could reduce the program's effectiveness. The goal is for students to complete the week's content within a reasonable daily schedule, ideally finishing by five or six p.m., while still covering all required material.

Finally, while the template starts on Sunday, we understand that it may not work for every facility. There will be flexibility to adjust start days as

needed, and we will ensure the schedule complies with the administrative code. These details will be finalized as the program is implemented.

9. If state exams are scheduled for Friday mornings, how will testing work for colleges that are not official test sites and may need to send students to another location?

- a. That is another excellent point. The inclusion of that element in the template was more for reference—it does not need to be fixed as part of the program.

For example, if a course finishes on a Friday and students then report to a standard testing site the following week for a state exam or other required activity that aligns with normal operations and is consistent with our current program practices.

The key is ensuring that all course closure activities are completed before dismissing students. This includes finalizing paperwork, documentation, and any other required materials. Even if a state exam occurs outside of the structured week, the process still serves its intended purpose and maintains program integrity.

10. Can the course closure and exam be shifted to the following Monday if colleges don't start on Sundays?

- a. This is very similar to the previous question, so the answer is essentially the same. Each course will have a defined maximum window of days to complete all requirements. Within that window, the testing schedule can be adjusted as needed.

For example, if a course finishes on a Friday but the state exam cannot occur until the following Monday or Tuesday, that adjustment is acceptable. Each facility or community college can handle scheduling in a way that works best for their location, while still ensuring the course requirements are completed within the established timeframe.

11. Is the 1:6 instructor-to-student ratio still in place for the 70-minute evaluation?

- a. This question ties closely to the next question as well so I will answer them simultaneously. Currently, the program can maintain a one-to-six instructor-to-student ratio. With a cap of 12 students, the program can effectively run with just two instructors, which is efficient and manageable from a logistical standpoint.

The number 12 was chosen based on practical considerations when designing the template. My goal was to balance the daily schedule, which is roughly an eight- to ten-hour day, while maintaining the one-to-six ratio and delivering the best possible experience for students. The math worked out so that 12 students allowed us to complete the course within the allotted daily hours without extending the day too long.

While 10 students might be considered the theoretical minimum for logistical and financial purposes, I selected 12 as a slightly higher, ideal number to maintain efficiency and quality. This number is not fixed permanently, it can be adjusted depending on the facility, instructor availability, or other logistical considerations.

Follow-Up Input: Colleagues with experience running courses at multiple colleges confirmed that 10–12 students is realistic, particularly for one-week courses. Given that students will no longer need to create lesson plans, this model should allow for multiple one-week sessions without overextending instructors.

In short, the maximum cap of 12 supports the one-to-six instructor ratio, fits within the daily schedule, and is flexible enough to adjust as needed based on local logistics.

12. For specialized certification classes, is the Presenter level the only certification instructors would need?

- a. Yes. Once a participant completes the five-day presenter portion, they are eligible to move into the specialized portion. The only limitation is that they will not be able to modify the content itself—this ensures consistency and quality across the program.

From a broader perspective, my goal with this program is to maintain the highest standards for instructor-level training. The split between the presenter and curriculum portions is just one part of the larger program “umbrella.” We are also considering how the probationary period could be adjusted to create a more robust training opportunity. This might include more structured requirements, additional supervision, and formal signoffs to ensure instructors meet a high caliber of performance.

The intent is to not only educate but also train instructors effectively. While the one-week course provides foundational knowledge and skills, developing truly high-quality instructors takes time, ongoing guidance, and practice beyond the initial course. This is a larger conversation for the future, but the short answer is yes—participants can move into specialized areas after completing the presenter portion.

13. How will instructors who completed the legacy GI course before January 2027 be “grandfathered” into both General Instructor and Curriculum Designer certification categories?

- a. Everyone who has completed the current program will be grandfathered into both the Curriculum Designer and Prisoner portions of the revised program. They will automatically receive the “stamp of approval” for both areas, ensuring no gaps in certification or recognition.

Once the pilot is completed and the program officially launches, participants moving forward will receive certification for the program they complete and will then have the option—or requirement, depending on the track—to complete both portions if they choose. For all instructors who completed the program prior to the changes, the grandfathering ensures they are fully recognized without needing to retake portions of the revised curriculum.

14. What is the anticipated process or timeline for rolling out the revised program across community colleges?

- a. The template we have is largely accurate as we move forward. In March, we will seek content approval to ensure that all stakeholders are comfortable with proceeding with the pilot. The pilot itself is planned for slightly earlier than mid-year and will involve a few community colleges to provide feedback and input.

Following a successful pilot, statewide implementation is scheduled for January 2027. This phased approach allows us to refine the program based on pilot results before full deployment.

On topic Follow-up Questions

1. Pamela Pope – Will E&T approve any online versions of this curriculum?

- a. Tony Losada - My understanding is that E&T has been cautious about approving certain parts of the curriculum for online delivery. Specifically, the *Legal* block was one they did not want offered online. The other two—*Professional Resources* and *Leadership*—were originally written with online delivery in mind, which is why *Professional Resources* is still presented in that format. For example, students complete that section with headphones since it was designed to be a prerequisite. Jennifer may be able to provide additional clarification, but to my knowledge, the restriction mainly applied to the *Legal* block.
- b. Jennifer Fisher - Thank you all for an excellent discussion today, and for allowing me to be part of it. Unfortunately, I was not involved with the CJ Commission during the initial round of revisions that Tony and Pam mentioned. I do recall attending those E&T committee meetings, but since joining the CJ Commission about a year and a half ago, to my knowledge there has not been any discussion about offering commission courses virtually. I should also note that, as a CJ Commissioner, I did not receive the template directly; I only received it secondhand through one of the other colleges. That said, I'm happy to answer any questions I can. I also see that our chairperson, Nathan Mizell, may be on the call, and he might have additional insights to share.
- c. Nathan Mizell - Yes, I was around when that first iteration came through the Commission. At the time, I was fairly new, but I do recall there being concerns about offering parts of the curriculum online. Listening to the conversations now, I think perspectives on online training have shifted—particularly in how it's delivered, monitored, and the quality that can be achieved. Personally, I would echo the recommendation that the *Legal* block remain in person. There are so many questions and discussions that naturally arise in that setting, which are best addressed face-to-face rather than online. That said, I do see value in having some prerequisite or pre-course work available online to help learners familiarize themselves with the material before class. Overall, I think there's now a greater openness to including certain elements online, especially as prerequisites, but in my view, *Legal* is still better suited for in-person instruction.

6. Action Items

- All Members: Spread awareness of renewal deadline.
- Speaker 1: Continue curriculum revision, solicit feedback on class size/schedule.
- Commission Staff: Finalize 2026 testing calendar.
- Advisory Board: Provide input on probationary requirements and technology prep.

7. Adjournment

Meeting concluded at approximately 3:15 PM.

Next Meeting: TBD (likely aligned with School Directors Conference).