

End of Course Essay

The purpose of this essay is to reflect on what I learned during my time at BLC. During my time of attending BLC, I have learned how the Army produces NCOs and reinforces these methods with applied learning. Several of the things that I have learned is conflict management in the army, leadership styles, and the various levels of group development. The learning approach of being student-driven is something to emulate back at my unit by taking the initiative as a team leader.

The levels of group development, according to psychologist Bruce Tuckman's model, progress through forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning. This is relevant and applicable to my unit because it helps me to understand all group dynamics are temporary. When I first arrived at my unit, I came into a team that had already fully developed and experienced these stages during their deployment. By being the new Soldier in the platoon, I was laying the foundation for what would be my contribution to the team when these soldiers would PCS or ETS. Now, I am a team leader, and things have come full circle.

In the second week, we received continued training on the different types of leadership styles. Democratic, authoritarian, and laissez-faire are different key styles. I realize that I have a laissez-faire approach in leading my Soldiers, which brings with it certain weaknesses. I must be careful to not allow my Soldiers to manage themselves and still give them appropriate direction, motivation, and purpose. By doing this, I am effectively doing my part in making sure that my Soldiers do not fall victim to a cycle of

complacency. The last approach discussed was the authoritarian approach. This style of leadership marked typically by a strong personality who might suppress individual ideas. It is important to draw from this and apply certain features of each style to become an efficient NCO.

One of the final takeaways at the NCOA that I will bring back to my unit is conflict management. This is relevant as a leader because it gives myself the tools to manage any conflicts within my squad, real or perceived. Such approaches include suppression, third party intervention, collaboration, and avoidance. Within these techniques there, each conflict has a different point of origin, work or individual-based. By understanding how Soldiers manage their feelings and the tools to diffuse issues I can be the example to follow. Managing conflict is not a goal to simply to avoid disagreements but rather to strengthen the bond between team members making them more adaptable in the future. Cohesion was the biggest takeaway from this lesson and is something that all units must continually work to achieve.

In conclusion, the purpose of this essay was to reflect on my BLC experience and the various skills that I will take back to my unit. Many of the techniques I have not thought about or heard discussed since high school. In that way, it was refreshing not being stuck within a rigid model of close-minded thinking that is prevalent in many units. BLC like all things in the Army is what you make of it and time will tell how my effectiveness as a leader is a direct reflection of my BLC performance.