

Curry Motivation Project

How do we increase Curry rates?

Is Improvement Science a useful methodology for CAP?

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How many Cadet Airman Basics have you seen with a Red Service Award? Not too many. If a cadet earns the Curry within the first 60 days (better yet, 30), that cadet is much more apt to remain in CAP. The cadet who flounders leaves well before the year is out. We all know this. Therefore, it's in everyone's interest to find ways to help more cadets make it to Curry, and to get there faster. Enter a one-time, short-duration experiment: The Curry Motivation Project.

Let's see if two types of supports make a difference to newcomer cadets. About a week or two after joining CAP, the new cadet receives in the mail the New Cadet Kit. It contains the leadership text, the aerospace modules, the *New Cadet Guide*, and a parents' guide. In May and June, we will select 200 new cadets at random and insert into their New Cadet Kits a little bonus: Cadet Airman chevrons, a Curry ribbon with holder, and a note of explanation (see Figure 1 on page 2). Of course, the chevrons and ribbon provide a visible, tangible symbol of the goal the new cadets are striving toward.

The second form of extra support is an invitation to a special webinar, "How to Do Awesome Stuff as a Cadet." The National Cadet Advisory Council doesn't know it yet, but some of those Phase IV cadets will host the webinars. (You guys will do great! Thanks!) So, we'll have a couple older, successful cadet officers providing tips to newcomer cadets, sharing success stories, modeling the Core Values, and answering whatever questions the newcomers have.

As a courtesy to squadron commanders, we'll email those who are affected to tell them that one of their newcomers is receiving the extra supports as part of the Curry Motivation Project.

At the end of the exercise, probably in late June, we'll compare the Curry attainment rates and speed to Curry of our special group of 200 Curry Motivation Project participants against those of a control group - everyone else who joined this spring and/or our historical Curry attainment data. (Fun fact: Did you know that when we transitioned to the "new" CPFT, which allows Phase I cadets time to get into shape, the Curry attainment rate jumped from 70% to 77% and, concurrently, CAP achieved a thirty-year cadet membership high.)

All the while, the Curry Motivational Project uses a methodology called improvement science. "Improvement science deploys rapid tests of change to guide the development, revision, and continued fine-tuning of new tools, processes, work roles, and relationships" (Bryk, et al., 2015). It's the signature method of the [Carnegie](#)

[Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching](#) and the University of Pittsburgh School of Education, where I am a doctoral student in the Out of School Learning area of concentration.

The National Cadet Team is using the Curry Motivation Project as a small test of change. Yes, we hope it proves that certain supports offered to newcomer cadets makes a difference in their achievement rates, but we're also doing this as a way to play around with a new methodology to see if it's worth our team making it our own. Our adopting principles of improvement science could serve the cadets tremendously for years to come. Stay tuned, and/or in the interim, share your thoughts in the Cadet Proving Grounds.

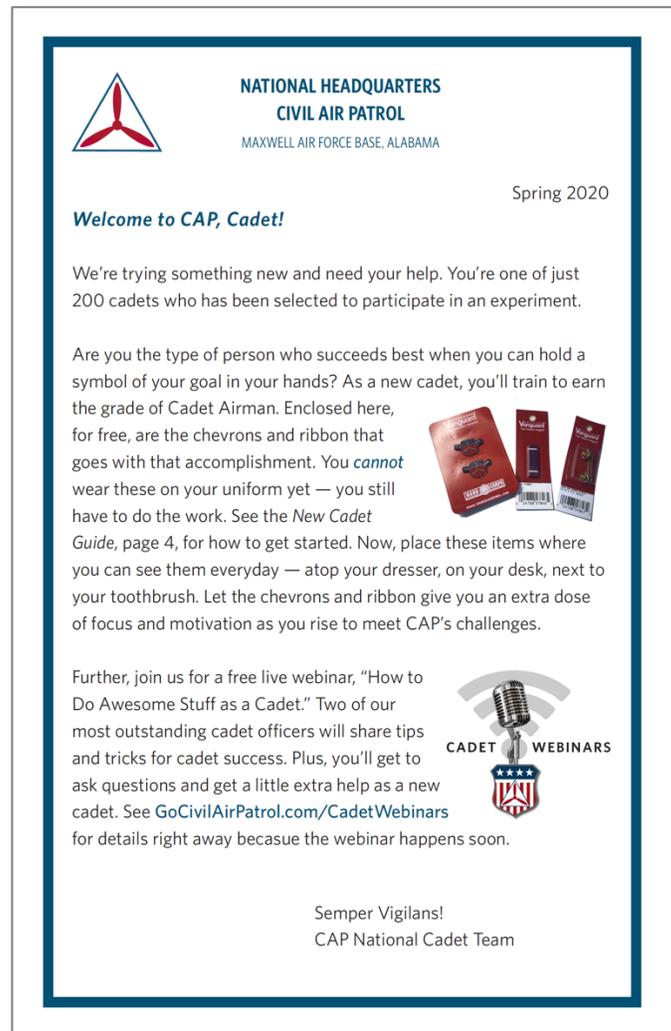


Figure 1. Notecard to be included in the New Cadet Kit sent to 200 randomly selected cadets

References

Bryk, A.S., et al. (2015). *Learning to improve: How America's schools can get better at getting better*. Harvard Education Press.

Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2020). Our ideas: Using improvement science to accelerate learning and address problems of practice. <https://www.carnegiefoundation.org/our-ideas/>