

WEBELOS-to-Scout Transition



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Agenda

- Background: Commissioners, Cub scouts, and Scouting's Growth and Retention challenge
- The Sociology of Pre-Teen and Teen Boys
- Commissioner's goals for W2ST
- How to achieve them
- Closing the Deal, and Afterward
- Summary - Things to Do & Remember

The Commissioner's Mission

- Our Mission: Help Scouting units succeed.
 - When the units succeed, the scouts, parents, leaders, professionals, and scouting program all succeed.
- How do we do it?
 - Primarily: Advise unit adult leaders.

About Cub Scouts:

A few reminders

- 4th/5th grade Cub Scouts are called "WEBELOS Scouts."
 - There is no such word as "Webelo."
 - The "S" in "WEBELOS" is always pronounced.
- WEBELOS is an acronym:
WE BE LOyal Scouts.
 - Originally from "Wolf, Bear, and Lion" cub scouts.
- WEBELOS Scouts have their own dens, advancement, uniform, and awards.

The Growth and Retention Challenge

- Units succeed by gaining new members and keeping scouts in scouting.
- Problem:
 - How do we get cub scouts to stay in scouting?
 - How troops find new members and thrive?
- Solution:
 - WEBELOS-to-Scout Transition.

Commissioner's growth & retention responsibilities

- Be a resource to Cub Scout Packs, Boy Scout Troops, Parents, & Scouts
- Encourage cubs to continue on in Scouting, in a unit that fits them.
- Help Troops recruit members
- Help cubs find troops that “match,” and vice-versa

The Sociology of Cub Packs

- Cub scout packs & dens are run by moms and dads.
- Cub packs & dens have no boy leadership.
- Cubs are there to learn, do projects, compete, and have fun.

The Sociology of Pre-Teen Boys

- Elementary to middle school is a big maturity transition toward being a young man.
- Young teens want to learn & do cool things, compete, be independent, form new friendships, lead others, learn what kind of person to be.
- A 5th grader keeps almost none of his friends. A 9th-grader's cohort may become life-long friends.

The Sociology of Troops

- Troops are boy-led. This means: Teen-age boys make all the key decisions.
- Adults are present for safety, training, role models / teaching ethics, and to guide in delivery of the Scouting program.
- Only trained uniformed adults routinely work with boys. (Non-trained non-uniformed adults work on Troop Committee in the background.)
- Every Boy Scout Troop has its own unique culture & persona—set by the boys. It's a tribe.

How Pre-Teen Sociology affects WEBELOS-to-Scout Transition

- 5th-grade boys are growing rapidly—in all directions, and away from their childhood friends.
- 5th-grade boys are ready to, and need to, make their own troop choice.
- Choosing a troop is the first big choice they'll make in their life about who they want to become when they grow up, and who their friends are.

Troop choice is individual, and personal to the WEBELOS.

- We need to respect and encourage their independent choices.
- Ten is older than you think.
- If a cub likes one troop, and his Den Leader/ Cubmaster/ Parent prefers another: Chances are 99% he's right & they're wrong—and they're not listening to him when he's telling them who he's becoming as a young man.

There is no "normal" troop for a WEBELOS Scout/den to join.

- There is no "normal" troop for cubs to move to. Same pack/troop unit numbers or chartering org is irrelevant. It's the cub's personal choice.
- A common but BAD idea: Pushing an entire WEBELOS den to move together to one troop.
- Making a boy join a bad-fit troop he didn't choose is one major cause of first-year dropouts from Boy Scout Troops.
- We want boys staying in scouting. Ensure each WEBELOS Scout chooses his own troop.

Commissioner W2ST goals

- Encourage every WEBELOS Scout to visit several troops, to find the right one for him.
- Advise troops to seek out WEBELOS Scouts who fit the troop.
- Advise pack officials on how to facilitate cubs making their choices.
- Advise parents to be a chauffeur, and otherwise, just let it all happen.

How to achieve those goals

- Get WEBELOS dens & troops interacting early and often.
- Teach unit leaders about local packs (for troops) or troops (for packs). Connect them up.
- Make sure packs know troop recruiting schedules & practices (vary widely).
- Make sure troops know pack graduation schedules & practices (vary widely).

Encourage early-and-often pack/troop interactions

- Advise units to start W2ST in September.
- Explain & encourage use of Den Chiefs.
- All troops & WEBELOS I & II dens: Participate in District WEBELOS Open House
- Troops: Plan a WEBELOS Open House Night.
WEBELOS II Dens: Attend Troop open houses.
- For promising pairings, joint or troop-hosted outing (e.g. Mountain Man)

Using Den Chiefs

Packs: Request Den Chiefs of local troops

- Den Chief is WEBELOS Den Leader's helper, and a role model for cubs.
- Tip: The Den Chief probably knows more cool scouting skills than the Den Leader.

Troops: Provide trained Den Chiefs to WEBELOS dens



- SM chooses Den Chief candidates, who then get Trained, and assigned (by agreement) to a pack.
- Tip: Choose boys who need a growth opportunity, who will benefit from being respected.

Planning & Running a Troop WEBELOS Open House Night

- Plan activities the troop's scouts find cool.
 - SPL leads, as always.
 - Remember, cubs think basic scouting skills & tools are cool (e.g. fires)
- Invite one or more WEBELOS II dens.
- Have a boy scout pair up with & "host" each WEBELOS guest that night.
- SM should take parents aside, give a pep talk.
- Goal: show the visiting cubs who the troop is.
It's a "first date."

Closing the Deal

- Boy scouts should be sure to actually ask cubs to join!
- Let cubs decide, but ask for a decision soon.
- Sometimes cub dens are a no-show for Troop Open House events. Fact of life. Plan for the unexpected, and plan to replan. Allow room in troop schedule for another try.
- When are you done recruiting? When the troop has a completed Boy Scout application form, and the cub attends troop meetings.

Formal transition

- Different packs have different graduation schedules—e.g. February Blue and Gold dinner, or June Arrow Of Light ceremony.
- SM, SPL, and several scouts from the troop should attend graduation/bridging ceremony.
 - SPL accepts the new WEBELOS into the troop.
 - SM welcomes new parents into the troop.
 - Develop a troop W2ST culture---a small unique troop-specific recognition to make new cubs feel welcome at graduation (e.g. neckerchief, SHB, ...)

Some details

- A WEBELOS may become a Boy Scout as soon as he achieves Arrow of Light. He then skips the first scout rank advancement, and comes into the troop already at Scout rank.
- Get WEBELOS scouts (& parents) planning in Spring for summer camp with the troop.
- Remember, cubs were not boy-led. Troops differ, but: If troop has a New Scout patrol, SM should assign a Troop Guide or ASM to help them learn Patrol Method and leadership.

Summary 1/2: Commissioner's W2ST role

- Be a resource to Packs, Cub Scouts, Parents, and Boy Scout Troops
- Encourage cubs to continue on in Scouting, in a unit that "fits." Help Troops recruit them.
- Help packs & troops find each other and build relationships--with Den Chiefs, troop visits, joint outings, District & Troop WEBELOS Open House Nights, relationships between unit adult leaders, awareness of schedules, and planning ahead.

Summary 2/2:

Things to remember

- There's a natural scouting calendar, but every troop & pack is a little different. Know your units.
- No cub or den is "expected" to go to any troop. Choice is individual, by each cub.
 - 10 & 11-year-old boys need to choose their own new friends, i.e. their own troop. Let them.
 - Every Boy Scout Troop has its own unique persona. Help cubs find one that fits them.

Closing Thought

If cubs are with boys they like and respect in the new troop

then they will respect elected boy leaders & patrol method, flourish and advance, stay in scouting, learn to become leaders, accept the ethical lessons and values of Scouting, and maximize their chance for personal development & success.

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