

# ***WEBELOS-to-Scout Transition***



MCS 307  
Commissioner College  
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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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