

**Webelos Transition: Problems and Suggestions**

*David M. Caldwell*  
*Assistant District Commissioner for Cub Scouts*  
*Reedy Falls*  
*Blue Ridge Council*  
*Boy Scouts of America*

*June 2006*

**Piedmont-Appalachian College of Commissioner Science**

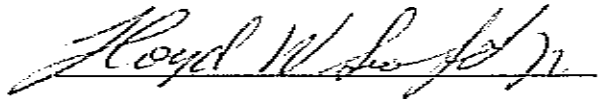
**Lees-McCrae College**

**Banner Elk, North Carolina**

*Lloyd Swift, Advisor*

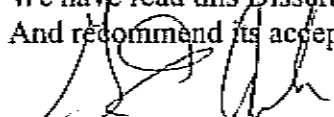
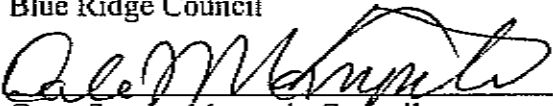
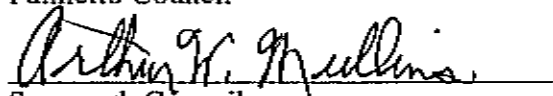
To the Doctoral Candidate Review Board:

I am submitting herewith a Dissertation written by David M. Caldwell, entitled "Webelos Transition- Problems and Suggestions". I have examined the final copy of this report for format and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Commissioner Science.

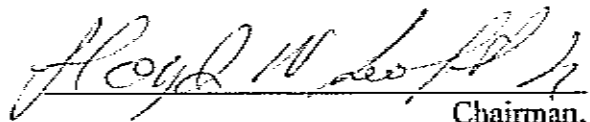


Lloyd Swift

We have read this Dissertation  
And recommend its acceptance:

  
Blue Ridge Council  
Great Smoky Mountain Council  
Palmetto Council  
Sequoyah Council

Accepted for the Piedmont-Appalachian College of  
Commissioner Science:



Chairman,  
Doctoral Candidate Review Board  
and Daniel Boone Council

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
Abstract	4
1. Webelos Transition- the normal process	5
2 Problems with Traditional Transition	6
3 Proposed changes in Transition Program	10
4. Probable Differences that this Program will make	14

## APPENDICES

Appendix A.	Sample Letter to Scout Leaders	16
Appendix B.	WEBELOS TRANSITION ASSISTANCE REPORT	17

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to state the current methods of Webelos Transition and problems related with these methods. Webelos Transition is normally considered to be concluded at crossover. I believe that transition should not be considered complete until the new Boy Scout has completed one year as a Boy Scout.

During Scoutmaster training, getting the New Boys to First Class in the first year is stressed. At that time they are considered well trained enough to handle themselves on outings and to hold leadership positions. I also feel that a boy will probably stay active longer if he can get to this level in a reasonable time.

In 2005 I taught this course at Commissioner College. During this class I stopped using my prepared lesson and led a discussion that followed my central themes of this paper. I was able to get ideas from leaders in all of the Councils during this class. Some of those ideas are presented in this paper.

## Chapter 1

### Webelos Transition- the Normal Process

The process of Webelos Transition is normally defined as what happens during the last few months of a boys Cub Scout experience. During this period the Webelos Den Leader is the person who most controls the boys scouting experience. The Den Leader will probably make contact with a troop; normally one connected to the Pack, and takes the Den on visits to the Troop to fulfill the Arrow of Light requirements. During these visits the Webelos will show up and observe what the Boy Scouts do. Sometimes the troop will have something planned for the Webelos to do with the Scouts, but this is the exception. Sometimes parents will come along, but the troop usually doesn't have any kind of orientation available for the parents. If the Troop is on the ball, they will take the parents to the side and give them an overview of what their Troop schedule is like. A Troop meeting is explained and what is expected from boys and parents is discussed. Many troops however don't do this and can't figure out why they don't grow much. The parents will either leave with a greater understanding of the differences in the Pack and Troop or be very confused. I personally saw a Scoutmaster say to a group of parents the following; "I just step back and the boys do all the work." That year we got none of those boys in our troop. The Cubmaster will arrange for a Crossover, but usually leaves Troop contact to the Webelos Den Leader. After the Crossover, the pack is no longer involved with the boys and the troop will start treating them as Boy Scouts.

## Chapter 2

### Problems with Traditional Transition

There are many problems with the traditional transition. I will detail them in the next few paragraphs. The parents of Cub Scouts usually aren't educated in the differences between troops, i.e., some troops are big into camping or hiking, biking, or even cooking. These parents also don't know about the option of going to different troops. The Webelos Den Leader is their main contact with the Pack and the passing of this type of information is normally not handled well. The parents don't know that some troops are primarily boy-led, while others have heavy Scoutmaster guidance. Other Troops require parental involvement in the committee and some don't need any involvement. Parents will often think that all troops will be the same, and need to be educated in the different things to look for. The boy and his parents need to be trained in what is to come in the Boy Scout program. The den leader and Cubmaster many times haven't been trained in how Boy Scouts works. This is one of the results of most Cub leaders getting involved with their own sons and moving up with them. The leaders need to receive training, but many times haven't done this before the Transition period starts.

In my own experience, when I had a Den of second year Webelos, I had the boys recite the Cub Scout Promise and the Boy Scout Oath at every meeting. We not only worked on finishing the Webelos requirements, but started on all of the requirements on being a Boy Scout. In this process I required that the parents become involved. I was lucky in that my District leadership team encouraged Webelos Den Leaders to take the Scoutmaster Fundamentals Course. This

course and the courses now available are great resources for training for Den leaders. As I was already working in some fields as a District volunteer, I had access to information on several troops. I took the boys to visit different types of troops and took the parents also. I saw from personal experience that my efforts to educate the parents as well as the boys kept the boys interested in the program and kept the parents committed to keeping the boys active. All of the boys in my den, who still lived in our city, made First Class in the first year. We did have some drop out over the years, but I had 25% Eagle Scout completion and one Life Scout.

In the normal process, the Webelos Den Leader will attempt to take the boys to a troop, but usually they take the boys to a troop that they know. Many times this is the troop with the same Charter Partner that sponsors the Pack. Although this allows the boy to fulfill his Arrow of Light requirements, it really limits his choices. Many parents don't know that they can take their son to any troop. Some have been led to believe that their son should remain at the same Charter Partner organization. Some Partnering organizations will implicitly let the parents know that their son should stay at the organization. The problem here is that in many cases, it is not only the parents, but the Den Leader also who doesn't know of their options. Many Den Leaders are pressured by their Cubmasters to stay in the same organization.

Cubmasters usually see their role in Transition as making sure to supply a good Crossover ceremony. They are not trained usually in what comes after Webelos, and that is understandable as they already have a full-time job as Cubmaster. Crossover is seen as an ending for the Webelos and not as a true transition to another level of Scouting. Cubmasters will supply a good Crossover, but many times don't really coordinate with a troop, or they only work with their

primary Troop. Again this is a case of the need for better training and coordination, which is where the Unit Commissioner must be involved.

Many Cubmasters have a monthly or less frequent meeting with the Den leaders, and keep a hands off attitude towards the dens. The Cubmaster many times has no contact with Scout Masters except for the unit he feeds to. Since many Cubmasters don't attend Roundtables, they have limited contact with outside units.

The Unit Commissioner should be aware of the level of training for his units; however most commissioners don't have that level of contact with their units. Although there are commissioners that do have very close relationships, most commissioners have a more cursory relationship and only have a phone call contact with their units. This isn't the ideal, but is the reality in most districts.

The Unit Commissioner is supposed to assist the Pack to contact various troops in the area, but there is a lack of resources to adequately do this. The commissioner will know of a local troop, but will not necessarily know what the emphasis of each troop is. The Commissioner is normally aware of the units he works with or is somehow connected to, but not the variety of units in the entire district.

Scoutmasters many times just wait for Den Leaders to contact them. They assume that they will get boys from their feeder pack, unless they don't have a direct contact with a Pack. The Scoutmaster may or may not be aware of all of the packs in his area, so he doesn't actively recruit. This can be a bad thing as a Troop which doesn't recruit can find itself with no new scouts coming in. Scoutmaster must be very heavily involved in drawing boys into the troop.



This influx of new boys is the lifeblood of a troop. The older boys need the new boys so that they can learn how to teach the skills that they have acquired. This teaching that the older boys do is critical to their growth as Scouts and as people. Scoutmasters are usually happy to accommodate visits from dens, but unfortunately wait for the Den leader to initiate the contact. Many times they have become complacent due to positive results in previous years that required very little effort on their part. My troop depended on our feeder pack which had been very reliable, and had a period where due to personal conflicts with the Webelos Den Leader, we didn't get any new Scouts for two out of three years. This kind of loss can cripple a Troop.

The District Transition Committee is many times ineffective. Instead of supplying Dens, Packs, and Troops with training and resources for contact, the committee basically just keeps track of the numbers. The numbers are important to measure success, but shouldn't be the main purpose. The committee should serve as an interface between Packs and Troops, but usually doesn't. The committee has the resources to let Cubmasters, Webelos Den Leaders, Scoutmasters and Unit Commissioners know how to let the flow of information get to all of the affected parties. The Transition Committee has contact with all commissioners but doesn't coordinate all of its' institutional knowledge into a usable document or database that can be used by the Commissioners and units. These resources include the Commissioner Staff and all of the contacts that that staff has with all of the units. Commissioners need to be encouraged to write up a synopsis of a Troop's interests to be included in a District resource manual. Many Districts keep a list of Merit Badge Counselors, and a listing of troops resources would be appropriate for the Committee and District Executive to have.

## Chapter 3

### Proposed changes in Transition Program

One of the most important things that a District or Council can supply for the volunteers is training. In the case of Webelos Transition I feel that this should be done on a Council basis so as to draw from a wider group of experienced Scouters. The Council Commissioner Staff should have this as one of their committee responsibilities. Optimally, a small group of exceptionally experienced Leaders who can travel around the Council would be chosen to present this training. They would need to have experience in Cub Scouting and Boy Scouting. Former Den Leaders who had progressed to Assistant Scoutmasters or Scoutmasters would be ideal.

Training days should be announced at the Program Kickoff each year in various locations in the Council. All Webelos Den Leaders and at least an Assistant Scoutmaster from each troop would be strongly urged to attend. The training days need to be in the first month after the Kickoff. In most cases this will be before school starts and regular meetings start. This training would be best during the summer, but attendance would probably be low as so many people are unavailable for activities such as training during the summer. Cub leaders many times have no contact or very little with their scouts during the summer, so they are more likely to not attend. Boy Scout leaders have camp and more active camping trips during the summer, so are also more unavailable.

These training days would only have to be a three or four hour process and would need to have District specific information. Appendix 2 shows a form that lets Webelos Den Leaders know about different troops in their area. Normally this form is set up so that a Den Leader can

learn about troops in the local area, but I have also set it up so that it can be more specific. A den at a Catholic Church, which may be attached to the church school, may want to keep the scouts in a Catholic Troop. This also goes for LDS and other religious groups that have a program that is more church focused. The list needs to be expanded to show the emphasis of the troop or at least show some information about the troop. This list should have only objective data in it and no value judgments. Parents should not be given value judgments about various units. My list is just a basic format and would need refinement at the District level. The District Commissioner Staff would need to be involved in this to help get as much usable information on the list. The list will need to be refined well before the Kickoff date so that the Scoutmasters can preview it and amplify or modify any information on their Troop.

The training will need to cover several aspects of Transition. One of the most important is what to teach the parents about the differences in Cub and Boy Scouting. If a boy's parents are aware of the differences in the programs, they are much less likely to get disillusioned about what their son is doing. Some of this disillusionment comes when parents see that much of the instruction of their son comes from other Scouts. They really need to be shown that the Scouts will learn more from other Scouts than adults. Therefore, this is one of the most important parts of the training program. The Den Leader needs to know what each troop offers and be able to explain this to the parents. I feel that when the Webelos go on visits to Troops, their parents need to go with them. At this point the Troop contact person should be trained in what the parents need to know. The Troop representative would ideally be an adult and preferably the Assistant Scoutmaster who will be working with the new boys the next year. The attitude of the troop

Scoutmaster who will be working with the new boys the next year. The attitude of the troop representative toward the parents is very important in not only recruiting the boy to a troop, but in how they will respond at later times when activities require parental activity. The briefing of the parents needs to include parental responsibilities and the function of adults in the Troop.

The District Committee Transition Chairman needs to be very heavily involved in this process as this is his primary responsibility. The Committee also has access to all of the resources of the District and therefore needs to be heavily invested in this process. The Commissioners are the ones with the personal contact with the units, so the Transition Chairman needs to meet with the Commissioner Staff to expedite this process. The Assistant District Commissioners for Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts are the primary contact people at the District level for resources at their appropriate programs. They should probably be at or coordinate the training at the different sites in the District. All reports about attendance and feedback from attendees needs to be given as soon as possible to these Commissioners. They will need to remain very responsive to comments and feedback so that the training program will be proactive and will not become static. Any feedback from Cub or Scout leaders needs to be passed out to the trainers so that they can keep the program up to the minute. An example would be if a troop were to be conducting a skills day, there are probably many Cubs and parents who would see this as a great time to visit. Many Districts have a web site dedicated to that District. Troops should be urged to post their calendar events to this site so as to broaden their appeal and possibly recruit from packs that they traditionally don't recruit from. Appendix 1 is a sample letter to all Scout Leaders that

attempts to get direct contact between leaders started. It was used by my District last year. This can be the cover letter for the Transition Assistance report.

One of the least used programs that will drastically improve retention after Transition is the use of the Den Chief. Troops seldom use this position as a leadership position, although it is an easy one to use. A boy who is working on Star or Life Scout is usually past being Quartermaster and there are only so many boys who can be Senior Patrol Leader. This is an excellent opportunity for leadership training for the Boy Scout. The example that he sets for the Cub Scouts will lead them into Boy Scouts and a desire to follow the example of their Den Chief. The main change that I see in that program is that it should be a two year commitment by the Boy Scout and the Troop. He should be assigned to a second year Webelos Den that will probably in large part come to his Troop. He will crossover with those boys. He will be the Troop Guide for the New Boys Patrol. This will insure continuity for the boys and their parents. Keeping the parents satisfied that their son is well taken care of is an important part of the Transition period. Scoutmasters will help their recruitment and retention efforts by the use of Den Chiefs. Cubmasters will see a better informed group of boys and parents moving up. This will be seen by parents and boys in the lower dens and helps out the Pack. This is a win-win situation for all units involved.

## Chapter 4

### Probable Differences this Program will make

One of the first differences this program will make is that the Unit Commissioners will make much more contact with their units. They will be required to make face to face meetings and collect a significant amount of information so as to fill in the required data for the Webelos Den Leaders. The Commissioners will also have more contact with the Packs and down to the Den Leader level. The increased exposure to the Packs by the Commissioners will enable the Pack to use the knowledge of the Commissioner to improve their program. The Commissioner will also improve in his knowledge of the units and will improve how the District can service the units.

I feel that the most important aspect of this program will be that more boys will make it to First Class and stay in Boy Scouting. Once a boy has achieved First Class, he is more likely to see Scouting as a lifelong activity and remain involved. By using the Den Chief, the Scoutmaster will have given a boy a great leadership opportunity and helped his program by recruiting more committed boys and parents. The Den Chief will be with the New Scouts for the first year and will enable them to grow into the Boy Scout program instead of being thrown in. This alone will tend to keep the boys active in Scouting. Once the first year is over, both the parents and the boy will see the great potential of the program and want to continue.

The greater level of communication between the Packs and Troops will lead to more joint activities and this will help recruiting for both organizations. A Troop that has an activity can invite a pack and open it to the public. An example of this is the Exporee just completed in the Blue Ridge Council. It was held at a very accessible location and open to the public. This kind of

event is obviously a Council event, but smaller events at District or Troop levels can also be held to recruit new boys into both programs.

The increased levels of contact between units at all levels will improve the overall program. The boys will be given a true transition instead of being thrown into a new and unfamiliar program. This will increase participation at all levels and will increase parental involvement. The program will grow and retention rates will grow. Currently each year the numbers that are looked at are the new boys recruited, whereas the retention rate should be at least as important. If we can retain boys we will be able get more boys to Eagle Scout. We hold that standard up to the boys as early as Tiger Cub. If this program can increase the number of Eagles by 1% we will greatly influence the lives of a great many boys and families.

In closing, I think that by making changes in the Transition Program, we, as leaders and Commissioners, can make a tremendous change in how the transition between the Cub Scout and Boy Scout Program is handled.

Appendix 1

Sample Letter to Leaders

Cubmasters and Scoutmasters,

Every year Scouting loses many boys in the transition from Cub Scouting to Boy Scouting. This doesn't just mean the crossover, but the first year as Boy Scouts. This year we are going to try a new way to avoid this loss. The list that is attached shows each pack and the three nearest troops. The list also gives the Cubmaster's and Scoutmaster's contact information. Each of these leaders should contact their counterpart and coordinate joint activities for the Webelos dens. As this is part of the Arrow of Light requirements, many of these contacts are already being made.

The Webelos Den Leaders should be actively engaged in this process. Please stress to your Webelos Den Leaders the important role they play in keeping a boy in Scouting. Many times a Den leader will only look to the unit with the same Charter Partner as a troop to visit. Since we know that not all boys are alike, all troops are also different. The boys should be exposed to at least two and preferably three different troops. These visits should also include the parents. The parents should be instructed on the differences in how a pack and troop functions. This will help the parents to make a good decision when deciding on priorities for their sons.

Our District Fall Camporee this year will include Webelos. This will be a great opportunity for the Webelos Scouts to camp with a troop and to see how different troops handle camping as well as helping them earn their Arrow of Light. Please try to get parents to come along so that they also can learn from this experience. We intend to invite Webelos to all future District Camporees.

Please use these resources and try to keep our boys in Scouting. You all know that a little effort aimed at the right place can keep a boy interested and active.

Yours in Scouting,

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Transition Committee Chairman

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Assistant District Commissioner Boy Scouts

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Assistant District Commissioner Cub Scouts



REEDY FALLS WEBELOS TRANSITION ASSISTANCE REPORT

Pack #	Sponsor	Unit Leader	Closest Troops	Scoutmaster
		Telephone Numbers		Telephone Numbers
9	Buncombe Street United Methodist Church	Chris Stolarski		
	200 Buncombe Street	H	9	Bill Mulligan
		W	521	John McGrath
		C	11	Joe Barron
11	First Presbyterian Church	Scott Simmons		
	209 West Coffee St	H	11	Joe Barron
		W	521	John McGrath
		C	9	Bill Mulligan