

## WEBELOS ASSIMILATION PROGRAM

For the last few years, many councils have used the Webelos assimilation program. Other councils have picked up the program, and the ground swell of positive response has left little doubt that the concept has a great future.

**Basic Concept.** The idea is simply that the Webelos den moves as a group into the Scout troop rather than by individual graduations.

**How It Works.** In the spring (February or March) the whole fifth grade Webelos den graduates into the troop as a new Scout patrol, under the leadership of the Troop Guide and Assistant Scoutmaster. This may take place as soon as all fifth-graders have earned the Arrow of Light Award. The former den is thereby assimilated into the troop program.

**Early Action.** Boys join Boy Scouting for action. It's vital that the fifth-grade Webelos Scouts get an early outdoor experience with the troop. Joint campouts in the fall help fulfill that need.

**Conditioning.** Prior to the Webelos den's graduation, it's important that the Scoutmaster condition the troop. First explain the need for new members. Next, put to rest the subject of hazing, harassment, bullying, etc. Explain that it has no place in Scouting and will not be tolerated. Remind them that "a Scout is friendly" and let the boys suggest ways of making the new patrol welcome. From that point on, it's important that the new patrol gets the TLC (tender loving care) necessary to make it take hold.

**The Big Step.** Summer camp is the primary factor in the new Scouts assimilating into the troop. Here it is necessary that the Scoutmaster fully understand the Scouting philosophy of camping. This is where Scouting will really take hold, advancement will begin and Scouting spirit will start to develop.

**Leader Reaction.** After leaders have had the experience of group versus individual graduation, there are usually two typical responses:

1. It's easier. Boys coming in one at a time take individual attention. Are they taking hold? It's slightly less difficult to check out a whole patrol on these points than individual boys.
2. Better holding power. Most experienced leaders have had a new boy for a few meetings, then never see him again. The boy coming with the group brings a certain amount of glue with him. He is already attached to his buddies.

**Where It Starts.** Webelos Scout assimilation starts in the pack. The pack promotion of the program is crucial. It starts with the recruiting and training of the Webelos den leader. The idea is simply taking the group through as a whole. The Webelos den leader then ties to the troop, or comes back to Cub Scouting next fall. (Webelos den leaders are a great source of assistant Scoutmasters for the troop.) A meeting of Cubmaster, Webelos den leader coach, Webelos den leaders, and Scoutmaster is essential prior to the physical transfer, and as early in the program year as possible. Set dates for things to happen. Many districts have a roundtable session to bring together the three primary participants.

**The Psychology of Webelos Assimilation.** Understanding why the individual, one-at-a-time graduation has not been successful is helpful in promoting the program.

1. Boys are just like adults. A structured group of unfamiliar faces that he must become a part of is frightening. That's what a troop looks like to many Webelos Scouts about to graduate.
2. The intact organism is prone to reject foreign bodies. This law of nature also applies to organizations, including Scout troops. It is the unusual boy, not the average boy, who is willing to take on that challenge.
3. The average fifth-grader needs a little push.
4. The Webelos Scout is top banana in the pack. As a new Boy Scout, he is the low man on the totem pole - a hard pill for anyone to swallow. The group transfer does not totally eliminate the problem, but it takes the edge off it. The boy still has his status identity with his Webelos group.

**Assimilating Parents.** Troops must also replace adult personnel as well as boys. The best time to invite people to save on the committee, or in another capacity, is when they first come into the unit. It has been done in the following ways:

1. The morning of the first joint campout, the leader or chairman meets with the parents when they arrive with the boys.
2. A special evening meeting is set just for all new parents.
3. A session is held on one of the first troop meeting nights, with new parents in another room, and over in time for parents to take the boys home.

**Future.** Webelos Scout assimilation is a practical Boy Scout recruitment technique. How well it works depends on the leadership skills of the Cubmaster, Webelos den leader, and Scoutmaster.