



The Dulaney District Advancement Committee News

12 December 2014

Troop Leaders, Advancement Chairs and Eagle Coaches of Dulaney District;

A. Eagle Boards of Review-Negative Reference Letters:



Eagle Scout Requirement 2 reads: *“Demonstrate that you live by the principles of the Scout Oath and Scout Law in your daily life. List the names of individuals who know you personally and would be willing to provide a recommendation on your behalf.”* Therefore, the Eagle Scout Rank Application requires that a Scout list references. The Guide to Advancement requires that each of these references be contacted, but allows local councils leeway to determine the specific process for obtaining the recommendations, most often in a letter, to the board of review.

On occasion, a board of review may receive a letter from a reference that provides a negative view of the Scout. What are the members of the board to do with this? The answer is found in the Guide to Advancement. Topic 8.0.1.1 explains that one of the purposes of any board of review is to help assure that the requirements for the rank have been met. One of the requirements for every rank is to demonstrate that the Scout lives by the principles of the Scout Oath and Scout Law in his daily life. The members of the board of review should not delegate the determination of whether this requirement is satisfied to any single reference.

If any board of review, especially an Eagle Scout board, receives a negative letter, the members of the board should consider the content and context of the recommendation. Does the writer have an accurate understanding of the principles of the Scout Oath and Law? Did the reference impose additional requirements beyond those written for the rank? Does the reference have a bias against the Scout? How does the negative recommendation compare to the others received? After considering questions such as these, the members of the board may determine they do not have enough information to make an informed judgment. Follow-up, either by phone or a personal visit, may be in order. Or, the board may want to consult with others who know the Scout in order to make an accurate determination of whether he lives by the principles of the Scout Oath and Law. That determination is the responsibility of the members of the board of review after considering all the information about the Scout.

B. Countdown to Eagle:

In a recent survey, troop leaders were asked, “At what point has time run out when a Scout is unable to earn the Eagle rank?” Their answers were overwhelmingly, “At age 18.” While it is true that all requirements must be completed prior to his 18th birthday, a closer evaluation reveals that some other milestones actually deserve more focus.



Simply stated, even though a board of review can be scheduled after his 18th birthday, if a Scout has not earned Life rank by age 17½, he will not have the necessary time to complete all of the requirements. Similarly, a Star Scout needs at least six months at that rank to be eligible for advancement to Life, and a First

Class Scout needs at least four months at that rank to advance to Star. Using that formula, we see that a Scout must have a minimum of 16 months of eligibility remaining from the date he becomes a First Class Scout to complete the Eagle Scout requirements in time.

In reality, it would be exceptional for a Scout to advance from First Class to Eagle in 16 months. Not only would all other requirements need to be completed on schedule, but unit leaders would be obligated to plan boards of review on very specific timelines in order to keep the Scout on schedule.

For young teenagers, it seems like their 18th birthday will never arrive, but for our Eagle candidates this milestone approaches at warp speed. Unit leaders should make the effort to be sure their Scouts fully understand the timing involved in the countdown to Eagle.

C. **Counselor's Compass: Merit Badge Newsletter on the Horizon:**

The Boy Scouts of America announces a new information resource entitled "Counselor's Compass." This publication, to be issued as an e-newsletter, will support merit badge counselors in four ways:

- **Things to do.** What new counselors should do prior to counseling a merit badge, such as become familiar with *Guide to Advancement* and the educational presentation, *Essentials of Merit Badge Counseling*, available under "Advancement Educational Presentations" at www.scouting.org/advancement.
- **Steps for Success.** Tips that can be helpful for both new and experienced counselors as they work with Scouts, such as the importance of using the latest pamphlet and requirements.
- **Glad You Asked.** Articles that address commonly asked questions sent to merit.badge@scouting.org.
- **News You Can Use.** Merit badge fun facts, and information on new badges.

Managing Subscriptions to Counselor's Compass:

Subscribing to *Counselor's Compass* is similar to subscribing to *Advancement News*: Send a message to merit.badge@scouting.org, with "SUBSCRIBE" in the subject line. Indicate your name, email address, and council in the message text.



COUNSELOR'S COMPASS

D. [Scout Advancement through First Class: Not Just a Matter of 1-2-3:](#)

Topic 4.2.0.1 in the *Guide to Advancement* states: "Requirements for Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class may be passed at any time after the joining requirements have been met." This policy is reflected in *Boy Scout Requirements*: "The requirements for Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class ranks may be worked on simultaneously."

The 11th and earlier editions of the *Boy Scout Handbook* reflected these references by advising the Scout: "You may pass any of the requirements for Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class at any time." However, the current 12th Edition *Boy Scout Handbook* is silent on this point. In light of its affect on the growth of the boy into a First Class Scout, it is important for advancement-related volunteers at all levels to make certain we understand the pertinent content in *Guide to Advancement* and the *Boy Scout Requirements* book. And then, to make sure it is

communicated to the Scouts we are here to serve. If we do not, the handbook alone may leave the impression that not only must the requirements-per-rank be completed in numerical order, but the ranks themselves as well.

It is equally important to guide patrol leader councils toward developing programs that support and encourage this multifaceted aspect of advancement. A troop can best support the learning of multiple skills that may fulfill requirements for all three foundational ranks, by presenting an active, exciting, and varied outdoor program. After teaching boys in a troop meeting how to tie a knot or to identify poisonous plants, a troop should reinforce the experiences by giving Scouts the opportunity to put their skill and knowledge to practical use. That is the value of the outdoor program. When a young man pitches his tent using a taut-line hitch to secure it, makes a cool camp gadget using a clove hitch and lashing, or spots poison oak near the campsite, he can and should receive credit for fulfilling an appropriate requirement in any of the first three ranks.

Learning and using advancement-based knowledge and skills within the troop's outdoor activity structure, provides precisely the kind of experiential learning that inspired the Boy Scout movement more than 100 years ago. Facilitating ongoing, across-the-board successes for today's Scouts means that we are maximizing the Boy Scout program for the future.

E. Merit Badges:

On the Horizon:

Are you looking for new excitement for your troop meetings? Are your Scouts looking for a new merit badge adventure? Have you ever wondered about **cryptography**? The opportunity to explore more about **Signs, Signals, and Codes** is coming. This new merit badge is scheduled for next year (2015).

Do the boys in your district yearn for more information on **Animation**? Right now a group distinguished as the "who's who" in the world of animation, digital media, game development, and film, is developing another exciting new merit badge opportunity. Some contributors are Eagle Scouts who create animated videos professionally. Early buzz is that when released, it will be available in both print and digital format.

In other news, nearly 20 merit badge pamphlets were recently released in digital "flip book" format through Amazon.com. We hope this is just the beginning of what is to come. It is possible that in the future, digital editions will be more robust and interactive than just pamphlets where the reader flips through pages.

Chess: An Age-old Game Made New:



For a game that has been around since the 6th century, chess has proven to be extremely popular among today's computer-savvy Scouts. In fact, since it was introduced in 2011, more than 62,000 Scouts have earned the Chess merit badge, placing it among the top 25 earned in 2013.

The newfound popularity of the merit badge comes as good news to proponents of another Scouting initiative, STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math), because the language of chess is algebraic notation. Requirement 4a indicates that Scouts should "demonstrate scorekeeping using the algebraic system of chess notation." The following suggestions may be helpful in learning this system.

- Use a demonstration board to teach the names of the squares on a chess board. Say something like "Each square has a first and last name. The first name is a letter, the last name is a number." Then ask Scouts to come up to the board and place a chess piece on squares that other Scouts call out.
- Whenever solving chess problems, always ask Scouts to name the square to which a piece is moving.
- Have chess score sheets available. They are designed for recording moves in a game and can be purchased online. Select a chess game from the newspaper or a chess booklet. Call out the first five moves of the game

and ask Scouts to write down the notations for the moves on their sheets. Then ask them to make the moves on their chessboards. Then write the correct notations on a whiteboard and make the moves on a demonstration board. See how many Scouts made the correct notations.

Ask two Scouts to volunteer to play a game in front of the group. The other Scouts record the moves by writing the notations down for both players. After the game is over, or when the leader calls time, have the Scouts re-create the game on their individual chessboards and discuss strategies and concepts they observed that are part of the merit badge requirements.

Replaying the game from the notation provides the opportunity for reflection and also guidance from experienced players.

So, what are you waiting on? It's your move!

F. Parent Orientation and Education:

One of the responsibilities of the unit advancement coordinator is to instruct parents, guardians, unit leadership, and committee members on appropriate methods to encourage advancement (*Guide To Advancement*, topic 3.0.0.3). An ideal time to accomplish this would be during one or more of the unit's parent meetings that are required to meet the **Journey to Excellence** gold level. Since new Scout parents will be involved, the first of these meetings each year may need to be the most comprehensive, with those later used to "refresh" everyone's understanding.

The topics for a first meeting might include the following—some of which are best covered by the unit leader and committee chair, and some by the advancement coordinator:

What Scouting is all about: After citing the aims of Scouting, it is a good idea to use terms that parents will understand. Remind them that their wild and wooly eleven-year olds running around in the next room will be the fathers of their grandchildren in not too many years! Though our common goal is for these boys to become men who live their lives by the Scout Oath and Law, we all need to remember that from the boy's point of view, Scouting has to be fun.

Who the leaders of the unit are: Parents want to know who is involved, so they know where to get help when they volunteer. At a minimum, the unit leader and committee chair should reintroduce themselves and quickly outline how they work together, particularly on advancement matters. At a troop's parent meeting, the Scoutmaster should introduce the senior patrol leader and let him describe his role.

The language of Scouting: New parents may not be familiar with the terms, "troop," and "patrol," much less the relationships between them. Parents need to understand how the troop is organized, or how the troop is boy-run. This is also the time to explain the uniform policy, pointing out how the different badges their sons will earn will reflect their accomplishments.

What is advancement? The unit advancement coordinator should explain the mechanics of advancement. Boy Scout parents should learn they now have a new role. They no longer sign off requirements, but their continued interest in their son's progress is no less critical than it was in Cub Scouting. Finally, leaders and parents alike, should be reminded that advancement is a tool we use to make Scouting fun. It is not an end in itself and each boy should advance at his own pace.

Keeping parents informed invites them to become more involved in troop management, which in turn, will keep boys in Scouting longer, giving us more chance to influence their character. Isn't that what we're all about?

G. Record Keeping for Youth Member Transfers:

Topic 6.0.0.4 of the *Guide to Advancement*, “Scout Transfers,” informs us that member identification numbers are unique only within each **local council**. **They are not yet nationally universal**. If a transfer is between units in the same council, a boy’s advancement records will follow him by his member ID number. When a Scout transfers to a unit in a different council, however, his membership number and related information from the previous council cannot be accessed by the new council.

When preparing to move to another council a parent or guardian may request a report called a “Person Listing” that shows the youth member’s advancement record. This report may be attached to the membership application for the new council. Alternatively the previous unit can provide an “**Individual History Report**” from any third-party advancement tracking software or an “**Advancement Summary Report**” from **Internet Advancement**.

Our founder made it clear that Scouting is different from schools where teachers maintain test and grade records. One way to maintain individual advancement records is in the Scout’s handbook, his signed “blue cards,” and collection of rank and merit badge presentation cards. This is also a good practice for any Scout, whether moving or not.

Yours in Scouting;

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