



The Dulaney District Advancement Committee News

9 June 2017

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

(Most of the contents have been copied from National Advancement News-March-June 2017)

A. INTERNET ADVANCEMENT:

If your Troop missed the February Roundtable, and thus the Internet Training session and you need help in getting up-to-speed on Internet Advancement, please contact Christine Hurt, the District Champion for Internet advancement at Hurtc111@gmail.com



B. EAGLE ISSUES:

1. Merit Badges for Star and Life - Effects on Eagle Scout Rank:

Earning the rank of Star and Life requires a Scout to complete a certain number of required and optional (non-Eagle-required) merit badges. Sometimes, confusion occurs about which merit badges can be counted toward which requirement and boards of review are needlessly delayed, which even could adversely impact a Scout's ability to earn Eagle Scout rank.

For Star and Life ranks the "any four" or "any three" requirement allows the Scout to choose ANY of the Eagle-required merit badges listed in Eagle Scout requirement #3, including alternatives, if available. These merit badges do not need to be from separate categories. For example, if a Scout earns First Aid, Camping, Environmental Science, and Sustainability, all would count as Eagle-required for his Star rank. Likewise, if a Star Scout earns Cycling, Hiking, and Swimming, all three may count as Eagle-required for Life rank. In each of these examples it would not be necessary for the Scout to earn any additional Eagle-required merit badge to meet the "any four" or "any three" requirement.

Although the alternative merit badges are counted toward Star and Life rank only one from each of the categories with alternatives would be counted toward the required merit badges for Eagle Scout rank. The other (extra) Eagle-required merit badges would count toward the optional merit badges required to make up the total of 21 merit badges. In the examples above, the Scout could choose to use Environmental Science merit badge for one of the 13 Eagle-required merit badges and Sustainability would count as one of the eight optional merit badges. In the other example, the Scout could choose to use Cycling merit badge as an Eagle-required merit badge and Hiking and Swimming would be counted as optional merit badges.

For the optional, sometimes referred to as non-required, merit badges the Scout can choose to count ANY merit badge toward that requirement, not just optional (non-required) merit badges. The Scout may choose to meet all merit badge requirements for Star and Life by only earning Eagle-required merit badges. For example, a Scout

who earns First Aid, Camping, Environmental Science, Sustainability, Emergency Preparedness, and Lifesaving, and no other merit badges, may count all of them toward Star rank. That same Scout could earn an additional 5 Eagle-required merit badges and have met the merit badge requirement for Life rank. Thus, it is possible for a Scout to complete the merit badge requirements for Star and Life ranks by only earning Eagle-required merit badges.

See *Guide to Advancement* topic 7.0.4.5.

2. From the Guide to Advancement: Eagle Scout Service Project Safety (April 2013)

“Eagle Scout service project coaches, or anyone who reviews Eagle service project proposals or final plans, should help to ensure safety. Familiarity with the *Guide to Advancement*, topic 9.0.2.14, ‘Risk Management and Eagle Scout Projects,’ and also ‘Service Project Planning Guidelines’ in the *Guide to Safe Scouting* will be helpful.

“Although the adults present at the project must monitor safety, the Eagle candidate should include attention to safety in his planning. The unit leader and the project coach (if one has been provided) will want to review the Scout’s plan, and they should encourage him to cover safety with respect to issues such as tool usage, site or weather hazards, wildlife and insect concerns, controlling horseplay, and general conduct during the project. A safety briefing should be conducted before work starts, and regardless of who conducts the briefing, the Eagle candidate should have a thorough understanding of the safety issues involved.

“Most every Eagle Scout candidate should include a first aid kit appropriate for the work he is planning. One may be available on location, or the troop’s kit may be taken to the site. These days it is almost unnecessary to suggest that a cell phone should be brought along to summon help if something more serious should happen.

“It is important the Scout understands ‘Age Guidelines for Tool Use and Work at Elevations or Excavations’ (available at www.scouting.org/filestore/healthsafety/pdf/680-028.pdf) that is, what tools may be used by a 14-year-old, a 16-year-old, or require an adult to operate. For example, all power saws are limited to adult use, and it is recommended that the saw operators be the saw owners. They are more likely to be familiar with the tool and how to operate it safely.

“One risk Scouts may not consider is that related to chemicals. For paints, solvents, and cleaning products, the Scout should see that the package labeling is read, understood, and followed. In some cases, adult handling may be appropriate. When cleaning, sanding, painting, demolishing, or refurbishing any surface painted before 1978, the potential risks with lead poisoning must be considered. Similarly, pressure-treated lumber is no longer made with arsenic, but old lumber may be involved in the project, and even new lumber still has some special handling requirements. (Information is available from most pressure-treated lumber retailers and at www.naturalhandyman.com/iip/infextra/infpre.html)

“Other common issues that should be considered are on-site risks ranging from buried utilities to plant or animal dangers (e.g., poison ivy, mosquitoes, ticks, and even bears, snakes, and alligators in some parts of the country). No matter where you are, weather, traffic, and sanitation issues should always be considered.

“Many projects require some form of personal protective equipment (PPE) such as long sleeves or pants, work or protective gloves, closed-toe shoes or work boots, safety glasses, ear plugs or protectors, dust masks, etc. The candidate should understand the specific PPE needs for his project and have a plan to be sure the necessary equipment will be available and used properly.

“Every Eagle Scout project should be carried out safely, but safety doesn’t happen by accident. Thorough advance guidance of the Scout will go a long way in helping ensure an accident-free project. Some councils even provide links for safety information on an Eagle Scout page of their websites to help their Scouts to ‘be prepared’ from the time they first meet with their Eagle project coaches and project reviewers until the project is safely completed.

“In closing, it must be noted that although a Scout is expected to be concerned with safety on his project, Scouts are minors. Adult leaders must take the responsibility for safety and they must be available and free to intervene if necessary. An Eagle project is defined by the BSA as a unit activity, and unit leaders have the same responsibility for health and safety during Eagle projects that they have with any other unit event. Additionally, property owners of a project site also have a responsibility for safety. For example, if digging is involved, the property owner must be forthcoming with information on the location of underground utilities and identification of any hazards specific to the site that the Scout or the unit leader may overlook.”

[Ed note: Scouts will do well to follow best local practices and seek out information on underground utilities locations by searching online for “call before you dig” contact information.]

3. Eagle Scout Rank Reference Letters

Eagle Scout requirement two requires the Scout to “... demonstrate Scout Spirit by living the Scout Oath and Scout Law” and to “List on your Eagle Scout Rank Application the names of individuals who know you personally and would be willing to provide a recommendation on your behalf, ...”

These recommendations can be useful to board of review members who may not have any personal knowledge of the Scout and how he lives his life.

The Scout meets requirement two, in part, by providing the names and contact information of his prospective references on the Eagle Scout Rank Application. The council advancement committee or other designated adults are responsible for securing the recommendations from the individuals listed. **The Scout may assist with delivering an addressed envelope and instructions, or perhaps a form to complete, to the listed references, but that is the limit of his participation.** The Scout must not be held responsible for any additional follow-through to obtain the recommendation letters.

Although reference letters can provide valuable information to a board of review, the lack of a reference letter from an individual must not be construed to infer a negative recommendation. Furthermore, if after a reasonably diligent effort, no response can be obtained from one or more of the references, then the board of review must go on without them. It must not be postponed or denied due to lack of reference letters. Nor can the Scout be requested to provide replacement names for those who have not responded.

An important aspect of the reference process is the requirement that all responses be handled confidentially and only board of review members or other officials with a specific need may see them. Completed references are kept confidential to ensure that the writers will be comfortable submitting a thoughtful and thorough recommendation, including negative information, if warranted. By ensuring that reference letters are kept confidential, those preparing them need not be concerned about the contents being disseminated inappropriately. For that reason, and to preclude errors in handling the completed references, those providing references shall not be given the option of waiving confidentiality nor shall they provide a copy of the reference letter to the Scout. Councils must not include such an option on any reference forms they might provide.

Once a board of review has been held, or an appeal process conducted, reference responses shall be returned to the council, where they will be destroyed.

See *Guide to Advancement* topic 9.0.1.7 for additional information on these requirements and procedures.

4. Requests for Extension of Time to Earn Eagle Scout Rank:

“If a youth foresees that, due to no fault or choice of his own, he will be unable to complete the Eagle Scout rank requirements before age 18, he may apply for a limited time extension.” (*Guide to Advancement* topic 9.0.4.0).

Local councils do not have the authority to grant or deny such time extension requests. Only the National Advancement Program Team has that authority. However, councils are responsible for thoroughly and fairly

investigating each request in a timely manner and then preparing a position statement, and eventually a formal **Request for Extension of Time to Earn Eagle Scout Rank** (form 512-077).

The process begins when a Scout sends his informal request for an extension, preferably by letter rather than email, to the council service center. In this letter, which if possible should be submitted before his 18th birthday, the Scout must document the circumstances that support granting the extension. If health-related, he must provide a statement from a health professional. If he claims that adult error is involved, the adults involved, if available, must provide written statements explaining the error(s) and the steps taken to prevent future occurrences. Time is of the essence when handling extension requests since a Scout may only need a short amount of time to complete his requirements. While the extension request is being reviewed at both the council and national level, the Scout should continue working on his requirements.

Upon receiving an extension request, the council advancement committee chair and staff advisor should expeditiously select at least two council advancement committee members to thoroughly research the request and prepare a summary report. The reviewers should obtain written statements from those familiar with the case, or at least interview them—in some cases, it is a good idea to hold face-to-face interviews—including the candidate, his family, and adult leaders, who must be included in the investigation. All statements must include the date and signature (name) of the author.

After reviewing the investigation summary and the evidence gathered, the council advancement committee must prepare a position statement stating whether or not they support the extension request. After they have shared this position statement with the Scout, his parent or guardian, and his unit leader, it will be up to the Scout to decide whether or not to pursue the request to the National Advancement Program Team, even if the council does not recommend that it be granted.

While the council committee should thoughtfully explain its reasons for not supporting the extension request, they must be careful not to discourage the Scout from pursuing his request. Sometimes councils misunderstand or misinterpret the rules governing extension requests and they may incorrectly recommend denial. Making statements such as "National will never approve this request" will have a chilling effect on the Scout and his family and must be avoided at all times. Ultimately the National Advancement Program Team will make the decision.

Please review *Guide to Advancement* topic 9.0.4.1 for a complete explanation of this process.

C. OTHER ADVANCEMENT ISSUES:

1. Webelos to Scout Transition: Avoiding “Culture Shock” for Scouts AND Parents:

THE SITUATION:

Your troop is about to receive a new group of Cub Scout “crossovers.” From experience, you know that they will need to make several major adjustments, i.e., adapting to a new small group structure (patrols operate differently from dens), to a new hierarchy of leadership (youth more than adults), and a new concept of advancement responsibility. Often the new boys and their parents will be unprepared for the major shifts that will occur after the Webelos-to-Scout Transition. If these differences are not understood and adjusted to quickly, there is a genuine risk of losing this next generation of Scouts before the first badges are sewn on their uniforms.

- **Patrols:** In the pack, your new Scouts were not only guided but were managed by their “Akelas”—their den leaders and parents. Now they find themselves members of a small group, ideally a patrol of new Scouts, led by other boys. The den-like structure is familiar, the “management” structure is not.
- **Leadership:** In the pack, the adults planned and ran activities. Now the Scouts find themselves involved in selecting their patrol and leaders from among their fellow Scouts. Their parents—those who were involved in pack leadership roles and those who were not—suddenly find themselves “unemployed.” Or at least that is the way it seems to them at first. Suddenly, adults are not at the forefront. Troop meetings are run by the senior

patrol leader and his patrol leaders, and campouts and hikes no longer require a one-to-one “buddy” parent presence—their son’s buddy is a fellow Scout.

- **Advancement:** Where advancement previously relied largely on their den leader’s initiative, the responsibility in the troop will be firmly placed on each Scout’s shoulders, with support (but not initiative) from his patrol and troop programs of activities. Similarly, parents no longer “sign off” rank advancement requirements in their sons’ handbooks unless they become trained, uniformed members of the troop’s “scoutmaster corps.”

THE SOLUTION:

Just as the troop’s Scouts and leaders tried to make the Webelos Scouts and their parents feel welcome to join during their Arrow of Light den visit to the troop, so too must they find ways to make them want to stay once they have arrived. There is no better way to do this than to welcome the new Scouts with an appropriate ceremony, followed by an orientation session—or two, in fact. Many troops find it most successful for the senior patrol leader and a few other selected youth leaders to lead the new Scout orientation while the Scoutmaster, troop advancement coordinator, and committee chair speak with the new Scouts’ parents. These can be done concurrently by simply using two different rooms at your chartered organization’s location or other meeting site.

When gathering the Scouts, make certain that all have the most current edition of the handbook. For parents, there really is no need to create a “troop advancement manual”—the BSA has already done this for us all. It is recommended that you just reproduce a few relevant Handbook pages, e.g., the requirements for the ranks of Scout and Tenderfoot, to use as examples, and have a copy of the current *Guide to Advancement* handy for referral.

From experience, these orientations, especially those for the parents, work best when conducted in an inter-active rather than lecture-style format. Facilitators for each session can prepare a series of discussion questions for participants, together with well-researched answers and examples. Be sure to leave reasonable time for spontaneous questions, and don’t be afraid to say, “I don’t know but we’ll research that and get back to you,” if necessary.

These orientation sessions, if held right at the outset of your new Scouts’ journeys, will not only give all new Scouts and their parents the information needed for success in Boy Scouting, but will let the new boys’ families know that their questions and participation in whatever role they would like to serve, e.g., assistant scoutmaster, committee member, even advancement chair, are always welcome. In addition, preparing these orientation sessions will help your troop’s key youth leaders and adult volunteers to re-ground themselves in the same areas, which should help ensure that the best possible overall troop program can be delivered to the youth we are all here to serve.

2. The Webelos-to-Scout Transition: A Question of Initiative:

As discussed in the previous section, taking initiative will often be a fresh and possibly disconcerting concept for these new Scouts and their parents. Up to the 11th Edition of the *Boy Scout Handbook*, Scouts were advised that “*you can advance at your own pace*,” but earlier editions were even more direct. Beginning in 2009, more recent Handbook editions have been largely silent on this critical aspect. For example, the 12th Edition suggested that:

- “*Self-Leadership is Having a vision of where you want to be;*
- *Figuring out the steps to get there; and*
- *Completing those steps one at a time.*”

The 13th Edition states, “*You should complete [the Scout rank] as soon as you join a troop...It’s a good idea to complete [Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class ranks] within your first 12 to 18 months as a Scout.*” The question becomes “how will that happen,” and whose initiative would be needed to achieve this result.

These new Scouts have just come off the “rank-per-year” system used in Cub Scouting, plus the highest rank, Arrow of Light, can only be earned as the boy exits the program. Their experience in Cub Scouts may leave boys and parents alike with a mistaken belief that Boy Scout ranks will be similarly earned, i.e., with seven ranks and up

to seven years in Boy Scouting, all may assume that boys can only become Eagle Scouts as they age out of the troop at the age of 18. Of course, nothing could be more erroneous, but this assumption may well be among the reasons why the average age of young men earning Eagle Scout rank is now 17.3 years, whereas just a few decades ago the average age was around 15.

Therefore, it is imperative that the issue of Initiative included in the new Scout and parent orientation briefings discussed in the previous section of this newsletter. Using “Advancement” in the Index of the 13th Edition of the *Boy Scout Handbook* as a guide, troop leaders can prepare a thorough troop advancement orientation which will, as a minimum want to cover the following points:

- Advancement in Boy Scouting is based on *individual initiative* with guidance and encouragement from your patrol leader, your Scoutmaster, and other youth and adult leaders
- Boy Scouting has seven ranks; advancement has four Steps: Learn-Test-Review-Recognize
- Requirements for completing Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class, and First Class ranks; additional considerations for Star, Life, Eagle, and Eagle palms, i.e., tenure, service, and merit badges (a brief introduction to procedures for earning, required vs. elective, etc.). Also for parents, if needed: alternative paths for Scouts with permanent physical or developmental challenges)
- The ways in which patrol and troop activities support advancement
- The purpose and relationship of participation; service and Good Turns; and “Scout spirit”
- Leadership/positions of responsibility
- The purpose and value of Scoutmaster conferences
- The purpose and procedures for boards of review
- Recognition: Badge presentation, courts of honor

As mentioned earlier, many troops find it most successful to hold two independent orientations—one for the new Scouts and a separate one for their parents—because different questions and discussion points will arise. However, it is strongly suggested that the new Scouts and their parents not go their separate ways until both have heard the first briefing point together: Advancement in Boy Scouting is based on *individual initiative*.

3. Learning to Teach Is Teaching to Learn:

“In springtime a young man’s fancy,” goes the joke, “turns to baseball.” While that may be true, in springtime a Scoutmaster’s thoughts actually turn to getting the troop ready for summer camp, especially that new group of Scouts who just crossed over from the pack. Experienced Scouters know that if these boys have a positive summer camp experience, they will stay in Scouting for a long time.

Who better to show these new Scouts the ropes than the boys who crossed over about this time last year, most of whom should by now be or at least close to becoming First Class Scouts? Under the guidance of the senior patrol leader, patrol leaders, and troop guides, let these “seasoned” Scouts teach the new boys the skills they will need at summer camp. In this way, the new instructors will reinforce the lessons they have learned during the last year, and show the senior Scouts they are ready to take on more responsibilities. Meanwhile, as the new Scouts learn, the experienced Scouts teach, and the senior Scouts put their leadership skills to work, the whole troop will be involved. The new Scouts will enjoy the positive attention from the older boys. In this way, everyone experiences personal growth.

There is no better way to learn something than by teaching it. As the *Guide to Advancement (topic 4.2.1.1)* puts it: “[The Scout] learns by doing, and as he learns, he grows in his ability to do his part as a member of the patrol and troop. As he develops knowledge and skill, he is asked to teach others; and in this way he learns and develops leadership.” In our example, the older boys gain leadership experience; mid-level Scouts reinforce their Scouting skills and learn how to pass them on to other Scouts. Together, new and old Scouts get prepared for the adventure ahead. All of this will happen with just a light touch from the Scoutmaster. It’s a beautiful thing.

4. Finding Exceptional Ways to Meet Advancement Requirements without Exception:

“Meet the requirements as they are written, with no exception”

The quote above from the *Guide to Advancement*, topic 10.2.2.0, at first glance may sound harsh, restrictive, and could even leave one wondering how a Scout with special needs can meet requirements that sometimes seem too tough. Well, with a little bit of creativity and teamwork, Scouts and leaders have found exceptional ways to complete requirements without exception.

Communication with the Scout and his family are important ingredients that can really help. Using resources such as school teachers and other community groups and leaders is really important, too. Another great resource could be your council’s Special Needs Committee.

We have heard great stories over the years about individuals with disabilities finding creative ways to meet requirements. For example, a Scout who can’t move his hands or arms to tie a knot, has learned the steps required and can dictate them to a friend who tied the knot for him. Similarly, other Scouts have used communication devices to work with an able-bodied partner to complete other requirements.

We really want to do all we can to enable Scouts with disabilities to advance in rank and complete merit badges, all while upholding the high standards of the badges. Every so often, we encounter a case where that’s just not possible, and that is the time to submit a request for alternative requirements or alternate badges.

Guide to Advancement topic 10.2.2.2 provides clear instructions on how to request alternative requirements for boys working on the ranks of Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class, or First Class. For ranks above First Class, the requirements cannot be modified; however, a Scout can request authorization to complete an alternative merit badge in place of one that just is not possible for him to complete. Again, the *GTA* can help you navigate and understand this process.

One thing that is important to remember is that advancement is not meant to be easy for any Scout, and that is why only a very small percentage of Scouts achieve the rank of Eagle. Meanwhile, it is equally important to remember that advancement should never get in the way of providing new, meaningful, and fun experiences.

D. MERIT BADGES:

1. Any Scout, Any Merit Badge, Any Time:

A few merit badges have certain restrictions, but there are no restrictions on when a boy can begin working on a merit badge. Any registered Boy Scout, Varsity Scout, or qualified Venturer or Sea Scout may work on any badge at any time. Furthermore, although recommended, it is not necessary for a Boy Scout to obtain an Application for Merit Badge, commonly called a “blue card,” before starting work on merit badge requirements. Sometimes leaders misinterpret the requirement for a boy to obtain a blue card to work with a merit badge counselor to mean that the boy must obtain the blue card before beginning any work. **That is not correct.** The Scout only needs to obtain the blue card once he is ready to begin working directly with a merit badge counselor.

Consider, for example, a boy who has a pet dog, collects stamps or coins, enjoys fishing or certain sports, or reading. Merit badges related to each of these interests have requirements that the boy can complete without a counselor. If the boy is interested in working on any of these merit badges he should be encouraged to do so, but he should be aware that it ultimately is up to the merit badge counselor whether or not to accept the work he has completed prior to receiving a signed blue card.

If this is true, why is there a requirement for obtaining a blue card before working with a merit badge counselor, even while attending merit badge fairs or similar activities? The simple answer is that a merit badge-related meeting is essentially a Scoutmaster conference that provides an additional opportunity for the unit leader to discuss the boy's interests with him before he provides the boy with the name of at least one registered and approved merit badge counselor with whom he would like to work. Every discussion a Scout has with his unit leader is meant to be a growth-oriented experience, not a gate through which the boy must pass. Thus, this

meeting should consist of more than just providing a name, a signature, and discussing concerns the unit leader might have related to the boy working on a specific merit badge. It should be seen as an opportunity to provide inspiration and direction beyond the subject of the merit badge, especially because it always remains the Scout's decision whether to proceed or not.

See *Guide to Advancement* topics 7.0.0.2 and 7.0.0.3 for more information on this subject.

2. Exploration Merit Badge Released:

Have you introduced the Scouts and Scouters in your council, district, or troop to the recently released Exploration merit badge yet? If not, it is high time you did. This new merit badge explores nine general areas:

- 1.General Knowledge
- 2.History of Exploration
- 3.Importance of Exploration
- 4.Real-Life Exploration
- 5.Exploration in Lab and Field
- 6.Expedition Planning
- 7.Prepare for an Expedition
- 8.Go on an Expedition
- 9.Career Opportunities.



Available at www.scouting.org/filestore/Merit_Badge_ReqandRes/Exploration.pdf or in Scout shops everywhere, this booklet comes complete with pages and pages of resources and acknowledgments giving credit to a huge variety of explorers, specialists, and consultants who joined together to create this exciting opportunity for boys, while putting them on a unique advancement path.

For example, Scouts working on the badge's #5 requirement are encouraged to visit a lab or research facility to learn firsthand what types of exploration are done in that facility, to ask questions, and perhaps even to catch a glimpse of the exciting discoveries they hope to make. Imagine the excitement these Scouts would feel someday should this facility announce a ground-breaking success and they remember the time they were there, in person!

Exploration is more than an adventure. It is discovering and uncovering information. It is contributing to scientific knowledge. Exploration is

- Subterranean
- Aquatic
- Terrestrial
- Extraterrestrial

3. Merit Badge Administration: Myth Busters!

Unfortunately, there are some “myths” on merit badge administration floating around out there in “Scout-land” that can cause confusion for merit badge counselors and other adult leaders. Let’s “bust” some of those myths right now.

- **Myth 1:** A Boy Scout must be at least 15 years of age and have achieved the First Class Scout rank to begin working on merit badges.

Fact: There is no minimum age or rank. A few merit badges have specific restrictions, but otherwise, any registered Scout can work on any merit badge at any time (*GTA topic 7.0.0.3*) up to the age of 18.

- **Myth 2:** A counselor may only be approved to counsel up to five merit badges.

Fact: The National Council places no limit on the number of badges a counselor may be approved to counsel (*GTA topic 7.0.1.4*). It is permissible for councils to limit the number of badges that one person counsels;

however, it must not do so to the point where Scouts' choices, especially in small or remote units, are so limited as to serve as a barrier to advancement.

- **Myth 3:** A Scoutmaster has the authority to deny a Scout's request to work on more merit badges if he has too many unfinished ones.

Fact: Any registered Scout can work on any merit badge at any time (*GTA, topic 7.0.0.3*). In this scenario, all the Scoutmaster is allowed to do is counsel the Scout to perhaps finish what he has already begun.

- **Myth 4:** An activity used for one merit badge cannot later be used for another merit badge.

Fact: Topic 4.2.3.6 of the *Guide to Advancement* explains that activities may be counted more than once, as long as these three conditions are met:

- The two requirements match up exactly.
- The two requirements have the same intent.
- The requirements do not state otherwise.

- **Myth 5:** A Scout must first discuss the merit badges he wishes to pursue with his Scoutmaster before starting to work on requirements.

Fact: According to *topic 7.0.0.1* in the *2015 Guide to Advancement*, a Scout may begin working on merit badge requirements as soon as he is registered. Discussing the badges with his unit leader is still part of the merit badge plan, because it will ensure that he receives the contact information for a currently registered and approved merit badge counselor, as well as a signed blue card.

- **Myth 6:** Instructing a merit badge to a large group of Scouts is ideal because it creates synergy among the participants.

Fact: *Topic 7.0.3.0* of the *Guide to Advancement* explains that teaching a badge to a Scout and his buddy or a small group such as a patrol affords the counselor coaching and guidance opportunities not possible in a large group setting. It also ensures each individual Scout has actually and personally completed the required work.

- **Myth 7:** A Scout must earn all or most of the Eagle-required merit badges before he can begin working on his elective badges.

Fact: As already shown, any registered Scout can work on any merit badge at any time (*GTA topic 7.0.0.3*), Eagle-required badges included.

E. JOURNEY TO EXCELLENCE: Advancement Is Just One Way to Keep Score:

The JTE scorecard for each Scouting organization from the unit through council level has an advancement component. Section 3 of the *Guide to Advancement* provides the following guidelines for JTE areas of emphasis at the council, district, and unit advancement committee level.

- Unit #7 – Assist the unit leader in establishing practices that will provide opportunities for each new Boy Scout to achieve First Class rank within 12 to 18 months of joining and Star rank soon thereafter.

The Journey to Excellence continuous improvement initiative helps units, districts and councils focus on details to provide the best Scouting program for youth. The 2017 JTE scorecards for each Scout organization can be found online at www.scouting.org/jte.aspx. While each has a line labeled "Advancement" the tracking of advancement progress is only one very important component of the overall score. It is important to recall that Scout advancement is not an end in itself; rather, it is the sum of Scouting's other components— Planning, Membership, Program, and Leadership, all of which are also listed and measured on each JTE scorecard. Addressing these

multiple, interrelated measures of advancement will help units, districts and councils to succeed in achieving positive results in this performance recognition program of the BSA.

Let's look at one example of ways that that district advancement committee can promote Cub Scout advancement. On the 2017 pack JTE scorecard, section #5 requires packs to calculate percentages of advancement during the year. There are multiple ways a district advancement committee might help the district and each of its units to achieve their mutual goal of increased advancement:

- The district committee, with the help of unit commissioners, can ensure that advancement reports that are being filed monthly, and can analyze these reports to identify areas where extra attention will be useful.
- Members of the district committee can identify areas of need (within the unit) and help with activities to promote advancement. For example, helping to provide den chiefs for packs by providing den chief training and encouraging troops to send suitable Scouts to this training.
- The district committee can promote communication with and among units encouraging participation in district activities that lead to advancement, ranging from Cub Scout day camp and district Webelos events to Boy Scout resident camp.
- Advancement committee members can assist the district training committee to develop, promote, and provide leadership training that ensures unit leaders are aware of the program outlines of the program support materials available for all levels of Scouting. Training will also encourage those leaders to present a program with multiple opportunities for including advancement activities. On an on-going basis, they can encourage participation in monthly roundtables where leaders can get up-to-date information about upcoming activities.

Yours in Scouting;

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