

Roundtable Hot Topic

Hot Topic - Intentional Transitions Planning for Success - Keeping Scouts Involved

Nationwide, Scouting maintains between 50% and 60% of the Scouts who join the program. One of the ways that we each can make an impact on this number, and play a pivotal role in delivering the mission of Scouting America, is to have an intentional plan to help Scouts and families stay connected with their Scouting family. Regardless of your program level or leadership role, you can make a tremendous impact by focusing on the connections you can create and nurture right where you are. Here are some ideas to consider:

Cub Scouts

- Missing Scout Protocol
 - Have a plan to follow up when a Scout has missed a meeting or two. A simple call, text, or email from a Den Leader or New Member Coordinator can help a family feel that their presence is wanted and their absence is felt.
- Winter break or extended stretch follow up
 - It's easy for families to get out of the habit when the schedule gets changed due to school holidays, weather, and other challenges. Make sure to communicate meeting times, and send out extra reminders for the first meeting back after an extended break
- Grade to Grade transitions
 - If the Scouts will be getting a new den leader next year, make opportunities for them to spend some time together. Perhaps have the new den leader come and lead your den one week so they can get to know them. If the current den leader is moving up with them, start talking about the plans for next year, helping the Scouts and families see that the journey continues!
 - Do a "Moving on up" ceremony like a mini crossover to signify the next step in their pathway
 - If you don't meet year round, make sure you have some activities planned through the summer to keep everyone connected
 - Host a "Back to the Pack" night before your fall recruitment to get everyone back together and prepare to welcome a new set of Scouts and their families
- Engage with the new parents early
 - Giving new families leadership opportunities early can help them to find a meaningful place in your unit. People need to feel valued, and this gives them a chance to serve in both big and small ways.

AOL - Scouts

- Help the Arrow families find their troop as early as possible. Making connections early will help to eliminate any fears they might have about the next step
- Attend Roundtables to meet Scoutmasters and learn about their programs.
- Find the troop that fits the Scout. The best way to keep a Scout in the program is to find them a troop that becomes their new family
- Troops can have a Scout serve as a short term Den Chief / Troop Guide with the AOL den prior to transition. That way the Arrows already have strong connections with someone before they even cross over.
- Den leaders and Cub masters follow up with the Arrows after they cross over. They are likely to tell you if they don't feel at home before they will tell the Scoutmaster they just met.

Scouts BSA

- Encourage connections as the new Scouts join patrols

- If you're doing a New Scout Patrol, connect them with a troop guide who may already have a relationship with them (perhaps the Scout who served as their den chief!)
- Support the youth led program
 - Train them, trust them, let them lead
 - Give them the tools they need to do an amazing job
- Never miss out on a leadership opportunity
 - Youth thrive when they are responsible, even for small things. Maybe a Scout hasn't had the experience to be a patrol leader yet, but they can certainly be in charge of taking attendance at patrol meetings, or making sure the patrol has a song for campfire
 - Encourage participation in advanced leadership training like NYLT and Philmont Leadership Challenge
- Don't let your own adult limitations keep them from planning and accomplishing amazing things
 - Scouts are brave, creative, innovative, and curious creatures. Allow them to think outside of your traditions and explore exciting opportunities.
- Follow up on dropped Scouts
 - Make sure the patrol leaders follow up with any Scouts who have missed a week or two, and tell an ASM that the Scout has been out
 - Have an ASM or New Member Coordinator follow up with the family. They will know they are missed and will feel like a part of the family
- Embrace high adventure opportunities
 - As these young men and women grow as leaders and adventurers, take advantage of all that Scouting has to offer by participating in a Philmont experience, Florida Sea Base, Northern Tier, or the Summit.
 - Encourage participating at the next National Jamboree!
- Attend Roundtable and connect with older youth program leaders in your area
 - Ships, Crews, and Posts are excellent ways to introduce scouts to the next level of challenge and excitement that Scouting has to offer

Older Youth Programs

- Work closely with area troops to be a ready resource to supplement their program, and to be the next step in a Scouts leadership journey
- Focus on facilitating success. At this point in their Scouting career, they are ready to take on huge leadership challenges. They no longer need the Scoutmaster like they did in a troop. They need supportive adults who help them find the resources they need to do amazing things.
- Connect Scouts with industry and community partners
 - Explorer Posts are designed to help youth discover a pathway to a new career. Connections with related partners will give members "behind the scenes" access to these new fields
 - Industry and community partners can bring access to places and equipment that youth may not have access to alone
 - Ships and Crews can partner with local climbing or high adventure groups, or even agencies such as the Coast Guard to help the scouts refine their skills and make connections that will carry them into the future

Strong, well planned program

From the time families enter this program, or any program, they want to believe that they are receiving value for their time and investment. Whether it's a fun and engaging Lion den meeting, a well thought out troop campout, or a thoughtfully programmed and supported high adventure expedition, Scouts and their families will see and feel the value that these experiences are bringing into their lives. Scouts are more likely to stay

involved, and much more likely to invite their friends to come along with them, when they are engaged, challenged, and given opportunities to lead.

Relationships

Beginning with the first invite or join night, connections are made between you, Scouting America's representative, and the Scouts and families that are investigating this opportunity. Families join Scouting for the amazing opportunities, but they stay in Scouting because of the relationships they form. The connection a Scout feels to the rest of their den or patrol keeps them engaged even when the rest of life can be chaotic. It becomes a safe place for youth to share life with other Scouts experiencing the same challenges. Likewise, connecting with the adults not only increases the chances of success of the Scouts, it also provides a place to be a part of an extended family of like minded individuals. Adults who join the Scouting movement find purpose in serving and seeing growth in not only their child, but also in the lives of their new extended family.

By creating an intentional plan that works in your area, units and leaders can make a tremendous impact on the number of Scouts who stay involved in the program through their youth and beyond. There are many great resources to help you develop your plan. Check out your District or Council Roundtable to learn what other leaders are doing in your area. You can more great tools to impact your program's success on the Renewal and Growing Resources page at <https://www.scouting.org/commissioners/renewal-growing/>.