

SCOUTS-L

**SCOUTMASTER
CONFERENCES**

Date: Sun, 2 Oct 1994 00:21:49 +100
From: Ian Ford <ianford@DIRCON.CO.UK>
Subject: New Scouts/SM Conference LONG

My first thought was if you have twenty new Scouts why not have **THREE** patrols of seven, seven and six. That would enable more kids to rotate through the leadership positions, and also make it easier on the Troop Guide.

Next, the job of the ASM (New Scout) is first and foremost to make sure the Troop Guide is up to steam. Then he can guide the patrol. (Personally I would have preferred the title Patrol Guide as more descriptive, but there we go ...)

We have had several very good troop guides. They work alongside the P/L to get the patrols organised for camouts, and help with practical support, e.g. on campouts the troop guide advises the P/L on setup, cooking etc. - not taking over but " whispering in his ear " so to speak.

The Troop Guides ought, IMHO, to be experienced Junior Leaders who want the job to help new Scouts, not because it is a position to qualify for rank. The ASMs(New) need to touch base with the TG weekly and review his plans. Maybe discuss particular Scouts, their progress and how they are settling in. Identify kids who need extra help.

As for your questions about the Scoutmaster Conference ...

- (a) to do this after dark and out of the way , even 2:1 is unwise and is open to misinterpretation. 'Nuff said.
- (b) the SM conference is <not> supposed to be an examination. If the ASMs are competent they should be checking each requirement as they sign it off. It is unreasonable to expect a kid to have " swallowed the book " and be able to know every detail , particularly new Scouts. Familiarity comes with experience through repetition of skills use.
- (c) The conference is <supposed> to be a one on one thing, conducted in relative privacy but according to YPG. This is covered on SMF 1&2 in the video and I won't labour the point here. But it should be, again IMHO , a positive experience for the Scout. The last SM conference I did with a New Scout was actually with an older kid aged 12.5 who had been in the British program, so it was longer than usual -

about twenty minutes. But this included orientation to the troop and checking what transfer of credit he was entitled to. When I do a conference for a new Scout in the ordinary way it takes maybe 10/15 minutes max and includes getting to know the kid, his hobbies, interests, why he joined, previous experience in Cub scouts, who his particular friends are. Then we talk about the Oath and Law etc. and what being a Scout means. Not testing, an exchange of ideas.

What follows is my "outline agenda" for each conference. The weight I put on each area depends on the kid and the circumstances:

For a Tenderfoot conference I would expect to take ten to fifteen minutes. I go over the campout(s) he has attended, ask what he enjoyed most/least, how he is getting on with the troop and patrol, what MBs he has done / is doing / is planning, and what he likes about them. I try to agree goals with the Scout. First Class in First Year is a slogan not a goal IMHO. Some kids are self-starters and get there faster, other are slower and need more time. I try to set a realistic date for First Class. I do ask a few questions about particular skills etc. but not as a re-test. At this stage the points I look for are an understanding of the buddy system, knowledge of safety procedure, priorities of first aid. Then I ask him about the Oath and Law and why he thinks he has shown "Scout spirit".

Second Class - 10 mins apx. Again, the first few minutes are to how he is getting on in the troop. If he has held a leadership position how did it go, if not what problems does he foresee. (Telling kids the same age and experience what to do is the favourite, and leads to some thoughts on styles of leadership.) Then it's again a review of safe swim, drug and alcohol abuse etc. Finally I may check out random requirements, just one or two, to get the "feel" for if the kid is confident or just scraping by. Again, a bit about Oath and Law and how it has applied to his life. "What have you learned so far?" and "Why do you think I should sign you off?" are interesting final questions.

First Class - This tends to be longer, about 15 minutes max. I review his progress to date, with more emphasis on leadership, inter-personal skills etc. Run through the citizenship requirements (in our case including being a US citizen overseas). What troop activities did he like best /least and why? Ask about campouts. What does he think the troop needs to be doing? Again, review MBs especially Eagle required - what has he done and

what are his plans ? Again , set goals with dates " pencilled in " for Star requirements. Promote things like JLT and special opportunities. What does international Scouting mean to you ? What do you do that gives other Scouts a positive example of the Scout Oath in action ? " " What does Duty to God " mean to you ?

I try to make it a joint effort, we set goals together, and my job is to offer encouragement , identify resources , motivate, maybe inject reality if he's being over-ambitious or thinks too highly of his own abilities. try to identify areas of weakness. " You seem to have a problem with ... what can WE do about it ? "

As I say, this is personal view, and a method which I feel comfortable with. Unless there are very special circumstances , such as major behavioural problems or a clear lack of basic knowlege I would not expect a conference to go beyond twenty minutes.

I'm not saying my approach is right - but I don't think it is that far wrong.

I don't want to comment too much on the original question, because I don't know the circumstances nor the dynamics involved. But it sounds to me as though the kids had a negative experience , so by definition the conference was unsatisfactory. There is some poor leadership somewhere that needs to be sorted out, that's for sure.

YiS
Ian

Ian N Ford
ASM, BSA Troop 401, American School in London
London,England

Date: Mon, 5 Feb 1996 02:16:25 -0500 (EST)
From: "Michael F. Bowman" <mfbowman@CapAccess.org>
To: support@tagus.com
Subject: Re: SM Conferences

Scoutmaster conferences ought to be held as often as possible to meet the needs of the Scouts. Five months wait is enough to make most Scouts quit trying and who could blame them. Advancement is a method of Scouting and not an end by itself. This tool has to be used to be effective, if it is allowed to rust, pretty soon its no good. Likewise the SM Conference should only be what is needed to review the Scout's work and not an inquisition. For some Scouts this may only take a few minutes and others it could take much longer, depending on what the Scout has been doing and what he needs to be working at improving.

Has this SM been trained? Does he need a refresher? How does the Committee feel about this? Sounds like something where the chairperson should be having a talk with the SM and if the SM needs help, then help should be provided. If the SM just wants it his way, this isn't Burger King. The Chartering Organization through the committee can replace him, if he is unwilling to use Scouting methods. The first step though is to find out why this happening and then trying to bring the SM around to what needs to happen.

Speaking Only for Myself in the Scouting Spirit, Michael F. Bowman
a/k/a Professor Beaver (WB), ASTA #2566, OA Vigil Honor '71, Eagle Scout '67, Serving as Deputy District Commissioner for Training,
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Date: Wed, 5 Feb 1997 09:49:40 -0500
From: "Anthony J. Mako" <ajmako@APK.NET>
Subject: Re: Scoutmaster Conferences

There has been a great deal of discussion recently concerning Scoutmaster Conferences. While many of the posts to the list concerning this subject showed that a great deal of thought and research has been done to get to the underlying meaning of the Scoutmaster's Conference, I think more emphasis has been placed on defining the conference rather than looking at its place in the advancement process.

When I was a Scout, what is now known as the Scoutmaster Conference, was known as the Personal Growth Agreement Conference (1970's). While that name sounds like a lot of psychobabble, it is a good description of what the conference was intended to accomplish. The initial conference takes place upon completing the joining requirements. It is during this conference that a Scout learns a little about his Scoutmaster, and what is expected of him as a Scout. It is also an opportunity for the Scout and Scouter to develop a relationship where the Scout feels comfortable talking about difficult subjects to the adult.

The ultimate goal of the Scoutmaster conference is to set a goal. In the process of setting the goal for the next rank, the Scout is encouraged to evaluate his performance since the last conference. The Scoutmaster's job in this conference is not to retest the Scout's abilities, but to test his personal growth. We want to find out how the Scout has grown, what he has learned, and how prepared he is to meet more difficult tests in the future.

As a Scoutmaster, I want to find out how prepared a Scout is to face the Board of Review. I am not concerned about how well he has learned the skills, or if he even remembers them. I want to help the Scout prepare himself for the BOR by helping him see how much he has grown since the last conference. I am building his self-esteem and providing him with the opportunity to address problems, ask questions, and set goals. I let the Board of Review do the re-testing if that's what they feel they must do.

For those who believe the Scoutmaster is the only person who should be able to conduct Scoutmaster Conferences, I believe you are downplaying the relationship part of the conference. I have just taken over an established troop. Half of the Scouts have been in the troop for three years and would not be very comfortable talking to me when it comes time to have a conference. As Scoutmaster I will have conferences with these Scouts, but the Scoutmaster Conference for their next rank will be done by one of my Assistant Scoutmasters because he has been in the troop with them since they joined and has a good relationship with them. They will be more comfortable speaking with him, and the conference will be more productive.

In my sixteen years of being a Scouter I have conducted many Scoutmaster Conferences, and a few Scouts have "failed". Usually it was because the Scout felt he wasn't ready (rare) or I felt he wasn't

ready, based on our conversation. This isn't a failure. If the Scout recognizes that he isn't ready to advance I am more inclined to "pass" him. It's not a test, it's an evaluation.

YIS

**Anthony J. Mako
Scoutmaster Troop 381
Great Trail Council
Eagle Scout, 1981**

**Date: Wed, 2 Apr 1997 13:22:08 -0500
From: Marc Godbout <GodboutM@ANDOVERCONTROLS.COM>
Subject: Re: Scoutmaster Conference**

The Scoutmaster Conference was the toughest for me. Maybe I missed it, but the Scoutmaster's Handbook doesn't really cover it in much detail. Our Basic Leader Training didn't cover it at all (something I complained about).

First, I review his book, making sure everything is signed off. Then we just talk about his interests, how school's going, what does he think of Scouts and our troop, future plans, things like that. Even though I require a uniform for SC's done at troop meetings (please, no arguments about saving burning orphans from space aliens - I heard it the first time :->), I try to keep the SC as informal as possible. Whatever you do, make sure you listen and try to remember what he says. You're supposed to be getting to know each other. I think a bit of confidence would be lost if I asked him what his favorite sport was for every SC. Instead, I'll refer to it as in, "So how'd you do in basketball this season?"

I don't hold SC's at only troop meetings. They can be done at summer camp, regular camping, anywhere, really, as long as YP guidelines are met.

**Marc Godbout
SM Troop 98
ASM Troop 412
Derry, NH**

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>From: Jeff Sigler[SMTP:ljs@IQUEST.NET]

>Sent: Tuesday, April 01, 1997 9:52 PM
>To: Multiple recipients of list SCOUTS-L
>Subject: Scoutmaster Conference

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>We have a new Scoutmaster and he is looking for different ideas that
>other people do during Scoutmaster Conferences. What do you do? What
>do you say? How long do they last? Any help would be appreciated.

> yis,
> Jeff Sigler
> Troop 336 Committee Chairman
> Crossroads of America Council
>

Date: Wed, 2 Apr 1997 13:39:01 -0500
From: "Jeff L. Glaze" <jglaze@SUBASIC.SCIATL.COM>
Subject: Re: Scoutmaster Conference

At 01:22 PM 4/2/97 -0500, Marc Godbout wrote:

>time :>), I try to keep the SC as informal as possible. Whatever you
>do, make sure you listen and try to remember what he says. You're
>supposed to be getting to know each other. I think a bit of confidence
>would be lost if I asked him what his favorite sport was for every SC.

When I was Scoutmaster, I used to keep a notebook with an index sheet for each scout.... I'd take notes regarding our discussion, especially with regard to a Scouts self determined goals. Then I'd review those notes before the next conference with the Scout, having his previous thoughts and plans at the forefront of this conference.... did he meet his goals... etc....

Just one way!

Jeff L. Glaze, Vice-Chairman
Northeast District Advancement Committee
Atlanta Area Council, Boy Scouts of America