

Excel By 5 Summer 2013 Newsletter

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Welcome

Welcome to the Excel By 5 Summer 2013 Newsletter. In this edition, you will find Breaking News, Community Updates, Summit information, and much more!

Excel By 5 is experiencing great growth throughout the state of Mississippi. We welcome Ripley and Senatobia as Excel By 5 Candidate Communities

and congratulate Lafayette County, McComb, and Hattiesburg on reaching Excel By 5 Certification!

The Excel By 5 staff would like to thank all of the community members across the state of Mississippi for making a difference in the lives of young children and their families.

*“What you do is
not the end
but the be-
ginning.”*

*Bob Clay
Executive Director
Excel By 5*

Breaking News

Excel By 5 welcomes two new Excel By 5 Candidate Communities: Senatobia and Ripley, MS.

Senatobia's efforts are being led by the City of Senatobia and three Certification Managers: Lana Nail, Laurie Madsen, and Jennifer Foster. Great strides are already underway for the children in Senatobia.

In Ripley, Excel By 5 staff have met with Mayor Chris Marsalis, representatives from the South Tippah School District, and other

key community contacts. Ripley is in the process of forming a coalition to begin their efforts.

Currently, there are 12 Certified Excel By 5 Early Childhood Communities and 17 Candidate Excel By 5 Communities.

The work that you do contributes to our growth. When other communities notice the good things that are going on in your area, they become interested in providing more opportunities for their children. Keep up the great work!

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**CONGRATS TO
THE NEWEST
EXCEL BY 5
COMMUNITIES**

McComb: A Certified Community

Submitted by: Carol Rawlings, Steering Committee Chair

Our journey began August 2011. We had our first coalition meeting. We were well on our way with no money- just a mission to get 0-5 year olds ready for kindergarten.

Throughout these soon to be two years, we lost a couple of steering committee members, but gained some strong ones. All in all, our steering committee has been faithful. We have had a monthly meetings from August 2011 to present—truly committed to making this certification happen.

As funds go, we depended on in-kind services. The McComb School District has been our life line. They provided us with a resource house, renovating it inside and out. They have included our childcare providers in trainings. We have been allowed to participate in the myOn computer program-giving children the opportunity

to read books online. Junior Auxiliary of McComb cleaned the resource house, painted rooms and provided blinds for every window. We did have an unexpected donation of \$250 from Southwest Community College and \$300 from a class reunion group. We stretched every dollar.



As word got out in our community about Excel by 5, we have had church groups, educational organizations and retired persons volunteering their services and providing necessary items for our resource house. I know this will continue because the calls keep coming asking what needs to be

done.

One of our biggest challenges was how we were going to get funding. We decided to go the route of applying for 501(c)3 status because the opportunity for grant writing and not being tied to the McComb School District and their regulations. In August 2012 we applied for the status with the help of a local accountant. In May 2013, we received the 501(c)3 status.

Now the stage is set to begin grant writing, have regular hours at the resource house and welcome young children to our library at the resource house. Childcare centers will begin visiting the resource house on a regular basis. Parent trainings will be scheduled. This is an exciting time in our city!

Indianola: Providing Capacity Building for Child Care Providers

Submitted by: Deborah Moore, Lead Agency Representative

Through a partnership with the Delta Health Alliance (DHA) Indianola Promise Community (IPC) and the Mississippi Low Income Child Care Initiative (MLICCI), eight childcare providers in Indianola are receiving technical assistance to build their capacity and improve quality of care. Nineteen child care staff are in the process of receiving their CDAs. Also through this partnership resources are being made available to improve their environment in response to the Infant Toddler Environmental Rating

Scale (ITERS)and Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS). Karen Blumenberg, technical assistant provider with MLICCI, states, "I am seeing centers and staff transform before my eyes". This partnership is made possible through funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation has also afforded Indianola with the opportunity to establish the Indianola Promise Community Early Education Collaborative where a number of local and state early childhood experts

work together to offer a comprehensive approach to early learning services.



LOU: Lafayette-Oxford-University Early Care and Education Event

Submitted by: Linda Glaze, Early Care and Education Focus Group Liaison



Our committee worked very hard the last three months to put together an awards dinner for our child care directors! We all felt the need to acknowledge the work our directors have done to help us meet certification.

It started with an idea I remembered from working with directors in Florida where each year those directors were honored with a dinner (or luncheon) and given awards for achievement. It was always a "dressed up time" that gave directors a chance to be with other directors and feel proud of the accomplishments of their center.

Our committee liked the idea and

we began to strategize how we could do that here. After several planning meetings we decided to have the event in the fellowship hall at a local church, using their real china and silverware. We set up the tables with white tablecloths and decorated with colored streamers and children's toys in the middle of each table. (They would be part of the take home donations for each center after it was over.)

Without much money for food we asked McAllister's for tea and lemonade (they donated) and each committee member brought something related to an "Italian" theme. We had hors d'oeuvres, lasagna, salads and plenty of garlic bread. For dessert, we were able to cut a delicious cake donated by Lusa Bakery into big pieces.

The evening started with guests visiting with one another at arrival. We opened with a welcome and introductions, and then called each director up to receive a certificate of appreciation. As they

came forward we talked about how their center had completed certain criteria that had helped our community become certified (some had received more staff development hours, some more teachers with CDA or higher and many that had agreed to a program evaluation).

As the meal began we heard from a speaker (Dr. Maxine Harper) who gave an inspiring talk about what a person in her life had done to make such a difference. Some of the listeners got teary eyed hearing about how Maxine had overcome such obstacles in her life, because she was taught to believe in herself!

We ended the program after dessert and all left with new sets of cardboard blocks and "little people" for their block centers as thank you gifts from the coalition. The committee stayed to clean up and shared the mutual feeling that this was something we wanted to do every year!

Indianola: Excel By 5 Coalition Provides New Baby Bags to Families in Indianola

Submitted by: Deborah Moore, Lead Agency Representative

While taking care of business during the June Excel By 5 Coalition meeting, the coalition stuffed new baby bags for families in Indianola. The bag consists of information on: Excel By 5, development stages of a child's life from birth to 5, resources available to families in Indianola and a baby's first book. Packets were distributed to the Parents as Teachers program, the Chamber of Commerce, Mississippi Childcare Resource and Referral Network, Supporting Partnerships to As-

sure Ready Kids (SPARK) and The Mississippi Low Income Child Care Initiative for distribution. Mayor Steve Rosenthal serves as chair of the Indianola Excel By 5 Coalition. He said, "The bags will be provided to families with new babies and to families moving into Indianola with children ages birth to five".

A child's life is like a piece of paper, on which every person leaves a mark. -Chinese Proverb



Central Clarke County: A Great Beginning for Young Mothers

Submitted by: Elisa Mayo, Steering Committee member



Baby bottles, dirty diapers, and sleepless nights are all in a day's work for the average mom, but add to that the academic and social demands of high school and failure can seem to loom in the future.

This is the reason Central Clarke

County Excel By 5 began their Young Mother's Support Group. The first meeting was held in May with elementary teacher, Melissa Parks, as the guest speaker. Mrs. Parks discussed her own struggles as a young mom and how she was able to obtain a college education and eventually get her dream job teaching elementary students.

The young mother's and mothers-to-be were presented with two books to help them through the first year of their newborn's life. CCC Excel By 5 plans to continue meeting with these mothers

throughout the summer offering them information about child CPR and child development.



Melissa Parks

Central Clarke County: New Guidelines Provide Early Support for Common Core

Submitted by: Elisa Mayo, Steering Committee member



Dr. Penny Wallin

New education standards for 3- and 4-year olds have been developed to bring cohesion among early child care providers and the start of formal schooling, also known as kindergarten. The Mississippi Department of Education will issue the new guidelines and the accompanying scaffolding by the fall of 2013. These standards will allow for early child care providers to understand what is expected of children as early as the

first day of kindergarten regardless of what kindergarten the child may attend.

Dr. Penny Wallin, Assistant Professor of Educational Leadership at MSU, was a guest speaker for the Central Clarke County Excel By 5 Educational Partner's meeting in May. Dr. Wallin served on the committee preparing the new 3- and 4- year old guidelines. Wallin states, "The standards mirror many of the Common Core Standards for Kindergarten. The words 'with prompting and support' are added to most standards simply showing that this is the beginning of learning that skill."

Wallin's discussion also suggested a focus on social and emotional development as being paramount to successful educational gains. "It is estimated there is one conflict per minute in a

early child care center, which makes it impossible to prepare students," Wallin said. "The use of conscious discipline can set the tone for handling social problems quickly." Conscious discipline works on developing discipline *within* a child rather than applying discipline *to* them. It also allows teachers to become proactive instead of reactive when conflict arises.

Each of the developmental domains deserves special attention as teachers of young children work to build a foundation for life-long learning. Educational partner's meetings like this are a great way to bring these teachers together, all focused on that common goal.

Lee County: Certification Underway

Submitted by: Beverly Williams, Certification Manager



After being approved as a candidate community last October, the Lee County coalition is gearing up for its current year events. In April, we held our community update/town hall meetings. Since our county encompasses such a large area, we wanted to reach as many different groups as possible. We decided to hold three meetings in different locations throughout the county. All meetings were held the week of April 15, at Saltillo Primary School (Saltillo), Verona Elementary School (Verona), and Milam Elementary (Tupelo). Different members of the coalition opened each meeting with discussion on brain development in the early years and the importance of education during this time. Beverly Williams, Lee County Certification Manager, then discussed the background of Excel By 5, the survey results, and the actions that would be taken to address each of the issues. We also gave the audience a chance to provide

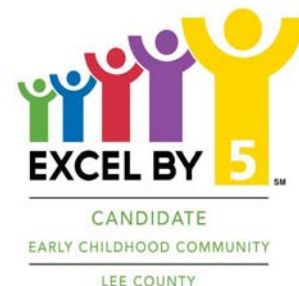
feedback. We posted large sheets of paper on the wall and wrote the most common survey responses to the question, "How could the community work better to support families of young children?" Each audience member was given three sticker dots, and was told to place their dot next to the answer they most agreed with, or to write their own response. We wrapped up each meeting with a question and answer session and pizza and drinks for everyone.

We are one of many agencies who worked with the Lee County 4th District Development Group to put on a workshop for teen moms. This was held on Saturday, June 15, at the Springhill Baptist Association. We had about 20 teen moms attend this all-day workshop. Breakout sessions included: Nutrition/Proper Care, Infant/Child Development Stages, Importance of Wellness Checkups, Need for Early Literacy, Discipline, Safety (including car seat checks), and Educational Options for Teen Moms. Each participant received resource materials and a diaper bag loaded with supplies. Lee County Excel By 5 presented a breakout session on the Importance of Reading and Early Literacy and gave each participant a book.

Our school readiness event was held in conjunction with the United Way's School Supply Giveaway

on July 20, 2013. This event was held at the mall before it opened, and our coalition had its own area dedicated to school readiness activities for preschoolers. We worked with our group of kindergarten teachers and early care providers to come up with the activities.

Our first family event is scheduled for Saturday, September 14, and will be held at Ballard Park in conjunction with the annual Touch a Truck event, where children are allowed to touch, climb on, and explore large trucks and machinery. We will have numerous activities for children, including inflatables, story time, obstacle course, and face painting. Our resource center will be there with samples of educational materials that can be checked out. We will provide goody bags to the families with information about agencies, our new family resource guide, and wristbands and giveaways for the kids.



We are looking forward to the rest of 2013!

Duncan: News

Submitted by: Mechelle Wallace, Sites Coordinator

The Duncan Health Council and Duncan Excel By 5 Coalition have finished the repairs to the community facility where the Coalition plans to hold family workshops and other activities. One of

the health issues identified through the Community Needs Assessment was to have healthy activities offered locally for the whole family to benefit. We are organizing our first exercise night

in which fifteen families with 0-5 year old children will be involved. We plan to teach a number of line dances. First on our agenda is the "Cupid Shuffle" and we plan to "boogie down!"

Biloxi: Biloxi Excel By 5 Received \$10,000 from the IP Casino Resort Spa

Submitted by: Susan Hunt, Certification Manager

The IP CASINO RESORT SPA promotes and supports the positive development of youth, education, arts, health, social and civic programs which contribute to a higher quality of life within the communities of the greater Gulf Coast region. The charitable focus of the IP CASINO RESORT SPA encourages project and program development and demonstrates the strategic partnerships between community/business leaders and organizations that make a positive difference in the lives of youth.

The Biloxi Excel By 5 Coalition submitted an application and was awarded a \$10,000 grant on March 8, 2013. The monies received by the coalition will help with a program entitled "Teaching Tots on Tuesday". The classes will be held bi-monthly or monthly for children (ages 3 – 4) and parents. The goals and objectives are given to parents prior to registration. The parents must pre-register as the class is limited to 10 children/parents or caregivers.

Lessons are developed based on the Common Core Standards in the areas of Language Arts and Mathematics. Following the academic lesson, a snack is provided for the children. The morning activity concludes with an art lesson or activity for the children.

Parents will receive a folder with the Common Core Standards, the skills lesson, list of toy lending library resource materials supporting the skills taught and the directional explanation for the art activity. The children will receive an educational activity/game or book that reinforces the skills taught. This permits parents to have designated materials to work with their child at home and reinforce the skills taught at "Teaching Tots on Tuesday".

Monies received from the IP CASINO RESORT SPA grant will be used to purchase educational materials for parents for "Teaching Tots on Tuesday", books for educational workshops, and books for children at events

such as the Health Fair, Safety Fair, Come Learn with Santa, Trip to Wonderland, Count Down to Readiness Fair, and Hop the Trail to Bunny Land.

The Mississippi Early Learning Standards for Classrooms serving Three and Four Year-Old Children is organized according to the following areas: English Language Arts, Mathematics, Approaches to Learning, Social and Emotional Development, Science, Physical Development, Creative Expression and Social Studies.

The English Language Arts and Mathematics Standards were developed to correlate to the Common Core State Standards for Mathematics and English Language Arts. The Approaches to Learning, Social and Emotional Development, Science, Physical Development, Creative Expression and Social Studies Standards were developed based on National Standards for Early Childhood Education.

Beulah: Excited

Submitted by: Mechelle Wallace, Sites Coordinator

We have discovered over time that when good leadership is in place and people come together

we can really make a difference in our community! We are in the process of building a multipur-

pose facility with an outdoor playground for children thanks to a land use agreement.



Each Excel By 5 community has access to their own page at Excelby5.com. The website allows coalition members to promote details of upcoming events and to show the world what steps they've taken to make a difference in their community for young children and their families. It is also a way to let community members know how they can join the coalition's efforts.

Please continue to give your Sites Coordinator information for website content so she can help you keep it up-to-date.

Your webpage is a small insight into a world of difference.

Biloxi: Third Annual Countdown to School Readiness Fair

Submitted by: Susan Hunt, Certification Manager

The third annual "Count Down to Kindergarten Readiness Fair" was held April 25th at Lopez School with approximately 50 children attending. The fair was sponsored by Biloxi Public Schools, City of Biloxi and Biloxi Excel By 5. Parents with children 5 years old on or before September 1, 2013, were encouraged to attend the free event.



Upon registering, parents received a "Countdown to Kindergarten Readiness Fair" stamp card. Children and parents who visited 10 or more designated activities had their cards stamped. At the end of the Readiness Fair, pre-schoolers received booklets designed by Biloxi Excel By 5 and Biloxi Public Schools: *Count Down To Kindergarten Readiness Fair; School Bus Activity; Food Service; Hand Washing Procedures; Nutrition Tips, Playground Information* and commercially prepared materials: *My First Day of School is Near; Get Wild about Reading; and Making Move to Kindergarten*. The pre-schoolers also received a box of

24 colors, scissors and a glue stick.

Participating elementary schools were Cedar Lake Christian Academy, Gorenflo, Jeff Davis, Nativity BVM, North Bay, Our Lady of Fatima and Popp's Ferry. The schools were assigned designated activities such as: Syllable Count, Number Recognition, Sequence, Fine Motor, Color Recognition, Alphabet Recognition, and Shape Recognition. Children had the opportunity to visit a classroom and utilize the playground equipment on campus. Children selected a "free" library book and were fingerprinted by the Biloxi Police Department.



Other opportunities included: boarding a school bus, learning about bus safety, visiting the playground, visiting a classroom, learning hand washing procedures, visiting the school cafeteria, going through the serving line, selecting food items of their choice, and seeing how lunch numbers are keyed into the cafeteria PIN pad.



Special thanks to the Educational Partners who made the event a success: Biloxi Excel By 5 Coalition, Biloxi Police Department, Biloxi Public Schools, Count Down to Readiness Fair Committee, Chartwells School Dining Service, City of Biloxi, IP Resort, Casino Spa, Rite -Way, the public and private elementary schools in Biloxi, and Biloxi Public Schools (Transportation, Maintenance, Special Services, Child Nutrition, and Student Services departments).



Please direct questions about this event to Susan Hunt, Certification Manager, at 228-297-6808 or email

Isola: Congratulations

Submitted by: Mechelle Wallace, Sites Coordinator

"WE HAVE A NEW MAYOR IN TOWN!"

Isola Excel By 5 Certification Manager Bobbie Miller was elected Mayor of Isola, MS on

June 4, 2013 and will affirmed the position on June 29, 2013. She began her term on July 1, 2013.

Mid-Jackson: Excelebration

Submitted by: Eileen Beazley, Certification Manager



This year the Mid-Jackson Excel By 5 Coalition has met the requirements for Excel By 5 Recertification!! The EXCELEBRATION was part of the annual Excel By 5 Health Fair with the Midtown/Millsaps College Block Party!



The following activities and health screenings were available to participants:

Height, weight, and blood pressure screening

Information about dental hygiene with proper brushing demonstrations using brushing puppets

First Aid Kits

Imagination Library enrollment

Wildlife Exhibit

Healthy Eating

GED Programs



The following community partners assisted with this event:

Millsaps College

Jackson State University

UMMC UNACARE

UMMC School of Nursing

UMMC Dental Hygiene School

Midtown Partners, Inc.

Mississippi Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy

Walker Foundation

Mississippi Department of Health

Mississippi Museum of Natural Science



Gunnison: Announcement

Submitted by: Mechelle Wallace, Sites Coordinator

The Mayor and Board of Alderman are working on securing funding for a community walking trail and playground equipment. The local leadership along with the Gunnison Excel By 5 Coalition has established a new part-

nership with the Department of Health Delta Health Collaborative/ Bolivar Communities Health Network. Through this partnership the Leadership in Gunnison plan to establish a Mayor's Health Council which will work to ad-

dress health concerns in our community as well as pinpoint parent and family interventions in line with the Excel By 5 certification requirements. We are working to be a Healthy Certified Early Childhood Community.

Corinth/Alcorn County: Benefits Package

Submitted by: Susan O'Connell, Certification Manager



The Corinth/Alcorn County Excel By 5 Early Education focus group

decided to include our coalition to help build relationships with the participating childcare centers in our community. They put together a benefits package for the participating childcare centers. The benefits package includes visits from our Mobile Resource Center, opportunities to receive free CPR training from our local hospital, advertising in the local paper as a participating childcare center, easy access to extra contact hours through the school systems, a goody basket and much more. The goody basket is given

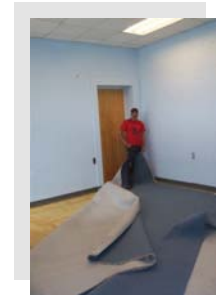
to the childcare center when they complete the survey and make the decision to participate in the Excel By 5 certification process. The basket includes a Wal-Mart gift card, cleaning supplies, educational books and materials, a few snacks and much more.



Senatobia: Resource Center

Submitted by: Laurie Madsen, Co-Certification Manager

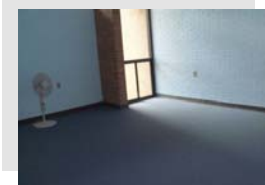
The Senatobia Excel By 5 Coalition is moving quickly in the Excel By 5 process to make information and supplies available for young children and their families in the city of Senatobia. Great progress has been made at the local library to house the Senatobia Excel By 5 Resource Center.



City Approves New Carpet



Friends Eager to Paint



Beautiful!

Alligator: Surprised

Submitted by: Mechelle Wallace, Sites Coordinator

When we asked parents what would help them better parent the young children four out of the ten parents living in the community said they needed to be more literate and needed to get a G.E.D.

As a result, July's Alligator Excel By 5 Family and Parent Workshop topic is Adult Literacy and Education.



Excel By 5 Partners: Childcare Providers



Excel By 5 and its Communities recognize the importance of Childcare Providers in early education. We'd like to thank all of those providers that are participating with Excel By 5 coalitions in helping children be better prepared for kindergarten and the first grade.

Here are this month's featured childcare providers that participate with three Excel By 5 coalitions.

Participating Providers in Pascagoula

* Bethel Christian Academy * Billie's Child Care * Calvary Baptist Day Care * Eastlawn United Methodist Child Development Center * First United Methodist Preschool and Child Care Learning Center * Gulf Coast Toddlers * Highway 90 Daycare * Jackson County Head Start * Ingalls Avenue Baptist Day Care * Little House of Wonders * Pascagoula Head Start Center * Resurrection Catholic School Preschool * and Sugarbears Preschool and Daycare *

Participating Providers in Central Clarke County

* Small World Day Care Center * Kid's Learning Korner

Participating Providers in Mid-Jackson

* Children's Choice Learning Center * Early Links to Innovation * The Bethlehem Center * Holy Ghost Head Start Center * Isaiah Sanders YMCA Child Care Center * Jones Early Childhood Center * Little Samaritan Montessori Center * Mid-Town Head Start Center *

Excel By 5 Partners: Entergy



Thank you, Entergy, for your generous contribution to Excel By 5. Your donation will make a difference in many lives of young children and their families all over the state of Mississippi.

2013 Annual Excel By 5 Community Collaboration Summit

When: October 2, 2013
 9:00am to 3:00pm
 *Registration begins at 8:30am
 Where: Mississippi Children's Museum -Jackson, MS
 Keynote Speaker: Brice Wiggins– Mississippi Senator
 Contact your Community Certification Manager or the State Office for registration details



Directions:
 Mississippi Children's Museum
 2145 Highland Drive
 Jackson, MS 39202

Don't forget to submit your **Community Update** to your Sites Coordinator no later than September 13, 2013.

Also, please plan to showcase your coalition's accomplishments with a **display board**. This a great opportunity for the press and other coalitions to learn more about your community.



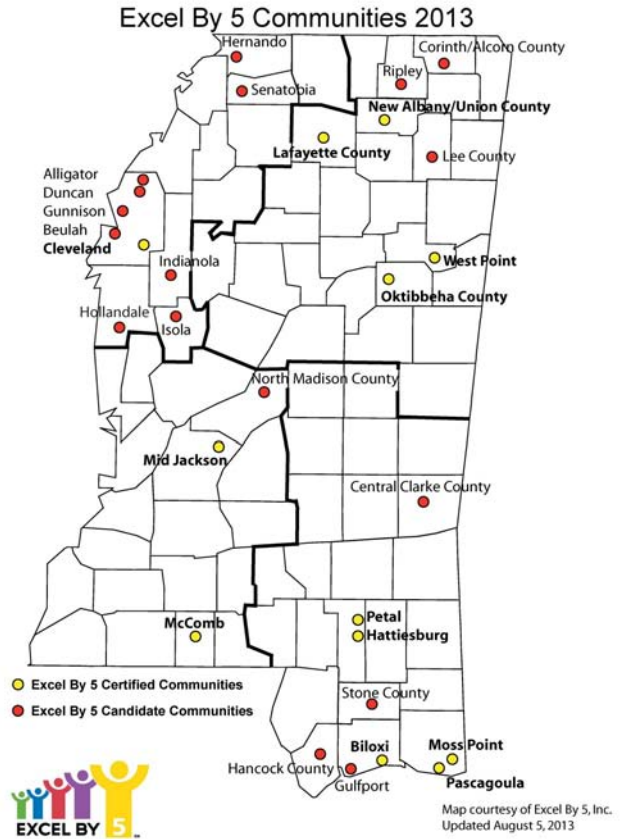
MISSISSIPPI
 CHILDREN'S
 MUSEUM



Excel By 5

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Launched in the Fall of 2004, Excel By 5 is an innovative process, that is designed to encourage and assist communities to become actively involved in supporting their young children. The first of its kind, this certification program emphasizes the important roles parents and primary caregivers play in educating children during their most formative years, birth to five.



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