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FACTS in ACTION

More and More States Create Early Learning Standards

While many are familiar with early childhood program standards, *early learning standards* are a new addition to the debate around standards and accountability. As research continues to increase our understanding of how to foster children's development and the demand for accountability increases, states are starting to specify what children in early childhood education programs should be learning and capable of doing. To learn more about the development of early learning standards across the states, a group of researchers from Teachers College and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro looked at which states have adopted these standards, how they are being implemented, and what kinds of support are being offered for early childhood programs and professionals. As the stakes increase it is important for early childhood education professionals to understand the different components of the standards debate and how they and their programs could be affected.

In general, education standards cover a broad range of topics. The importance of this research study is its focus on *early learning* standards. While program standards describe structural features such as adult:child ratios, group sizes or curriculum, early learning standards express expectations for children's growth and development. Early learning standards serve a number of purposes. They can:

- identify clear expectations of what programs should be teaching,
- establish a common set of goals for child outcomes, and
- highlight and prioritize important aspects of children's growth and development.

Researchers began by identifying those states that are developing or have developed standards for children's learning and development prior to kindergarten entry:

- 19 states have officially adopted or endorsed early learning standards, and an additional 8 states have developed standards not yet officially endorsed
- 13 states are in the process of developing standards
- 18 sets of standards have been finalized since 2000.

Next, researchers explored what these standards cover. The National Association for the Education of Young Children and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education have stressed four important elements that standards should encompass:

- incorporation of all developmental domains
- emphasis on content shown to be important for children's learning and development
- grounding in knowledge of the process by which children develop in the early years
- inclusion of cultural, community, lin-

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guistic and individual perspectives

This translates into having standards in each of the following categories: physical health, cognition, approaches to learning,

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Facts in Action's mission is to connect practice and advocacy with early childhood field and policy research — to turn facts into action — in order to promote higher quality programs and to bring new advocates to the field of early care and education.

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Quality Education and Child Care for All



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*Standards,
Continued from page 1*

social-emotional and language. Seven states have standards in each of these five domains: Arkansas, California, Florida, Minnesota, Oklahoma, Rhode Island and Vermont. Further, researchers found that language is the most common domain to be covered, followed by cognition and then physical health.

Researchers also examined how the states intend the standards to be used and how they relate to assessments and accountability measures. All of the states reported that early learning standards were intended to "inform curriculum and instruction." Other main reasons offered were to "improve program quality," "improve school readiness" and "provide a basis for instructional assessments." Four states - California, Maine, New Mexico and Washington - indicated that they would use the standards as a basis for a data collection system, thus creating accountability links for programs between standards and assessment. However, several states specifically included language in their standards clarifying that *individual children* were not to be held accountable, and assessment data could not be used in this way.

The effectiveness of the early learning standards will depend on the level of support offered to the early childhood programs, professionals, and families for interpreting and implementing the standards. While more attention and resources have focused on the development stage, several states are initiating various forms of support for implementation. These supportive efforts have included short-term initiatives, such as conference presentations or workshops, as well as efforts to integrate standards into teacher preparation programs. In addition, technical support is provided to help people and programs clarify specific questions.

Researchers concluded by providing several recommendations for states' future actions, including:

- States work towards including all developmental domains - particularly social-emotional development.

- States allocate resources for studying the relationship between universal standards and unique populations, such as children with disabilities and English-language learners.
- States organize systematic evaluation of the implementation and use of standards, emphasizing connections between standards, assessment and curriculum.
- States provide training and ongoing support to frontline staff to ensure that the standards are understood and implemented effectively.

Massachusetts has officially adopted a set of early learning standards. They are currently for children ages 3-5 and pre-K/Kindergarten-entry and cover the domains of cognition and language. Explicitly in Massachusetts, the intended purposes of the standards are to inform curriculum and instruction and improve program quality. Early childhood educators should expect to see continued discussion about this topic in the state.

Given the recent activity around early learning standards, advocates and practitioners around the country should be aware of developments in their states. Many states are implementing accountability measures that are linked to their early learning standards. While in early childhood education the push is being made not to link accountability to individual student's performance (as it is in the higher grades) the data will likely be used to evaluate programs' performances. Further, funding or curricula decisions may become linked to these accountability measures. These plans raise important questions, which early educators and advocates should consider as more and more states move towards developing and implementing early learning standards.

Source: C. Scott-Little, S.L. Kagan, V. Stebbins Frelow. *Creating the Conditions for Success with Early Learning Standards* Early Childhood Research & Practice [http://ecrp/uiuc.edu/v5n2/little.html](http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v5n2/little.html)

In The Classroom: Connecting with Latino Families

There are more than 35 million Latinos living in the United States and its territories. By the year 2020, it is estimated that one in four children will come from a Latino family. As preschool classrooms become more and more diverse, it is increasingly important that early education professionals are aware of cultural differences and are able to work with parents and children in a culturally and linguistically sensitive way.

The Center for Children and Families at Education Development Center identifies key cultural values that ECE professionals need to be aware of when working with Latino children and their families, along with suggestions for caregivers and center directors:

Familia/Family: Forming Alliances with the Family Network – for Latinos, the family network is a central part of life, and childrearing is viewed as a shared responsibility. So connecting and working with the extended family is vital in serving Latinos

- Know the student's family, extended

family and social network

- Involve members of the community in teaching, planning and implementation of lessons and activities – families can be a resource to teachers and programs
- Reach out to the student's family and community leaders to act as liaisons and/or interpreters to communicate with the family in the most comfortable and respectful way

Pertenencia/Belonging: Creating a Sense of Family – Latinos' identity is strongly tied to their sense of belonging, whether to their family, community or other group.

- Create an environment where teachers and students are invested in each other. Provide opportunities for children to identify with the group and develop relationships with peers and adults
- Engage children in activities where they can share information about their families and neighborhoods; acknowledge that each child is already the member of a group

- Allow children and teachers to use the language most comfortable for them; try to pair Spanish-speaking adults with Latino children

Educacion/Education: Learning Together – For Latino's, education is a social process. "Success" is not about individual achievement and is directly tied to the influences of others

- Support children and praise their accomplishments by connecting them to family influence – i.e. telling them how proud they make their families
- If possible, arrange children in multi-age groupings so they can learn through observation, much as they would learn from siblings and family members
- Use a mentor/apprenticeship model to allow children to be both student and expert, learning empathy and communication skills

Source: *Connections and Commitments: A Latino-Based Framework for Early Childhood Educators*, C. Eggers-Pierola, The Education Development Center, Inc., 2002.

Quality Preschool – a Cure for Bullying?

After the release of a study by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development in July 2003, linking early entry into child care (birth to age 4.5) to increases in aggression and bullying, debate has raged over whether preschool programs actually cause behavior problems in children. Recent research on bullying brings new information to the debate.

Richard Tremblay, professor of pediatrics, psychiatry and psychology at the University of Montreal claims that high quality preschool programs can actually help to curb childhood bullying behavior. After two decades of research on children, juvenile delinquents and adult offenders, Professor Tremblay has developed a new theory of childhood aggression. As a

result of his research, Tremblay believes that aggression is an inborn trait, starting at birth and peaking about 17 months later. From that point onward, adults in the child's life (parents, teachers, etc.) serve as role models for appropriate behavior, teaching children how to control their impulses.

However, if children don't learn how to regulate their behavior, they will likely experience difficulties with impulse control throughout their lifetimes. According to Tremblay's research, preschool offers a chance to help turn these children around and prevent a lifetime of behavior problems and aggression: "A high quality preschool environment can teach children ways to channel aggressive impulses in constructive ways, such as how

to use words, negotiate, and get along with all those other pint-sized aggressors."

Tremblay warns it is unlikely that poor quality preschool programs will prevent bullying. In programs with low morale and high class sizes, inadequate training and compensation, teachers may never be able to teach their students how to deal with aggression. Tremblay advises creating (and funding) high quality preschool programs that are equipped to teach children how to self-regulate, rather than trying to remediate behavior problems later in life.

Source: *Preschool Programs Best Way to Curb Bullying*. Preschool Matters, NIEER Oct/Nov 2003 <http://nieer.org> and www.excellence-earlychildhood.ca

Asthma Linked to Chemicals

As the Massachusetts Senate considers the "Healthy Cleaning Products Act" - legislation aimed at reducing asthma from cleaning products used in schools, hospitals and day care centers - a new study emerges linking early exposure to certain chemicals with increased risk of childhood asthma.

The study, released by the Keck School of Medicine at the University of Southern California, associates childhood exposure to chemicals and pollutants such as those found in weed killers, pesticides, dust, animals, fuel oil, soot and exhaust with an increased risk of developing asthma. Researchers found that children exposed to weed killers in the first year of life were 4.5 times more likely to develop asthma before age 5 than children not exposed to the chemicals. Additionally, the study found that babies in day care before 4

months of age had an increased risk of developing asthma later in life.

Many of the chemicals found in common cleaning products are known asthmagens (substances that cause asthma or can trigger an attack). Chemicals such as formaldehyde (found in glues in carpets and furniture), and many chemicals found in air fresheners, disinfectants and other cleaning products have been shown to trigger asthma attacks in both children and adults.

It is a good idea to be aware of these chemicals and the effects they can have on students and center workers. Many states and local school districts are now working with the EPA to address these issues and to replace dangerous chemicals with less toxic substances.

More information can be found at:

Babies Harmed by Pollution too, Health Finder, 12/19/03 www.healthfinder.gov

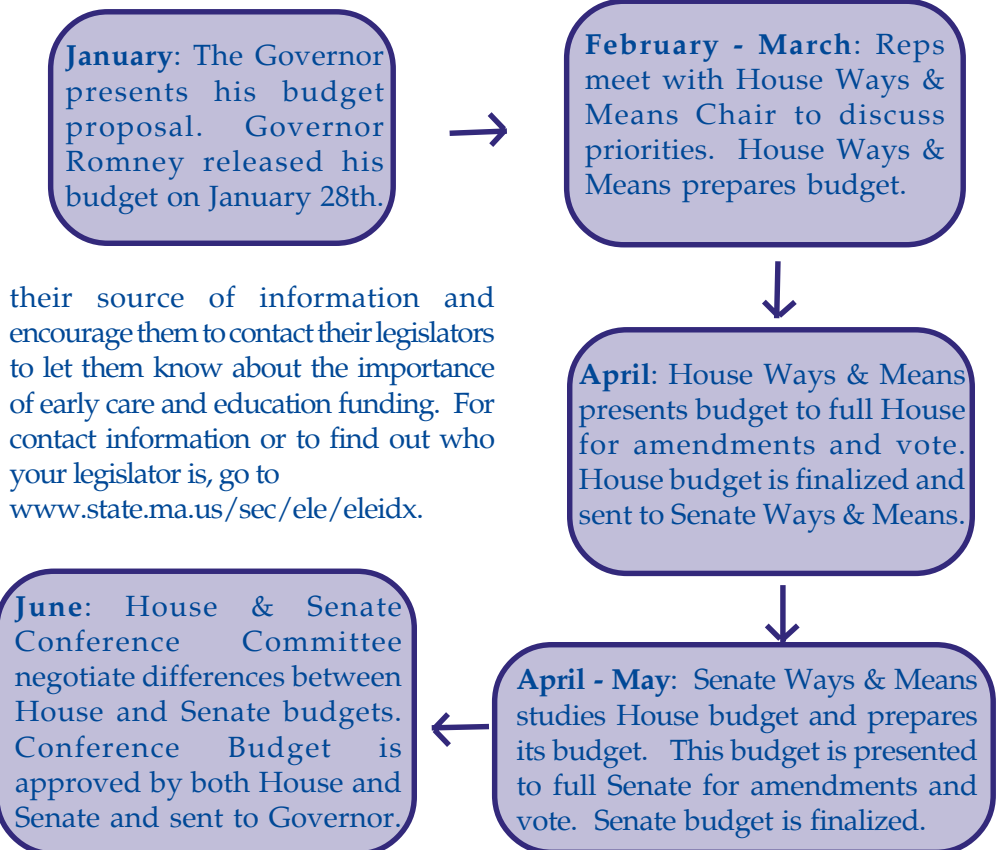
Early Life Environmental Risk Factors for Asthma: Findings from the Children's Health Study, The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences NIH/DHHS, Muhammad Towhid Salam, Yu-Fen Li, Bryan Langholz, Frank Davis Gilliland, <http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov>

Indoor air is becoming polluted by powerful household chemicals, Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, 12/23/03 <http://www.post-gazette.com>

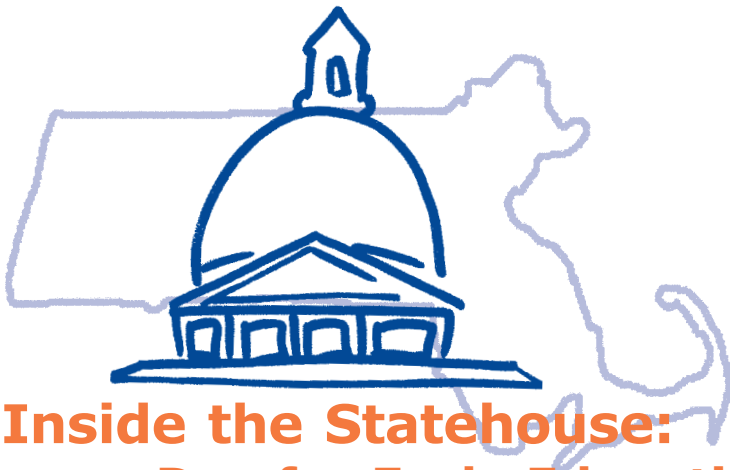
EPA's website dedicated to helping schools "Buy Clean" http://www.epa.gov/oppt/buy_clean/index.htm

Ideas for Action: Impacting the State Budget Process

It's that time of year again: budget time - when the Governor and Legislature are making decisions about funding, spending priorities and budget cuts. During this time, it is important to make sure that the Governor and legislators hear from early care and education providers and advocates about just how important our work is. What can you do to impact the state budget? Call, write or meet with your state legislator - both your personal legislators and those that represent where you work. You can also organize your parents, your staff, and other members of your community - be



their source of information and encourage them to contact their legislators to let them know about the importance of early care and education funding. For contact information or to find out who your legislator is, go to www.state.ma.us/sec/ele/eleidx.



Inside the Statehouse: Advocacy Day for Early Education and School-Age Programs, 2004

"Here we go again...but not quite the same" I thought to myself as I approached the State House that morning. I was ready to be searched from head to toe and a little chilly since I left my coat in the car - one less thing to hold me up while going through the metal detectors. Today was not only lobby day but also the Constitutional debate around Gay rights to marry. However, to my amazement it did not seem to keep people away. I stood in line with many of my colleagues ready to lobby on matters important for our youngest children. I was elated as I approached the corridor to see a sea of early childhood educators and supporters joining to rally on this very time limited morning.

The morning began with opening comments in the Great Hall. It was refreshing to be in that space, as opposed to Nurses Hall where the acoustics really handicapped the speakers.

The remarks from the president of MADCA, Representative Peter Larkin and the Commissioner of the Office of Child Care Services Ardith Wieworka were great and very encouraging. However the most impressive of all for me was that the Speaker of the House Thomas Finneran took the time to address the field in the midst of all the controversy he was dealing with. He was brief but clear in delivering the message that he wants early education to work for Massachusetts. He even joked that we were the reason the

press was swarming the State House and congratulated us on sticking to our agenda and just showing up. He said he was impressed. Well Speaker you impressed many of us that morning and the early childcare field would like you to just keep on impressing.

After our much energized beginning we went off to meet with our work and home based Representatives and Senators. This was the real challenge. Although some of us were unable to meet with our legislators we had good conversations with their aides. I had the pleasure of visiting Rep.

Marie St. Fleur, Rep. Angelo Scaccia, Sen. Marian Walsh and Sen. John Hart. I must say Steve the aide in Sen. Walsh's office was a joy to speak with. He seemed genuinely interested and eager to pass on the information. I will

find out when I do my follow up phone call over the next couple of days. For me it was another great success. I am that much more comfortable at the State House, that much more energized about this important work and that much closer to running for... No, I better wait. I am still getting my feet wet.

Reflections on Advocacy Day, submitted by Lori Thames, Director, Project Hope Children's Center.

*Advocacy Day for Early
Education & Care and
School-Age Programs,*

Held February 11, 2004

Attended by 500
members of the field

Reader's Comment Corner

I was pleased to read the article "Examining Family Child Care in MA" (Nov./Dec. 2003) which examines the "Massachusetts Family Child Care Survey" - a study by Acre Family Day Care and Wellesley College. The article points out some of the important policy implications such as "...systems play a significant role in assuring that providers are meeting regulations and receiving training." The article also states that the "training and support they [systems] offer can have a crucial positive effect on the quality of family child care, and thus children's school readiness." Unfortunately, there are presently no system-wide standards of measuring the system's impact on the quality of care in its contracted family child care programs. This study is a small step towards ensuring that children are receiving the highest quality care possible, and that a family child care provider's skills and abilities to provide high quality care and education really is enhanced by their involvement with a system or network. To access this report in its entirety go to www.acrefamily.org and click on "Acre-Wellesley study." To learn more about the Institute for Family Child Care Systems click on "What we do," then click on "Institute."

Submitted by Paula Bowie, Director, Institute for Family Child Care Systems at Acre Family Day Care.

Facts In Action welcomes written comments from readers. If you have tried something new based on an article you read in Facts In Action or would like to respond to an article you've read, write to us! Send to Erika Argersinger at 95 Berkeley St., Suite 306, Boston, MA 02116 or email to: eargersinger@associatedearlycareandeducation.org

ECE Council Releases Report

As part of last year's state budget, the MA Legislature and Governor created a Council on Early Education and Care, composed of the Commissioners of Education, the Office of Child Care Services, and of Public Health. The Council was charged with developing a "comprehensive plan to coordinate, integrate and streamline publicly funded early education and care administration and functions." The council held five public forums, soliciting input from nearly 400 individuals who attended. Based on the discussions among the commissioners, as well as their review of the comments and recommendations from the early care and education field, the council made a number of recommendations aimed at improving the coordination of services, strengthening parent involvement, and ensuring the creation of a workforce system to support the education, training, and compensation of teachers.

Specific recommendations of the Council include:

- Adopting uniform program standards, or "Commonwealth standards" for all preschool programs, in place of the current multiple sets of standards used by DOE and OCCS; and establishing similar uniform Commonwealth standards for Infant/Toddler and Family Child Care programs
- Establishing a joint program monitoring plan in order to reduce duplication of effort at the state and local level, as well as the regulatory burden on programs
- Working towards the establishment of a standard state rate for services and uniform financial eligibility criteria for child care subsidies
- Strengthening parent education and involvement through the development of a guidebook and expansion of training opportunities on nurturing children's development and education
- Creating a single early education and care data collection system to guide policy and program planning. The system would be maintained by OCCS, with information shared across the

three state agencies, and with local CPC councils.

- Establishing opportunities for early childhood educators to advance along a career ladder through aligning credits offered by various professional development systems, and supporting scholarships, loans, and federal loan forgiveness programs.
- Ensuring that any increase in the standard state rates for services be used to improve compensation of early care and education providers, including family child care providers.

The Council proposed that it continue as an oversight board that will meet quarterly and continue working towards coordinating policies, program administration and program funding. Providers and advocates will want to keep informed of the Council's progress and continue to push for improvement.

For full report visit: www.doe.mass.edu/els/news04/childhood_report.pdf

Robin Hood in Reverse

The Children's Defense Fund reacted strongly to the Bush Administration's Fiscal Year 2005 budget in a report -declaring that the budget choices are an act of "Robin Hood in Reverse." Emphasizing that a budget is more than a spending plan, but rather it is a declaration of values and priorities, the CDF report asserts that this budget announces, "America does not have a resources problem, it has a priorities problem."

First, the budget proposal intends to make permanent the tax cuts passed in 2003. According to the CDF report, for the same \$181,700 that the permanent Bush tax cut

would eventually give to each individual millionaire on average in one year, the following alternatively could be provided: after-school programs for 208

children, or child care assistance for 49 children of working parents, or Head Start for 22 preschoolers.

President Bush's proposed budget routinely makes choices that cut or severely underfund programs critical to providing children's needs. For example, the proposed budget flat funds child care assistance, thus leaving more than 550,000 children still on waiting lists. It freezes Head Start funding, when only 3 out of 5 eligible preschoolers are served, and provides no significant increase in funding for child nutrition programs, even though 22 million children suffer from hunger. The budget proposal also takes from America's working families. The proposed budget will force 200,000 children from the child care rolls by 2009, as families lose child care assistance. The Center for Law and Social Policy and the



Center on Budget and Policy Priorities claim that in fact as many as 447,000 children could lose their child care assistance by 2009.

The budget leaves children behind. This budget proposes the smallest increase for education since fiscal year 1996, leaving many federal child care and education programs such as No Child Left Behind and Title 1 underfunded by billions of dollars. The budget proposes to block grant several funding streams, thus eluding the federal responsibility to children and families. In addition, cuts come at a time when most states are facing significant fiscal deficits and are cutting programs to balance their own budgets. Therefore, states and families are even more dependent on support from the Federal government. Overall, the Bush Administration is an act of Robin Hood in reverse.

Source: Robin Hood in Reverse. Children's Defense Fund. www.childrensdefense.org

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What do you get in return? Five issues filled with the latest research on early childhood issues, important state and national policy updates, and information on how all of this impacts you as providers and advocates. Please fill out the form below and send it in today! Thank you.

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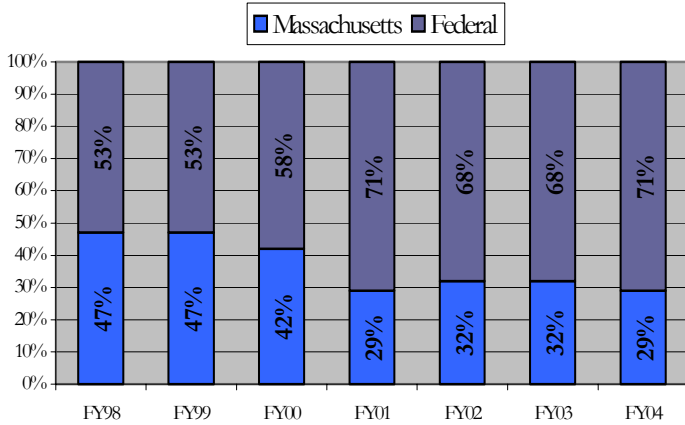
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Quick Facts to Clip and Quote

Just where do Early Childhood Education dollars come from? How much comes from the federal government and how much does Massachusetts invest? In Fiscal Year 1998, funds came almost equally from federal and state dollars. However, since then, the split of ECE dollars has shifted dramatically, with Massachusetts' investment decreasing from 47% in FY '98 to 29% in FY 04. See the chart below for each year's splits.

Federal and State Share - Early Education and Care Funding - FY98 - FY04



Source: Associated Early Care and Education, Inc.

Jazz It Up!

Associated Early Care and Education, Inc. invites you to our 7th annual Jazz It Up! celebration with the Handel and Haydn Society at the Berklee Performance Center. Sunday, April 18, 2004. For more information please contact Kathleen Kilgore @ 617-695-0700 x 266 or

kkilgore@associatedearlycareandeducation.org

New England AEYC Early Childhood and School-Age Annual Conference

Join NEAEYC April 30 - May 1, 2004 at the Worcester Centrum, MA for their annual Early Childhood and School-Age Conference. Focus areas of the conference are: Peaceable Classrooms, Violence in the Lives of Children, Conflict Resolution; Challenging Behaviors, Behavior Management, Inclusion; Play Environment, Curriculum; Child/Family/Community. Keynote speakers will include: Alfie Kohn, Margie Carter and Deb Curtis, Luis Hernandez. Registration deadline is April 17th. For more information please visit <http://www.massaeyc.netfirms.com/>.

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