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## ABSTRACT

This issue of "Community Update" focuses on families involved in learning. The first article briefly discusses the "Ready to Read, Ready to Learn" White House summit that highlighted new research on early childhood learning. The center spread of this issue offers "Priming the Primary Educator: A Look at L. A. County's Parent Involvement Programs" (Nicole Ashby). The issue also announces the September, 2001 Satellite Town Meeting; describes a pediatric program that reaches out to families; presents an interview with Derrick Smith, a parent, about staying involved during the high school years; describes Camp Fire USA's Community Family Club program; discusses recent activities of partners; and concludes with information on the Department of Education's Information Resource Center. (RS)

[Families Involved in Learning]  
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Editor: Nicole Ashby

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# COMMUNITY

Issue No. 91

U P D A T E

September 2001



Photography by Rod Paige, Jr.

*“The more we share with parents about this type of research...the more they will start to ask themselves ‘What am I teaching my baby?’”*

*Lisa Kaufman, coordinator of the Early Advantage program for the Los Angeles County Office of Education*

**FULL STORY ON PAGE 4**

## “Ready to Read, Ready to Learn”

*White House Summit Highlights New Research on Early Childhood Learning*

First Lady Laura Bush joined U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige and U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Tommy G. Thompson to co-host this summer’s White House Summit on Early Childhood Cognitive Development, “Ready to Read, Ready to Learn.” The summit unveiled a new federal effort to develop and promote research-based cognitive development activities for preschool-age children.

The summit was created by Mrs. Bush to highlight the early learning activities that parents and educators can use to prepare young children for school. More than 400 government,

education, community and philanthropic leaders from across the country attended the meeting at Georgetown University on July 26–27.

Secretary Paige called the summit the first step in a long-range and widespread effort to raise public awareness of the science of and need for early childhood cognitive development. He described the new task force of senior education and health and human services department officials announced at the meeting as a way to put the research and recommendations presented during the course of the summit to work in government programs for young children.

“Together, the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services will ensure that the Head Start and preschool programs we support are doing the right things and getting results,” Paige said. “We will also work to make sure every adult who cares for a child understands the methods we have learned at this summit and will use them at home. In other words, we will get the government’s house in order and spread the word to all the other houses, too.”

The summit participants also heard from the newly appointed assistant secretary of education for elementary and

## COMMENTS

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## Pediatric Program Reaches Out to Families

During a regular checkup, pediatricians in the "Reach Out and Read" program give parents a prescription for their children's total well-being: "Read with your children."

Serving more than 1.4 million children and their families each year, Reach Out and Read is a national program that seeks to make early literacy an integral part of pediatric primary care. At every well-child examination for children from six months to five years of age, pediatricians encourage parents to read aloud to their young children and give books to their patients to take home.



Zuckerman with patient.

The program started at Boston City Hospital (now Boston Medical Center) with educators, doctors and nurses bringing books from home to the waiting room so that children could read while they were waiting for their appointments. When it was discovered how quickly the books disappeared, founders Robert Needlman,

M.D., Kathleen Fitzgerald Rice, M.S.Ed., and Barry Zuckerman, M.D. developed the Reach Out and Read concept.

"Pediatrics has always gone beyond treating illness to trying to prevent problems," explains Zuckerman. "Promoting literacy is an important and natural step in the evolution of preventative pediatrics."

Over the past 12 years, the Reach Out and Read program has spread across the country with more than 1,100 sites located at hospitals, health centers and private pediatric offices. Thousands of pediatricians and nurse practitioners have received training in how to demonstrate to parents and children the importance and techniques of reading together.

Among supporters are the U.S. Department of Education, the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, and Scholastic, Inc.

For information about starting a Reach Out and Read site, visit [www.reachoutandread.org](http://www.reachoutandread.org) or call 617-629-8042.

## Satellite Town Meeting

Tuesday, September 18  
8:00 p.m.—9:00 p.m. E.T.

The September Satellite Town Meeting, the first of the 2001–2002 season, will focus on the most productive ways that parents can contribute to their children's academic success, as well as the best ways for schools to reach out to parents and families. Secretary Paige and his guest pan-

elists will explore various topics in the broadcast entitled "Families Involved in Learning: The Key to Student Success," including:

- The latest research on family involvement,
- Empowering parents to be better advocates for their children in dealing with schools and school districts,
- Ways that schools and teachers can be more welcoming to parents,
- Things parents can do in the home to encourage student achievement, and

- The Department of Education's Partnership for Family Involvement in Education.

To join the Satellite Town Meeting, call 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327), or visit [www.ed.gov/satelliteevent](http://www.ed.gov/satelliteevent). The Satellite Town Meeting is produced by the U.S. Department of Education in partnership with the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the National Alliance of Business, with support from the Bayer Foundation, the Procter and Gamble Fund, Target Stores, and Riverdeep Interactive Learning.

# Staying Involved During the High School Years

An Interview with Derrick Smith, a Parent at James Madison Memorial High School, *Madison, Wis.*



**D**errick Smith is one of the founders of "AHANA" (Asian, Hispanic, African American, and Native American), a parent group at

*James Madison Memorial High School in Madison, Wis. The group promotes family involvement as well as smaller learning environments in school, which have been shown to be effective in closing the achievement gap between ethnic minority students and their peers.*

## What led to the start of AHANA?

We felt that it was important that all parents get involved with their children in the high school. When kids get to that age, they tend to feel isolated. Because there are two wage earners for some families and a single parent in others, there's not a lot of time for parents to really sit down and talk with their kids about high school and the problems and pressures they encounter—especially for kids of color. Here in Madison, where there's a 4-percent black population in some high schools, there is a problem with kids of color getting acclimated. I think sometimes when school

administrators and teachers see parents of color they think their ideas—and ideals—are different from those who are not of color. But most people want their kids to have the best education, and parents have to be at the forefront of that.

## How can high school parents become more active?

One thing is to visit the campus, because then you really see what your child is going through. Also, by stepping onto the campus you make teachers and administrators aware that you are holding them accountable for the things that you feel are important.

## How do your sons deal with having their father on campus?

Some parents want their kids to feel independent and they want to be a "friend" to their kids—and I don't think there's anything wrong with that—but teenagers need to have their parents involved in their day-to-day lives. We can't just send them off to school and expect four years later that they're going to be these great young adults....

I don't worry about being "uncool," because there are too many kids falling through the cracks. I don't want to embarrass my sons; I understand peer pressure. But if I don't take the time to

go to the school and find out what's going on, I can't expect somebody else to do that. So I get them involved and say, "I'm going to call your counselor next week to sit down with her for a few minutes to see how you're doing and look at some of the college issues that you have and I'd like you to be there with me. What's your schedule?"

## How can the school involve more parents?

Sometimes you have to put the onus on the teachers and the administrators to meet you when you can: after hours, early in the morning or at your home. I think that's where some of the issues in education have changed from when I was a child. Before, if you had an issue, your teacher could come to your house or meet you somewhere convenient. Nowadays, we don't see a lot of that.

We now are talking with the administrators at Memorial to see if we can make it more convenient for parents who can't get there easily. We need to send buses to their community centers, or give them a taxi voucher, or get them to school some other way. Another way we try to welcome parents to our meetings is to have interpreters—both Spanish and Hmong.

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

secondary education, Susan Neuman, who told of the findings in her own research about the effect of children's surroundings on how and when they learn to read. "There is no way that we can be successful without parental involvement and parental choice," Neuman told the audience.

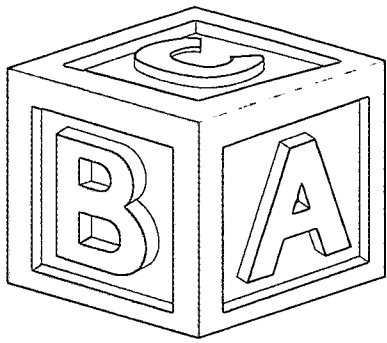
Closing the summit, Secretary Paige challenged the participants to spread the word about what adults can do to help children learn. "We will encourage adults to read with children and encourage teachers to stress cognitive development with

their young charges," Paige said. "We need to build a bridge between powerful scientific research, homes and preschools, and make sure that adults know how vital it is that children have strong cognitive development, even before they enter school. I look forward to working with you and with teachers and parents around the country to ensure that no child is left behind."

More information on the White House Summit on Early Childhood Cognitive Development is available at [www.ed.gov](http://www.ed.gov).

**A**s this issue of *Community Update* went to press, the United States suffered the worst terrorist attack in the nation's history, resulting in great loss of life and tremendous damage. U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige is directing the resources of the U.S. Department of Education to assist those affected by the attacks, including the students displaced by the destruction of the World Trade Center towers in New York City who require services to help them deal with fear and grief. More information on the Department's response will be featured in upcoming issues.





# Priming the Primary Educator

BY NICOLE ASHBY

## *A Look at L.A. County's Parent Involvement Programs*

This fall, visitors to the Del Amo Fashion Center in Southern California will find a new and unique mall attraction next to the food court and department store. Colorful floor stencils of numbers and letters will direct them to the “Early Advantage Center,” a project by the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) and the Los Angeles County Education Foundation.

The center, which opens in November at the largest shopping mall on the West Coast, will serve as a one-stop shop for parents who want to learn what they can do to ensure their children's success in the primary school years. According to LACOE, the Early Advantage Center will be the first of its kind in the nation.

“What this office—its board and its superintendent—realized,” says LACOE's acting superintendent Marilyn Gogolin, “is that if we really want to change student achievement, if we really want to stop playing catch-up or stop trying to change the life of a child after the child's already in school, we have to do something different.”

The Early Advantage Center is the latest effort in a chain of initiatives by LACOE to prepare the parent as the child's first teacher and part of the county's strategic plan to improve school readiness for all children, particularly for those in the most need. The concept was born three years ago at local hospitals as an outreach program for expecting mothers and parents of newborns. But LACOE recognized that, in order to make significant change in a county of 1.7 million chil-

dren, it had to go where the masses are.

“So we realized that the mall is a place of entertainment. It's a place to just go and look around when you can't afford to go to a skating rink or a \$40 rock concert,” adds Gogolin. Services through Early Advantage will be free to the public.

With negotiations under way for a second center, the Del Amo site will be a prototype for major malls throughout Los Angeles County, leading to greater community support for education, LACOE hopes. The Del Amo Fashion Center, a privately owned corporation, jumpstarted the project by donating 5,500 square feet of prime retail space.

“For the longest time, businesses that wanted to support education were left to maybe adopt a school or write a check,” says Sophia Waugh, president of the Los Angeles County Board of Education. “But now we're talking about something much more sophisticated: businesses having real impact on a child's life at the very earliest stage.”

Decorated with Sesame Street-like props and other visuals, the center will be organized into learning stations that will focus on activities for building children's skills, from cognitive abilities to physical development. For example, one section devoted to infants and toddlers will include a play area. There also will be two literacy rooms—one for pre-kindergartners, the other for children of all ages—which will contain books, audiotapes and an area for storytelling.

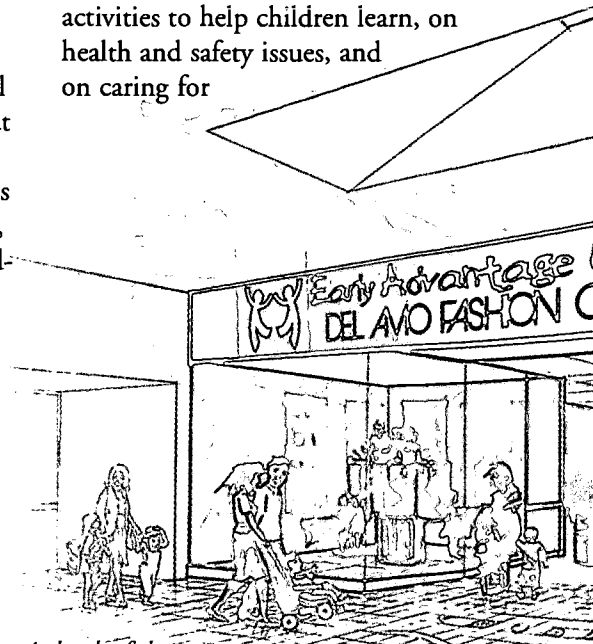
However, the Early Advantage Center will not be a drop-off facility.

A sign reading “Every child must be accompanied by an adult” will be posted to remind visitors of the importance of parent involvement.

A second component of the center focuses on training caregivers and parents, including grandparents who account for a large percentage of the child-rearing adults in L.A. County. There will be workshops and classes led by early childhood experts explaining, among other topics, the most recent findings on how a baby's brain is stimulated to learn.

“The more we share with parents about this type of research, the next time they do anything, let's say, go and grab themselves a bowl of cereal, the more they will start to ask themselves ‘What am I teaching my baby?’ just by pouring cereal in a bowl,” says Early Advantage's coordinator Lisa Kaufman, whose research contributed to the development of the program.

In addition, through the project's Child Care Training Institute, child-care providers can take workshops on activities to help children learn, on health and safety issues, and on caring for



*A sketch of the new center.*

special needs children.

Another feature of the center, which will operate on mall hours, organizes resources such as publications or contacts for families to learn about additional services, whether economic, social or health-related.

### Trainer of Trainers

With the Early Advantage initiative, LACOE plans to bring under one roof several of its parent programs being offered at various sites throughout its 81 school districts. As the largest regional education agency in the country, LACOE is trying to build capacity at the local level by providing training to schools, which in turn train the parents, who then mobilize themselves to train more parents.

"To empower parents to be able to share key information with their own parent community is what this is all about," says Nancy Jenkins, a former school board member who translated her experiences as a mother of three into coordinating LACOE's Parent University. The program, which covers math and reading coaching, standards and assessments, and educational technology, has a Web site with more than 250 pages of instructional materials for parents and caregivers to use with children at home.

Another county effort for building home-school connections, the Parent Education Center, offers

training to parents on topics ranging from college preparation to school safety. The center also trains school staff on how to communicate effectively with parents from diverse cultures.

Daniel Gil's extensive involvement in the education of his six children led to a position as coordinator of the Parent Education Center at Abraham Lincoln High School. As a Mexican

for teachers. Instead of concentrating on student behavior to improve student achievement, the Teacher Expectations Support Achievement program looks at changing educators' attitudes towards children's academic potential to ensure all students are held to the same high standards. With a similar mission, PESA examines the interaction between parent and child



Photography by Bob Rifkin, Jr.

*Ma with daughters Judy (left) and Kathy.*

immigrant who took adult classes at night while working full time, Gil can relate to the parents in his largely Hispanic neighborhood who work two or three jobs. He encourages them to stay involved both at home and at school in their children's education in spite of the workload. "I'm talking parent to parent, so they believe me," he says.

Los Angeles County serves one of the country's most diverse school systems, with some ethnic populations larger than those at the state level. Much of the parent training provided is translated into several languages, including Spanish, Korean, Chinese and Armenian.

Because the goal for each program is to develop the parent as a partner in their children's education, there is some overlap in topics covered, but each effort has a slightly different focus.

Five years ago LACOE adopted the initiative "Parent Expectations Support Achievement (PESA)," a parent version of the national long-running program

to foster high expectations in the home.

Before her first PESA workshop, Daisy Ma says she thought she was doing a good job in spending time with her two daughters. Through the training she later learned that watching television is a passive activity that does not provide the same quality of interaction as, for instance, reading a book together or teaming up to do household chores.

"Being a parent is kind of a new job in our lives," says Ma, now a PESA parent facilitator and mentor for Chinese families. "Every year it's changing and we need to learn something new to be good parents."

The Los Angeles County Office of Education is a member of the U.S. Department of Education's Partnership for Family Involvement in Education. For more information about LACOE's parent programs, visit [www.lacoe.edu](http://www.lacoe.edu), or call Dee Nishimoto, director of the Division of Parent and Community Services, at 562-922-6381.





# PARTNERSHIP *for Family Involvement in Education*

*A coalition of more than 7,200 education, community, religious and business organizations nationwide.  
To join the Partnership, call 1-800-USA-LEARN or visit <http://pfie.ed.gov>.*

## Camp Fire's Family Club Builds Partnerships

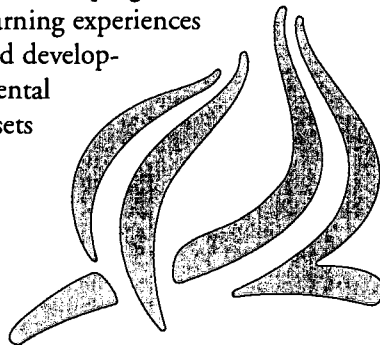
For over 90 years, Camp Fire USA has helped build caring and confident youths and future leaders through its K-12 programs, its partnership with schools, and its deliberate and effective involvement of parents and families in programming for youth.

The newest addition to Camp Fire's collection of family-oriented programming is the Community Family Club, which creates collaborations with communities and schools and facilitates family togetherness.

Designed by Camp Fire after two years of research about consumers, including parents, teachers and community members, the program draws upon the support of all involved to provide developmental programming for all family members during non-school hours.

"Community Family Club involves the entire family—regardless of the form the family takes in today's society," says Stewart Smith, national chief executive officer for Camp Fire USA. "It offers a unique opportunity for parents to find a community support group for raising their children. Most

important, it is outcome-based and tracks the progressive learning experiences and developmental assets



ents and community mentors to become involved as partners with the school in children's learning.

"Once you experience the family club, you're hooked," says Irma Flores-Brothers, principal of Richard J. Wilson Elementary School in Fort Worth, Texas. Flores-Brothers found the Community Family Club to be a great way to increase family involvement in school activity.

"Partnership is essential... We all have to care, to be involved, and to show children that there are people to help them achieve," she adds. Community Family Club is an example of what

can happen when schools, families and community-based organizations work together for the benefit of children and youths.

Community Family Clubs are currently being piloted in seven states. Systemwide testing of the program is scheduled for late fall, with full implementation of the program in 41 states and the District of Columbia by summer of 2002.

For more information, call 1-800-669-6884 or visit [www.campfireusa.org](http://www.campfireusa.org).

# Camp Fire USA<sup>SM</sup>

## Today's kids. Tomorrow's leaders.

acquired by both youths and adults."

This innovative program is designed to be delivered in four primary venues: schools, churches, corporations and childcare settings. Families in the club meet at least once a month to participate in developmentally appropriate activities with their children. Older youths have an opportunity to take on leadership roles as well.

At a school-based site, families partner with classroom teachers and counselors to provide fun club activities that enhance the skills being taught in the school curriculum. This allows par-



# ABOUT OUR PARTNERS

## A Roundup of Recent Activities



HFRP founder Heather Weiss (left) speaks with a mother and her children at a Boston elementary school.

**Harvard Family Research Project (HFRP)**, at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, provides strategies for family involvement and community collaboration to support student achievement through ongoing research. Among its projects, the Family Involvement Network of Educators connects over 300 teacher-trainers committed to preparing educators for greater family involvement in education. Resources include research, publications and training tools on various topics related to increasing family involvement. In addition, HFRP offers two online services free of charge: a new database of after-school program evaluations,

now available in a pilot version, and a monthly newsletter, *The Evaluation Exchange*, a compilation of articles from evaluators and practitioners worldwide. For more information, visit <http://gseweb.harvard.edu/hfrp>.

**IBM** will contribute an additional \$25 million to expand its Reinventing Education grant program, bringing the total value of this technology and school reform initiative to \$70 million. Since 1994, IBM has provided Reinventing Education grants to 21 school districts and states in the United States, as well as to eight countries, to develop technology solutions that support school reform efforts and raise student achievement. Grants in Charlotte and Durham, N.C., and Detroit, Mich., are implementing the IBM Learning Village, an Internet-based tool that connects schools with homes, community centers and housing developments to allow parents to conference with teachers, learn about their children's homework, and see how their children are performing against standards. Parents in Durham have additional access to computers through a partnership with Duke University. For more information, visit [www.ibm.com/ibm/ibmgives](http://www.ibm.com/ibm/ibmgives) or call 914-499-6692.

**National Center for Family Literacy (NCFL)**, a nonprofit organization based in Louisville, Ky., is dedicated to improving literacy services for families to gain the resources they need to support their children's education. NCFL developed a literacy model that integrates adult education instruction, children's education, Parent and Child Together Time, and Parent Time into a comprehensive program for families with preschoolers. While their children learn in nearby classrooms, parents pursue their own educational



Learning together is at the heart of a family literacy project in Louisville, Ky.

goals. During the day, parents and children work and play together, giving parents the chance to increase their skills as their children's first teachers. Because of the model's success, NCFL began development of a school-age model, which is being implemented in 45 Title I elementary schools nationwide. For more information, visit [www.familit.org](http://www.familit.org) or call 1-877-FAM-LIT-1 (1-877-326-5481).



## CALENDAR

### October 17–19, Mobile, Ala.

The first in a series of fall conferences on *Improving America's Schools*, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education. The Partnership for Family Involvement in Education will hold a Families Engaged in Student Learning Institute on day two of each

conference. The remaining dates are Nov. 13–15 in Reno, Nev., and Dec. 17–19 in San Antonio, Texas. Call 1-800-203-5494. Also, visit [www.ncbe.gwu.edu/iasconferences](http://www.ncbe.gwu.edu/iasconferences) or e-mail [ias\\_conferences@ed.gov](mailto:ias_conferences@ed.gov).

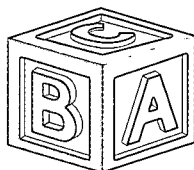
### October 31–November 2,

Anchorage, Alaska.  
*Eighteenth Annual Symposium on Partnerships in Education: "Exploring*

*New Frontiers for Student Success.*" Call the National Association of Partners in Education at 703-836-4880 or visit [www.partnersineducation.org](http://www.partnersineducation.org).

*While these resources are relevant to the mission of the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, they are available from a variety of sources, and their presence here does not constitute an endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education.*

**IN THIS ISSUE:**



Priming the  
Primary Educator

**PAGE 4**

## Linking Families to Education Information

Activities for helping children learn while at home, tips for planning ahead for college, and steps toward becoming more involved in neighborhood schools are among a number of resources parents and caregivers can access through the Information Resource Center (IRC) at the U.S. Department of Education.

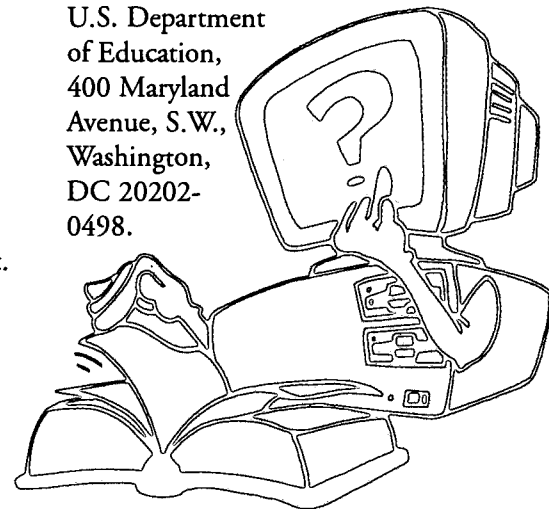
A central entry point into the Department, the IRC links families, schools and communities to information on student learning and provides updates on Department programs, funding opportunities, teleconferences and other events.

The IRC is staffed with specialists with expertise in various fields of education that can provide assistance or contacts for—

- programs and initiatives that center on the president and secretary's priorities,
- popular grant programs,
- free publications and materials, available directly from the Department's publication center,
- teleconferences and events, such as the monthly Satellite Town Meeting,
- referrals to additional education information and services, and
- directory assistance for finding a person or office in the Department.

The Department of Education's Information Resource Center is available Monday through Friday—9 a.m. to 5 p.m. E.T.—by calling the toll-free number 1-800-USA-LEARN

(1-800-872-5327). The center can also be reached by visiting [www.ed.gov/offices/OIIA/IRC](http://www.ed.gov/offices/OIIA/IRC), or by sending correspondence to its e-mail address at [usa\\_learn@ed.gov](mailto:usa_learn@ed.gov) or to Information Resource Center, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC 20202-0498.





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