



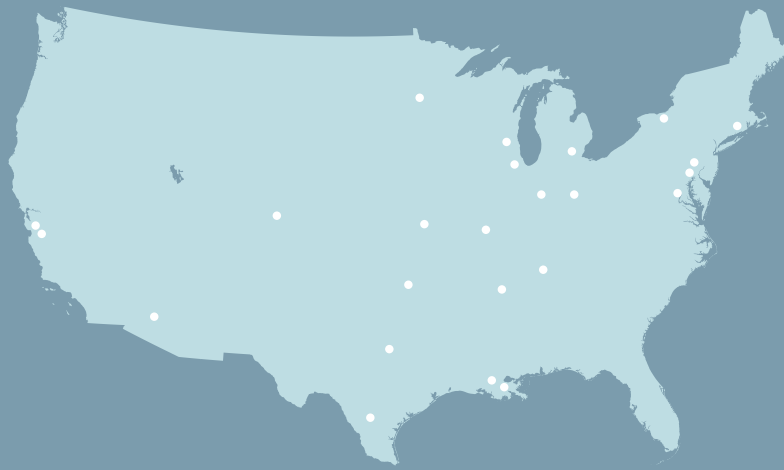
How Cities Can Compete For Great School Leaders



Education Cities™

A NETWORK OF LEADERS
FOR GREAT PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Who We Are



ABOUT US

Education Cities is a network of 31 city-based organizations in 24 cities united by one North Star goal: increasing the number of great public schools.

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JULY 2015
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INTRODUCTION

Cities compete in nearly every sector. They compete to attract jobs. They compete to attract highly skilled workers. They even compete to attract sports teams. When evaluating new markets, employers and job seekers have common priorities: vibrant cultural scenes, affordable and quality housing, and strong public schools.

Cities should compete then, too, for the school leader and founder talent they need to fuel a successful school system. But they don't.

In truth, cities barely compete at all when it comes to school leaders. Most cities struggle to help students achieve at high levels and find the talent needed to drive school success. In most cases, they rely on traditional university based training programs and a few newer talent pipeline programs, like Teach For America and New Leaders, to source their future school leader talent.

At Education Cities, we are privileged to work with member organizations in 24 cities across the country that are trying to ensure that all students can access great public schools. These organizations are focused on deploying a number of strategies to attract, support and retain great school leaders, yet we have come to believe that many cities in our network and beyond are neglecting some essential strategies to build their school leader pipelines.

For this paper we asked two researchers and recruitment experts, Christina Legg Greenberg and Julie Petersen, to help us interview more than 20 nonprofit, city, education, private sector and recruitment leaders, and review the research on proven strategies to identify, recruit and retain leaders in the public and private sectors. The research, in addition to other supplemental publications, are available at the end of this paper in the form of a recommended reading list.

Here's what we found: cities and city-based organizations working to improve public education could do much, much more to compete in the effort to attract and retain great school leaders.

In other sectors of the American economy you simply don't see the same level of passivity and deference to competitors when recruiting leaders. Fortune 500 companies recognize that talent fuels their success and compete ferociously to attract, invest in and retain the best and the brightest.

In fact, one of the most common private sector talent strategies is to poach great leaders from your competition, yet poaching is a loaded word in education. Some say that the talent pool for great school leaders is shallow, and competition is a zero sum game; it is better to play nicely than poach from each other's cities. We disagree.

In a sector with healthy competition, where the incentives for great school leaders more accurately reflect their value in the national labor market and their impact on children and cities, we believe the talent pool would get bigger over time. In fact, we believe that the lack of true competition and active poaching strategies could be repressing the market value of school leaders and artificially limiting the potential talent pool.

Imagine, for example, if cities recognized the true value of successful school leaders and competed to attract and support them like private sector companies. Perhaps we would see increased compensation, customized relocation packages, or new, creative strategies that meet each individual's unique needs. Over time, as cities compete for great school leaders, the career will become more attractive, compelling more, better leaders to pursue careers in the sector.

If the success of cities is tied to the success of their public schools, if great schools anchor great communities, and if graduates of great schools drive economic development, then we believe that our members, and other city-based leaders, need to take a page out of the private sector's playbook and recognize the true value of great school leaders.

We believe that for cities to effectively compete for school leader talent they need to answer two questions. First, who are the best school leaders in the country? Second, what does it take to get them?

Cities that take the time to track down these leaders – and marshal resources to meet their unique needs and desires – will be rewarded with the strong public schools their communities so desperately need.

COMPETING FOR TALENT

For cities to compete effectively for school leader talent, it's helpful to recognize that we are entering a new phase of talent management strategies in the education sector – or what we call Talent 3.0.

In Talent 1.0, public education was a closed system – teachers' colleges prepared new teachers for the classroom, with a subset of them eventually becoming principals and then administrators. There were no charter schools, no Teach For America, no Building Excellent Schools. In this closed system, the labor market was controlled by two basic factors: where educators and leaders went to school and where they wanted to live.

Over the past several decades, a Talent 2.0 approach has infused the system with non-traditional talent that enters the market through new pathways like alternative teacher certification, principal residencies and leadership incubators. The labor market has expanded through the Talent 2.0 phase, with charter schools and alternative talent pipelines laying the groundwork for geographic competition for talent and operators. These non-traditional teacher and leadership development programs have become vital resources for many cities and schools, and should continue to grow in the future. In fact, there is need for more alternative pathways to school and classroom leadership, especially for mid-career changers who may have a wealth of management experience but limited education sector exposure.

However, talent programs, incubators and charter residencies all rest on an “if we build it, they will come” philosophy. In other words, if we create opportunities for people to receive training or support, the right ones will actively find it and apply. That approach may work for emerging leaders looking to enter the market (especially younger leaders or those switching sectors), but is less appealing to ambitious school leaders ready for their next step. When considering switching companies, great private sector leaders aren't likely to seek training programs or other established pathways. School leaders aren't looking for programs or pathways either.

Today, Education Cities believes our members must usher in the era of Talent 3.0. Cities should maintain or even expand their 2.0 investments, and also seek to identify the best possible school founders and leaders and do more to bring them to town, even if that means going to extraordinary measures like buying them a house or creating a compensation package that rivals those of private sector leaders.

Talent 3.0 puts into practice what private sector recruiters, sports scouts, matchmakers, venture capitalists, Hollywood agents, and many others know to be true — to get the right people, you have to pull out all the stops.

We are not arguing for an abandonment of more traditional, programmatic approaches to talent recruitment and development, nor are we suggesting that cities need to use personalized recruitment strategies for every school leadership vacancy. Rather, we believe that every city needs a set of anchor schools — best in class schools around which you can build and grow a strong education ecosystem — and that finding the leaders or founders of those schools may require more effort and creativity than we currently see in practice.

We also know that the leaders and founders of these anchor schools must be a diverse set of individuals, and that each city's recruitment strategy will differ based upon the unique needs of their students. It is our hope that a more personalized recruitment strategy, using many tactics included in this paper, will support our members and their partners in diversifying the school founder and leader talent in their city.

In the following pages, and in the reading list at the conclusion of this publication, we will lay out strategies and ideas for how cities can use a Talent 3.0 approach to recruit great school founders and leaders, as well as try to answer several key questions, including:



Ushering In The Era of Talent 3.0

We are entering in the era of Talent 3.0, a new phase of talent management strategies in the education sector. Talent 3.0 puts into practice what private sector recruiters, Hollywood agents and sports scouts know to be true - to get the right people, you have to pull out all the stops.

Education Cities defines the evolution of talent management strategies as follows:



Teachers' colleges prepared new teachers for the classroom, with a subset eventually becoming principals and administrators. The labor market was controlled by two basic factors: where educators and leaders went to school and where they wanted to live.



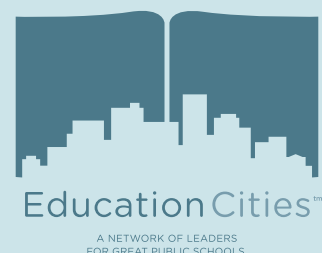
The emergence of alternative teacher certification programs, principal residences and leadership incubators has opened the market to a broader talent pool. However, these programmatic approaches use an "if we build it, they will come" recruitment strategy, requiring top talent to seek out new opportunities on their own.



City education leaders proactively identify the best possible school founders and leaders from across the nation and do more to bring them to town. Armed with flexible capital, recruiters can go to extraordinary measures to meet the unique needs of every candidate, even if that means buying them a house or creating a compensation package that rivals those of private sector leaders.

Education Cities is a network of education harbormasters across the country working to increase the number of great public schools. Together, we are improving educational opportunities for millions of families and children.

EDUCATION-CITIES.ORG



Where do you find proven leaders?

Proven school leaders are found exactly where you would expect them — in great public schools, specifically those that are helping low-income and other underserved students beat the odds day after day. While recruiters should start with the best schools in their city (seeking emerging leaders who could accelerate the growth of great schools), they will likely also need to look beyond their own borders for new leadership talent. That means getting over the fear of “poaching” candidates from other schools, districts and states. It also means getting comfortable with the idea that your best candidate already has a job and that it’s your job to convince them to pick up and come to your city.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS:

- ① Get to know every principal, assistant principal and lead teacher at the five best public schools serving low-income students in your city.

These individuals are likely the strongest educators in your city and could be hungry for opportunities to grow their impact. Host networking events, connect them with professional development opportunities, or even give small good will grants to help them purchase needed materials. You will get to know who could be interested in school leadership, and can propose the opportunity when the time is right.

- ② Sell the value of these practices to local charter management organizations.

If executed properly, the Talent 3.0 approach could be the next career step for successful charter school principals. If charter management organization recruiters or Chief Academic Officers are aware of the opportunity you are offering and the private sector funded recruitment packages you are bringing to the table, it may make their recruitment work easier! A city-wide Talent 3.0 approach creates an automatic pathway for great school leaders to grow and could be a valuable asset to charter organizations.

3 **Make a list of high-performing public schools with similar populations, and find out who is on the leadership team.**

Get familiar with what excellence looks like and the people who know what it takes to achieve great results for underserved kids.

The Mind Trust in Indianapolis created a comprehensive list of all 5,000+ charter schools in the country. They rated each school based on academic performance and student demographics, then reached out to the 300 schools and networks with the strongest academic success with high-need students to inform them about opportunities for school leadership and support in Indianapolis.

4 **Look for local, successful, civic-minded entrepreneurs.**

It is no secret that successful school founders and entrepreneurs share many character traits. With the rise of Talent 2.0 strategies, there are numerous training programs that can transform business leaders into strong school leaders. Spend time at a local business incubator or with the individuals on your city's "40 Under 40" list and use your resources to usher the most promising individuals into a training program that prepares them to start or lead schools.

5 Tap into the alumni base of renowned national training and professional development programs.

The Charter School Growth Fund Emerging CMO Fund, the Aspen Institute, The Broad Center Residency – all of these programs are full of diverse, ambitious, and impactful education leaders. Collect the names of individuals who recently went through the programs and track down their contact information through online research. Reach out to each person individually to open a dialogue.

6 Remember, they aren't looking for you.

The best candidates are already leading great schools, which means they have little to no time to waste in a day. Sending press releases or newsletters won't be enough to get them to look up from their work. It takes personal, targeted, repetitive outreach to potential candidates you have identified.

“Most of your best, top-tier prospects won't be on LinkedIn. They're well and gainfully employed, and they have their heads down executing their job rather than spending time creating and maintaining profiles on social media.” – Caroline McClure, Principal, Executive Recruiting and Talent Management Firm, ScoutRock

A photograph of a teacher and a young girl sitting at a desk, looking at a book together. The teacher is on the right, leaning over the desk, and the girl is on the left, smiling. The background shows a classroom with posters on the wall. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter.

How do you reach out to them?

In some ways, what makes great school leaders successful is what makes them so hard to find. Rather than cruising the Internet and clicking on job postings, they are working hard, long hours in schools with students and teachers. Because these candidates are probably “passive,” reaching them requires some active work on the phone and out in the field. As you talk to them, you’ll not only be evaluating their potential for success in your city, but also uncovering what it would take to motivate them to consider a new opportunity.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS:

1 Go offline.

Great leaders have their heads down doing great work in schools, not online looking for jobs, so you need to be there too, picking up the phone to follow up on emails that get clickthroughs or flying out to visit.

Just ask Todd Dickson, now founder of Valor Collegiate Academies in Nashville. As one of the founding principals at Summit Public Schools, Todd was focused on serving his students and community in 2011. "I was so busy running my school that I wasn't looking for new opportunities," said Todd. It wasn't until Nashville Mayor Karl Dean came to visit his school that Todd considered relocating for the right opportunity. After local education, political and philanthropic leaders worked together for five months to create the conditions to ensure Todd's schools and family would be successful, he made the leap to Nashville (personal communication, May 25, 2015).

2 Do it yourself.

While recruiting firms can help surface potential candidates and refine processes, the best school leaders want a hard sell from people working directly in cities and schools. We believe that school founder recruitment is so important it may be worth building the internal capacity to manage searches directly.

At least one in four Fortune 500 companies now have an internal recruitment role. This is up from just one in 10 a decade ago (Lublin, 2012).

3 Be patient.

One-on-one recruiting pays off, but takes time. Remain in frequent contact with potential candidates while prioritizing those who seem most interested. For “colder” candidates, stay in touch – email relevant news articles, celebrate their rising literacy or graduation rates, and even send holiday cards! Every bit of effort counts.

“Cultivating passive external candidates directly takes a lot longer and much more effort to move from interest to application to offer to contract (personal communication, March 16, 2015).” – Talia Shaull, Chief Human Resources Officer, Tulsa Public Schools

4 Build a recruitment task force.

It is safe to say that your city partners visit schools locally, and across the country, on a monthly, if not weekly, basis. Make sure that everyone understands the importance of recruiting new school founders and leaders to your city and is collectively taking advantage of every interaction with prospective candidates.







How do you recruit them?

“You have to go all out to persuade the candidate that he or she will be better off in every way than he or she already is,”

says recruiter Tony Beshara, president of Dallas headhunting firm Babich & Associates (Fisher, 2014). Likewise, city leaders must explain the magnitude of the opportunity at hand. This takes a clear articulation of the problem this individual can solve, the conditions that will enable their success, and the impact they will have in both the short and long term. Potential school founders and leaders need to know they have a real shot at professional and personal success in your city.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

In their book, *100,000 Successful Hires: The Art, Science and Luck of Effective Hiring*, recruiters and co-authors Tony Beshara and Rich Lavinski say any company looking to hire passive candidates must consider:

- Does the opportunity have the right money, benefits, potential, and security – above and beyond any other opportunity out there?
- Is there a career path, with an exceptional potential future, beyond this position?
- From the CEO on down, are we willing to go the extra mile to get the right candidate?

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS:

1 Prepare to court them.

To get someone to consider a new opportunity, you need to work hard to understand what motivates them. Are they looking to be closer to family? Do they want the opportunity to build a new school model? Do they want a better environment to raise their children? What do they like to do in their free time, and what conditions make those activities possible? Proactively address all those questions and concerns.

“I had three long phone conversations with Nashville leaders before I even visited. Armed with the information I provided during those calls, they designed a four day visit for my wife and I that addressed all of our priorities and personal interests (T. Dickson, personal communication, May 28, 2015).”

2 Sell the city.

A big city can sell its fast-paced lifestyle, a richer network of like-minded people and organizations, and sometimes higher salaries. Meanwhile, a smaller city can offer a candidate an opportunity to make a greater impact faster, as well as a tight-knit community and a more relaxed, affordable, family-friendly lifestyle.

“In big cities, it can be hard to make a difference because there are so many competitors. To be a big fish in a small pond can be appealing (personal communication, March 26, 2015).” – Ron Storn, Recruiter for Lyft

When recruiting leaders, schools, and new programs to Indianapolis, The Mind Trust highlights the high level of civic support for school improvement, the great family atmosphere in the city, the low cost of living, and the legacy of stable and effective city government.

Tosha Downey, who is leading efforts to recruit great school founders to Memphis through the organization Teacher Town, says, “I tell people ‘I promise you can make a really big impact in a city that is small where the need is great (personal communication, June 18, 2015).’”

3 Don't forget to sell the spouse.

If the candidate has a spouse and family, get them engaged in the process early to figure out what's important to them and how willing they are to support a move. If they're concerned about finding a new job themselves, underwrite job search services or connect them with local recruiters.

“We try to get inside their heads early,” says Terry Gallagher, president of Battalia Winston, who finds it is critically important because, if the spouse and family are not on board, it can derail the entire recruitment process (Grensing-Pophal, 2014).

“During our visit, my wife was paired up with a Nashville real estate agent and spent a day visiting homes that would have far exceeded our price range in the Bay Area. This was a huge selling point for her and us (T. Dickson, personal communication, May 28, 2015).”

4

Engage as many elected officials, community members and senior education leaders in the process as you can.

Show candidates that the whole city and system is invested in their success by putting them in direct contact with people with power, money and influence. Ensure that this group of individuals is diverse and can attest to many different social, civic, cultural, and economic features of your city.

In Tennessee's Achievement School District (ASD), which is working hard to entice school founders and leaders to replace dozens of its state's failing schools, ASD Superintendent Chris Barbic calls many prospects directly. Candidates respect Barbic – himself a successful former charter school founder and leader – and appreciate direct contact with the leader who would authorize their new schools (Ash Solar, personal communication, March 16, 2015).

City leaders should also set up meetings for local foundation leaders to meet with candidates one-on-one to demonstrate commitment from the funding community (T. Shaull, personal communication, March 16, 2015).

When considering opening schools in Memphis, TN, Aspire Public Schools met with a diverse set of local and statewide leaders interested in recruiting the organization. “To be set up for success, there has to be a vast array of players at the table from the beginning. We heard not just from those with formal power, but the people from the communities we were going to serve. More times than not, these are the people you need most when opening the doors to your new school (personal communication, June 26, 2015).” – Heather Kirkpatrick, Chief People Officer, Aspire Public Schools

5 Fly them in and roll out the red carpet.

When persuading a candidate to relocate, it's essential to give them and their families a real sense of what the job and the lifestyle would be like if they accepted. Make the experience unforgettable with not just a few meetings and a night alone in a hotel, but rather a guided tour of the best of what your city has to offer, conducted by prospective colleagues and other local ambassadors.

"These people won't just show up. You need to take a weekend off, drive candidates around, show them the city, roll out the red carpet. You have to drag talent to you (personal communication, March 18, 2015)," says Mark Caldwell, who manages recruiting at Ingersoll Rand.

"Design a flawless experience for candidates. Don't put them in a hotel. Put them in a house with a fridge stocked and make them feel like a rock star (personal communication, March 24, 2015)," says Jabu Dayton, who is a recruiter and Human Resources Executive who has worked with Airbnb, Lyft and others.

Aspire Berkley Maynard Academy,
Courtesy of NewSchools Venture Fund



6 Show the growth path, both for the organization and the leader.

Great school leaders need to know their school or organization can not only survive, but thrive, with sufficient capital to compensate and motivate the leader and his or her team over time.

Brian Greenberg, from Silicon Schools Fund tells prospective school founders: “If you keep doing great, we will keep funding new schools (personal communication, March 27, 2015).”

7 Recruit multiple school founders to start or relocate around the same time.

The cohort effect can build camaraderie and allow school founders to share the experience with someone who knows exactly what they are going through. Plus, there’s safety in numbers.

The Tennessee ASD hosted an informal brainstorming session with strong national charter management organizations to plant the seed of potential expansion with those leaders. They found that potential leaders talk to one another and started saying, “If you go, I’ll go (A. Solar, personal communication, March 16, 2015).”

8 If you are committed to diversifying the school founder talent in your city, sing it from the rooftops.

This will signal your seriousness to candidates, ultimately making your city more attractive.

9 Customize the offer to each individual's specific needs.

“There is no particular incentive plan or across-the-board formula for determining which form of monetary compensation is most effective for recruiting or retaining staff members in a particular industry or position (Ayscue Hassel, Hassel & Kowal, 2008).”

Compile a compelling salary and benefits package that shows the school leader how much they would be valued by the community. Tell the story of the compensation in terms of how they could live, and help them see the value in how far that money goes (B. Greenberg, personal communication, March 27, 2015).

Coordinate and pay for all relocation needs.

Consider creative compensation packages including one-time bonuses, loan payments, or college savings accounts.

Advocate with state policymakers to make school leaders eligible for college loan forgiveness that is being offered to teachers. (McCann, 2014)

Pay for rental housing, or better yet, raise funds to put a down payment on a house, or secure a local foundation or community bank willing to offer a low-interest mortgage. For example, Princeton University will “buy” a portion of the equity of their senior leaders’ houses to enable them to purchase something more substantial than they might otherwise afford.

Cover the cost of selling their house. This offer is especially lucrative for candidates moving from places where home prices still haven’t bounced back from 2008.







How do you keep them?

One of the traits that make talented school founders and dynamic school leaders so good is that they're continuously improving, stretching and growing their schools. This applies to their own careers as well, which means that few are content to stay put in a role or organization unless there are real prospects for growth. To ensure these school founders remain in your city, figure out how to address their unique needs, both immediate and forthcoming.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS:

1 As complexity grows, so must compensation.

The incentive structure for school founders is bizarre. If they are good at their job, they can keep their school open. Yet, if they choose to grow schools, their salaries rarely rise in proportion to the complexity and challenge of running multiple schools. Local funders and city leaders should consider the importance of retention-oriented market pay for effective leaders of growing school networks.

In the US military, an individual's pay "rises not just with years of experience, but with promotions to higher ranks and pay grades – promotions that are based on a complex performance evaluation system (Ayscue Hassel, Hassel & Kowal, 2008)."

2 Make their job – and life – easier.

Raise funds to ensure they have skilled support staffs – ranging from a chief of staff to an executive assistant – who can manage scheduling and travel, both of which get more complex over time. Take the lead with local foundations, and secure school funding to support growth.

3 Pay to grow their skills.

Underwrite executive or management coaching. Pair them with local mentors. Offer education stipends for leaders to take college courses in subjects that interest them, or pay for regular visits to other schools that can inspire them.

One national charter management organization leader was the recipient of formal coaching and mentoring from the former head of a Fortune 500 company. This opportunity would not have been possible without the investments and personal connections of local funders and the CMO's Board of Directors.

4 Help build their networks.

The bigger an individual's personal network is, the more connected they are to a given city.

Teacher Town partners with New Memphis Institute to give educators the tools, experiences and connections they need to be successful both personally and professionally. With more than 400 alumni from three different fellowship programs, the Institute provides an immediate network with great connections across Memphis.

5 Offer regular paid sabbaticals.

Extended time off is a popular incentive in the private sector and higher education that could help prevent school leaders from burning out or moving on.

At Adobe, employees are eligible for longer sabbaticals the longer they stay – four weeks after five years of employment, five weeks after 10 years, and six weeks for every five years after that (Kane, 2015).







CONCLUSION

Great school founders and leaders take on their roles because they are mission-driven and committed to the work of improving education for underserved students. They want to put their skills to work in service of student learning and success, but cities must make them feel valued, important and irreplaceable – because they are. That means that cities should commit to finding, recruiting and keeping great school leaders, even if they must adjust budget lines and raise flexible new resources to do so. Keeping these leaders motivated and contributing to a city's school system is an investment that yields enormous dividends for students and communities over time.

Embracing a Talent 3.0 approach will have real implications for city-based education organizations like those in the Education Cities network. Specifically, our members and other city leaders should consider:

1. Fundraising for flexible capital that can be used to recruit and compensate school founders in non-traditional ways.
2. Adjusting staff time so at least one person dedicates a significant portion of their time to identifying, contacting and selling school founders and leaders.
3. Educating city partners about the importance of recruitment and enlisting them in the effort. This may also involve creating standard collateral and talking points that can be used by individuals across the country when meeting potential school founders.

Implementing a Talent 3.0 approach will not be easy. It will challenge entrenched practices. It will require funders to create pools of flexible capital. It will require modifications to staffing models for city-based education organizations. And it will require a shift in how we view the job of school leadership.

However, over time, if cities make the shift to embrace competition and a Talent 3.0 orientation, we believe that school leadership will become a more attractive profession, and cities will be able to more rapidly accelerate the growth of great public schools. At the end of the day, that is the core mission of our member organizations, and should, in fact, be the mission of any civic leader concerned about the future of their city. We should stop at nothing to ensure our children have the education they deserve – even if that means competing to make our schools the best that they can be.

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