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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes a program to help parents learn some specific teaching skills to help their children learn. To develop a positive reinforcement teaching style was the basic objective because it is both the most simple style to learn and the most powerful style for building success in learning. Role-play stimulation in small groups was the basic strategy for both the teachers' learning to teach parents and for parents learning to teach their children. Teachers were trained for three days on materials explaining program purpose, strategies, role-play experiences, and the kinds of sensitivity necessary to be effective teachers of parents. Each of these teachers trained three to five parents for 2 1/2 days. Next, the parents under direct supervision of the professional teachers taught kindergarten age children in a Head Start summer program. Evaluations of the program were conducted utilizing: (1) analysis of audio-taped samples of parents' teaching, (2) written observations of parents' and teachers' training, (3) daily logs and interviews with teachers and supervisor. Eleven of the 12 parents increased their use of positive reinforcement. Eight of the 12 parents increased the variety of reinforcers used. Appendixes and tables included. (Author/AJ)

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SIMULATION ACTIVITIES FOR TRAINING
PARENTS AND TEACHERS AS
EDUCATIONAL PARTNERS:
A REPORT AND EVALUATION

by

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The massive learning which goes on outside of school has effects on the pupils' learning inside the school. Some public schools and teachers are beginning to break their log jam of indifference to pupils' outside of school learning experiences. Rather than viewing the community experiences in the traditional way as debilitating and causative factors in many children's failure in the school, some of these educators are beginning to develop strategies to take advantage of the enormous potential resource represented by the people (especially the parents) of the school community. In the past, especially in economically poor areas, our misguided warnings to parents not to help or tutor their children have unfortunately been heeded. Parents in more economically affluent areas have more often ignored these statements.

It has become increasingly clear that the motivation of poorer parents for their children to succeed in school is at least as high as that of any other groups in this country.

. . .the typical (lower class) mother tries to socialize her child for scholastic achievement by laying down verbal rules and regulations about classroom conduct, coupled with punishment of detected transgressions. But she does not do enough to guide and encourage her child's efforts of verbal-symbolic mastery. (Katz, 1968 p. 64)

More likely than not, nobody explains to the parents how they can help or be important factors in the education of their child, and the whole process of their child's education-- even for the few who become active in the PTA's -- remains foreign and alien, and often their contact with the school carries a condescending quality. (Deutsch, 1966, p. 17)

This report summarizes a design the authors' have written and implemented. It represents one attempt to break through and begin in real ways to help parents learn some specific teaching skills to help their children learn.

Based on the best learning theory we know, we designed our teaching strategies around active involvement with immediate reinforcement feedback. Thus, role-play simulation in small groups (usually triads) become the basic strategy for both the teachers' learning to teach the parents, and for the parents who were learning the skills of working with their children on school tasks.

A positive reinforcement teaching style was selected as the basic objective of the skills training program. There are at least two major reasons for this selection:

1. This teaching strategy is the most powerful one we know for building success in learning. It is accompanied by the pupils' feeling more adequate. He is more likely to wish to continue the interactions.

2. This strategy is simple to learn, has wide applicability and encourages the pupil to verbalize more. Other teaching strategies build on this basic one.

Our first task was to train the teachers. They were then to train the parents.

The teachers' had three working days of training (with some outside work on their own) in learning the strategies to teach to

the parents. The basic package of training materials they used was also designed by the authors.¹ This package, partially programmed, is written in a book format. It contains chapters on the issues of:

- a) why work with parents
- b) the kinds of sensitivity teachers must have to be effective teachers of parents
- c) descriptions of the strategies
- d) learning experiences using role play simulations are suggested for teachers with each strategy in the learning package.

At the completion of their training, the teachers each trained a small group (3-5) parents to use a positive reinforcement teaching style. After 2 1/2 days of this training, the parents, under the teachers' direct supervision, were to act as the teachers of kindergarten age children in a Headstart Summer school program.² The professional teachers, although they were always present, were really in the role of supervisors and parent educators. The professional teachers did the planning and prescription writing for the pupils and then directed the parent who carried out the teaching.

The sequence of the learning program for the parents training in the use of positive reinforcement in teaching follows:

¹Teaching Parents Teaching by David W. Champagne and Richard M. Goldman, Appleton-Century-Crofts, to be published in the Spring of 1971.

²This summer school, part of a Headstart Planned Variation Program in the Clinton County Schools (Lock Haven, Pennsylvania, used the L.R.D.C. University of Pittsburgh early learning (PEP/IPI) Follow Through Model of Individualized Instruction).

Strategy 1 -- Introduction and Pre-test.

This strategy introduces the parent to the training program. It also helps the teacher get pre-test data on the parent's teaching. The pre-test is done with children, or in a simulated session. The parent tutors a child or children for about ten minutes. The teaching is audio-taped and a time sampling system (Wrobel Time Sampling Category System WTSCS) which categorizes the positive, negative and neutral comments made by the parent in his teaching, is used to analyze the tapes. It gives a percentage figure on each of these categories.

Strategy 2 -- Listing Reinforcers.

This strategy helps the parent develop a list of reinforcers for use as they work with their children. The parents think of all the positive praise words they use or might use with their children. The teacher adds a few as his contribution. These reinforcers are typed and given to the parents for use. The list is expanded as the parent and teacher suggest other reinforcers.

Strategy 3 -- Counting Reinforcers-Taped.

This strategy teaches the parents to recognize and count the reinforcers of another parent's interaction with his child. The parent keeps a written tally of each reinforcer used by the parent on the audio-tape. The teacher also keeps a tally of the reinforcers on the tape. The tape is played again if the parents do not tally at least 80 per cent of the reinforcers used on the tape. After listening to the tape the teacher and parents again talk about the importance to the child of the positive reinforcement of his learning.

Strategy 4 -- Counting Reinforcers-Live.

This strategy teaches the parent to keep a tally count of the reinforcers he uses as he teaches a child or simulates teaching a child by role-playing the interaction with the teacher or another parent. Often the teacher will reinforce the parent's use of reinforcers during the interactions. The parent is taught to record his use of reinforcers on a simple bar-graph. This bar-graph is used to give the parents a control over the process, and to help them build in their own reinforcement of their teaching.

Strategy 5 -- Self-Evaluation.

At the beginning of each training session the teacher asks the parents to evaluate themselves in their use of reinforcers. This strategy is again seeking to focus the attention of the parent on the major purpose of the training. It also helps the parent develop self-evaluation skills which he may use to monitor his progress in the future as he tutors.

Strategy 6 -- Alternative Statements to Negative Comments.

Some parents continue to use a high percentage of negative comments in their teaching. This behavior is first discussed, then alternative statements are developed with the parents. After situations are discussed in which these alternatives are appropriate, the parents and teacher role-play situations where a child is having trouble. The alternative statements are practiced until the parents begin to be comfortable with their use.

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Strategy 7 -- Simulated Teaching.

This strategy is usually used in a remedial setting. Most parents skip it all together. An audio-tape of a parent teaching a child is made. Spaces are left on the tape after each response of a child in the teaching sequence. The teacher asks the parent to supply an appropriate reinforcer at this point. The pre-written list is used as a source for these reinforcers where it is needed. The teacher reinforces the variety and appropriateness of the reinforcers used by the parent with this simulated teaching sequence. The parent is often asked to tell why he used a certain reinforcer for a given situation. He is reinforced for having appropriate reasons.

Strategy 8 -- Listing Teaching Hints.

After working with a parent for a number of sessions (5-7), the teacher informs the parent that a list of teaching hints may be useful suggestions to help other parents improve their teaching. It also helps the parent summarize the generalizations he has learned about teaching. What the parent says serves as an evaluation for the teacher of how much the parent understands and has internalized of the training program.

Strategy 9 -- Group Training.

This strategy uses any one of the above strategies with a group of parents. The group training has additional advantages over training parents individually. It is more efficient use of a teacher's time. The group members lend support to each other, and develop a shared norm about the values of teaching their children.

All of these strategies were written in such a way that they could be used during a parent-child tutoring session with the teacher as observer, as simulated strategies with an individual parent (with teacher playing the child), or with groups of parents using the teacher as observer and discussion leader.

In the Lock Haven summer school all of the strategies were used by individual teachers with small groups of parents. After the pre-test, all strategies were done on a simulated basis with the parents constantly taking roles of child and observer and parent.

The evaluation sections report the success of the group training.

The teachers learned these strategies by role playing their own, and the parents roles in short triad simulations.¹ The third role in the simulation was always an observer role where one teacher watched the interaction of the other two and gave immediate focused feedback at the end of each role play session. The supervisor of these teachers, who had already learned the strategies from the authors, organized the teachers' training sessions and led them in the simulations. Prior to their formal training sessions, the teachers had worked through the chapters of the book which: a) helped them develop reasons for working with parents, and b) helped them become more aware of the sensitivities they would need in this new role.

Analysis of Effects of Simulation Training

The evaluation of the effects of the simulation activities consisted of the following:

¹Appendix A shows a sample of the simulation strategies that the teachers use in learning to teach the parents.

- a. analysis of audio-taped samples of the parents' teaching,
- b. written observations of parents' and teachers' training kept by the researchers,
- c. daily logs kept by the teachers and the supervisor,
- d. extensive interviews of the teachers and supervisor.

A. Evaluation of the Parents' Skill in Using Positive Reinforcement.

The most direct procedure for evaluating the effectiveness of the simulated activities for the training of teachers as parent educators is to analyze the improvement in the parents' ability to use positive verbal reinforcement.

The data on the parents' teaching consists of the following:

- a. One ten to fifteen minute audio-taped sequence of a parent tutoring two to four children. This tutoring took place prior to any training and served as the pre-test. The parents were taped at least three additional times during the summer. The WTSCS was used on each tape to calculate the percentages of time samples of positive reinforcement and negative comments.

- b. The tapes described in a. were also analyzed to ascertain the increased differentiation of reinforcers used by the parent.

Prior to the pre-test, the parents were told by the Parent Educational Specialist (Supervisor) that this tape would be used as the summer progressed to demonstrate to each parent the progress he had made in his teaching. The parents were also informed that this progress information would be used to improve the training for other Head Start parents in their community and other parents in school districts around the country. The parents had approximately five minutes to examine

the material they would be using in the tutoring session. When a parent stated that he was ready, a quiet area was found in a classroom and the tutoring began. No mention was made by the researchers or the supervisor of the specific objectives of the parent's training.

The two LRDC consultants had an interrater reliability of 0.95 with the WTSCS used on the tapes

TABLE 1
PERCENT OF TIME SAMPLES OF REINFORCEMENT
USED BY PARENT TRAINEES IN PRE-TEST

Parent	% of + R's Time Samples	% of - Comments Time Samples
A	10	2
B	15	0
C	7	0
D	5	8
E	20	0
F	10	3
G	10	5
H*	---	-
I	13	0
J	21	4
K	15	0
L	29	0
M	9	4

*did not tape

The pre-test data of these parents was similar to inner city parents who received similar training. (Goldman, 1970)

The pre-test session occupied most of the morning. The next two days of training consisted of the teachers teaching the parents reinforcement skills by using strategies 2, 3, and 4 of Teaching Parents Teaching. The parents' training for the rest of the summer consisted of daily group seminars and individual conferences with the teacher. These seminars often included use of the simulation strategies.

Each parent had specified tasks each day of the month of summer school. These included teaching in both conceptual and exploratory areas of the curriculum. The parents' teaching day was so busy that they had no time to be reminded by the teachers to make sure to use positive reinforcement. The researchers observed many of the parents during a typical day and saw them do the taping tasks as just another assignment for the day. Table 2 displays the changes between the pre-test tape and an average of all other tapes for each parent.

TABLE 2

CHANGE IN PERCENT OF TIME SAMPLES OF REINFORCEMENT USED
BY PARENT TRAINEES FROM PRETEST TO ALL POST TRAINING TAPES

Parents	Pre-test		All Other Tapes		Δ 's from Pre to	
	% of + R's Time Samples	% of - comts Time Samples	% of + R's Time Samples	% of - comts Time Samples	Δ 's of + R's Time Samples	Δ 's of - comts Time Samples
A	10	2	21	1	+11	-1
B	15	0	29	4	+14	+4
C	7	0	31	1	+24	+1
D	5	8	22	2	+17	-6
E	20	0	29	0	+9	0
F	10	3	29	0	+19	-3
G	10	5	25	1	+15	-4
H*	--	-	31	3	---	--
I	13	0	22	2	+9	+2
J	21	4	32	0	+11	-4
K	15	0	38	0	+23	0
L	29	0	23	1	-6	+1
M	9	4	13	2	+4	-2

*did not tape pre-test.

Eleven of the twelve parents increased their use of positive reinforcement. The range of the increases was from four per cent to twenty-four per cent. Eight of the twelve parents had an increase of at least ten per cent. Those parents whose percentage of reinforcers used improved the least were those who were initially highest in their use of reinforcers. The effects of the training on the parents' use of reinforcement was similar to inner-city parents who experienced the same training. (Goldman, 1970)

The use of differentiated reinforcement was not a skill taught directly to the parents. We hypothesized that the parents would acquire this skill as they increased the amount of reinforcement used in the tutoring sessions.

TABLE 3
CHANGE IN NUMBER OF DIFFERENT POSITIVE REINFORCERS
USED BY PARENT TRAINEES FROM PRE-TEST
TO ALL POST TRAINING TAPES

Parent	Pre-Test # of Different Reinforcers Used	All Other Tapes # of Different Reinforcers Used	Δ's From Pre to All Other Tapes
A	5	11	+ 6
B	4	15	+11
C	3	11	+ 8
D	4	8	+ 4
E	10	10	0
F	7	11	+ 4
G	7	10	+ 3
H*	-	10	---
I	10	11	+ 1
J	14	11	- 3
K	10	6	- 4
L	10	11	+ 1
M	8	5	- 3

*did not tape pre-test

Eight of the twelve parent increase! the variety of reinforcers used. For the three parents who decreased their differentiation of reinforcers, specific training experiences should be designed.

B. Analysis of Teachers Attitudes Toward Parents as Teachers

We analyzed the teachers' daily logs and type scripts of interviews with each teacher to find evidence of increased acceptance of the role of parents as teachers on the part of the professional teachers.

The supervisor of the program stated in her first log entry: "Teacher A did not think all the moms were competent. Teachers B and C were satisfied. . . .I am not certain that the parents can acquire the skills we are teaching them." Teacher A stated her doubts in her log: "I don't think the parents can learn in a week what I learned in four years (of college)." The teachers' attitudes began to change as the effects of their training of the parents began to be observed in the parents' interactions with children. This change of attitude was expressed in their logs during the second and third week of the program:

Supervisor: Parent at _____ explained to visitors how to use positive reinforcement in home and school. They also described the operations of the summer school.

Teacher B: We have one child who had been a real problem to his kindergarten teacher. He was very active --- and mistreated other children by kicking, hitting. . . .Three of the parents know him from the neighborhood. . . .I asked the parents to reinforce him for every little thing he did that was good, no matter how small. It worked. I'm sure his kindergarten teacher will never believe it's the same boy.

Teacher B: I feel I have a very good relationship with the parent-teachers. I am their helper. I help the children find their math boxes so the teachers don't have to leave their groups; but I don't do any of the parents' work. They check all math prescriptions.

Teacher B summarized her feelings about parents as teachers during the last week of the summer school:

I said at the workshop that these parents probably would be able to get along without me before the end of the month and I'm sure they could do just that now. They have good ideas.

Teacher C reported the high quality of work by the parents during the first week:

They did a magnificent job of making a list of field trips--listed 22--and a list of activities for project hour. Each was eager to contribute her full efforts, donate materials, and make contacts.

Teacher C described parents' ability for preparing and leading a field trip:

They were great in guiding the kids to prepare for our trip to feed the ducks. They had singing on the bus and had them safely feed the ducks.

Most of the parents had less than a high school education. Teacher C based her evaluation of the parents on their performance with children not their diplomas, grammar, etc. Teacher C writes about her feelings of one particular parent:

After school, Parent A and I were discussing the play. This is the teacher who lingers behind with me the longest each day to chatter about the day's events. She told me yesterday she always considered herself a dummy--never even finished high school. I told her, in my opinion, that she was the very opposite of dummy--she was intelligent, extremely inventive, and had a rare ability to talk with kids. I pointed out all the ingenious ways she was using her classification material and told her I felt she was doing an excellent job. She seemed encouraged. Today I kept asking her leading questions to get her to talk about her teaching methods. I am sure of one thing, after the ways the consultants admired her techniques, she sailed home on cloud 9.

All of the teachers referred to the parents in their logs as "teachers" or "parent teachers." The feeling that the parents were an integral part of the school was expressed by teacher C:

In this school they are referred to as teachers and afforded the same courtesy and respect due every professional teacher, and which they return to me. We do not speak of them as 'these women' or 'these people', nor do we take any notice of errors in grammar. I am sure they consider themselves as teachers and are proud of themselves.

Teacher A, who had the most doubts about parents' ability to be teachers without proper certification, stated during the last week:

I am really impressed with the handling of conceptual time by the parents. The parents don't have to have four years of college to have good teaching ideas.

C. Learning Skills by Simulation Activities: Teachers' Comments

The teachers expressed positive reactions to the simulation activities. The following quote expresses the feelings of all the teachers: "I've always felt learning by doing is the most effective method--nice to see you using this format." The director of the program summarized the one day workshop where teachers practiced the strategies using role playing techniques: "We had a lot of fun and the day just flew by. That rates the training package high on interest level and value of content."

One teacher contrasted the parents and teachers' abilities to role-play. She found the parents much less inhibited than the teachers during role-playing. There are numerous possible reasons for the more natural behavior of parents during the role playing:

a. Teachers are too concerned about supervisor and peer evaluation;

b. Parents are accustomed to follow the directions of authority figures;

c. Adults become more rigid with each successive year of formal education;

d. Teachers who lack experience working with parents have difficulty playing the roles of parents.

Recommendations for Designing and Using Simulations for Parents and Teachers

The three teachers described in this report had no prior experience working with parents. The teachers' experience in this summer school varied. One teacher had no previous teaching experience beyond her student teaching 15 years previous to the summer. Another teacher, in her second year of teaching, had never worked with this curriculum nor in an individualized classroom. The third teacher was uncertified, but had worked in the program the previous year.

Ten of the thirteen parents had little or no prior contact with the schools. After a two day workshop for teachers, and an additional two day workshop with parents and teachers, the teachers acquired sufficient sensitivity and skills to train parents to become competent teachers.

What design components are needed for simulation activities involving parents and teachers?

a. The simulation activities should have clear objectives;

b. The simulated roles should be realistic to the actual situation;

c. Feedback sessions should be a part of each simulation activity;

- d. A non-participant should observe each simulation activity. His role is to give feedback to the participants;
- e. The simulation activity should last a prescribed and short time limit to allow the observer to give accurate feedback;
- f. All participants in the simulation activity should have an opportunity to give feedback to one another;
- g. After completion of a simulation activity, the participants should make changes in the training strategy based on participants skill, community needs, etc.

APPENDIX A

A SIMULATION EXERCISE: INITIAL CONTACTS WITH PARENTS¹

General Description and Objectives

This activity is a role-play simulation organized in triads. The three roles (parent, teacher, observer) are rotated and repeated until each participant has at least two chances to practice each role. The observer role is structured so that the feedback to the teacher will focus on his language communication patterns, and ability to focus. This activity is an example of a type of organization which should be useful for training others in specific teaching skills.

The objectives for this simulation exercise are:

1. Teachers will make clear acceptable initial contacts with parents. These contacts will lead to continuing productive working relationships between parents and teachers.
2. The teachers will receive feedback about their use of language, their ability to plan and carry out strategies which help parents feel comfortable.

¹Adapted from Teaching Parents Teaching by D.W. Champagne and R. M. Goldman.

Simulation and the Role-Playing Triad

Role-Playing is one of several different kinds of simulated techniques used in teaching. It is used because it produces high involvement, realistic feelings, and reactions in a realistic setting. Role-playing gives quick feedback on performances; it allows persons in role-play to try out new behaviors quickly, and it usually produces quick lasting learning among the participants.

The three roles in each of these triads are: teacher, parent, and observer.

The teacher is getting some practice and feedback on his performance in meeting with parents. Parents, here simulated by teachers are reacting to how their language and style sounds when they are receivers rather than the "authority figure." Some different types of parents possible are: (a) accepting, (b) hostile, (c) suspicious, (d) non-committal, etc.

The observer role is very important. Here you are trying to be of help to others as they learn and practice new behaviors. Your feedback will be most helpful to others if you can give specific information on what happened rather than your opinions and conclusions without data.

DIRECTIONS

1. You will be involved in three simulation exercises. In each exercise you will play a different role; parent, teacher or observer. On your package of materials place the number one, two or three. Make sure in your group the numbers one, two and three appear only once. Follow the following coding for your role:

First exercise	1 - Parent	2 - Observer	3 - Teacher
Second exercise	1 - Teacher	2 - Parent	3 - Observer
Third exercise	1 - Observer	2 - Teacher	3 - Parent
2. In the first exercise number one is the parent, number two the observer and number three the teacher.
3. In the second exercise number one is the teacher, number two is parent, and number three is the observer.
4. In the third exercise number one is the observer, number two is the teacher, and number three is the parent.
5. The first three minutes of each exercise will be used for planning. If your group accomplishes the task before the allotted time is up, start completing the observation guides. All observation guides should be completed before any feedback is given.
6. The first three minutes of the feedback segment will be used only by the observer; the last two minutes will allow for interaction by the parent, teacher, and observer.

Situation I

You are going to initiate a program with parents of your students. You wish to help parents learn some specific teaching skills so that they may help their children with school work. This is your first phone call to a parent. You are trying to make an appointment to visit the parent and explain in detail the program. You want to explain how this will benefit the student.

Time Table

10 minutes - Orientation and directions

5 minutes - Planning

10 minutes - Phone conversation

5 minutes - Feedback

10 minutes - Phone conversation

5 minutes - Feedback

10 minutes - Phone conversation

5 minutes - Feedback

Observation Guide for Observers

The following questions are intended as a guide for your observation of the teacher's phone call with parents. You should record data during the phone call which will help you answer the questions.

1. How do you think the parent felt about the phone call? (Give some data which helped you reach this conclusion.)
2. How do you think the teacher felt during the phone call? (Give some data which helped you reach this conclusion.)
3. Give some examples of language used by the teacher you felt was appropriate.
4. If the teacher used some language which you felt was inappropriate, what did he say?
5. Do you feel the teacher was interested in the parent and what he had to say? (Give some data which helped you reach this conclusion.)
6. Did the teacher appear to be organized and planned for this phone call? (Give some data which helped you reach this conclusion.)

Situation II

The parent you contacted in Situation I has agreed to meet with you. You have arrived and been invited in. You now want to explain the purpose of your visit; the program you wish to begin, and what the child will get from this help.

Time Table

- 5 minutes - planning for interview with parents
- 10 minutes - time with parent
- 5 minutes - feedback by observer
- 10 minutes - meeting with parent
- 5 minutes - feedback by observer
- 10 minutes - meeting with parent
- 5 minutes - feedback by observer
- 10 minutes - summary, implications for community involvement, discussion

Observation Guide for Observers

The following questions are intended as a guide for your observation of the teacher's meeting with parents. You should record data during the meeting which will help you answer the questions.

1. How do you think the parent felt about the meeting? (Give some data which helped you reach this conclusion.)

2. How do you think the teacher felt during the meeting? (Give some data which helped you reach this conclusion.)

3. Give some examples of language used by the teacher you felt was appropriate.

4. If the teacher used some language which you felt was inappropriate, what did he say?

5. Do you feel the teacher was interested in the parent and what the parent had to say? (Give some data which helped you reach this conclusion.)

6. Did the teacher appear to be organized and planned for this meeting? (Give some data which helped you reach this conclusion.)

IMPLICATION OF EXERCISES

Most contacts that a parent has with teachers and schools usually leaves him with a negative feeling. The initial contact with a parent is most critical. If the initial contact that a parent has with a teacher is positive, the parent is more likely to become more involved in school related activities.

This simulation exercise provides a laboratory where you can plan and practice a telephone call or a meeting with a parent before either takes place. This exercise is a means whereby you can meaningfully involve parents in your school. It is important that you have planned objectives for parents. This planning can lead to involvement of parents in the following ways: regularly scheduled visits by parents to your school, regularly scheduled meetings in the parent's home, conferences with parents concerning their children, and training sessions for parents. These are only a few suggested ways to use this simulation exercise to involve parents in your schools.

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