

ALABAMA EDUCATION NEWS

NEWS AND ISSUES IN ALABAMA PUBLIC EDUCATION, K-12

FEBRUARY 2004

WHAT'S INSIDE ...

- A Chat With Interim State Superintendent of Education Joseph B. Morton
- Section Spotlight – Technology Initiatives
- System Highlight – Elmore County School System
- AMSTI
- Praxis II

MORTON NAMED TO TOP EDUCATION POST



Acting State Supreme Court Chief Justice J. Gorman Houston, Jr., swears in Dr. Joseph B. Morton as Interim State Superintendent of Education during a special meeting of the Alabama Board of Education, January 22.

“ The first and foremost issue we face is the 2004 legislative session. We have to work as hard as we can to restore some of the cuts we already have in the budget and get back on our feet in terms of supporting classrooms and supporting teachers by giving them the supplies they need to be successful so students can be successful. We’ve got to find funding so we can fully implement the Alabama Reading Initiative. At this point, we can’t stay updated on technology, we can’t buy textbooks, and we can’t buy library books. We’ve got to make sure every child can read at grade level because other learning skills depend on reading. We’ve got to make sure our children are allowed to fulfill their dreams.”

– INTERIM STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION JOSEPH B. MORTON commented as he addressed the Alabama Board of Education.

Standing before the members of the Alabama Board of Education – as he has many times – **DR. JOSEPH B. MORTON** knew this time it was different. In this instance, the Board was unanimously appointing Morton as Alabama’s Interim State Superintendent of Education, following the resignation of **STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION ED RICHARDSON**, who is now serving as Auburn University Interim President.

DISTRICT 8 STATE BOARD MEMBER MARY JANE CAYLOR feels Morton was the logical person to follow Richardson. “He’s worked closely with Dr. Richardson and knows the issues and problems we face,” she said. “He understands the legislative process and he

cares about this state and its children.”

Morton has served in education 33 years, first as a history, government and economics teacher in Jefferson County, then as schools superintendent in Sumter County and Sylacauga where he served over 17 years.

The new interim superintendent exclaimed, “I am going to do all I can every day to help get Alabama on top. I want to work with everyone who has that same goal – **GOVERNOR RILEY**, the state Legislature, and Alabama’s educators. While we may face challenges, we also have a wonderful opportunity. When it comes to positively influencing a student’s education, my inner fire burns as hot as anyone’s.”

See interview with Dr. Morton on Page 3.



T

here is great news for schools in the south region of the state. Some 250 south Alabama educators will receive extensive training this summer through the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI). Until now, the Alabama Department of Education's initiative to improve math and science teaching statewide was limited to educators in the northern area of Alabama due to a lack of state-based funding.

During a news conference on Jan. 15, **INTERIM STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION JOSEPH B. MORTON** announced the University of South Alabama (USA) in Mobile will be the location of a new AMSTI Master Site. Joined by **DISTRICT ONE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION MEMBER RANDY MCKINNEY**, **USA PRESIDENT GORDON MOUTON**, **USA DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION CHAIRMAN DR. PHILLIP FELDMAN**, and **ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AMSTI COORDINATOR STEVE RICKS**, Morton explained, "Initially, the USA AMSTI Master Site will train teachers and administrators in the Baldwin and Mobile County School Systems this summer and lend support throughout the school year. Students throughout the area will benefit from this outstanding program for many years to come."

"The USA College of Education is committed to the long-term preparation and continuing education of our teachers," added Feldman. "We are excited about the AMSTI project

and are grateful to the Alabama Department of Education for making this idea a reality for our area."

The new USA AMSTI Master Site is funded by a one-year, \$1.4 million federal grant targeted toward changing the way math and science are taught at the university level. The USA AMSTI Master Site will work with south Alabama teachers this summer. Additionally, prospective teachers will be trained on AMSTI materials and will have opportunities to participate in AMSTI Schools. Future plans also include expansion to other schools within the South Alabama inservice region.

Each site selects schools to become AMSTI Schools through a competitive process at the local school system level. AMSTI Schools agree to send their entire math, science, and technology teaching staff and their administrators to a two-week AMSTI Summer Institute for two consecutive summers. Currently there are 41 AMSTI Schools in Alabama.

The initiative calls for the establishment of 11 regional MASTER sites across the state. The first AMSTI Master site was opened in 2002 at the University of Alabama Huntsville. In 2003, a second AMSTI Master site was initiated at the University of North Alabama in Florence.

For more information on AMSTI, contact Alabama Department of Education AMSTI Coordinator, Steve Ricks, at 334-242-8256 or [click here](#). 🍏



Alabama Education News recently sat down with Dr. Morton to discuss his thoughts and plans now that he is Alabama's Interim State Superintendent of Education.

QA What is your immediate priority for K-12 public education?

To restore cuts made in the fiscal year 2004 budget. We must provide enough money to buy textbooks, restock libraries, purchase technology equipment, offer more professional development, fund the remediation program for the Alabama High School Graduation Exam, ensure safe student transportation, and make sure schools are safe and well maintained.

QA Are you encouraged by reported state revenue growth?

Preliminary fourth quarter figures indicated an increase in revenue, however, January receipts pointed to a decrease. The net effect is that the first four months show a 5.59 percent growth in revenues. We must be sure the upward trend continues and remains stable before adopting the fiscal year 2005 budget. The worst thing possible is to get overly optimistic too early, and enact a budget that could possibly go into proration.

QA Did you have much dialogue with the Governor, legislators, and the state finance director prior to the current legislative session?

Absolutely. In our meetings I stressed the importance of restoring education funding to supply our teachers with the tools they need for the classroom. Additionally, we had very productive discussions regarding transportation, operations and maintenance, and funding the Alabama Reading Initiative.

QA Do you expect there will still be teacher layoffs in local school systems this spring?

It depends on growth projections and how much the legislature allocates for K-12 spending. If we can sustain a modest growth, there might be a chance to keep state funded teacher units. I cannot stress enough that we do not need layoffs.

QA What are your thoughts on the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)?

The concept is sound, yet when Congress passed the law it failed to provide enough implementation funding to fully cover all the law's components. For example, data management is one big area of concern. We are required to disaggregate test scores in many different categories. Accumulating, separating, and reporting those data is very time consuming, yet the law requires all that to be completed and returned to the school in time to share results with parents prior to school beginning in the fall. The failure to fund special education at a level promised by Congress is very troubling. The students still must be served and the financial strain on state and local budgets is enormous.

QA The Alabama Reading Initiative (ARI) is one of your pet projects. What would you like to see for ARI in the future?

Fully funding ARI is critical. This program has proven results. If properly funded and fully implemented in schools across the state, this program will enable all students to read on or above grade level. Reading on grade level is imperative for students to succeed in school and in their adult lives. Reading paves the way for future endeavors. Everything I've said about reading can also be transferred to the Alabama Math, Science, and Technology Initiative (AMSTI). Reading, math, and science infused with technology are the gateways to the future. Failing to fund these programs is equal to withholding funding to eliminate a crippling disease; it can handicap a student for life.

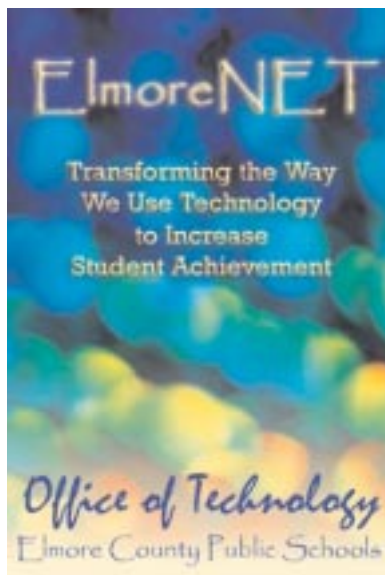


System Highlight

ELMORE COUNTY SCHOOLS

The Elmore County School System serves four relatively small Alabama communities – Eclectic, Holtville, Millbrook, and Wetumpka. Led by **SUPERINTENDENT BRUCE FULMER**, this county school system is busy making big things happen in its 15 schools where over 10,000 students are enrolled.

“Our school system was the first in Alabama to use distance learning curriculum. Our Office of Technology



provides our four high schools with connection to Elmore NET, and also Tallassee High School takes advantage of our distance connection as well,” said Fulmer “Additionally, we are

very excited to soon implement a joint partnership with the Lowndes County School System by providing their high schools with distance learning courses currently not available to their students.”

Elmore NET provides teachers with extensive technology staff development and allows students to take courses in foreign language, advanced studies, and dual-enrollment classes with Auburn University at Montgomery. According to **ELMORE COUNTY SCHOOLS TECHNOLOGY COORDINATOR DAVIS BROCK**, “These classes would not be available to some schools due to the cost of hiring additional teachers. We are constantly working to change the way we use technology to increase student achievement.”

[Click here](#) to discover more. Also [click here](#) to find out more about Elmore County Schools. 🍏

Members of the Wetumpka Elementary School Clown Troupe, who serve as school ambassadors, are selected based on academic grades, classroom behavior, and performance abilities. The group performs for schools, civic events, and nursing homes.



WHAT'S HAPPENING IN SOME ELMORE COUNTY SCHOOLS

Wetumpka Elementary School provides the state's curriculum and also makes learning a fun experience by featuring a clown troupe. (Principal–**KATHY WILLIS**)

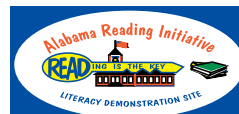
Wetumpka Intermediate School has a highly successful reading tutoring program, which uses 30 volunteers to tutor fourth-graders. (Principal–**LYNN RITVO**)

Although Elmore County High School dates back to 1911, it offers state-of-the-art technology training. (Principal–**JIM ADAMS**)

Holtville High School's [Web site](#) is maintained by the school's media design class. (Principal–**RICHARD DENNIS**)

There are four Alabama Reading Initiative Sites.

An extensive community education program is offered in three communities: Eclectic, Millbrook, and Wetumpka. All offer preschool programs year-round from seven in the morning until six at night. These programs utilize high school students who aid tutors and teachers in daily tasks.



Section Spotlight

TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVES

Technology Initiatives serves as a single point of contact in school system technology planning. This section implements the [State Technology Plan - IMPACT: Indicators for Measuring Progress in Advancing Classroom Technology](#), which provides support and assistance in filing for E-rate discounts, and supports local school systems in technology planning.

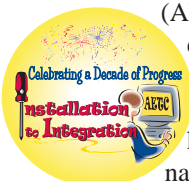
Technology Initiatives is responsible for:

- Administering Federal Grant Programs for Technology.
- Responding to requests from organizations and agencies needing technology data.
- Maintaining a database of technology compiled from yearly survey reports.

AETC

ALABAMA EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY CONFERENCE

Technology Initiatives staff plan and implement (with help from other state Department of Education key staff) the annual Alabama Educational Technology Conference (AETC). AETC plays a key role in helping educators at all levels increase their understanding of the role of technology in education. AETC provides a wide variety of hands-on and concurrent sessions led by nationally known visionaries in the field of educational technology and skilled Alabama practitioners with classroom-tested strategies across the curriculum. The conference features three full days of professional development, along with one of the largest educational technology vendor shows in the state. This year, Technology Initiatives will present its 10th annual statewide conference.



ALEX

ALABAMA LEARNING EXCHANGE

The Alabama Learning Exchange (ALEX), the state education Web portal, was conceived and designed by Technology Initiatives staff in partnership with the Alabama Supercomputer Authority and the subject-area specialists throughout the department. The goal of the ALEX is to provide an easily accessible collection of resources for Alabama educators to improve teaching and learning. Technology Initiatives staff maintain and continually expand the ALEX based on feedback and suggestions from users.

Other projects include the [Alabama Renaissance Technology Academy for Administrators](#); [Alabama Virtual Library](#); [ALT4 Project](#); [Library Media](#); [Alabama PT3 Grant](#); and [Technology in Motion](#).

Additionally, since 1998, the Alabama Department of Education has been reporting the status of instructional technology in its schools. Technology Initiatives is responsible for gathering and reporting this data. *Technology in Alabama Schools, January 2004* represents the state of technology integration in Alabama. The report, consisting of four surveys (IMPACT, TAGLIT, Inventory, and Profiler), provides educators and policymakers with vital information used to gauge the state's progress over time and to make informed decisions as they plan technology programs and projects. School systems and schools can use the findings as a basis of comparison for their own technology initiatives.

TECHNOLOGY IN ALABAMA SCHOOLS JANUARY 2004 KEY FINDINGS

- Results indicate the state of technology use in Alabama is moving forward, and progress parallels that of other states nationwide.
- Although there were fewer modern computers in Alabama schools in 2003 than in 2002, a greater percentage of the computers now have Internet access.
- There are 20,374 classrooms in Alabama that have only one computer.
- In terms of students' use of technology, surveys revealed they are using some technologies more frequently than others.
- Students are making steady progress toward the state's benchmark of using technology to complete inquiry-based learning projects reflecting personal significance and/or social importance.
- Educators tend to use technology more for personal productivity than for instruction.
- There is a general trend toward adding computers to classrooms rather than adding computer labs.

TARGET RATIO OF STUDENTS PER CLASSROOM COMPUTER	
COMPUTERS	
1 National '03 -	5
1 Alabama '02 -	11.5
1 Alabama '03 -	7.2

A fairly new resource available to assist teachers with technology is APTPLUS presented by Alabama Public Television. APTPLUS offers an extensive FREE library of instructional videos that can be viewed or downloaded from the Web-on-demand (video streaming), plus a wealth of related multi-media resources for classroom education and professional development. APTPLUS gives teachers access to more than 1,400



educational television programs with video-on-demand.

GETTING STARTED – The technology coordinator for each school will receive a User ID and password and serve as an APTPLUS administrator. Administrators provide User IDs and passwords to each teacher.

ACCESS FROM ANYWHERE – Educators can view the APTPLUS resources from any computer with Internet access.

For system technology coordinator passwords, contact APTPLUS or **Donna Fuller**. School passwords may be obtained from your system technology coordinator. 🍏

KUDOS KUDOS KUDOS KUDOS KUDOS

ALABAMA ARTS STUDENTS CAPTURE NATIONAL AWARDS

Five Alabama School of Fine Arts students recently received recognition from the National Foundation for Advancement in the Arts (NFAA) for their creative work. Seniors **CEDRIC RUDOLPH** (writing), **JOSHUA BOWERS** (poetry/short story writing), **QUINN LEWIS** (nonfiction writing), **DURRELL COOPER** (theatre), and **LILLIAN PLOTT** (poetry) were recognized in the foundation's national Arts Recognition and Talent Search (ARTS) competition identifying exceptionally talented young high school artists from around the country.

Additionally, the NFAA nominated Rudolph as a Presidential Scholar in the ARTS finalist – 20 are selected from 50 national finalists. Winners will be announced in May.

Other Alabama public school students who received NFAA recognition in the competition are:

- Danielle Andress (photography), Bob Jones High School, Madison City Schools
- Erin Elizabeth Young (novel writing), B. T. Washington Magnet High School, Montgomery County Schools

THEY'RE POETS' AND THEY KNOW IT

When it comes to making money, students in one Montgomery high school are wheeling and dealing and perhaps making history by starting what may be one of the first student-led entrepreneurship in an Alabama school. **JAMES BARNES**, chairman of the new Sidney Lanier High School Poets' Unlimited, presented a business proposal to classmates who are members of an investment club and to business owners urging them to invest money to start a school-based retail business. Members of the Poets' Unlimited hope their new business venture will turn a profit to help benefit their school.

Barnes and other students enrolled in Lanier's Business Academy are planning to use the investment funds to purchase t-shirts and other school-related items to sell to fellow students, teachers, parents, and community members. The project is slated to begin sometime later this month. Faculty members are excited about the project because it will help the school and will provide the students with valuable, real-life business experience. The students will be responsible for management, purchasing, production, sales, advertising, and investment of profits.

The Principal of Sidney Lanier High School, in the Montgomery County School System, is LEWIS WASHINGTON. CLINTON CARTER is the superintendent. 🍏

More than 6,500 students from across the country entered this year's ARTS competition. To find out more, visit the [NFAA Web site](#).

JOHN NORTHROP is the director of the Alabama School of Fine Arts in Birmingham. 🍏



(Seated l-r) Lillian Plott and Quinn Lewis. (Standing l-r) Joshua Bowers, Cedric Rudolph, and Durrell Cooper



MEMBERS OF THE SIDNEY LANIER INVESTMENT CLUB AND POETS' UNLIMITED

Back row, left to right: Cilina Rudolph, Rodrigues Hill, Vernisha Mobley, Gregory Armstrong, Christopher McGhee, Tamara Thomas, Brandon Johnson, Makia Griffin, Rajneesh Daniels, Jeffrey Lamar, Diva Townsend, LeBaron Judkins, Alicia Blair, Shane Webb, Ariana Richardson, and James Barnes. Front row, left to right: Tiffany Hill, Melissa Hurst, Michelle Nelson, Courtney Lewis, and Kimkeisha Ivey.

Editor's Note: Let us know about outstanding accomplishments in your school. E-mail rwhite@alsde.edu



PRAXIS II —

BECOMING HIGHLY QUALIFIED

A

labama teachers had their first opportunity to take *Praxis II* tests in January. *Praxis II* tests are voluntary content-area exams, which some current and prospective teachers are choosing as an option to document their status as Highly Qualified under the requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*.

The Educational Testing Service (ETS) developed the *Praxis II* test series. The Alabama Department of Education worked with ETS to validate tests. Registration and scoring information are confidential. An individual score report is released to the test-taker only, but individuals who pass the appropriate test(s) should share that information with current or potential employers.

Tests in other teaching fields, including art, music, geography, political science, chemistry, and theatre will be added as quickly as possible. For *Praxis II* test-taking locations, registration deadlines, test fees, and other information, [click here](#).

For information regarding the *Alabama Model for Identifying Highly Qualified Teachers* and the *High Objective Uniform State Standard Of Evaluation (HOUSSE)* [click here](#). 🍎

CURRENT BATTERY OF TESTS AVAILABLE FOR ALABAMA TEACHERS INCLUDES:

- Elementary Content, Grades K-6
 1. Early Childhood Education
 2. Elementary Education
 3. Special Education, Grade 6 and Below
- Middle-Level Content, Grades 4-8
 1. Middle-Level Generalist
 2. English Language Arts
 3. Math
 4. Science
 5. Social Studies
- Reading Specialist, Grades Pre-K-12

FUTURE TEST DATES:

MARCH 6, APRIL 17, JUNE 12

Secondary (Grades 6-12) tests in English language arts, math, science, social studies, economics, history, biology, French, and Spanish are being selected and validated with a target testing date of April 17.

BOARD BRIEFS

JANUARY AGENDA ITEMS

INCLUDED:

- ✍ Accepted State Superintendent of Education Ed Richardson's Resignation
- ✍ Appointed Joseph B. Morton Interim State Superintendent of Education
- ✍ Passed Resolution Commending Dr. Ron Wright for the "Barbara Fannin Memorial Employee of the Quarter Award" for January-March 2004
- ✍ Passed Resolution Commending Michael Fletcher, 2003 Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award Recipient
- ✍ Passed Resolutions Commending Students Making Perfect ACT Scores
- ✍ Authorized Review of Teacher Education Programs, Alabama State University, Montgomery
- ✍ Approved Teacher Education Programs, Oakwood College, Huntsville
- ✍ Approved Substitution of Later Edition of Mathematics Textbooks
- ✍ Received Resolution for Adopting Social Studies State Course of Study
- ✍ Announced Intent to Amend Administrative Code Rule Pertaining to Regulations Governing Public Schools
- ✍ Passed Resolution Recognizing January as School Board Member Recognition Month
- ✍ Adopted Emergency Administrative Code Rules as Permanent Rules Pertaining to Annual Apportionment of Foundation Program Funds, Transportation Funds, and Public School Funds

FEBRUARY



1	BLACK HISTORY MONTH						7
7-13		SkillsUSA-VICA Week					
8	12	Alabama Board of Education Meeting					14
16		Washington/Jefferson Birthdays (STATE HOLIDAY)					
15	16						21
23-27		Alabama Direct Assessment of Writing-Grades 5, 7, 10					
22	23						28
26		State/System/School Report Cards Released					
29	Alabama Board of Education Work Session						

MARCH



ALABAMA COMMUNITY EDUCATION MONTH ARTS EDUCATION MONTH

2	Read Across America Day					13
1-4/16	Alabama Alternate Assessment Administration					
14	Alabama Occupational Diploma Portfolio English Language Acquisition Test					20
28-12	Alabama High School Graduation Exam Administration					27
11	Alabama Board of Education Meeting					
25	Alabama Board of Education Work Session					

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND RESOURCES

Legacy's 2004 Environmental Partnership Conference will be held at Marriott's Grand Hotel, Point Clear, February 18-20. For more information, [click here](#) or call 334-270-5921.

The Environmental Education Association of Alabama's (EEAA) Annual Meeting will be held at Camp Beckwith, Fairhope, February 19-21. For more information, [click here](#).

The Alabama Community Education Association's 2004 Conference is planned for March 3-5 at the Perdido Beach Resort, Orange Beach. [Click here](#) for registration information.

The USA Today 2004 All-USA Teacher Team is a recognition program for K-12 educators. Team members serve as representatives of outstanding teachers across the nation. To learn more, [click here](#). **Deadline: April 19.**

The Alabama PTA 86th Annual Convention will be held in Montgomery, April 23-24. [Click here](#) for further information.

AWARD AND GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

The Lucent Global Science Scholarship Competition recognizes high school seniors who are planning on pursuing careers in technology. [Click here](#) for more information. **Deadline: February 25**

The 14th annual Haiku Contest is open to Alabama residents of all ages and to friends of Alabama living in Japan. The entry form can be obtained by calling 205-348-5312 or 5311, or [click here](#). **Deadline: March 1**

Sidewalk's Student Filmmaking Competition is open to students in Grades 7-12. [Click here](#) or call Catherine at 205-324-0888 for further information. **Deadline: April 30**

Education's Unsung Heroes Awards Program recognizes K-12 educators for their innovative teaching methods, creative educational projects, and ability to make a positive influence on the children they teach. For more information, [click here](#). **Deadline: April 30**

TEACHER OF THE MONTH FOR JANUARY

*Heritage Elementary School, Madison City Schools
State Board of Education District 8*

CATHY NASH is January's Teacher of the Month, a second-grade teacher at Heritage Elementary School and also serves as the second-grade curriculum specialist for the Madison City School System.

A National Board Certified teacher, Nash was named Teacher of the Year for the Madison City School System in 2002-2003 and received the Madison County and Huntsville Outstanding Educator Award in 2002.

Nash believes teaching is both a science and an art. She understands the powerful influence a teacher can have on a young child. "As I plan and organize each day, I take on the role of an artist, creating a most precious piece of art. Every word I say, every step I take, and every activity contributes to that human piece of art," said Nash. She also involves her students in community projects such as making cards and writing notes for the elderly, and collecting hundreds of books for children's shelters and after-school programs.



TEACHER OF THE MONTH FOR FEBRUARY

*Winston County High School, Winston County Schools
State Board of Education District 7*

THERESA SNODDY is February's Teacher of the Month. She teaches 11th- and 12th-grade English at Winston County High School.

The first and only National Board Certified teacher in her school system, Snoddy was named Winston County's 2003 Teacher of the Year. The 31-year teaching veteran compares her role as teacher to a coach who must constantly work to get the most from her players. "I believe that moving a pencil around on a page in a meaningful and creative way can be just as rewarding to students as moving a football around on a field or dribbling a basketball down a court – and it's my job to help the students realize that," she said. "Just as going the extra mile in sports can pay big dividends at game time, so pushing their limits in school – taking that advanced placement course, reading those classics, joining the drama team or newspaper staff – can pay off in a big way later in life."

Both teachers and their schools each receive \$1,000 from ALFA Insurance Co. and the Alabama Farmers Federation. In 2004, Alfa will honor one teacher from each of Alabama's eight school board districts as well as two principals and two private school teachers.

2004 AWARDS SCHEDULE

January – Board District 8
February – Board District 7
March – Board District 6
April – Board District 5
May – Board District 4
June – Principal
July – Principal
August – Private School Teacher
September – Private School Teacher
October – Board District 3
November – Board District 2
December – Board District 1



ALABAMA EDUCATION NEWS

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