



Act 1240 District Waiver Extension Request

District:	Bentonville
LEA Number:	0401000
Superintendent:	Dr. Debbie Jones
Email:	djones@bentonvillek12.org
Contact for Waiver:	Dr. Jennifer Morrow
Contact Email:	jmorrow@bentonvillek12.org
Contact Phone:	479-254-5008
Date Received by DESE:	1/7/21

The following documents must be submitted with the waiver request:

1. A signed copy of the resolution adopted by the school district's board of directors authorizing the district to request the waiver extension
2. Evidence of support from district staff for the continuation of the waiver

Waiver Request #1

Topic:	Teacher Licensure
Standards/Statutes/Rules:	Standard 4-D.1; A.C.A. §6-17-309; A.C.A. §6-17-401; Ark. Code Ann. 6-17-1004; 6-17-302; 6-17-919; 6-17-902
Duration Requested:	5 years
Name of Open-Enrollment Charter Holding the Waiver	Arkansas Arts Academy
Schools, Grades or Classes the Wavier Will Apply To	Grades 11-12 at Bentonville West High School and Bentonville High School in the Ignite Professional Studies Programs

1. Explain the benefit of the waiver for students, staff, the district, the community or the State.

The waiver will allow the Ignite Professional Studies program to hire professionals from the field of study to teach students in career courses (elective courses, not core courses). Instructors that have experience in the field can bring expertise to the classroom that is current and relevant for students. Our district would have the flexibility to hire outside professionals to meet the needs of difficult hires in high need career areas. Professionals from the field create a network of other experts that can help build a program and produce student workers in high demand, high need professions. Our state has a critical need to have employees with specialized training. Giving a district flexibility in hiring, should provide better qualified graduates in career courses.

2. How will the waiver enhance student learning opportunities, promote innovation or increase equitable access to effective teachers?

Waivers to have flexibility to hire content experts without a current teacher license will enhance the classroom through:

1. Current content relative to needs in the workplace.
2. Students will be under the direction of a highly qualified individual from the field.
3. Instructor will have a network of experts that can come into the classroom and serve as guest speakers, mentors and offer internships.
4. Instructors from the field can develop work and training around multiple opportunities available within an industry.
5. Teachers from the field have a better understanding of the certifications and trainings that are beneficial to a graduate.
6. Coursework from a college transcript will provide evidence of training in the field before the practical experience has taken place.

Content experts teaching our students provide a level of admiration for those trained and practicing in the same areas the student wants to pursue. The classroom can be better equipped and connected to outside groups if a teacher has the relative experience.

All non-licensed teachers will need to meet the same requirements for professional development and evaluation measures as other teachers in the district. Teachers not in possession of a state licensed will be monitored and high expectations will be insured.

3. How will students be served as a result of the waiver?

Our students will be taught in classes that meet in blocks of time for 2 1/2 hours daily. Within the course, students are learning the technical skills necessary to be successful upon graduation. Our students are earning college credit. Much of this college credit is earned because our teacher has the degree to teach at the Higher Education level. Our students are also earning certifications where our teachers are equipped to provide students the correct training to pass certification exams.

As part of the program, our students spend time doing real work for clients in our community. A teacher that has spent time in the field understands the work from a prospective of being the client/customer of the person working to land the sale or project. A background in actual work/employment will benefit our students as the teacher shares experiences from multiple perspectives.

Our students are served through internships, certifications, college credit and working on real projects for actual clients. A teacher with experience in the industry will provide a realistic view to the students of the realities of the job.

4. How will the district will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the waiver?

Our district will evaluate the effectiveness of the waiver through

1. Number of certifications received.
2. College credit earned.
3. Number of internships obtained.
4. Number of student enrollment in the course.
5. Teacher evaluations.
6. Partnerships developed.

5. If the district is requesting an extension of teacher licensure waivers, the district must also provide the following information:

The number of positions filled by a teacher employed under the waiver: 4

The number of teachers employed under the waiver that have obtained licensure: 1

The number of teachers employed under the waiver that are actively engaged in a licensure pathway program: 1

Waiver Request #2

Topic:	Leased Academic Facilities
Standards/Statutes/Rules:	A.C.A. §6-21-117
Duration Requested:	5 years
Name of Open-Enrollment Charter Holding the Waiver	Northwest Arkansas Classical Academy
Schools, Grades or Classes the Wavier Will Apply To	Grades 11-12 at Bentonville West High School and Bentonville High School in the Ignite Professional Studies Programs

1. Explain the benefit of the waiver for students, staff, the district, the community or the State.

The waiver will allow school programs at Bentonville Schools to grow beyond the traditional classroom space at the schools within our district and lease facilities from local business partners. We have used this waiver for approximately five years and rented (for a fee) facilities including U of A Global Campus, NWACC Health Professions Building classroom space, NWACC Brightwater, and others. Without a fee we used private facilities at TaTa Consulting, MuSigma, ArVest, and others. When education and training is allowed to be held in local establishments within our community, students have access to professional sites that can enhance the learning. The flexibility to meet off campus in leased spaces gives the district an opportunity to pilot programs before housing them in the traditional school building. Community members are investing in the school district, the program and the students when businesses offer space for our students to learn. There is buy-in by community partners when the business professionals contribute to the education of our children. We have utilized this waiver over the last five years and have formed solid business and education partnerships because of the connection of our students meeting in their spaces. Internships for our students have also been implemented because of housing our programs in remote sites. The opportunity to meet in remote sites has been beneficial to all parties involved over the last five years. We would like to continue to offer programming that may need to meet in a leased space.

2. How will the waiver enhance student learning opportunities, promote innovation or increase equitable access to effective teachers?

Waivers to have flexibility to meet off campus at leased facilities enhance our programming by

1. Piloting programs to determine student interest.
2. House in facilities that have professionals in the field to connect as program partners to enhance learning opportunities.
3. Students meet off campus where they are taking the responsibility to respect the spaces and learn to conduct themselves in a place of business rather than school rules.
4. Bus service is provided to meet at the remote sites.
5. Teachers are also connecting with the surrounding business professional to enhance their learning and growth in the subject matter.
6. Through the waiver used in the past, our students have connected with community members that have provided internships and scholarships.
7. Through the waiver used in the past, our students have attended professional trainings held at the off-site locations and been mentored by individuals in the field.
8. Community members have easy access to help with training our students.

Leased ALE facilities will conform to school facility standards defined in the Arkansas School Facility Manual. Facilities will meet requirements of all state and local health and safety codes, ADA, and IDEA.

3. How will students be served as a result of the waiver?

Placing our students off-campus in professional spaces allows students to immerse themselves in an environment conducive to the training students are receiving in our district. In the past our Global Business students met at Arvest Bank, Ta Ta Consulting, our Health Sciences students met at Northwest Arkansas Community College Health Professions Building and our Education Innovation students met at a Middle School. The environments where they were exposed made a significant impact on their training and development. Students were in an environment simulating what the workplace would look like once they were employed. Students also had access to professionals in the field to observe and learn from rather than rely on a teacher for the significant part of the training. We expected our students to dress appropriately for the workplaces where classes were held, which contributed to their professionalism. Off-site training gives the students a broader perspective of all the opportunities in the field they have an interest. Immersion into the spaces with a connection to the actual work environment is invigorating and enhances the learning.

4. How will the district will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the waiver?

Our district will evaluate the effectiveness of the waiver through

1. Number of community partners involved in the programs.
2. Number of community spaces where training is received.
3. Number of internships obtained.
4. Number of student enrollment in the course.
5. Teacher evaluations.
6. Cost of leasing to the district.

Waiver Request #3

Topic:	Unit of Credit Meets for 120 Clock Hours
Standards/Statutes/Rules:	Standard 1-A.2;
Duration Requested:	5 years
Name of Open-Enrollment Charter Holding the Waiver	Arkansas Arts Academy
Schools, Grades or Classes the Wavier Will Apply To	Grades 11-12 at Bentonville West High School and Bentonville High School in the Ignite Professional Studies Programs

1. Explain the benefit of the waiver for students, staff, the district, the community or the State.

The waiver will allow school programs in the Ignite Professional Studies program to award credit for subject matter competency. Students complete course work in classes with teachers, certification programs, and work-based learning experiences for local businesses or employers. The waiver was sought at program inception in 2015 because some program completion was not related to class time but rather in the certification program settings or professional work-based-learning settings.

2. How will the waiver enhance student learning opportunities, promote innovation or increase equitable access to effective teachers?

A waiver to allow credit acquisitions through subject matter competency enhances learning opportunities, promotes innovations, and increases equitable access to effective teachers in the following ways.

1. Students can earn certification from industry professionals in authentic work environments.
2. Students can attain subject matter competency through experiences in authentic work environments with mentors who become valuable networks for employment and mentoring beyond high school.
3. Authentic learning environments and mentor exposure are innovative and rigorous far beyond classroom exposure to textbooks and simulations.
4. Authentic mentor experiences are innovative and rigorous.
5. Authentic industry certifications allow for immediate employment opportunity during and beyond high school.
6. Students can complete more than one high school course, certification, or work-based experience simultaneously.
7. Students have an opportunity to earn more high school credit without taking up hours in their course schedule from other interests and activities.
8. Students have access to college level instructors, certification instructors, and mentor that they may not be able to afford individually beyond high school.
9. Students have access to a less expensive form of tuition for college classes or certifications and in some cases, it is free.
10. Students have the support of the district to help transition students from high school to college level courses and employment.
11. Students without professional family networks gain professional mentor networks through these subject matter competency experiences and the guidance of our teachers.

3. How will students be served as a result of the waiver?

Our students will be served in the following ways:

1. Enrollment in certification programs with industry professionals.
2. Earning employable certifications.
3. Assignment in work-based learning programs with industry professionals.
4. Exposure to authentic work environments and industry professionals.
5. Creating employable networks of industry mentors.
6. Enrolling students in a college class along with their Ignite course to earn dual credit.
7. Introduction to the rigor of college courses.
8. Understanding the expectations in a college course.
9. Access to a college Learning Management System and other technologies.
10. Helping students understand the importance of earning a strong GPA on their college transcript.
11. Allowing students to fast-forward their college courses needed for a degree or employment.
12. Students have a clearer understanding of the career pathway based on taking college courses.
13. Offering students transferable credit to most universities.

4. How will the district will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the waiver?

Our district will evaluate the effectiveness of the waiver through

1. Number of certifications earned.
2. Number of post-secondary training enrollments.
3. Number of students pursuing the same college major of the college courses taken in Ignite.
4. Feedback from students on the value of the course experiences.
5. Teacher evaluations.
6. Work-based learning experiences, project accomplishments, and mentor feedback.
7. Students transferring credits to other post-secondary educational sites.

Waiver Request #4

Topic:	Uniform Grading Scale
Standards/Statutes/Rules:	A.C.A. §6-15-902(a); Section 2-2.01 of the DESE Rules Governing Grading and Course Credit
Duration Requested:	5 years
Name of Open-Enrollment Charter Holding the Waiver	Arkansas Arts Academy
Schools, Grades or Classes the Wavier Will Apply To	Grades 7-8 at Fulbright Jr. High, Grimsley Jr. High, Lincoln Jr. High and Washington Jr High

1. Explain the benefit of the waiver for students, staff, the district, the community or the State.

We have utilized a standards-based grading system at the elementary level (K-4) for the last several years and are planning to develop and implement a standards-based grading system for grades 5-8 over the next several years. We have already developed an "assessment handbook" for use in grades 5-12 which details our beliefs and practices related to assessment of student learning, including grading. We are utilizing research from many sources including the research and direct involvement of Dr. Thomas Guskey to impact grading and assessment practices. The benefit of this waiver is to allow continuation of the assessment system that is in place at the elementary level to be implemented in upper grades. This continuation will provide students and parents much better assessment information and keep students from having to pivot to a different, less effective grading system. The district will benefit from more students working under the standards-based grading system which is integral to assessment practices which truly measure students' knowledge and skills. Ultimately, this waiver will benefit our community and state as students graduate from our district better prepared for the workforce and post-secondary education options.

2. How will the waiver enhance student learning opportunities, promote innovation or increase equitable access to effective teachers?

A waiver to allow utilization of a standards-based grading system will enhance student learning by allowing students, parents and teachers to work together more effectively to support each student's individual mastery of the knowledge and skills defined in our state standards. Standards-based grading allows for a focus on learning, not grades. Standards-based grading allows teachers to provide students much more meaningful feedback that can enhance students' learning. Standards-based grading allows students and teachers the flexibility to demonstrate expected learning in multiple, differing ways which allows students to be more vested in their own learning.

If approved, this waiver will promote innovation and increase the effectiveness of all teachers primarily through our Professional Learning Community (PLC) work. The combination of utilizing standards-based grading with our continually developing formative assessment practices will have a synergistic effect on determining students' learning levels and teachers' effectiveness. Teachers will be more able to refine instructional practices as they focus on students attaining mastery of standards as opposed to calculating percentages.

3. How will students be served as a result of the waiver?

All elementary (K-4) schools in our district currently utilize a standards-based grading system. Our middle schools (5-6) are not yet fully utilizing a standards based grading system but have been doing the work necessary to fully implement a standards based grading system with 5th grade students in the fall of 2021. We intend to "roll up" our current 4th grade elementary students into 5th grade (middle school) where they will experience the same learning assessment system they are used to from their current elementary school. In subsequent years, the next grade level (6th, then 7th and above) would fully implement the standards based grading system.

4. How will the district will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the waiver?

We are confident that increasing the number of grade levels utilizing standards-based assessment practices will increase the mastery of needed knowledge and skills by students at those levels. The expected increase in students' learning mastery will be evidenced in multiple objective assessment tools. As such, the success of the waiver will be evaluated in multiple, objective manners. Primary methods include the following:

1. ACT Aspire and DESE performance report ("report card") - we expect all schools to maintain or improve the letter grade on the annual report card based on our students' increased performance on the ACT Aspire exam.
2. Local assessments - we expect to see a measurable improvement on students' performance on the following:
 - a. the NWEA MAP assessments (we administer these literacy and mathematics assessments 3 times per year to every student in grades 5-8)
 - b. our math and reading comprehension assessments (we administer math [IKAN] and reading assessments [Acadience] to all students multiple times per year)

The success of the waiver will also be evaluated in more subjective measures including teachers' improvement in assessment development work, in their PLC collaboration work and in teachers' performance ratings in the Teacher Excellence and Support System (TESS). Teachers should document higher performance ratings for component 3d "Using Assessment in Instruction," 1f "Designing Students Assessments" and 4c "Communicating with Families," but other components should certainly show improvement as well.



Bentonville Schools

Whereas the Bentonville School District Board of Directors met in a regular, open, and properly-called board meeting on Tuesday, November 17, 2020, at 500 Tiger Boulevard in Bentonville, Arkansas.

Whereas 7 members were present, a quorum was declared by the chair.

Whereas a representative of the Superintendent presented for consideration "waiver extension requests" with an explanation for each.

Whereas the Board of Directors had opportunity to review the waiver requests and to ask any questions.

Whereas the Board of Directors received a recommendation from the Superintendent to authorize the district to request the waiver extensions from the Arkansas State Board of Education.


Whereas the Board, after serious consideration, moved to approve the request to authorize the district to request the waiver extension.

Therefore, due to the specific reasons cited above, it is hereby declared to be the intent of the Bentonville School District Board of Directors to authorize the Superintendent to request the waiver extensions



Board President

11/17/2020
Date



Superintendent

11/17/2020
Date



where excellence lives

Bentonville Schools
500 Tiger Blvd.
Bentonville, AR 72712

November 17th, 2020

Arkansas State Board of Education
Four Capitol Mall
Little Rock, AR 72201

To Whom It May Concern:

Please accept this correspondence as our formal request to utilize waivers for teachers in our district's Ignite Professional Studies program. Focused on providing high school junior and seniors real, relevant work experiences, the Ignite program engages area professionals as classroom teachers. We have used the following waivers since the 2014-15 school year and request that each of them be renewed: Teacher Licensure, Facilities, and Unit of Credit.

Specifically, we are asking for **licensure waivers** for the teachers in the following programs of study: Health Science, Computer Science, Graphic Design, Global Business, and Audio Visual Production. Because these teachers come to us with substantial backgrounds in their specific area of expertise, they often have not gone through a traditional teaching program. We feel that their content knowledge in the field is a strong benefit to our students, and we work diligently with them in the development of educational pedagogy, classroom management, and other education-specific competencies.

If allowed to use a **facility waiver**, we have strong partnerships with local industry leaders that graciously allow our students to meet in their spaces. These are state-of-the-art facilities that offer our students the chance to gain valuable, first-hand experiences throughout the year. Additionally, being on site allows them the chance to see the work that is being done by professionals and get feedback on how to make themselves stand out as potential employees.

And, lastly we would like to utilize a **unit of credit waiver**. This would allow our students to concurrently earn both high school and college credit, which can potentially lead to certifications and Associate's degrees.

Please know that the Bentonville Schools Ignite Center for Advanced Professional Studies has our unequivocal support. We are hopeful that the renewal of these waivers will continue to benefit our students and teachers in everything that they do.

Thank you for your consideration of our request, we hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Jack Loyd

Jack Loyd
Principal
Bentonville High School

Jonathon Guthrie

Dr. Jonathon Guthrie
Principal
Bentonville West High School



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Bentonville Schools
500 Tiger Blvd.
Bentonville, AR 72712

November 17th, 2020

Arkansas State Board of Education
Four Capitol Mall
Little Rock, AR 72201

To Whom It May Concern:

As we developed a premier professional studies program we found the need for waivers in the areas of Facilities, Unit of Credit, and Teacher Licensure. These waivers have been in place the last five years and we wish to renew those waivers.

The Ignite Professional Studies program has utilized these waivers in the following ways:

Facilities - We have utilized facilities in various corporate and professional settings for classes so that students are immersed in the professional workplace and have access to professional mentors and instructors from our partner agencies.

Unit of Credit - This waiver has allowed us to utilize concurrent credit in our career and professional studies coursework.

Teacher Licensure - This waiver allows us to hire industry professionals with a great depth of knowledge and experience in the career fields of health science, computer science, graphic design, global business, and AV production who would not have otherwise been on a traditional teacher education pathway.

We, the undersigned represent the faculty and students in the Bentonville Schools Ignite Center for Advanced Professional Studies. We support this waiver renewal and find these waivers essential to our innovative career and professional studies programs.

Thank you for your consideration of the request.

Sincerely-

Handwritten signature of Teresa Hudson in black ink.

Teresa Hudson
Director
Ignite Professional Studies

Handwritten signature of John Mark Russell in black ink.

John Mark Russell
Instructor

Handwritten signature of Jessica Imel in black ink.

Jessica Imel
Instructor

Handwritten signature of Kimberly S. Burgess in black ink.

Kimberly Burgess
Instructor

Bentonville Schools
500 Tiger Blvd.
Bentonville, AR 72712

November 17th, 2020

Arkansas State Board of Education
Four Capitol Mall
Little Rock, AR 72201

To Whom It May Concern:

As we implement processes for students to track their own academic progress, utilize teacher feedback methods, and unpack content standards for the purpose of building rubrics, we believe it would be beneficial for our teachers to provide feedback consistent with the standards based grading (SBG) system students experienced in the district's elementary grades.

Our junior high campuses have worked to establish Professional Learning Communities (PLC) over the last ten years that seamlessly analyze essential learning targets, how to gauge student growth, how to intervene when students fail to demonstrate mastery, and how to extend and enrich learning when students have already demonstrated essential skills. The next step in this PLC process for our teams is to be able to not only build and implement rubrics for the purpose of identifying indicators of student growth, but to be able to report that growth out without necessarily trying to convert it into a traditional percentage based grade. The use of percentage based grades as they currently exist in eSchool serve as a communication tool for parents and families, however their usefulness is somewhat disconnected from the peer and teacher conferencing and feedback students experience in the classroom setting. The implementation of a standards based reporting model will help communicate to parents and families more accurately the essential skill growth a student is pursuing in their classes with the assistance of the teacher and learning community. It points students towards growth opportunities more acutely and also helps students at the junior high level begin that transition towards a "GPA" mentality for high school purposes in pursuit of college post-secondary learning opportunities.

Thank you for your consideration of the request.

Sincerely-

Bradley

Skyler

Josh

Tim

Bradley Webber
Principal
Fulbright Junior High

Dr. Skyler Brown
Principal
Grimsley Junior High

Josh Thompson
Principal
Lincoln Junior High

Tim Sparacino
Principal
Washington Junior High

Bentonville Schools
500 Tiger Blvd.
Bentonville, AR 72712

November 17th, 2020

Arkansas State Board of Education
Four Capitol Mall
Little Rock, AR 72201

To Whom It May Concern:

We are writing in support of a waiver extension that applies to ACA 6-15-902(a) for Bentonville Schools. The benefit of this waiver is to allow the continuation of the assessment system that is in place at the elementary level to be implemented in the upper grades. The waiver will allow continuity in our grading system and not cause students to transfer to a different, less effective grading system.

Standards-based grading is integral to assessment practices and truly measures a student's knowledge and skills. Standards-based grading allows teachers to provide meaningful feedback to students that can enrich a student's learning experience. Students become more focused on the learning and less on the achievement of a grade. Standards-based grading provides students the opportunity to illustrate mastery of a standard in multiple, differing ways.

The district already has an assessment handbook in place that details the practices that coincide with standards-based grading. Teachers have been performing the practices outlined in the assessment handbook and have found them to be successful in achieving mastery of standards. By utilizing standards-based grading and developing common assessments among our Professional Learning Communities (PLC), teachers are able to refine their instructional practices to focus on student mastery, not the calculation of a grade.

We ask that you please grant the extension of the waiver we are requesting. Doing so will provide the district and staff the opportunity to utilize a grading system that is proving to be beneficial to students, parents and teachers. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,

Marilyn

Marilyn Gilchrist
Principal
Ardis Ann M.S.

Aaron

Aaron J. Gaffigan
Principal
Bright Field M.S.

Jeff

Jeff Wasem
Principal
Creekside M.S.

Leslie

Leslie Lyons
Principal
Old High M.S.

Eric

Eric Hipp
Principal
Ruth Barker M.S.

November 10, 2020

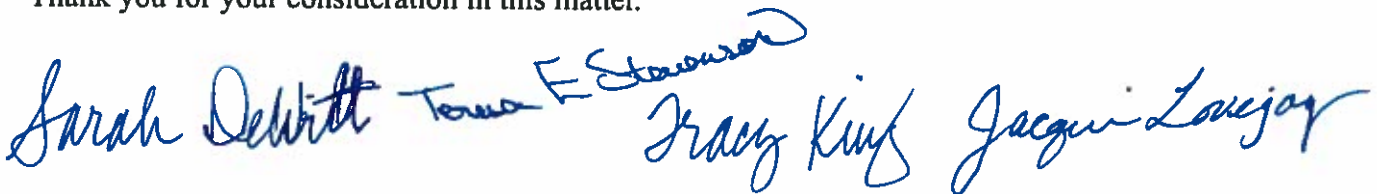
Dear State Board of Education:

The purpose of this letter is to emphasize our support for the proposed request for a waiver of the Uniform Grading Scales for Public Secondary Schools. We endorse the continued use of standards-based assessment practices, which we believe positively impact our students' understanding in relation to mastery of the standards.

It is our belief that standards-based grading provides for more student and parent clarity about achievement. This understanding is based on the work of Dr. Thomas Guskey, among others, who explains that to be effective and meaningful, grades must describe how well students have mastered the learning objectives, thereby linking assessments and reporting to standards (Guskey, 2001). A further benefit, of course, is that with a standards-based assessment system, teachers must know the standards very well themselves in order to define learning targets and success criteria for the students. John Hattie's work cites the effect size of teacher clarity as 0.75. Furthermore, the effect size for collective teacher efficacy is 1.57 (Hattie, 2015). When teachers of all subjects are clear on the standards, convey that understanding so that the students also have clarity, and report achievement in terms of mastery of the standards, teachers can have that collective sense of achieving more for the students in their school.

Ultimately, standards-based assessment and reporting is most beneficial to our students. Our shift to standards-based assessment has helped to reframe our students' thinking. We see student focus moving from "How do I get an A?" to "How am I meeting or not meeting the expectations of the standards?" which gives them student ownership of their learning and understanding of their knowledge and skill level. In the end, that is exactly what we want our grading and reporting system to reflect.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.



Sarah DeWitt

Teresa Ellis-Stevenson

Tracy Kincy

Jacquie Lovejoy

5-8 Instructional Specialists

Bentonville Schools

500 Tiger Boulevard

Bentonville, AR 72712

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