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School Ready, Mind Ready, Let's Learn...from Home

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Abstract

This year school has dramatically changed from in-person class to class that is done remotely over a device. Thus, the focus issue addressed in this capstone project is understanding and creating a designated at-home learning environment where students who are doing remote learning can benefit. This is important for students and parents because students are now completing the school year online and at home. An argument made is that creating a designated school area at home will give students a school mindset and create fewer distractions, therefore letting them concentrate on their schoolwork. Considerations of the issue included the perspectives of two teachers and parents of Harry Elementary School because of their relation to the issue. Three action options that emerged from an analysis of the data were: educating parents on the importance of a student's environment and how it can affect learning; providing parents with tips and information on how to improve their at-home learning environment; and the resources they can use to do so. Providing parents with information on how to create and provide their child with an at-home learning environment is argued to be the most effective way to achieve the goals of a learning environment where students can thrive.

School Ready, Mind Ready, Let's Learn… from Home

The year is 2020; you wake up to get ready to go to school. You do your daily routine of getting up, brushing your teeth, and changing out of your pajamas to put on your school clothes. You walk down the hall to put on your tennis shoes but instead, you reach for a pair of slippers. Your school is now your home, your desk is now the kitchen table, your backpack is now the tops of counters, and your new classroom maybe your room. Your laptop is now your only connection and way to interact with your teacher and classmates, and you are only one lousy wifi signal away from losing that connection. The stress of online distance learning has affected many students. You may not have a designated area in your home to do your distance learning and are in a house filled with distractions. This reality is my reality, but also many other students across the country as well.

Having the abrupt change from attending regular everyday schooling to now the "new normal" of learning online can stress a student and begin to raise questions for students and parents. Where am I going to do my school work? Do I have the resources at home to promote my children's learning? How can I design an area where my child will benefit while doing online learning? It is easy for students to just plop on the couch and put on their favorite show while they are in distance learning, but this is not an ideal learning situation. Even just sitting on the sofa or at the kitchen table can not be beneficial. Not being in a place where we can be put in the school mindset may cause us to be easily distracted. Based on my own experience, I have trouble focusing on hearing outside noise like my family members watching tv or listening to music. I also struggle with paying attention when I am not sitting at a desk or table in a remotely quiet area. I make adjustments to my at-home learning area that best benefits my needs. When creating an at-home learning area for your student, you must ask your child about their experience and

tips from their teachers so that the parent or the student can adjust accordingly when we think about our own classroom experience and our students. We notice that our students are in an environment that is well supported emotionally and physically. Emotionally meaning they are receiving support at home and are building off of their strengths. Physically meaning they have a desk or table to work on as well as comfortable seating. They are in a room with beneficial lighting and are provided with resources that will benefit them with their learning. Many students with distance learning do not have these resources at home. When not put in a designated at-home learning area, they will be easily distracted; when looking at an area to set up your student in, think about what may benefit your child and what factors may take away from their learning.

With this new normal of learning, many students feel anxious and stressed with the change. It is safe to say that students experiencing these mental hardships are at a disadvantage when it comes to absorbing new material in school. It is essential to provide our students with support and encouragement and set expectations for the day. Furthermore, it is crucial as parents and caregivers to meet our student's needs, as, without these necessities, students will also be at a disadvantage when it comes to learning. Seeking help from the child's teacher on creating an excellent at-home learning area that will help your child with engaged learning is one way that these needs can be met. Still, there are a plethora of ways that students can be supported to create a positive learning environment. Parents have always played a considerable role in their students' learning, but they are now playing an even more prominent role in distance learning. One must consider that the parents are monitoring the student's growth primarily, and one cannot forget this critical role. This means that parents must take time out of their day to check in on the child and perhaps provide scaffolds or other tools to promote learning. Since this is a relatively new

and currently occurring situation, I want to provide parents, guardians, students, and teachers with information that they may use and share when trying to create an at-home learning environment. In this study, I hope to find ways to improve student's at-home learning areas so that they may succeed in this transition to online learning. This also means exploring the different ways in which students with different modalities of learning may be adequately given the right opportunities to foster growth and learning.

Literature Synthesis & Integration

Due to the ongoing global pandemic, students from across the United States have switched from in-person learning at school to distance learning at home and remote education. Distance learning is the separation of teacher and learner in space and/or time without in-person face-to-face contact in a traditional setting with a teacher in a classroom (Sherry, 1995). Remote learning is when students log into a virtual classroom using technological devices such as computers or tablets at scheduled times to view lectures and participate in an online class (Sherry, 1995). Since students are neither face-to-face with their teachers, nor are they in a classroom setting, parents are required to be more involved with their child's learning more than ever.

This brings up the issue of why parents must create an at-home learning environment for their students so that they may succeed in the online classroom. An at-home learning environment is a quiet, comfortable, and dedicated space devoted to learning (Covid-19,para.1)**.** Due to remote learning, students who are the learners are considered as the main controlling element to their education rather than the teacher or supervisors (Smith, 2012). Students are held to be more accountable and responsible for their education. It is up to the student and their parents to ensure they are fully engaged and get the full teaching out of the lessons. This then

raises the question of whether parents are developing an appropriate at-home learning

environment for their students to succeed in their online classes.

Why is it an issue?

Since the consequences of this pandemic are continuing, students in California,

depending on the counties they live in, cannot attend face-to-face school instruction until their

county reaches the requirements to open back up. According to California's Covid-19 website

there is a four-tiered color-code system that each county in California follows. In order for a

school to open up their county has to reach the required color and meet the requirements

according to the California government. Until their counties meet these regulations, students are

required to be in distance or remote learning. Students need a learning environment that is

beneficial for them, and that meets their needs. They need to be away from distractions that come

with being at homes, such as other family members, pets, television, and other household noises.

Therefore, maintaining focused attention in a home-based classroom environment may be

particularly challenging for students. If a student's at-home learning area has too many visual

features like pictures or posters in their learning area this may tax their still-developing and

fragile ability to maintain task goals and ignore distractions actively (Davies et al., 2015).

Providing students with a consistent designated home learning environment free or minimizing

distractions with a structure and routine can establish a learning environment that they would

typically have in a classroom and bring positive force to their online education

(Covid-19,para.2).

A student's learning environment affects the way a student learns. According to a study

done by the professors of the University of Salford, they found that about 25% of students'

progress was affected by their learning environment (Davies et al., 2015). Even though not every

home learning environment set-up will be the same, parents must find the best fit for their students. The students need an established home learning environment to establish learning routines they would typically use in school. These routines will provide children with consistency, confidence, security, trust, and a sense of safety because the routines allow them to identify patterns that help them predict what will happen next (Watson & DiCarlo, 2015, p. 1). This will help the students stay on task and establish routines that they will get used to and be prepared when they go back to face-to-face schooling. Making this at-home learning area a school only zone will help students develop a school mindset. This will help them realize that they are in school, and they are ready to learn.

What should be done?

Seeing that distance and remote learning are going to continue, there is a call to action that parents create an at-home learning environment for their students that is an area of their home that is just dedicated to schoolwork. Since a learning environment affects students' learning, parents should help provide a positive and supportive environment that will best meet their students' needs. A positive environment is one where students feel a sense of belonging, trust others, and feel encouraged to tackle challenges, ask questions, and are willing to take risks (Davies et al., 2015). When designing an area, it is argued that intimate and personalized spaces are better for absorbing, memorizing, and recalling information (Davies et al., 2015). Getting the child involved as well may help personalize this area and may encourage them to start using this new designated at-home learning area. Instead of having students perform online learning on a couch or in their bed, which are not conducive to school work, parents should use a desk or table and a comfortable chair. These properly designed materials help improve on-task behavior, promote better sitting and standing postures, reduce back pain and other musculoskeletal

complaints, increase trunk muscle strength, and improve overall academic marks (Smith, 2012). This will help students concentrate on their work and refrain from distractions. This does not mean the designated area in a separate room, but perhaps a corner of an area. Parents may also provide bookshelves to store textbooks and other materials to help their students stay organized and other school supplies such as notebooks, pencils, pens, and a whiteboard. Having supplies nearby will create less time wasted through looking for the proper materials and fewer times for being distracted about what is occurring in their household. When students feel ownership of their learning area, it sets the stage for cultivating feelings of responsibility (Davies et al., 2015).

Having proper lighting in this home learning area is also essential, as is creating an area that is not too cold or too hot. Since learning environments are linked to the academic performance of K-12 students, poor control of classroom environmental indoor air, room ventilation, temperature, humidity, thermal comfort, lighting, and acoustic quality directly affect a student's performance (Smith, 2012). It is vital to design and to plan the needs of your student rather than incorporating and recreating an aesthetically pleasing home learning area that does not meet the needs of the student. It is also essential to have a visually stimulated area that does not promote too much stimulation. Color research shows that room color affects both emotions and physiology, causing mood swings to impact performance (Davies et al., 2015). It is crucial to keep visuals such as posters and charts useful and straightforward to avoid too many distractions.

Conclusion

Having a designated home learning area helps separate a student's structured learning time from the unstructured time at home. With a home learning environment, students can see that education is a priority and that learning does not only occur in school. Parents and guardians will be showing their students that they care about their knowledge and want to see them succeed

with distance and remote learning. Tips and suggestions from teachers will also help parents design an area that best meets their child's needs.

Method

For this capstone project, the researcher will investigate how teachers and parents view having a designated school area at home during remote instruction and how to improve this area so that students may succeed academically. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature, the researcher will use what she has learned to formulate an action that responds to the need for improved designated school areas at home in a way that inspires, informs, or involves a particular audience. Since school is all online, creating a designated school area at home will give students a school mindset and create fewer distractions letting them be able to concentrate on their schoolwork.

Context

Henry[1] Elementary School is a kindergarten through eighth-grade school located in Southern California in the city of Momona. The city of Momona is a relatively large city and is the seventh-largest city in Los Angeles county. According to the school's SARC report, the school's structure, classrooms, and playgrounds are well kept. The elementary school is composed of 80 percent of its student population being Hispanic or Latino therefore the school is not considered to be culturally diverse. About 90 percent of their student population is socioeconomically disadvantaged and 17 percent are considered homeless. Also, about 13 percent of the student population has a learning disability and 18 percent are English Language Learners.

Participants and Participant Selection

I invited sixteen parents of students attending Harry Elementary school to participate in my study. Out of the sixteen parents, only ten parents choose to participate in the survey. The parents who participated have a child between the grades of first-fourth. Two teachers from Harry elementary school also o participated in this study. One teacher is a resource teacher who has students that are in kindergarten-fifth grade and the other teacher teaches third grade. This

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[1] Pseudonyms have been used for the names of people, places, and organizations.

group was chosen to participate in the study because they are teachers or are parents of students who are in the process of participating in online distance learning.

Researcher. I believe it is important to have a designated at-home learning area since school has been moved to full-time online learning. Based on my own personal experiences with distance learning, I find it hard to focus on lectures and school work when sitting on a couch, my bed, or an area where I can become easily distracted. I find it beneficial to work in an area with a desk or table that is well organized and can fit my school supplies like books, laptops, and writing materials on top of it. I know that some students will have access to more resources than others. For this project, I hope to find ways to improve students' at-home learning areas so that they may succeed in online learning.

Semi-Structured Interview and Survey Questions

Parent Interview Questions

1. Describe in detail your child's home-learning environment.
2. What has been hard about trying to improve your child's home learning environment?
3. What is currently being done to improve your child's ability to learn from home? and do you think this is good, bad, or indifferent? Why? How is this working?
4. What would help your child to learn better from home? If you have a desk or table to use does your child use it for school work? If they do not why not?
5. How would a desk or table improve your child's learning from home? Do you have the resources for a desk or table if your child does not have one?
6. Is there anything else that you would like to say about your child's at-home learning environment?
7. Where does your child do schoolwork and online zoom classes? How is this working?

Teacher Interview Questions

1. Describe your typical student's home learning environment.
2. What is currently being done to improve students' home learning environments - by whom. What do you think about these efforts? Why?

3. What do you think should be done to create better environments at home?
4. What do you think are the obstacles to make these improvements?
5. Is there anything else that you would like to say about how parents can improve their at-home learning environments? Are there any tips or suggestions you would like to give parents?

Procedure

All participants were interviewed individually. Since the breakout of COVID-19, no participant was interviewed in person face-to-face. Parent participants were interviewed through an online survey using Survey Monkey. The average time to take the parent survey was around 20-25 minutes. As for the teacher interviews, both teachers were invited to participate in a phone interview or an online survey. One teacher did the survey over the phone while the other one was asked the same questions on an online survey through survey monkey. The teacher interviews took less than one hour to complete. All interviews and surveys were completed for the convenience of the participants.

Data Analysis

Transcribed interviews will be coded and analyzed for emergent themes.

Results

For this Capstone Project, two teachers and ten first-fourth grade parents were interviewed to see what they think could be done to improve their child and students' at-home learning area. This is important because students are now in full-time online learning at-home. They are surrounded by a new learning environment and have to find ways to minimize distractions and learn at-home. Since students do not know when they will return to an in-person class, they must find ways to accommodate and maximize their learning from home. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature, three themes emerged (see Table 1). Evidence-based decision-making required evaluating each potential Action Option by the following criteria: time, resources, and effectiveness. Time is a huge factor that needs to be considered. Students are already participating in full-time online learning at home. Since students are already experiencing this change, these actions must be time significant. Resources are a factor that must be considered because the action must be accessible to the students. The action

also must be effective to be successful. Based on the evaluation of each Action Option, action
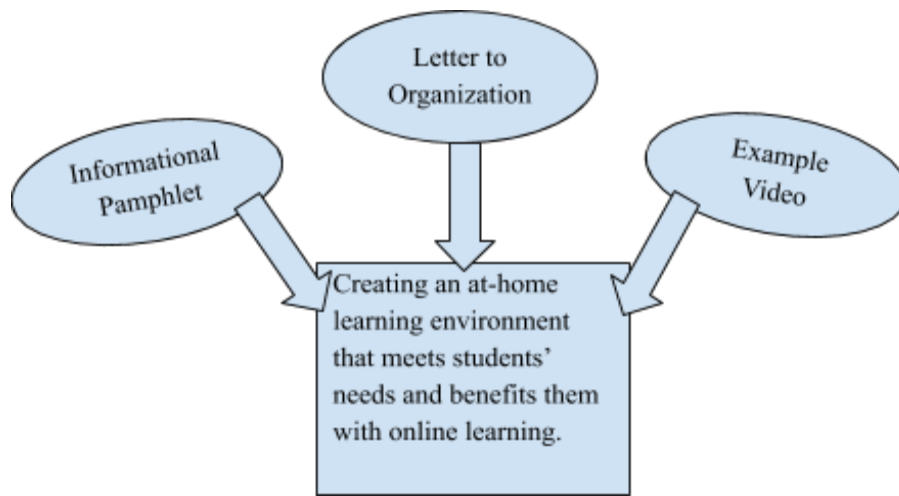
will be recommended and justified.

Image 1. Themes which emerged from data and literature.

Table 1

Evaluation of Action Options

	Time	Resources	Effectiveness
Provide students and parents with an informational pamphlet that gives tips, information, and resources on an effective at-home learning area.	Medium	Low	Medium
Write a letter to an organization willing to provide students with a desk, table, or other resources.	Medium	Medium	Medium
Create a video that shows examples of practical at-home learning areas and tips to improve their child's area.	Medium	Low	Medium

Informational Pamphlet

Educating is a common theme throughout the interviews—educating the parents on what to do to provide their child with an effective at-home learning environment. The interviewed teachers discussed educating parents on the importance of creating an at-home learning environment that models what students' environment would be if they were in an in-person class. One teacher said that, "Students are in a classroom away from distractions. They have a desk, a structured chair, and their school materials close to them so they are prepared to learn. Their at-home learning area should be modeled after the classroom." The teachers discussed many useful tips for parents to make their students' environment effective. They also discussed that students are often distracted or interrupted by their younger siblings. Many parents may not know what to provide to create a beneficial area for their students to learn. Since teachers have to create an effective learning environment for their students in their classroom, they have insight and tips that they may provide to their parents by providing parents with information on creating an environment filled with little to no distractions.

An action that rose from this was providing parents with an informational pamphlet. This pamphlet would be distributed virtually for students' and teachers' safety since no one meets in person. The information provided would be practical tips provided by the teachers on how and what a parent can do to provide a safe and effective at-home learning environment for remote education. Other resources like websites would also be provided for parents to read to for more information.

Organization Letter

Throughout the interviews, having limited resources, at-home was a common theme that was brought up. Many parents do not have the resources to provide their children with a proper

school-like environment at home. After looking at the collected data from parents and teachers, the surveys concluded that many students participate in their distance learning from a bed or sitting on the couch with their laptop resting on their legs. This causes some students to be easily distracted, cut off from the camera's view, and many of them tend to fall asleep because they are too comfortable. An action that emerged from this was writing to an organization that is willing to donate small tables, desks, chairs, or other resources for students that do not have access to one at home. The letter would be written and sent to an organization that has helped donate items to the school in the past. I would write and send the letter discussing the data I collected and explain the benefits these resources would be providing the students. I would also present research on how important it is for a student to have these resources to learn and thrive from home.

Informational Video

Every household is different, and many families may be limited to only a certain amount of resources that they can use. A common theme that came up in the data was that some parents do not know where to begin to create this environment. Since this is all new to many parents and students, there is not much information that has been shared on what to do and how to create their child's learning area—creating a platform that provides pictures for examples of other students at-home learning environments. This would allow the parents to virtually see other students' set-ups and use them to model their own and provide parents with tips and ideas on creating this environment for their children. This video would also explain to parents how a student's learning environment affects their ability and learning. This video would be distributed virtually by email to the parents and teachers.

Recommendation

After careful consideration of all three actions, it is essential to educate parents on how a child's environment can affect their learning. It is also necessary to provide parents and students with information on how to do so. I propose that the best solution for this issue would be to do the informational pamphlet. I am confident that this is the best solution for providing parents with information and ways to use their resources at home to accommodate their children. This section will continue to discuss the concessions, limitations, and potential adverse outcomes of this solution.

Concessions

Choosing the action I have selected does not indicate that the other two options are not worthy . For example, the letter to an organization may provide students with a desk or small table to hold their laptop and other supplies that they may need throughout the online school day. This would also offer students who do not have a desk or table with one and may eliminate the use of a couch or bed. As for creating an informational video, this would involve examples of different at-home learning environment set-ups. This would provide parents with an array of examples and spark ideas on how they would like to create this area for their child. I believe all solutions allow and give parents more opportunities to be involved in their child's education and improve their online learning experience.

Limitations

Even though providing parents with an informational pamphlet this is the best solution for parents and students, this does not mean there are no limitations that come with it. Parents have to be willing to put in the time and effort to read the pamphlet and improve their child's at-home learning environment. Without them ready to do this, the effect of this solution may be limited. Since many parents are juggling working from home and taking care of their children,

putting in the time to improve or create may be scarce. Another limitation may be that parents do not have the resources to improve their child's learning environment from the set-up they already are using.

Potential Negative Outcomes

There are some potential negative outcomes that may occur with this action solution. Parents may feel that their child's learning environment has to look exactly like the examples given. This may discourage parents into creating this environment based on their child's needs. Students may also not want to change their set-up. Students may want to stick with doing online schooling on the couch or in front of the tv, ignoring tips and suggestions . These reasons would cause the informational pamphlet to be useless in these households.

Concussion

Regardless of the limitations and potential negative outcomes, an informational pamphlet is still the best solution when providing details and examples to parents and students of how to create an at-home learning environment. This action solution provides parents and students on where to begin as well as reminding them to be creative and make it their own. Additional resources like websites are also provided on the pamphlet. Parents may do their own research and gain a better understanding on why they should create and improve their child's environment. I believe the changes this pamphlet will bring will benefit students later on when they are able to attend in-person schooling. This new designated at-home learning environment can become a homework and study area. It will be free from distractions and structured to fit the needs of the student.

Action Documentation and Critical Reflection

Due to the ongoing pandemic, many students across the country are not attending in-person school but are learning from home. Remote learning is relatively new to many students, teachers, and parents and having a designated at-home area comes with this "new normal." It is essential that parents create a space where their child is able to succeed and limit the distractions that come with learning at home. In order for parents to create a beneficial environment, they must know first how to do so since a child's learning environment affects their academic success. After researching and conducting interviews with two teachers and several parents, three actions emerged from the data. The first option was to provide students and parents with an informational pamphlet that gives tips and data on an effective at-home learning area. The second action was to write a letter to an organization willing to provide students with a desk or table and other resources. The last option was to create a video that shows examples of practical at-home learning areas and tips from teachers to improve their child's space. The option chosen was creating an informational pamphlet. This option was the most time-efficient, safest, and required fewer resources to use. This pamphlet was distributed electronically through email to the two teachers that were interviewed. From there, the teachers emailed the pamphlet to their parents. The pamphlet contained tips from the research as well as from teachers on how to create an at-home learning environment that would benefit their students and what resources they could use for this area. The pamphlet also contained websites with additional information and images of different learning at-home environments that could be used, and that would spark ideas when creating their own.

Be Creative

Personalize your area! Add posters and pictures to your area that promote learning and provide your child with words of encouragement or information about what they are learning. You can also add corkboards to hang up calendars or worksheets. Use shelves, boxes, or pencil holders to keep supplies organized. Create labels to print out and tape to your area like schedules, rounties, or to do lists. Its important to make this area your own! Add colorful rugs or plants to your area

It's important to note that you can create this area using the resources you have at home. The at-home learning area you create should be used strictly for online schooling, studying, and homework if possible. You want your child to learn that when they are in this area it is time to focus and learn.

Websites

Additional Information
Additional Information
Ready-Made Labels

Where do I begin?

First, think about where you would want your child's area to be. Choose an areaaway from distractions like the television, a radio, outside noises, and any other distracting noises. This area should have a source of light coming in like a window or a room light that can turn on and off.
Could this area be in the child's room or the corner of a room?

What supplies do I need?

Once you figure out what area you are going to use. Provide your child with a desk, table, or anything with a flat table top that they can use to put their laptop, books, writing materials on, and any other supplies they may need. You also want to provide your child with a comfortable chair that has structure. Avoid using a couch or a chair without a backrest.

Let's Learn From Home

Our Mission

This pamphlet is designed to give tips and information about designing a designated area in your home for your child to complete online schooling. We know that online schooling is new to many, and there may be questions about how to provide your child with an area that promotes learning and minimizes distractions. In this pamphlet, you will find tips given by teachers and examples of different at-home learning areas to implement into your home.

By: Ashlyn Barajas

Image 1. Screenshot of the informational pamphlet that was sent to the teachers, parents, and students. This pamphlet contained tips, additional websites, and images to provide examples of setting up an at-home learning environment.

Reflection

Since online learning is relatively new to me and many, I felt this topic of having a designated learning area at-home might be overlooked. I was not surprised to find little to no literature on this topic. After conducting my interviews, I was surprised to learn that many students were doing their online learning from their couch or bedroom bed. Very few of them were using a table, desk, or flat area to set their laptops, materials, and supplies. The teachers also mentioned that those sitting on the couch tended to fall asleep during class since they were

too comfortable. As for the parents, many of the responses given were that they did not know

where to begin to create this area and what resources they needed. With this information

collected is where my three action projects emerged. With these action projects, I wanted to

include ways where the teachers could also be involved since they had useful information. I

originally wanted to go with my second option of creating a video that provided students and

parents with images to use as examples when creating their at-home learning environment. After

completing the video, I realized that it did not provide parents with enough information on this

topic. I decided to go back and relook at my action options. I felt option one with creating an

informational pamphlet would be more efficient to provide parents with tips that would help

them develop this area. This taught me that it's okay to rethink, reflect, and make modifications

to create something and turn it into something that may be more beneficial.

Synthesis and Integration

My time here at the California State University of Monterey Bay (CSUMB) has pushed

me, shaped me, and challenged me to be the person I am today. Being involved in the

community around CSUMB with service-learning and other class involvement has been a

rewarding experience. Service-learning has given me the opportunity to be in a classroom and

work with students and teachers while building a relationship with them. The required

coursework for liberal studies, service learning, and this action project has developed me as a

future educator. With MLO 1: Developing Educator, I have developed the skills to think, write,

and speak critically in the classroom, school, and the community. With this action project, I was

able to research and reach out to my community and work out a solution with them. With MLO

5: Subject Matter Generalist, I was able to demonstrate and conduct a successful coherent depth

study with my action project. Working with students and teachers and being in the classroom has

made me want to continue in the education field and continue on the path of becoming a teacher.

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