



The joy of fearless reading.



The thrill of fearless writing.



The gift of fearless learning.



The power of fearless questions.



*Innovative teaching,
fearless learning.*

State of the School Report Winter 2013

A Letter from Pat Roberts and Nancy Blair

AIM Academy...Innovative Teaching, Fearless Learning.

We are so proud to present this State of the School Report taking time to reflect on all that has been accomplished since the Summer of 2012 and to thank all of our families, friends and community partners for helping to make our dreams a reality. It is also a time to outline our vision for the coming year and to invite all of you to continue to be involved in sharing your ideas, experiences, time and resources to providing a center of excellence for families and educators across the country.

River Road Campus

Our plans for this campus have been realized beyond our expectations. This fall, we expanded space in our main building to increase to 60,000 square feet of **science laboratories, robotics labs, arts areas and the build-out of a separate wing for our expanding high school program.**

What was once a parking lot in front of the building is now a fabulous soccer/lacrosse field and playground complex. But we are by no means finished. We have ambitious plans for an **AIM Community Center**, which will include a gymnasium and a performing arts center. It will also be a conference center in which we can host professional and community-based educational events. Our Phase III Capital Campaign begins this Spring with the goal of breaking ground in the Fall of 2013. We will need everyone's help to make this a reality.

21st Century Leaders

Our goal at AIM Academy is for all of our graduates to have the knowledge and skills to flourish in the 21st-century world they will enter. Our strategy to get them there is a seamless continuum of engaging and enlivening experiences that dissolve learning anxieties and promote fearless curiosity.

Our **Start-up Corps for entrepreneurial studies** is a program based on the fact that 35% of the most successful entrepreneurs, such as Charles Schwab, have dyslexia. This is student-led and teaches important lessons about



the value of working hard, being motivated and having a supportive network. Students will compete this spring for venture capital seed money to enhance their business plans!

From Legos to underwater robots to building, programming and competing with their own remote control creations, AIM's innovative **Robotics Program** is a model of our **STEAM** curriculum—exploring **science, technology, engineering, arts and math.**

Signature programs of the future will expand those listed above as well as **international studies, technology, and the arts** as avenues for our students to explore their interests and talents.

Innovative Teaching

Our highly-trained teachers have an intense commitment to put the latest research findings into practice as quickly as possible. They are able to do this because the **AIM Institute for Learning and Research** is right on our campus. One could think of AIM Institute as being a think tank for language based learning differences. Our prestigious **Research Advisory Board** is comprised of some of the most internationally celebrated names in the field. We see ourselves as a regional and global resource. More than 2,500 area teachers have already benefited from the expertise available at AIM Institute. Preparations are underway for our First Annual **Research to Practice Symposium** on March 11, 2013 for our University and School Partners.

We thank each and every member of the AIM Community and invite you to continue the journey of making a difference in the lives of children and educators throughout the region and beyond.

Pat Roberts

Nancy Blair

AIM for the Stars Gala Raises Record Support

The 5th Annual *AIM for the Stars* Gala to promote literacy for students who learn differently and celebrating AIM Academy took place on Thursday, November 8, 2012 at The Hyatt at the Bellevue. Representatives from throughout the Greater Philadelphia education community including University partners, legislators, corporate sponsors, and families, faculty, and staff of the AIM community made up the more than 300 guests at this celebration of literacy. The event raised over \$150,000 including designated support for current programs and activities through the popular Fund the Dream auction.

AIM honored Cinthia Coletti Haan with the Sally L. Smith Founder's Award recognizing leadership in education and literacy for children who learn differently. Cinthia Coletti Haan is Founder, Chairman & CEO of The Coletti/Haan Foundation for Children and The Coletti Institute for Education and Career Achievement. Cinthia is an advocate in Washington D.C., securing federal funding for high quality education and neuroscience research.

The inaugural AIM Institute for Learning & Research Educator Award was presented to Stacy Gill-Phillips, Ed.D. In 2002, Dr. Phillips welcomed the first class of students into the West Philadelphia Achievement Charter Elementary School (WP~ACES) where she currently serves as founder and chief executive officer. Through Dr. Phillips' commitment to teacher training, and her partnership with the AIM Institute of Learning & Research, WP~ACES recently received a letter of commendation from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Education for the significant improvement of their reading scores.

A highlight of the evening was the memorial tribute to AIM founding Board Chair Marvin N. Demchick who passed away in 2012. With family present including his widow, Mildred Demchick, a video shared remembrances of Mr. Demchick, and a portrait by acclaimed artist Lisa Learner (AIM Parent 2020) was unveiled.



Guiding Stars

Shire
Archie & Helene van Beuren

Star Tables

Edward & Gwen Asplundh
Fred & Bryna Berman
Bochetto & Lentz, P.C.
Mr. & Mrs. Craig W. Cullen Jr./Mr. & Mrs. Carlton Neel
John & Franny Glomb/
Philadelphia Insurance Companies
The Kinser Group
Mid-Atlantic Sports Construction
West Chester University

AIM Star Tables

Bruce Batzer/Melissa Heller
Brian & Nancy Blair/Chris & Pat Roberts
Elite Underwriting Services/Mr. & Mrs. Matthew Naylor
Gil & Tracey Hanse
myCIO Wealth Partners, LLC
Hon. & Mrs. M. Joseph Rocks/
NHS Human Services
Saint Joseph's University

Shooting Stars

Ms. Jacqueline Allen
Dr. Curt Alloy & Hon. Wendy Demchick-Alloy
Marvin & Sandi Alloy
Anonymous
Ardmore Nissan
Mike Barker
Blackney Hayes Architects
Cabrini College
Mitch & Melissa Codkind
Comcast | NBC10

George Connell/
Drexel Morgan & Company
Roslyn & Charles Epstein & Family
Elliott Greenleaf
Floors USA
Gwynedd-Mercy College
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AIM Signature Programs

Startup Corps

AIM's new Upper School *Startup Corp* elective has been overwhelmingly successful! The Startup Corp is an organization that comes to AIM twice a week for workshops to provide our young entrepreneurs with guidance and small capital as they develop actual business ventures. Founded by an entrepreneur who struggled to learn to read, the program fosters the creative and innovative characteristics of AIM's Upper School student body. In Startup, there are no limits to the kinds of businesses students can establish. Currently, Sophia (AIM 2016) is well on her way to offering video production services for those seeking to document events. Will and Nathan (both AIM 2016) have successfully started a food delivery service to bring breakfast from a favorite Manayunk eatery. Proceeds from this project have gone to fund free apples for anyone in need of a healthy snack. Tyler (AIM 2015) is simultaneously developing an online enterprise while also taking on a group leadership role. He has helped over half the students enrolled in Startup develop the individual websites for their business ventures. Hallel (AIM 2016) recently opened the *HR Smoothie Bar* where affordable and fresh smoothies are being sold on Fridays. Daniel (AIM 2014), working with Ms. Yoshida, has officially launched the Japanese Art Club as a winter extra-curricular activity. Many thanks to Rich Sedmak, Scott Aronow, and Christian Kunkel our Startup Mentors!



Robotics

This year, AIM Academy introduced the VEX Robotics program to the 10th, 11th and 12th grades as a mini-course within their science class. Students worked in teams to build their own Claw-Bot before competing among classmates to see who can maneuver, lift, and pick up objects the fastest. This pilot program has given students the chance to build a robot with nuts, bolts, gears and motors as well as learn to draw new robot designs in 3D format.



The course continues with students learning to program their robots and students will also have the chance to design a new robot, reconstruct it and add computer programming instructions to allow it to perform new and useful tasks. All students have really enjoyed the robotics experience and have demonstrated new ways to collaborate, problem solve and bring their ideas to life.



Drama

On November 29 and 30, the AIM community was treated to an outstanding production of **Peter Pan** presented by the AIM Academy Drama Club. Talented students in grades 6-12 under the skillful direction of Maryanne Yoshida and Bonnie Inver wowed their audiences through three performances. Peter, Wendy, Tinkerbell, Captain Hook, the Crocodile and many more were performed with skill and grace and carried us all off to Neverland. Congratulations to the AIM Drama Club for a fabulous performance.

It was truly awe-inspiring as the students commanded the stage in a witty version of this classic play. The students connected with both children and adults in the audience and were mesmerizing to watch. We appreciate the devotion of their families to insure that the students were available for practice and for the hours of dedicated time at home to help to memorize lines. It was truly magical. Now on to the production of **Grease** this spring culminating in a performance on the stage of the University of the Arts in May. Congratulations to all.



Nurturing Executive Function Skills

What skills or factors predict success for students? And how do we develop these “success factors” in AIM Academy students? To address these two important questions, the AIM Psychology Department and Division Heads turn to published research as well as the expertise of our faculty to shape our unique approach to assessing, teaching, and nurturing executive function skills and related success factors. We incorporate the work of top researchers in the field with the work from the Frostig Center, Angela Duckworth and others. While there is no definitive consensus on the most important factors predicting success, leaders in the field agree that successful students and adults have strong executive function skills and self-regulation (inhibition, self-awareness, resistance to distraction, working memory, emotional self-control, self-motivation). Both involve sustaining behavior and focus over time to achieve goals, making decisions/choices and problem-solving along the way.

Research at the Frostig Center has focused on identifying the factors that contribute to success for individuals with learning disabilities. The Center believes that “understanding and nurturing these key factors - called ‘success attributes’ - can aid in a child’s development and ability to overcome LD.

Advisory, a formal, school-wide program is the underpinning and backbone of the academic curriculum at AIM. Meeting at least once per rotation, our Advisory program is framed around teaching and promoting EF skills. During midterms

and finals, Advisory sessions meet more often and are particularly intensive and reflective. Our teachers evaluate these EF success factors in 6th-12th grade students, using a rating system we designed and incorporated into our ACE and Precept programs. Moreover, our Upper School students evaluate themselves using the same measures and set personal goals in each of these areas:

- Self-monitoring/Self-awareness/Metacognition
- Self-regulation/Emotional Coping Strategies
- Effective Communication/Self-Advocacy
- Goal Setting/Problem Solving
- Initiative/Perseverance
- Planning/Organization

In the Lower School our EF curriculum is titled Brain Detectives. Staff Psychologists lead classroom lessons teaching students about how their brain thinks, pays attention, and learns. Group activities help our younger students develop strategies to enhance their executive function capacity, and promote critical thinking and problem solving skills.

From the moment our students first arrive on campus until their graduation day, we build and hone these “success factors” which are vital to developing their intellectual and creative talents and achieving their goals.

Expanded Middle and Upper School Programming

AIM Academy College Fair 2012

The goal of the college counseling program at AIM Academy is to guide all of our students and their families through the college selection process. AIM college counselors meet frequently with each high school student to help identify their affinities, strengths, and goals. Institutions of higher learning are identified that meet students' personal, academic, and professional goals and align with their unique learning styles, intellectual gifts, and areas of affinity.



On November 15, AIM Academy hosted its first annual College Fair. Representatives from twelve colleges and universities across five states visited AIM and spoke to small groups of high school students and parents about the college experience. Special attention was given to colleges with comprehensive support programs for students with learning differences. It was a wonderful opportunity for students in grades nine through twelve, along with their parents, to hear about the different programs that local and national colleges have to offer. Keynote speakers included Lisa Ratmansky from Cabrini, Ginny Maine and Mandy Marion who run AIM's ACT Prep, and our resident college expert and principal Dick Baroody.



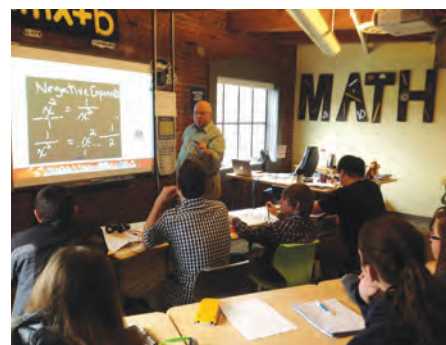
Here is what they had to say about AIM:

"Thank you, for including Philadelphia University. I enjoyed meeting your students, parents and staff. I must say I was particularly impressed by the manners of the students; all made a point to introduce themselves to me. Kudos to your students!"

Colleen Giambalvo, Philadelphia University

Teaching Turned Upside Down

If you have ever had math homework and could not figure out how to get it done, AIM Academy may have the solution. Using screen capture videos from their interactive whiteboards, teachers are able to record themselves delivering a lesson and then share that video with their students. Teachers use Google Drive to share the videos and all AIM students have Google email accounts through the school so they can access them from wherever they are. This way, students can access the videos at home while they are doing their homework.



Some AIM teachers feel that these videos could be the beginning of a discussion about the possibilities of using upside-down teaching in their classroom. Upside down teaching is a method where students watch lessons at home and then do their "homework" in the classroom when the teacher is there to support them. As technology becomes more accessible to both teachers and students, AIM looks to be a leader in the appropriate and creative use of strategies that lead towards greater comprehension.

Cabrini Dual Enrollment Program

As part of AIM Academy's mission to best prepare students for college-level work, current seniors completed their fall semester at Cabrini College. This is our second year with Cabrini and the partnership has been invaluable to our students' success.

Our seniors were enrolled in a freshman level, writing intensive, ECG 100 course that analyzed various societal issues from past civil rights protests in Tennessee to modern day farming practices. Their task was to research, write, and present on the causes of these issues, their effects on society, and then examine potential solutions.

To meet the high college standards, the students sought support from Cabrini's Center for Teaching and Learning and would frequently conference with their professor. At AIM, students were guided on crafting their lengthy research essays and signed up for 1-1 sessions in AIM's newly formed Writing Center. It was a phenomenal learning process and in the end, the seniors each earned a B+, but more importantly they gained the tools they will need next year when they approach college as independent and self-advocating learners.

Athletics

In the same way AIM provides specialized instruction for rigorous academic achievement, we employ both professional and seasoned coaches and consultants to advance our athletic programs.

From the launch of the crew team in 2008 with the consulting advice of long time coach Mark Valenti and the guidance of Matt Paul in our basketball program to the newest addition of athletic consultants, Brett Manney of the Philadelphia Wings lacrosse team and Director of Communication for NXT sports, the expertise of these specialists inspires AIM athletes to pursue their hopes and dreams in the athletic arena.



In addition to competitive team sports each season, we offer individual athletic options and intramural sports for those who enjoy that level of play. We are also fortunate to have riding stables nearby, so students interested in taking horseback riding lessons can do so at Ashford Farm for an additional fee.

Our competitive team, intramural and individual sports program provides valuable opportunities for AIM student athletes to develop good sportsmanship, cultivate team and school spirit, build focus and discipline, learn graciousness in victory and defeat, and experience the joy of athletic pursuits.

Fall

Cross Country
Soccer
Volleyball

Winter

Basketball
Cheerleading
Flag Football

Spring

Crew
Golf
Lacrosse
Softball



Homecoming

Homecoming was a great success, preceded by Spirit Week! Staff and students in all grades participated in each day's theme - such as Pajama Day, Twin Day, 70's Day, Super Hero Day and of course, Blue and Gold Day! The Upper School students also decked the halls with school spirit in their Hallway Decorating Contest. Congrats to the winning freshmen class!

Friday was a sight of smiles! Thanks to a very generous donor, all students wore their special Homecoming t-shirts designed by our very own 8th grader, Oliver Buck and Middle School Science Teacher, Chrissy Johnson. Faces were painted and hair was dyed in blue and gold! The field was consumed with blue during the afternoon pep rally where teachers and students competed in a variety of activities. Following the victorious game, US students and alumni danced the night away. A big thanks to Jenna Bonshock and the faculty and family helpers for all you did to make the week special!



Philadelphia Zoo Project

This year the 3rd and 8th grade students are working together to create awareness about conserving energy and recycling. They are participating in the UNLESS contest sponsored by the Philadelphia Zoo, which is providing students the opportunity to be involved in a project dedicated to the idea that everyday choices can impact wildlife and our environment. The 8th graders are teaching the 3rd grade students about tree frogs and polar bears in order to build background knowledge. The students will then



work together along with our arts team to create a polar bear out of plastic shopping bags. The teachers have created many cross-curricular activities that will be completed surrounding this topic. The plan is to have the students develop an informational website where they will be able to post video shorts to inform their community about how our everyday choices impact the polar bear and tree frogs. Additionally, they are looking to create their own reusable bags to sell with a tagline and logo. The 3rd and 8th grade teachers are working to create activities in Science, Math, Reading, Writing and the Arts in order to reinforce and truly immerse the students in the importance of conservation and recycling.



Vetri Foundation's 'Eatiquette' Program

Students at AIM Academy began the school year with a new approach to lunch--the Vetri Foundation for Children's Eatiquette program. The goal of this unique program is to transform lunch to a dining environment where students gather around tables, pass plates of fresh food to one another, and experience social interaction while enjoying healthy food choices.

Program creator Marc Vetri visited AIM Academy on Wednesday, September 19th to dine and share his inspiration for 'Eatiquette' with the AIM community. Vetri



is executive chef and owner of the acclaimed Vetri Family Restaurants in Philadelphia: *Vetri Ristorante*, *Osteria*, *Amis* and *Alla Spina*.

At AIM Academy, we believe our students are tomorrow's leaders. Student table captains sporting crisp white chef coats guide fellow students on how to set a table, how to work together as a team, and how to try new foods.

All students learn to respect those who prepared their food, and to appreciate how healthy food can make you feel. The community leaves the Dining Commons fueled both physically and psychologically, ready to tackle the afternoon's learning challenges. Meals are prepared on site from scratch using locally-sourced foods. This summer, Executive Chef Catherine Wuenschel, who has a Grande Diplome from Le Cordon Blue in Paris, joined the AIM Academy team.



Going forward, the intent is to begin a small garden whose produce can be incorporated into our menus. A composting program, in partnership with neighboring Miquon School, has heightened students' sensitivity to limiting waste and ways to contribute and not just consume.

First Annual AIM Fall Festival

Students, families, faculty, and staff came together on a stunningly beautiful October Sunday afternoon to celebrate the First Annual AIM Fall Festival. On the Conshohocken school's new athletic turf field, children of all ages enjoyed pumpkin decorating, face painting, cookie decorating, circus games, moon bounce, sack races, go karts and much much more.

The community came out to support the Fall Festival as well. The Spring Mill Fire Company's Engine 45 was on hand to demonstrate fire safety and to give demonstrations to our students. It was fun to have Berg Toys bring out their latest models of go-carts for students to enjoy and we all enjoyed

the wonderful food provided by donations from Jack's Firehouse and our many families.

The event would not have been possible without our three amazing parent chairs Randy, Jamie and Stacey. Our 210 families from grades 1-12 were all invited with our Upper School students helping our youngest students with face painting and pumpkin decorations. This is truly the start of a wonderful tradition for our community.



AIM Book Fair

The entire AIM community was treated to an incredible week of activities and great holiday shopping through the AIM Book Fair. Items for readers of all ages were provided by Children's Book World. Highlights from November 29-December 6--and there were many--included readings and discussions by guest author Sue Levine. Dr. Levine, a member of the AIM Advisory Board and textbook author, penned an 8-book series, *Susie's Shoesies*, full of fun, mystery and time-travel for young readers. On November 29, Dr. Levine selected AIM Academy as the site to be presented her 3E Institute Educator 500 award from West Chester University. The award recognizes Levine for her 66-day national book tour of school readings to teach 8 to 11 year olds how to 'read like a writer' and 'write like a reader'.



'Breakfast with a Buddy', 'Family Night', Book Talks -- all brought out students, teachers, parents, and grandparents. Many thanks to co-chairs Terry Bovarnick and Denise Melnick McGlade and all the many volunteers for this wonderful Book Fair.

Presidential Appointment for AIM Trustee Dr. Darryl Ford

On November 21st, President Barack Obama announced his intention to appoint AIM Board of Trustees Member, Darryl J. Ford, Ph.D (AIM Parent 2023) to the National Board for Education Sciences, an advisory board composed of prominent researchers, school administrators and business executives. In announcing the appointment of Ford and four others to the 15-member board, Obama said, "I am pleased to announce that these experienced and committed individuals have agreed to join this Administration, and I look forward to working with them in the months and years ahead."

The National Board for Education Sciences is the governing body of the Institute of Education Sciences, which was established by Congress in 2002. The institute is responsible for providing thorough and objective evaluations of federal programs and sponsoring research relevant and useful to educators and others, including policymakers. The institute describes its mission as serving "as a trusted source of gold-standard, reliable, unbiased information on what works in education."

"I am honored to have been asked to join the National Board for Education Sciences," Ford said, "and hope that my contributions might assist in some small way to improve the state of education in our country." Ford has been Head of School at Penn Charter since 2007 and has served on AIM's Board of Trustees since 2010. The entire AIM community joins to congratulate Dr. Ford.



AIM Institute for Learning and Research

International Dyslexia Association (IDA) Conference

AIM Academy had a wonderful presence at the Annual Conference of the **International Dyslexia Association** held in Baltimore, October 24-27. A number of our AIM parents attended the IDA Annual Conference and Inaugural Parent Conference. The following are notes on some of our faculty presentations:



Chris Herman, AIM Upper School Coordinator, presented on "**Linking Language Comprehension to the Study of History**".

In describing how interdisciplinary learning in social sciences can target 'Higher Order Reading' processes and skills, Chris provided a detailed overview of how AIM's Academic Club Methodology enables students to access advanced language comprehension skills through an interdisciplinary and arts-based model. Session attendees from as far as California, Alabama, Texas, and North and South Carolina all appreciated hearing how our rich experiential learning helps students build background knowledge, dynamic vocabulary, and construct the critical verbal reasoning skills required for reading.

Chris has been invited to present at the **Learning Disabilities Association of America** 50th Anniversary conference in San Antonio in February. He will be speaking on 'Building

Background Knowledge for Reading Comprehension' and the immersive approach to teaching content.



During this year's IDA conference in Baltimore, MD, AIM's Director of Curriculum and Instruction, **Pam Greenblatt**, and Education Consultant and Board Member, **Nancy Hennessy** presented a session entitled: "A Literacy Framework:

Constructing a Guide for Comprehension Instruction". During this presentation, Pam and Nancy outlined the current research on reading comprehension and the expectations for students based on the Common Core State Standards. The session highlighted the process that AIM underwent to create a curriculum that is aligned with research and the Common Core State Standards. Additionally, the presentation focused on the implementation of the curriculum, including AIM's commitment to teamwork, research, ongoing professional learning, and the ongoing, evolving process that includes refinement of learning activities and instructional practice in the classroom. The session was attended by about 130 individuals from across the country including some leading individuals in the field of education.

At the invitation of LETRS founder, Louisa Moats, Pam and Nancy have been invited to present at the **Annual LETRS Summit** in Austin, TX in June."



Access to the Experts 2013

It takes 10 years for research to reach the classroom,
AIM Institute for Learning & Research
helps you access the experts now!

Dr. Kate Cain

Understanding Words,
Sentences, and Text
Saturday, March 9
9 am - 3 pm

Dr. Louisa Moats

Why Spelling is Important for
Reading, Writing, & Language
Thursday, April 25
9 am - 3 pm

Ronald Yoshimoto

A Morphological Examination of
the Higher Levels of Language
Thursday, May 9
9 am - 3 pm

For program descriptions and to register, visit www.aimpa.org.

1200 River Road, Conshohocken, PA

... By Invitation Only ...



AIM Academy's First Annual Research to Practice Symposium

"Listen to the Voices of Language, Literacy and Mathematics Research"

Monday, March 11, 2013

Daniel B. Berch, Ph.D.



*Professor of Special
Education & Applied
Developmental Science,
University of Virginia
Curry School of Education*

Barbara A. Wilson, M.Ed.



*Author and Co-Founder
Wilson Language
Training*

Nancy Hennessy, M.Ed.



*AIM Board Liaison;
Founding Member,
The Consulting
Networks; National
LETRS Trainer*

Kate Cain, BSc. DPhil.



*Language & Cognitive
Development, Lancaster
University, United Kingdom*

Ken Pugh, Ph.D.



*Director and President of
Research, Senior Scientist,
Haskins Laboratories,
Yale University*

Save the Date

AIM for the Future...and Generations to Come

AIM is thrilled to announce Phase III of the capital campaign to complete our campus at River Park. With our turf field and playground in place, we are now focused on the AIM Community Center that will house our Gymnasium and Performing Arts. AIM Academy's unique program fosters creativity, encourages rigorous academic pursuits, and provides exciting opportunities in the arts and athletics. With the addition of this facility, AIM students will have increased opportunities to be physically active year round and cultivate team and school spirit. The Black Box Theater will be a showcase for the many endeavors in dramatic, musical and performing arts at AIM. Equally important, the AIM Institute for Learning and Research will have its 500 seat auditorium to host major conferences. To learn how you can take part in our campaign, please contact Executive Director Pat Roberts.



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