

State of the School • Winter 2015

A Letter from Pat Roberts and Nancy Blair

Dear friends of AIM.

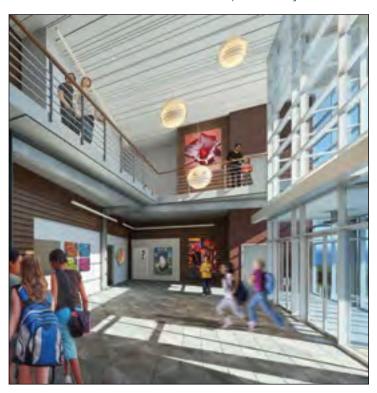
We are extremely proud and excited to announce the upcoming spring ground breaking for the AIM Community Center! By adding this critically-needed facility, AIM will stay on the forefront of education for children with learning differences and have a



greater impact on our students, families, faculty, the greater school community and research and practice in the field for now and the future.

The 23,000 sq. ft. AIM Community Center will be a multifunctional facility located on the east end of the campus. It will include a full-scale basketball court, a performing arts center, a broadcast and live streaming studio, arts, design and music classrooms and studios and an auditorium that seats 500 people.

• Benefits to Students: First and foremost, AIM is committed to providing extraordinary opportunities to our students. AIM students are active participants in the performing arts and athletics, which support their educational and social growth. Our students NEED and DESERVE to have athletics facilities, performing arts spaces on campus and additional music, arts and other classrooms. As we write this in February, our students have had to have indoor recess too many times this winter due to the cold and inclement weather. With this new center, indoor recess will be past history!



- Benefits to the School Community: Graduation ceremonies, Parent programs, School concerts, festivals and art shows will now have a campus home. The AIM Community Center will be a hub and convening space for our community.
- Benefits to Research and Practice: From its founding, AIM Academy has been focused on bringing research-based strategies to the classroom. The AIM Community Center will be the epicenter for the AIM Institute for Learning and Research, which offers state-of-the-art training to educators throughout the region. AIM research conferences provide direct access to globally recognized experts on learning differences to AIM parents, faculty and interested community members. A 500-seat auditorium will serve these programs.

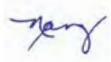
As of February 1, AIM has raised nearly \$4.6 million towards the building construction goal of \$8 million and the campaign goal of \$10 million. This is a wonderful start, but there is much more work to do and significant funds to raise. Thank you to all who have contributed and we hope that everyone will play a part in making this building a reality for our community.



We appreciate all of the incredible support and belief in the AIM mission that has brought us to this milestone in AIM's history. As we begin the celebration of our 10th year, AIM is proud of the many accomplishments that have been possible thanks to your support! Watch for more details on the ground breaking and how you can be part of this amazing legacy for the future!

Best wishes,



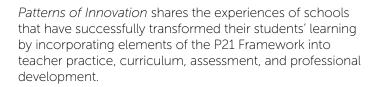


AIM Academy Named Exemplar School By A Partnership For 21st Century Skills

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21), the leading organization advocating for 21st century learning for every student, has designated AIM Academy as an Exemplar School, as part of a program to highlight exemplary 21st century learning practices that are improving schools and student learning in classrooms and communities across the United States.

<u>Patterns of Innovation: The 21st Century Learning Exemplar Program</u> showcases schools, educators, and students from around the country that have embraced the P21 Framework for 21st Century Learning to increase educational options and outcomes for all students.





The 2015 21st Century Learning Exemplars, including AIM Academy, were selected along with 14 schools through a rigorous application process, and evaluated for educational excellence and 21st century learning implementation. The schools are part of P21's ongoing initiative to identify, document, and showcase exemplary 21st century learning in action.

"This award recognizes AIM's legacy of arts-based learning and its focus on the Four Threads for the Future: Arts & Design, Science & Engineering, Business & Innovation, Global Competency & Sustainability. AIM students demonstrate their unique talents everyday and AIM faculty look forward to a year of partnership as a P21 Exemplar School," states Pat Roberts, AIM Executive Director.

"We are very proud to continue sharing the *Patterns of Innovation* to highlight strong learning communities, leadership, and the importance of student voice," said Dr. Helen Soulé, P21 Executive Director. "P21 is working with our many members and partners to make 21st century learning a reality for schools and students everywhere, regardless of zip code, because every student deserves an exemplar school."

Case studies on schools just announced, including AIM Academy are currently in development and will be unveiled later in 2015. Check out www.p21.org/exemplars for completed case studies, powerful learning stories, podcasts, videos, and more. #PatternsofInnovation.











A 4-Year Commitment to Implement School-wide Literacy Program

AIM Academy, the School District of Philadelphia, Tamar Olitsky and the Olitsky Family Foundation and the Philadelphia Burger Brawl have joined forces for a multi-year commitment to a school-wide K-3 literacy program. AIM is extremely grateful to Tamar Olitsky for her leadership and vision for bringing AIM Academy and the School District of Philadelphia together to initiate this exciting four-year pilot program in two schools with a focus on early literacy. All organizations agreed to deepen their commitment to Philadelphia public schools while the Olitsky Family Foundation and Rob Wasserman's Philadelphia Burger Brawl agreed to provide the funding for the implementation of the AIM Integrated Literacy Model (ILM) which includes teacher training and student materials for reading comprehension, writing and interactive history teaching. AIM Academy provides on-site coaching and support for the implementation of this curriculum that is being used in both **Andrew Jackson** and Ziegler Elementary Schools over four years. AIM is also implementing Fundations and the Wilson Reading System as a Wilson Partner School. Both pilot schools have received 200 iPad minis, 20 MacBooks and science kits to be used in this exciting K-3 project. AIM Academy is a proud partner of the Read by 4th! Initiative designed by Dr. Hite to insure that all children read on grade level by grade 4 in the School District of Philadelphia.

Nichole Pugliese is the AIM Coordinator for this exciting program and she expresses that her experience is rewarding and inspiring to watch the AIM model come to life in the Philadelphia school district. She is witnessing the students actively engage in learning, become excited



Nancy Blair, Dr. William R. Hite, Jr., and Pat Roberts

about attending school and that the schools report that absenteeism has been reduced in these grades. Nichole is coaching the teachers who are becoming more aware of their students' abilities. The teachers can now differentiate their instruction diagnostically, meeting the students where they are and honing their skills and interventions to get them where they need to be.

News stories about this important program have run in the Philadelphia Daily News, Philadelphia Tribune and on CBS3. Links to these stories can be found on the AIM website at www.aimpa.org.

AIM & Disney Youth Educational Series Collaboration

AIM Academy students began an exciting collaboration this fall with the Disney Youth Educational Series. This wonderful relationship not only begins to guide AIM students as they embark on the Four Threads to the Future programs in the Upper School, but also solidifies AIM's leadership as a 21st Century School. The entire 9th and 10th grades spent a week at Disney's Walt Disney World® in Orlando, FL experiencing guided, in-park educational field studies with courses in Applied Sciences, Environmental Studies, Liberal Arts and Leadership Development.



AIM 9th Graders in the Disney Youth Educational Series

The Disney Youth
Programs are
extraordinary,
enriching
experiences designed
to engage students
and show students
the path to turning
dreams into reality.

These practical learning programs use the impact of Disney storytelling, the dynamic Cast and environment of Walt Disney World®



AIM Students Science Project at Walt Disney World ®

and the power of hands-on learning to spark creativity and unlock the hidden potential within each student.

The AIM students returned from their trip with presentations to the Middle and Upper School about the rich learning experience. AIM is excited to have established this exciting new learning experience and tradition for Upper School students.

Spotlight on AIM Drama & Robotics

AIM Drama Presents The Jungle Book & Midsummer Night's Dream

AIM Academy Middle School Drama Club's production of Disney's Jungle Book Kids in November 2014 was a wonderful success! 27 students in grades 6-8 participated in this musical with outstanding costumes and a creative set. In January 2015, the AIM Upper School Drama Club staged spectacular performances of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, from the original William Shakespeare, as adapted by Lindsay Price. This performance involved over 25 students and featured elaborate dialogue, inspirational costumes and set.

Congratulations to the talented casts, dedicated and creative stage crews and amazing AIM drama and music faculty for these amazing productions. Thank you to AIM faculty Maryanne Yoshida, Emily Bolles and Kristen Seavey for their outstanding leadership.

AIM looks forward to the **Spring Musical**: *Seussical* on May 15, 16 and 17 at the <u>Arts Bank Theater</u>, University of the Arts, 601 South Broad Street, Philadelphia. *Seussical* is produced through a special arrangement with Music Theatre International (MTI).







Upper School Drama's Midsummer Night's Dream

Robotics Update

AIM Academy Robotics Teams are enjoying working together on strategic planning, design, construction and competing this season. The AIM Robotics Lab has been enhanced in 2015 with new equipment. Wolf Pack Robotics team members and AIM Faculty and Staff were very excited to acquire a CNC - Computer Numerical Control - Milling Machine and are grateful to the donors who made this addition a reality.

In December 2014 AIM Wolf Pack Robotics enjoyed a fun and successful day in a <u>FIRST Lego League</u> competition. Both AIM teams did a great job in the morning judging rounds and were energized and ready to compete on the tables in the afternoon. Team 6391 finished 7th out of 21 on the tables and Team 6394 finished 10th - a very strong

showing for both teams. Team 6391 won the Teamwork Award and finished 6th overall, qualifying for the regional finals Penn FLL at University of Pennsylvania. Go Wolf Pack!

AIM Academy Robotics continues to expand and succeed and look forward to more competitions for all teams in 2015.



AIM Robotics Team 6391 Celebrating their Teamwork Award

Student & Team Spotlight

AIM Students Present at The Duckworth Lab at the University of Pennsylvania

AlM Academy students Andrew Rosenstein '17 and Sophia Gross '16 were invited to present at The Duckworth Lab at the University of Pennsylvania on January 15. The Duckworth Lab focuses on two traits that predict achievement: grit and self-control. Angela Duckworth is an Associate Professor in the Department of Psychology in the University of Pennsylvania's School of Arts & Sciences and is the recipient of the 2013 MacArthur Fellowship.



Sophia Gross '16, Angela Duckworth, and Andrew Rosenstein '17

Angela Duckworth is an inspirational leader to Andrew and Sophia and they came to her attention through their TEDx talk last spring. They were selected to present their TEDx talk featuring inspirational students who share their passions and ideas regarding key components of change and innovation. Sophia and Andrew's presentation Difficulty into Success: The Story of Young Entrepreneurs was powerful and discussed their journey to academic and business success as students who learn differently at AIM. Their business, Opportunity Rise was started as part of AIM's innovative Startup Corps program. At AIM Academy, Startup Corps works with

Upper School students to plan and start real businesses, developing them into the next generation of entrepreneurial leaders, thinkers, and creators.

In addition Andrew and Sophia were invited to the International Dyslexia Association (IDA) Conference in San Diego to introduce leading entrepreneur Cameron Herold as he received the IDA Pinnacle Award. Cameron, who is dyslexic, is founder of Backpocket COO. Well known for the spectacular growth of 1-800-GOT JUNK, he now mentors an impressive class of proven CEOs, entrepreneurs and their teams, helping them navigate growth, leadership, and building their own unique company cultures. The IDA Pinnacle Award was created to recognize a dyslexic individual who has publicly acknowledged such, made significant achievements in his/her field of interest, is leading a successful life and is a role model for others with dyslexia

AIM is very proud of Andrew and Sophia and their TEDx Talk can be seen on YouTube at http://youtu.be/FPkLtbaBBIw.

AIM Students Win New York Times Vocabulary Video Contest



Allison Gubanich, Nina Buck '16 and Sophia Gross '16

AIM Academy students Nina Buck '16 and Sophia Gross '16 are winners of the New York Times Vocabulary Video Contest. This is the second annual 15 second vocabulary video contest for the New York Times and their partner Vocabulary.com. Nina and Sophia



chose the word SWERVE and filmed their winning video on the AIM campus with AIM Upper School students helping to define the word. Thanks to AIM English Faculty member Allison Gubanich who oversaw this project for her students.

AIM is very proud of Nina and Sophia. Their Swerve video can be seen on YouTube at http://bit.ly/16YUzJ2.

Wolf Pack Girls XC Champions Tri-County Independent School League



Gwyneth Donahue, Journey Jones, Kendall Hancock, Kathryn Riter and Maria Santangelo

Congrats to all of the AIM Athletic teams for an outstanding fall season! AIM is extremely proud of the Girls' Varsity Cross Country (XC) Team for being the CHAMPS of the Tri-County Independent School League! This is the first year that AIM has been a member of the Tri-County Independent School League and this team of Gwyneth Donahue, Journey Jones, Kendall Hancock, Kathryn Riter and Maria Santangelo along with their coaches Allison Gubanich and

Dr. Kristin Zielinksi, all excelled!

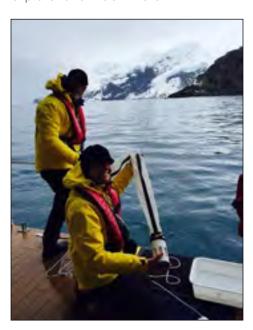
Great job Wolf Pack Girl's XC!

Faculty Spotlight

Amy Cline Brings Her Antarctica Experience to AIM Students



Over the AIM 2014-2015 Winter Break. Amy Holt Cline was selected to run a Young Explorers Program for Abercrombie & Kent that traveled to Antarctica. She has brought back her amazing experiences to AIM and created curriculum connections for students in 9th grade biology and the 12th grade Global Science Senior **Seminar.** These AIM students are learning about the animals and plants that live in the Antarctic Ecosystem and how this unique environment thrives. Some of the topics they are discussing in class include how species migrate and interact to survive, major ocean currents that surround the region, Ernest Shackleton, the famous Polar explorer and much more.



The 9th grade is studying terrestrial ecosystems in Antarctica and comparing permanently frozen lakes to seasonally frozen ones. They are also learning about the management of fur seals on South Georgia and other sub-Antarctic islands

The Senior Seminar is evaluating the whole Southern ocean ecosystem and learning how to read and interpret data specific to that region. Seniors are studying climate change and its effects on this region as well as others around the world. The 9th grade class will also be dissecting squid, fish and sharks to understand anatomy. AIM students are enjoying the closer look at this critical ecosystem through Amy Cline's hands-on lessons, readings, photos, dissections, labs and more.

Justin Schwartz Selected for Wharton Seminar for High School Educators on Business and Financial Responsibility



AIM Faculty member Justin Schwartz was selected to participate in the PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP (PwC US) and Knowledge@Wharton High School (KWHS) Seminar for High School Educators on Business and Financial Responsibility.

This intensive, three-day learning experience in December 2014 enabled educators to deepen their understanding of financial literacy and develop business-related skills that they can seamlessly integrate

into their classrooms. Justin studied finance, entrepreneurship, leadership, marketing and relationship-building to help students develop real-world job skills.

The seminar took place at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School and Justin was part of a select group of attendees from all over the country and included public and private high school teachers, principals, administrators and superintendents.

The PwC-KWHS Seminar for High School Educators on Business and Financial Responsibility is unique as it exposes educators to an advanced level of learning about business and financial literacy education that world class Wharton faculty and PwC executives provide.

Justin experienced an inspiring and comprehensive seminar experience in a stimulating educational environment with practical classroom strategies, regular networking forums and idea exchanges.

Justin was delighted to be part of this program and to bring back these financial literacy and business principles to the AIM classroom.

Carolyn Bjornson and Alli Gubanich Certified as Socratic Seminar Teacher Trainers

In fall 2014 AIM English faculty members Carolyn Bjornson and Alli Gubanich completed the Socratic Seminar: Teacher Trainer accreditation through PaTTAN (Pennsylvania Department of Education). Socratic seminars continue the tradition of Socrates, the classical Greek philosopher, whose teaching method involved asking questions. This method allows for intellectual. collaborative discussion

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE

through open-ended questions and enhances reading, speaking and listening, and writing skills.



Carolyn and Alli received their teacher training certification and held two training sessions at AIM for their fellow faculty members. After the first session, teachers were required to implement a Socratic Circle in their classrooms and report back during

the second session. Because teachers from all subject areas participated in the training, students discussed issues ranging from the legacy of John Muir to determining the best way to solve a math equation. The feedback has been very positive from both AIM faculty and students, and Carolyn and Alli look forward to training more teachers in the Socratic Seminar method.

AIM Faculty to Participate in the 2015 Colonial Williamsburg Teacher Institute

AIM is delighted that four faculty members have been selected to attend the Colonial Williamsburg Teacher Institute this summer. Lauren Benjamin, Eilis McMahon, Caitlin Schlosser and Devon Sparks will participate in this prestigious experience thanks to the generosity of the Sally and Dick Brickman Foundation.

This program will be a six-day session on location in Colonial Williamsburg and the surrounding area. The AIM faculty will be part of 25 participants with a Master Teacher engaging in an interdisciplinary approach to teaching social studies with American history as the focus. Lauren, Eilis, Caitlin and Devon will have the unique opportunity to exchange ideas with historians, meet character interpreters and become part of the story in The Revolutionary City. Throughout each day, the AIM teachers will work collaboratively with Colonial Williamsburg staff and Master Teachers to examine interactive teaching techniques and develop instructional materials that bring history to life in the classroom. AIM looks forward to the knowledge and experience that these four talented faculty members will bring back to share with the AIM community.

Institute Highlight

AIM Welcomes Vanderbilt University Researchers To Campus

AIM welcomed Dr. Donald Compton, Laura Steacey & Esther Lindstrom of Vanderbilt University this fall. Dr. Compton is a Professor and the Chair of the Special Education Department as well as a John F. Kennedy Center Investigator at Peabody College, Vanderbilt University. He teaches undergraduate and graduate courses at Vanderbilt and his research involves modeling individual differences in the development of children's reading skills and the identification of children

Dr. Donald Compton and Pat Roberts

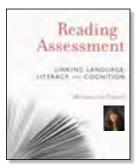
with reading disabilities. Dr. Compton and his team were delighted to visit AIM and visit the academic clubs and observe how AIM students transfer critical thinking skills. Pat Roberts and Nancy Blair are working with Dr. Compton and his team and look forward to his next visit to campus.



AIM's Nancy Hennessy with Vanderbilt University's Esther Lindstrom, Laura Steacy and Dr. Donald Compton with Pat Roberts

AIM Access to the Experts 2014-2015 Speaker Series

The AIM Institute for Learning and Research was founded in 2006 with the express purpose of providing teachers and professionals both specialized training and access to field experts in the areas of spoken language, reading, writing, and math. AIM programs reflect the latest research and knowledge of best practices and evidence based instruction within each area. The 2014-15 AIM Access to the Experts Series for professionals and parents once again brings globally renowned researchers and experts in the field of early literacy and learning differences. The speakers include:



Dr. Melissa Farrall - Linking Reading Assessment and Instruction. Dr. Farrall teaches assessment and the structure of language at Simmons College in Boston, MA. Her workshop in August 2014 focused on the selection and interpretation of informal and formal tests as a foundation for instructional decision-making. Dr. Farrall discussed test data and qualitative information

that can be used to identify the strands of language and decoding that are necessary for skilled reading. In addition, the attendees learned how to design instruction that is both research-based and individualized to meet a child's profile as a learner.

Dr. Peg Dawson - Smart but
Scattered: Executive Dysfunction at
Home and at School. Dr. Dawson of
the Center for Learning and Attention
Disorders in Portsmouth, NH, came to
AIM in November 2014 and discussed
that school success requires an array
of executive skills including planning
and organization, task initiation and



follow-through, sustained effort and attention as well as behavior regulation, including controlling emotions, managing impulses and dealing with situations requiring cognitive flexibility. This workshop explained executive skills development and gave parents and teachers an array of practical strategies to help children with weak executive skills be more successful.

In March AIM looks forward to welcoming Dr. Steve Graham. Dr. Graham is the Warner Professor in the Division of Educational Leadership and Innovation in Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College at Arizona State University. For close to 30 years he has studied how writing develops, how to teach it effectively, and how writing can be used to support reading and learning.



Dr. Graham will present a workshop examining evidence-based practices in writing that are successful with students with LD and children at risk for writing difficulties. This will include explicitly teaching planning and revising strategies, sentence construction skills, and transcriptions skills such as spelling and handwriting.

Preparing AIM Seniors for College

The College Counseling team at AIM Academy provides an organized, informative and individualized program that guides our Upper School students and families through the intense preparation and application process surrounding college selection. With more than 4,000 postsecondary institutions in the United States, our College Counseling team



works closely with families to ensure students find the right fit for their life after AIM.

To date, AIM students have been accepted at over 95 schools and received over \$1.6 million in merit based scholarships. Colleges and universities include U of Arizona, Beloit, Colorado State, U of Delaware, Drexel, Duquesne, Hofstra, Ithaca, St.Joe's, U of the Sciences and Wheaton, to name just a few.

Mike Dunn leads the AIM College Counseling team and writes the AIM2College Blog found at aim2college. tumblr.com/. Here you can read the latest college and university acceptances and learn more about the college series speakers, programs offered and much more.



The 7th Annual AIM for the Stars Gala

The 7th Annual AIM for the Stars Gala to promote literacy for students who learn differently and celebrating AIM Academy took place on Thursday, November 6, 2014 at the Sheraton Valley Forge Hotel. Representatives from throughout the Greater Philadelphia education community including university



Sally L. Smith Founder's Award Winner Kettner Griswold, Sr., Nancy Blair, Sally L. Smith Founder's Award Winner Jerry Pinkney, Pat Roberts, and Master of Ceremonies Rick Williams

partners, legislators, corporate sponsors, and families, faculty, and staff of the AIM community all gathered for this extraordinary celebration of literacy.

AIM honored Kettner Griswold, Sr. and Jerry Pinkney with the Sally L. Smith Founder's Award—two inspirational leaders who have overcome learning challenges in their lives and through their success, leadership, and spirit, have made significant contributions to enhance education opportunities for children who learn differently.

Dr. William R. Hite, Jr., Superintendent of The School District of Philadelphia, received the AIM Institute for Learning and Research Leadership Award.



To hear the inspirational words of our honorees and speakers and for a full gallery of images for this wonderful night for AIM and students who learn differently, visit www.aimpa.org/aim4stars.

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Pennsylvania Tax Credit Programs: EITC & OSTC

The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania currently offers two tax credit programs that make it possible for businesses to redirect their tax dollars to AIM Academy for financial aid. The benefits to deserving AIM students and their families are incredible.

The Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) provides a tax credit to businesses that pay Pennsylvania's corporate income tax for contributions to schools or organizations that give scholarships to eligible children.

The Opportunity School Tax Credit (OSTC) offers further support for students whose neighborhood public school is low-achieving.

The EITC and OSTC programs enable a Pennsylvania business to direct up to \$750,000 of its annual Pennsylvania state tax burden directly to AIM Academy's scholarship program. More information can be found at www.aimpa.org/ostc.

AIM is extremely grateful to the following donors for their support!

EITC:

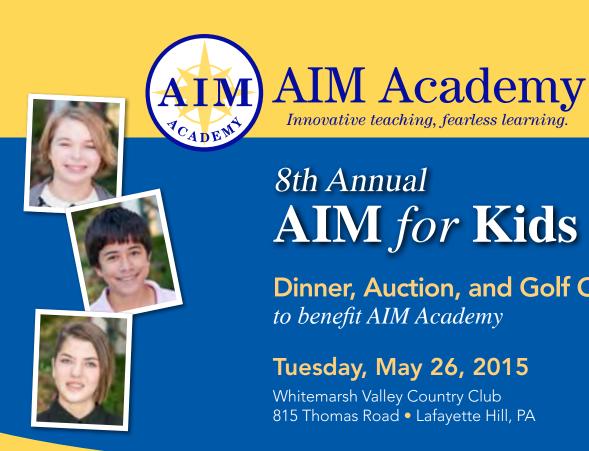
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AIM is extremely grateful to Wells Fargo for their strong commitment of \$100,000 to support student scholarships through OSTC.

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8th Annual AIM for Kids

Innovative teaching, fearless learning.

Dinner, Auction, and Golf Classic to benefit AIM Academy

Tuesday, May 26, 2015

Whitemarsh Valley Country Club 815 Thomas Road • Lafayette Hill, PA

www.aimpa.org/aimforkids or aimforkids@aimpa.org



Winter 2015 State of the School

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