

TEACHERS' VOICE



PROFESSIONAL
PROGRESSIVE
UNIONISM

October 2013

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“

When you wage war on the public schools,
you're attacking the mortar that holds the
community together. You're not a conservative,
you're a vandal. –Garrison Keillor ”

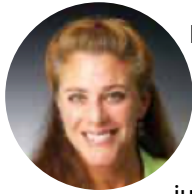


albuquerque teachers federation

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Really?

IT WILL GET BETTER...*REALLY!*



In August, everyone was hit in the face with the harsh reality of the PED's evaluation system. Although we had been sounding the alarm for several years, I know it was hard to imagine just how horrible and unfair the system really is. I know it's now clear to everyone that this is not about truly evaluating your ability to teach and providing you with useful feedback—it's about setting up good teachers to be labeled as "bad" only to fuel an anti-public school political agenda.

As far as I can tell, New Mexico has the most punitive, highest-stakes teacher evaluation system in the country. *Really!* Why? Because this politically-motivated scheme was imposed by administrative rule and never vetted through a legislative or negotiated process where most extreme agendas are usually tempered.

In August, we sent you a flyer entitled, "*Really?...Really!*" Much of the content affirmed the unbelievable evaluations based, in part, on how many times you call in sick.

Really?...Really! Principals threatened to come up with a minimum "bad teacher quota." *Really?...Really!*

I want to continue that theme by sending important news that might help you take heart and perhaps provide some motivation to join our collective efforts to get rid of this terrible system. Your teaching world may be inundated with the negativity of this imposed evaluation system, but that is not all that's happening in the education world. Political observers and average citizens are waking up to the devastating effects of high-stakes testing and the whole corporate reform agenda. We can take heart. *Really!*

»» According to the results of the 2013 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools, teachers are respected and supported and parents do not support corporate reform schemes like New Mexico's evaluation system. *Really!*

»» In the Michigan Legislature, a bill was introduced called the Mandatory Public School Test Validation Act. If passed, it would put to the test the elementary school-level skills of Michigan's 110 state representatives and 38 senators, as well as the governor, state superintendent of education and state board of education. All would be required to take standardized tests required of Michigan's third-, eighth- and eleventh-grade students and their results would be posted online. *Really!*

»» The bright light of truth is starting to shine on the corporate reforms created to shame, blame and discredit public schools and teachers. A new report by ProgressNow shines a light on how the American Legislative Exchange Council's (ALEC) education task force "fabricated failure in state public education systems in order to create a sales opportunity for their corporate membership." By the way, the New Mexico evaluation rule mirrors ALEC model legislation. *Really!*

»» Because of recent school closings targeting low-income communities of color in cities throughout the country, a national 25-city coalition called the National Journey for Justice Alliance, is calling for U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's resignation. *Really!* They state, "Despite research showing that closing public schools does not improve test scores or graduation rates, the federal agenda has incentivized the privatization of schools with primary fallout on low-income communities of color."

»» The voices of educators and parents were heard when AFT New Mexico and affiliates of the American Federation of Teachers around the country took a stand calling for a moratorium on high stakes attached to tests until teachers had time work with the Common Core State Standards for at least a year. In June, U.S. Education Secretary Arne Duncan agreed. Thousands of New Mexico teachers put pressure on Sec.-designate Skandera last month when over 7,000 postcards calling for "Putting the Brakes on the Stakes" were delivered to her office. *Really!*

»» Thousands of striking public school teachers in Mexico have shut down Congress, blocked traffic and paralyzed the heart of Mexico City to protest a draconian "education reform" package aimed at curtailing union power and privatizing Mexico's already ravaged public education system as the war on teachers, also waged on U.S. soil, spreads. *Really!*

Now, while we are not Mexico—yet—the above examples show us what can be accomplished when we join together in collective action. But, that takes the energized participation of the majority of educators. When the teachers in this district and state are ready to act and vote in their professional interests, *It Will Get Better...Really!*

In solidarity,

Ellen

ALEC EDUCATION TASK FORCE FABRICATES PROBLEMS TO SELL SOLUTIONS

Below are excerpts from an article posted July 23, 2013 on educationvotes.nea.org by Amanda Litvinov

The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) was established four decades ago to connect corporate players with lobbyists and legislators, trading political influence for funding from foundations with corporate connections, big business and its associations, and some of the nation's wealthiest individuals.

It's no surprise, then, that the hallmark of ALEC model legislation is to make conditions as favorable to corporations as possible. The group has long sought ways into the previously untapped market of public education.

A new report by ProgressNow focuses on how the ALEC education task force has used a state-by-state report card to fabricate failure in state public education systems in order to create a sales opportunity for their corporate membership.

Since 2008, those ALEC report cards have focused on education policy, giving higher grades to states that have opened up their public school system to privatization. States that have passed laws to support virtual schools and voucher schemes, for example, receive higher grades than those with high-performing schools but few or no market-based education policies.

In fact, the 25 states with the top performing schools are ranked lower than the 25 states with the lowest performing schools in ALEC's most recent report card.

The National Educational Policy Center's examination of the ALEC report card concluded:

Overall, ALEC's Report Card is grounded less in research than in ideological tenets, as reflected in the high grades it assigns to states with unproven and even disproven market-based policies. The report's purpose appears to be more about shifting control of education to private interests than in improving education.

ALEC uses its annual report card to paint a false picture of states in need of education reforms. Then its members take the opportunity to sell the solution, calling on their vast network of elected leaders to introduce model legislation that creates opportunities, not for students, but for corporate interests.

After receiving tens of thousands of dollars in campaign donations from virtual learning

company K12 Inc., Governor Bob McDonnell requested the introduction of ALEC model legislation to expand virtual education in 2010. It passed in the Virginia legislature, and K12 Inc. swiftly set up shop in one of the state's most impoverished counties to maximize the public money it would receive.

The Carroll County School Board voted to close down K12's Virginia Virtual Academy just four years after its opening, due to financial and administrative burden and the fact that the Virtual Academy fared worse than traditional schools on 20 out of 22 measures.

Still, Virginia legislators with ALEC connections enacted a law in 2012 requiring high school students take an online course to graduate, further expanding the market for K12 Inc.

The National Journey for Justice Alliance demands include:

- »» a moratorium on school closings, turnarounds, phase-outs, and charter expansions.
- »» a proposal for sustainable school transformation to replace failed, market-driven interventions as support for struggling schools.
- »» the resignation of U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

PUBLIC'S ATTITUDES TOWARD THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Some of the findings from the 2013 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll :

- A majority of Americans reject using student scores from standardized tests to evaluate teachers.
- In just one year, Americans reversed their opinion, and now 58% oppose requiring that teacher evaluations include student scores on standardized tests.
- Almost two of three Americans oppose releasing information to newspapers about how students of individual teachers perform on standardized tests.
- While 60% of Americans believe performance reviews of teachers should be released to the public, a greater percentage believe similar reviews of medical doctors (76%) and police (70%) should be released.
- More than 70% of Americans have trust and confidence in the men and women who teach in public schools, and 65% have trust in public school principals. These percentages are even higher for Americans under the age of 40.
- Americans are divided on whether public school teachers should be permitted to strike, although there is substantially more acceptance of strikes now than when the question was asked in 1980.
- Lack of financial support continues to be the biggest problem facing public schools. Public school parents agree, and they see overcrowding as the second biggest problem.
- Three new concerns rose to near the top of the list of the biggest problems facing public schools: lack of parental support, difficulties in getting good teachers, and testing requirements and regulations.
- 53% of Americans gave the schools in their communities an A or B, the highest percentage ever recorded.





ISSUES | ADVOCACY | ORGANIZING

issues

Evaluation Results and Leave

Teachers have been very upset by the PED plan to count more than 10 absences against teachers in their evaluation. The only thing we know for sure is that federally/legally protected leave will not count against the teacher. That protection includes FMLA and jury duty.

PED will also not count professional leave against teachers. Beyond that, we have been led to believe that an absence is an absence is an absence.

This is 10% of a system that sets everyone up for some kind of failure. Please, do not go to work sick. If a loved one dies, go to the funeral. Use your leave if you need to, but don't worry yourself "sick" about this.

PDP Alert

With all of the changes in the teacher evaluation system that have gone into effect this year, one thing hasn't changed. A Professional Development Plan (PDP) is still a requirement. Each PDP should be unique to the goals and growth areas identified by the teacher and his/her supervisor.

A PDP is an annual requirement and it is permissible to extend it over a three-year period. It is a contractual requirement that information about the PDP evaluation be shared with the teacher within 40 workdays after the start of the school year.

What has changed this year is that, rather than the PDP being linked to one of the essential teacher competences, it must now be linked to a domain to align with the new evaluation system. It is still however an individual goal not a school-wide goal and principals cannot mandate a domain area just as they could not mandate a specific competency in past years.

Individual Contracts Will Be Issued Soon

You should have already received your individual instructor contract from the District. The contract will reflect information concerning your *base salary*, years of experience, and education level the district has credited you. Remember the information on your contract will reflect the years of service credit you have completed as of the end of last school year. *Note: Contracts will not reflect differential pay or compensation for extended contracts.*

Please check your base salary with the salary schedules on the ATF website. Make sure it is correct. APS will include on your individual contract a disclaimer about their right to recoup overpayment from employees when they make one of their many payroll mistakes.

advocacy

Evaluations; Improvement Plans; PAR

With the arrival of the new evaluation process, the question arises about what happens if a teacher is observed and rated "ineffective" or "minimally effective" by the principal. When this occurs, the principal must provide in writing to the teacher the details of the deficient performance, and also inform him/her of their right to a post-evaluation conference within ten days. At that conference attended by both APS Human Resources and ATF Staff members, the principal will present specific recommendations to address the areas of poor performance and will place the teacher on an individual professional growth plan for 90 school days.

As part of this process, the District is obligated to provide help to the employee to improve. This is done via the Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) program, a joint APS/ATF effort negotiated several years ago. To assist in the improvement process, PAR assigns a Consulting Teacher (a professional colleague experienced in classroom management, content and pedagogy) to provide non-evaluative support to the teacher.

Because our PAR program is small, APS and ATF agreed that those teachers who are very close to, but not quite, "effective" based on observations will receive help at the school first.

The ICs Role in Building School Budgets

There is not a lot of discretionary money for schools to spend, but what little there is should be allocated by your school's instructional council. Because we have had to intervene in school budget matters over the last two years, we are bringing this right to your attention early so that the council can start planning to address next year's budget issues early in the school year.

Our contract language already guarantees that the council has the right to make budget decisions concerning discretionary funds. Because most of the district's money comes from allocations from the state legislature, there is always a time crunch between when the state determines how much the school will get and when it has to be budgeted to make plans for the following school year. If councils have not had discussions about its priorities, the time frame is too short for there to be serious discussion about how to spend money. This usually results in the principal or small group of people making a fairly rushed decision.

If you would like assistance in analyzing your budget or enforcing your rights to make important decisions at your school, please contact the office.

Check Your Check For Accuracy

We can't emphasize enough how important it is to verify the accuracy of your paycheck. Over the summer, numerous payroll processing issues came to our attention from several employees who unexpectedly had pay reductions or pay stoppages at the end of the school year. Needless to say, these employees and their families experienced great disruptions to their household budgets and their lives. Most of the errors, which were due to Lawson glitches, impacted teachers who had a change in contract (e.g. new extended contract; differential; etc.) during the school year.

In response to the major mistakes, Ellen met with the district's CFO and head of accounting. At the meeting, it was agreed that the district and union would establish a clear process for notifying employees of payroll errors and a "payback" system to minimize the financial hardship associated with these errors. We also agreed that verifying accuracy of pay is a joint responsibility between the employer and employee. A notification will be sent to all employees explaining the processes referenced above.

Please call us if you have any concerns about the accuracy of your check.

organizing

Member Benefits: More Great Reasons to Join ATF

\$1 Million Professional Liability Protection/Legal Action Trust Plan for complete professional protection. Automatic enrollment when you join.

\$25 Thousand Accidental Death/Dismemberment insurance coverage. Automatic enrollment when you join.

With access to a wealth of opportunities and resources, the AFT has something for you.

- Insurance for your home, auto and life—even your pets
- No fee credit card with special union-member features
- A mortgage program with special features for AFT members
- 15 percent off wireless phone plans

Many of the AFT's benefit offerings are through our affiliation with Union Plus, the AFL-CIO benefits program. New Union Plus programs have been added to the AFT + roster of benefits to bring you savings on an even wider array of products and services.

- AFT+ endorsed insurance
- health
- legal and financial services
- travel and entertainment
- shopping
- scholarships
- loan forgiveness

TEACHER UPRISINGS IN MEXICO A LESSON IN DEFENDING PUBLIC EDUCATION

Excerpts from Common Dreams, published August 28, 2013

Members of the CNTE union, which represents a third of the country's public school teachers, launched protests August 19 at the start of the school year to protest the sweeping education reform law currently under debate in Mexico's Congress. While the package, championed by President Enrique Peña Nieto, already passed in December, Congress is now debating legislation necessary to implement its provisions.

Teachers and their allies are slamming the 'reforms' as a ploy to blame teachers for Mexico's education shortcomings, rather than look to the severe under-funding and privatization of education that devastate school systems, particularly in poor areas.

Their political battle echoes the U.S. fight against corporate education reform aimed at curbing teachers' rights and privatizing public education, which has been met with protest and strikes, but not the full-scale revolts sweeping Mexico.

"It is an attack on the teaching profession and does absolutely nothing to help improve education," Francisco Bravo, one of the protest leaders, said in a news conference, the LA Times reports.

"The 2013 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools makes it clear that the American people soundly reject the agenda being pushed by austerity hawks and market-based reformers to starve public schools of resources and fixate instead on testing, opt-outs and sanctions."

- AFT President Randi Weingarten

"Overall, ALEC's Report Card is grounded less in research than in ideological tenets, as reflected in the high grades it assigns to states with unproven and even disproven market-based policies. The report's purpose appears to be more about shifting control of education to private interests than in improving education."

- The National Educational Policy Center's examination of the ALEC report card

COPE

NOW Is the Time

Sara Attleson
ATF COPE Chair | Kennedy Middle School

In August, retired APS teacher and ATF member Ken Whiton wrote an eloquent Letter-to-the-Editor exposing the flaws and deficiencies of the PED's evaluation system. Along with objective information, he wrote:

This teacher evaluation scheme is punitive, arbitrary, subjective and harmful when it should be instructive, collaborative, objective and helpful...

We are putting teachers into difficult and/or unworkable situations which make it harder for them to meet their obligations to their students. We then judge them harshly because they can't perform up to our expectations. It's the same as tying a quarterback's arms behind his back and after his team loses, criticizing him as a slacker and cutting his pay.

Our COPE reports frequently try to illuminate the "big picture" forces in education, the corporate money that flows into politics, the efforts of "reformers" who work to undermine confidence in public schools, teachers and their unions, and divert public money into private pockets through vouchers, charters, and magical curricula. It is really important that we, as educators, understand the political context in which we are working.

Informing and educating legislators is a direct and personal process. We need to make sure that the informed, knowledgeable and at times passionate voices of educators are clear and influential. Please take time this month to contact your state senator and representative. They need to understand how bad the imposed evaluation system truly is and why. They need to hear it from you.

Tell them: How is the evaluation system impacting you? What does your school do that is not reflected in a letter grade? What does high-stakes testing do to your students and your teaching? How does the lack of funding impact your class, your resources, your paycheck, and your life?

January or the start of the legislative session are late in the process for legislators to hear from us. NOW IS THE TIME! Let them know.

Not sure of your district? Go to the Bernalillo County Clerk's website: <https://www.bernco.gov> and click the "My Voter Information" link on the left side of the page under Online Services Links.

CCSS

Text at the Center: A Conversation

The Achievement Partners, who did most of the legwork to write the Common Core and continue to impact its implementation via their website (achievethecore.org), believe strongly that the CCSS will work best when teachers "put text at the center of the lesson."

This fundamental belief was the subject of much debate at the last meeting of the ATF CCSS workgroup I attended in D.C. in December of 2012. Ultimately, the teachers in the room prevailed against the Achievement Partners who were there. The teachers' point was that "text" can look like many things; and although it may be "at the center," it doesn't completely replace the good and appropriate experiential strategies that bring content to life for students.



Implementing Common Core Literacy standards does not mean students stop diving into content and only read about it. Experiencing content topics is among the best ways to build student confidence with new vocabulary as they talk with others about what they are doing, write about their experiences, make t-shirts to commemorate it, etc. - Susan



And on that note...Discovery ED defines text as multimodal text, that is, text can be pictures, video, graphs, etc. - anything we use to gain information in a written form. They say, please don't do away with hands-on science and experiments; that's where we truly learn to be scientists. The online resources they offer are just that, resources not replacement for real, in-the-moment discovery. - Wendy



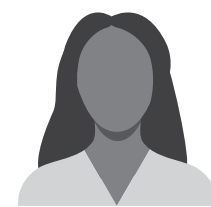
You learn science by doing science. No reading, no picture, no video can replace the EXPERIENCE of learning science. Text is NOT at the center of the scientific method; inquiry and discovery are. Text can give context to scientific discovery. It's the way formal discoveries are shared. But, it is dry and lifeless without hands-on learning.

While I'm at it, content vocabulary does not need to be front-loaded. Students can read about rockets, but that will never give them the rush of watching their own rocket roar into the sky. Or, learning what altitude means by following your own tiny speck of parachute falling from 1,000 feet up.

Inquiry is NOT close reading of the text. Inquiry is what kids do when they jump off of swings that are going too high. Gravity and friction are what make them skin their knees when they hit the ground. There's no bubble test, no vocabulary quiz, no written analysis, but it's a lesson they remember for life.

I am teaching my first batch of millennials and they are getting a pretty complicated world handed to them. I beg for a scientifically-literate public that will preserve this planet. Even Discovery Ed can't get them there... only we can. - Sondra

OCTOBER 2013	
10/1	FED REP COUNCIL
10/2 10/9 10/16 10/23	MANAGING DIFFICULT STUDENTS (4-part series) 4:30-6:30PM Members: No cost/Non-members: \$25 per session
10/3	COMMON CORE PLANNING & PEDAGOGY 4:30-6:30PM No cost/RSVP appreciated but not required
10/7	NATIONAL BOARD RENEWAL 4:30-6:30PM No cost/No RSVP required
10/8	COMMON CORE PLANNING & PEDAGOGY 4:30-6:30PM No cost/RSVP appreciated but not required
10/15	PDD OVERVIEW 4:30-7:30PM • call to Register: 262-2657 Members: No cost/Non-members: \$50
10/16	NATIONAL BOARD LARGE GROUP 4:30-6:00PM Meeting for current candidates
10/17	S&RSP CPS OVERVIEW 4:30-6:30PM • call to RSVP 262-2657 Members: No cost/Non-members: \$50
10/17	COMMON CORE PLANNING & PEDAGOGY 4:30-6:30PM No cost/RSVP appreciated but not required
10/21	COMMON CORE PLANNING & PEDAGOGY 4:30-6:30PM No cost/RSVP appreciated but not required
10/22	ATF GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING 4:30-5:30PM All ATF members invited/No RSVP required
10/24	S&RSP CPS SEMINAR 4:30-6:30PM • call to RSVP 262-2657 Members: No cost/Non-members: \$50
10/24	ATF SYMPOSIUM 4:30-6:00PM No cost/No RSVP required
10/29	COMMON CORE PLANNING & PEDAGOGY 4:30-6:30PM No cost/RSVP appreciated but not required
TO REGISTER CALL: 262-2657 All events held at ATF office: 530 Jefferson Street NE (unless otherwise noted)	



Special education students need those hands-on experiences as well. Without the touching, hearing and doing, the "lessons" may not make it to our students' long-term memories. Students are then unable to make connections and build a depth of knowledge. As motivating as our technology can be, we cannot underestimate the effectiveness of the hands-on, and often low-tech, experiences. - Leila

Join the conversation. Come to a class or comment on our blog, "Teachers-Own-The-Common-Core" at www.atfunion.org.

"This is to defend public education!" shouted a teacher in front of the French embassy Monday as protesters faced off with riot police, the Wall Street Journal reports. "This is against oppressive neoliberal reforms!"

- Teacher Uprisings in Mexico a Lesson in Defending Public Education. Published August 28, 2013 by Common Dreams



PED WATCH

Never to be deterred by facts, Gov. Martinez continues with her slogan reform, grabbing headlines with change that will do no good and has no substance. The latest?

Governor Susana Martinez announced a new education reform initiative that will pay 400 New Mexico teachers an additional \$5000 to work with students in struggling schools or to help students earn Advanced Placement (AP) credits.

What about the other 2,300 teachers who haven't had a raise in five years and are struggling to feed their families? That's why this is slogan reform—gets a headline but has no positive impact on students or teachers.

The first step will be to "reward" 100 teachers who agree to move from a school with a grade of an A or B to a school with a D or F grade.

Zero evidence that this will help kids. Are teachers going to be asked to move schools mid-year? What a disruption!

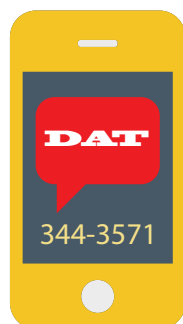
Additionally, 300 teachers—currently instructing AP classes—will be eligible for an incentive. Awards will be based on teachers who increase the number of students successfully passing AP courses.

And more high stakes on yet another test. I would hate to be in one of those AP classes, the pressure will be crushing!

Governor Susana Martinez also announced that more than 100 science and math teachers statewide will receive a \$5,000 stipend this year for teaching at 'hard-to-staff' schools.

Again, it's all unproven, but the PED intends to charge ahead with these "competitions" that are no more than thinly-veiled, back door "merit" pay.

DIAL-A-TEACHER



CHALLENGING HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENTS

Remind students to call **DIAL-A-TEACHER** M-TH | 5:30-8:30PM for free homework help offered in English or Spanish.

AROUND THE NATION

From AFT LeaderNet

AFT to File Request in Florida for All Communications Between Tony Bennett and Jeb Bush's Foundation, ALEC

In a continued push for transparency, the AFT announced it was filing public information requests in Florida for all communications of former Florida Education Commissioner Tony Bennett and other former education commissioners with Jeb Bush's Foundation for Excellence in Education, the American Legislative Exchange Council and others since 2011. The request also includes for-profit education companies that fund Bush's foundation and ALEC, including Charter Schools USA, the for-profit charter provider that employs Bennett's wife. Last week, the AFT and AFT Indiana filed similar requests in Indiana.

"Public education is a public good, and taxpayers, parents, teachers and others who rely on our public schools are entitled to full transparency around the decisions and actions made regarding our schools—whether in Indiana or here in Florida," said Weingarten. "We need to reclaim the promise of public education to help all children reach their full potential. Tony Bennett betrayed that promise when he put backroom deals and favors for political donors ahead of the children of Indiana. Creating full transparency will ensure continued confidence and trust in our public schools."

Thousands Rally For Philadelphia Schools

Only 18 days before public school students were scheduled to return to classrooms, teachers, school staff, students, parents and supporters with the Philadelphia Coalition Advocating for Public Schools marched through the streets, demanding that big business, the mayor, the governor and the School Reform Commission do their part to fully fund Philadelphia's schools.

They denounced the notion that students, parents and teachers should continue to bear the brunt of slashed funding. The \$50 million that the city last week agreed to borrow in order to open buildings on time will not restore the staff, supplies and programming needed for kids to succeed, warned Jerry Jordan, president of the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers and an AFT vice president.

"What about the children?" Jordan repeatedly implored at the demonstration. "We are out here not for ourselves, but for Philly's children. We will not stop fighting for them until we get full, fair funding."

"We have one thing to say to the people inside: Shame on you!" said Ted Kirsch, president of AFT Pennsylvania and an AFT vice president, as the rally heated up outside the school district headquarters.



BY TEACHERS | FOR TEACHERS | FOR FREE

The AFT Share My Lesson site includes more than 200,000 resources across grade levels and subject areas and has a section devoted to the Common Core. It's a tool that helps teachers find the free, high-quality resources they are looking for to help them do the best job possible with their students. www.sharemylesson.com

TEACHERS' VOICE



albuquerque teachers federation
professional progressive unionism

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