

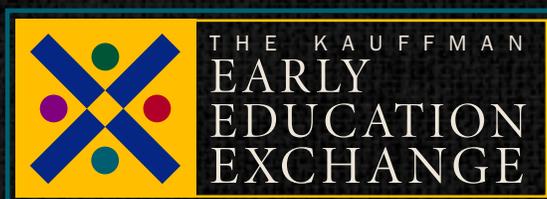
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



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SET FOR SUCCESS:

BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR SCHOOL READINESS BASED  
ON THE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG CHILDREN





*Set for Success:  
Building a Strong Foundation for School Readiness Based  
on the Social-Emotional Development of Young Children  
Executive Summary*

ABOUT THE KAUFFMAN EARLY EDUCATION EXCHANGE

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*The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation convened the first annual conference in the Kauffman Early Education Exchange series in November 2001. These national conferences are designed to exchange information and scientific knowledge and to discuss the implications for policy and practice toward the goal of enabling all children to enter school prepared to succeed. The Kauffman Foundation hosts one conference a year on a selected topic related to early childhood development, family support and early education. These conferences include presentations from leading experts, researchers and policymakers who are invited to write papers for the Exchange. Each paper explores a different aspect of the selected issue.*

*The focus of the inaugural Kauffman Early Education Exchange held November 12, 2001 emphasized the link between social-emotional development and later cognitive development. There were 12 presenters and more than 150 guests invited to participate in the initial Exchange. This executive summary presents the key findings and recommendations outlined in the six papers commissioned by the Foundation. The full report contains the six commissioned papers presented during the Exchange. The list of presenters is detailed on the following page.*

The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, 4801 Rockhill Road, Kansas City, MO 64110-2046, publishes the Kauffman Early Education Exchange report and executive summary (ISBN # 1-891616-23-4). The Kauffman Early Education Exchange report is distributed free of charge through a controlled circulation. Opinions expressed by the writers in this report are their own and are not to be considered those of the Kauffman Foundation. Authorization to photocopy articles for personal use is granted by the Kauffman Foundation. Reprinting is encouraged, with the following attribution: From the Kauffman Early Education Exchange, a publication of the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, © 2002. To be added to the mailing list for future reports, write to Kauffman Early Education Exchange, Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation Fulfillment Center, P.O. Box 12444, North Kansas City, MO 64116. The full report and executive summary are available on the Kauffman Foundation's Web site at <http://www.emkf.org/pages/12.cfm>. Photographs that appear in this report were acquired independently of the articles and do not have a direct relationship to material discussed in each article.

*The first Kauffman Early Education conference was held November 12, 2001.  
Presentations included remarks from the following individuals:*

**FACILITATOR:**

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*Joan Lombardi, Child and Family Policy Specialist and Director of The Children's Project, Washington, DC*

**PRESENTERS:** The presenters who wrote papers for this first Kauffman Early Education Exchange conference were:

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*Ross Thompson, Ph.D., University of Nebraska, Lincoln, NE*

*Linda Espinosa, Ph.D., University of Missouri-Columbia, Columbia, MO*

*Oscar Barbarin, Ph.D., University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC*

*Paul Donahue, Ph.D., Center for Prevention Psychiatry, Scarsdale, NY*

*Roxane Kaufmann, M.A., Georgetown University Child Development Center, Washington, DC*

*Deborah Perry, Ph.D., Georgetown University, Child Development Center, Washington, DC*

*Jane Knitzer, Ed.D., National Center for Children in Poverty, Columbia University, New York, NY*

**PANELISTS:** A conference panel discussion about effective early education practices that promote social-emotional development included remarks from:

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*Dwayne Crompton, Executive Director, KCMC Child Development Corporation, Kansas City, MO*

*Deborah Hoskins, Community Resources Manager, KCMC Child Development Corporation, Kansas City, MO*

*Brenda Loscher-Hudson, Education Consultant, KCMC Child Development Corporation, Kansas City, MO*

**DISCUSSANTS:** Four experts in the field served as discussants at the conference:

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*Marilou Hyson, Ph.D., Associate Executive Director of Professional Development, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Washington, DC*

*Tammy Mamm, Ph.D., Director, Early Head Start National Resource Center, Zero to Three National Center, Washington, DC*

*Sandra Adams, Ph.D., Center for Prevention and Early Intervention, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL*

*Jack Shonkoff, M.D., Dean, The Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University, Waltham, MA*

**PLANNING TEAM:** The Kauffman Early Education Exchange is planned and administered by the Kauffman Foundation Early Education Team:

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*Lisa Klein, Senior Program Officer, Early Education*

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## I N T R O D U C T I O N

### SET FOR SUCCESS: BUILDING A STRONG FOUNDATION FOR SCHOOL READINESS BASED ON THE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG CHILDREN

For decades, the question of how to make sure children are successful as students in school and as individuals in their communities has been a priority for parents and educators. In recent years, that question also has become increasingly important to elected officials; policymakers at the local, state and federal levels; colleges of education; professional researchers in psychology; practitioners in early childhood education and children's advocates.

Research into school success shows a direct link to the preparation (or lack thereof) that young children receive from the time they are born until they enter kindergarten. *Young children who do not have opportunities to engage in stimulating cognitive activities and nurturing social-emotional relationships are already behind their peers when they enter kindergarten.*

State reports of the percentage of children that are not prepared to enter school ready to succeed range from 20% to 49%. In response, multiple federal, state and local initiatives are aimed at promoting school readiness and academic success beginning with our youngest children and their families. In 1994, Congress enacted the Educate America Act, with the first goal being: "All children shall enter school ready to learn." The 107th Congress introduced the Foundations for Learning Act, aimed at reducing the risk of early school failure. On April 2, 2002, President Bush announced a new early childhood initiative called: "Good Start, Grow Smart," a plan to strengthen early learning in young children.

Research evidence from the National Academy of Sciences and others has demonstrated that children entering school with well-developed cognitive and social-emotional skills are most likely to succeed and least likely to need costly intervention services later through

either special education or juvenile justice. The science of early childhood has repeatedly provided evidence that strong social-emotional development underlies all later growth and development. Young children who develop strong early relationships with parents, family, caregivers and teachers learn how to pay attention, cooperate and get along with others. As a result, they are confident in their ability to explore and learn from the world around them.

*Stated simply, positive relationships are essential to a child's ability to grow up healthy and achieve later social, emotional and academic success.*

Presenters at the inaugural Kauffman Early Education Exchange outlined several theoretical and practical lessons from the beneficial marriage of psychology — developmental, educational and clinical — and of the teaching profession. They include:

- How children feel is as important as how they think in ensuring learning.
- Learning depends on stable, secure and enduring relationships with both adults and peers.
- Emotional and motivational readiness is not just good for, but critical to, learning.
- It is easier to teach cooperation than to deal with a disruptive student.

There are, however, several challenges to translating the science into effective programs and policies that promote school readiness and success including societal beliefs about childrearing, economic deficits in the states, and the

tragic events of September 11. Overall strategies for achieving the goal of preparing children to succeed include:

- Creating a common understanding of what good social-emotional development is and how it underlies later academic success;
- Building broad-based public and political will to make the healthy growth and comprehensive development of young children a priority;
- Committing public and private investment in the types of programs and policies that are proven to result in greater success for young children and families;
- Building expertise for parents, families, providers and teachers in order to promote strong social-emotional development in all young children, particularly those at-risk for serious problems and delays;
- Providing effective interventions for young children who experience social-emotional problems that interfere with their development and learning; and
- Assuring good outcomes by assessing progress and tracking indicators of social-emotional development and its relation to later school readiness and academic success.

The Kauffman Early Education Exchange presented three perspectives on the topic of social-emotional development:

*The View From Research*

*The View From the Field*

*Implications for Policy and Practice*



## T H E V I E W F R O M R E S E A R C H

*The Kauffman Early Education Exchange conference began with a series of papers that presented the latest scientific research and compelling evidence about what is necessary to prepare young children for school success. The first three papers present findings from the fields of developmental, educational and clinical psychology.*

### THE ROOTS OF SCHOOL READINESS IN SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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The National Academy of Sciences study “From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development,” reported on *three qualities that children need to be ready for school: intellectual skills, motivation to learn and strong socioemotional capacity*. School success requires young children be able to: understand their own feelings and the viewpoint and feelings of others, cooperate with both peers and adults, resolve conflict successfully and control their own behavior. Evidence shows that young children who have established positive relationships with parents, caregivers and teachers are secure and confident in exploring new situations and mastering learning challenges.

Kindergarten teachers report the most concern with the children who lack the socioemotional qualities of school readiness. They say it is more difficult to assist children who are not interested in learning, lack confidence in their success,

or are incapable of cooperation and self-control. The intellectual preparation for young children is easiest for kindergarten teachers to remedy because they are accustomed to working with children with varying degrees of cognitive capabilities and skills. As one teacher stated the problem, “the kids are sad, mad and bad, it’s not that they can’t add.”

Developmental scientists have found that child-adult relationships provide a psychological foundation for many of the socioemotional qualities that underlie school readiness. Two conclusions arise from this research. First, the preschool years are a period of considerable growth in the psychological foundations of school readiness.

*AS ONE TEACHER stated the problem, “the kids are sad, mad and bad, it’s not that they can’t add.”*

Advances in the child's understanding of other people, self-understanding, emotional growth, self-control and conscience and peer relationships provide an essential bedrock of skills necessary for learning in the classroom. Second, supportive relationships are the common core ingredient of positive early social and emotional development. The science of early childhood development shows that:

- The quality of relationships with parents is significant and primary;
- The quality of child care and the caregiver-child relationship are significant influences on social and emotional development; and
- Young children have a strong, intrinsic drive toward healthy development, but it can be undermined by troubled relationships with the people who matter to them.

*The research clearly shows the positive and negative implications for understanding the conditions that influence school readiness. School readiness is hindered when:*

- Children live in families affected by domestic violence, parental mental health or substance abuse problems or other conditions that make the home environment stressful for young children;
- Children are in child care settings that are stressful or unstimulating, with teachers who are unknowledgeable or uninterested in the importance of fostering growing minds and

personalities, or with staff turnover so high that it is difficult for children to develop stable relationships with their caregivers; and

- Children live in circumstances where many of these risk factors to healthy early psychological development co-occur, such as in poverty.

*On the positive side, the research also highlights opportunities to facilitate school readiness in young children.*

*These strategies include:*

- Strengthening family experience, especially through opportunities to develop more secure and nurturing parent-child relationships;
- Improving child care quality in three ways — by strengthening the training and awareness of child care providers about their crucial role in promoting social and emotional development; by reducing turnover of child care providers through increased professionalism and compensation; and by making classroom practices more developmentally appropriate and child-centered;
- Focusing on the transition to kindergarten as an important opportunity to instill and maintain enthusiasm for learning; and
- Attending especially to the needs of vulnerable children who come from at-risk backgrounds.

THE CONNECTIONS BETWEEN  
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
AND EARLY LITERACY

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L I N D A   E S P I N O S A ,   P H . D .

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Research on the topic of literacy widely acknowledges that literacy development is closely related to earlier language development. What is less widely discussed in relation to literacy are the early ties between social-emotional development in infancy and the development of language and symbolic play during the second year of life. *There is strong evidence that social-emotional development in the first year of life is the foundation of language development and that social-emotional well-being continues to affect both language and literacy as a child matures.*

The development of early language and eventually literacy occurs in the context of close relationships with others. These earliest relationships with parents and other primary caregivers provide the foundation for developing the characteristics of trust, autonomy and initiative.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY *language and eventually literacy occurs in the context of close relationships with others.*

During the first year of life, joint attention occurs between mother or caregiver and child when the infant and adult are interacting and establish the earliest stage of pre-language communication. For preschoolers, play is the best way young children develop pre-literacy language and communication. As they grow, the adults who care for them and their attitudes, beliefs and level of literacy influence children's exposure and interest in reading. The literature provides compelling evidence that nurturing relationships and responsive social environments set the stage for language and literacy as children grow and mature.

Because reading is a language-based skill, children experiencing difficulties in reading often also experience difficulty in three areas of language development: receptive and expressive vocabulary, narrative skills and phonological processing. Research has shown that children's reading abilities in the primary grades has been positively correlated with early vocabulary development. However, many children living in poverty arrive at school with poorly developed vocabularies.

It has repeatedly been shown that high-quality preschool programs can positively influence the intellectual, academic and social development of poor children, both immediately and long-term.

Virtually all experts in early education and related fields agree that intensive, high-quality interventions for young children, particularly those in poverty, can have substantial impacts on their future school and life success. *When designing early care and education programs it is critical to consider the following elements:*

- Develop positive and supportive relationships with young children to promote their emotional development;
- Place a strong emphasis on oral language development;
- Include in curriculum school-related skills and knowledge;
- Establish small class sizes to provide frequent interactions with peers and adults;
- Engage teachers in collaborative planning, assessment and reflection;
- Ensure teachers are educated in early childhood development, well-trained and well-qualified to teach young children; and
- Establish a collaborative and respectful relationship with parents and/or other family members.

## CULTURE AND ETHNICITY IN SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

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OSCAR BARBARIN, P.H.D.

Academic competence and socio-emotional adjustment are built upon a common foundation of early psychological development. Likewise, both are molded by cultural and ethnic contexts. This is nowhere more evident than among children of color in the United States who occupy social niches, defined by socio-economic status, gender and ethnicity, which ply them with a risk-inducing formula of above-average environmental strains and below-average material resources. For many children this formula results in a compromising of social development and academic achievement.

Stressors facing many poor children of color that limit their ability to successfully cope include: early deprivation or trauma, family instability or conflict, involvement in the child welfare system, and neighborhood danger and limited resources. Evidence also shows that many children experiencing problems in social-emotional functioning are also experiencing delays in acquiring early academic skills. Early identification of mental health problems in ethnic minority children coupled with effective referral and service delivery has long-term implications for preventing academic failure.

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Social-emotional competence is an essential ingredient of school success because it constitutes a prerequisite condition for effective instruction and learning. For the many children who experience academic difficulties, attaining social-emotional and self-regulatory competence sets the stage for and is essential to later academic achievement. Problems in social-emotional competence not only diminish academic achievement but also complicate efforts to remediate problems in acquiring skills.

*FOR THE MANY CHILDREN who experience academic difficulties, attaining social-emotional and self-regulatory competence sets the stage for and is essential to later academic achievement. Problems in social-emotional competence not only diminish academic achievement but also complicate efforts to remediate problems in acquiring skills.*



*There are many promising strategies that have emerged in the past five years for ways to intervene that will make a difference in improving academic success among children of color.*

Interventions focused on improving and enriching the social and familial environments of children, particularly among young children are critically important. All children will prosper in environments that are safe, stable, supportive and stimulating. There are a number of strategies that can help correct the imbalance of strains and resources to give children of color a fighting chance to develop to their full potential. These include:

- Early intervention;
- Access to high-quality pre-kindergarten programs;
- Improved teacher preparation; and
- Sustained efforts to build collaborative relations between families and schools.



## T H E V I E W F R O M T H E F I E L D

*The second series of papers focus on identifying and using effective practices that promote positive early relationships that intervene when young children are vulnerable or experience emotional and behavioral problems.*

### PROMISING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN YOUNG CHILDREN: THE ROLE OF MENTAL HEALTH CONSULTANTS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS

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With the advances in the study of brain development in infants and toddlers and research on the early acquisition of learning skills, preschool education has taken on a new significance. Considering that more than 60% of children under age 6 are in some form of child care, it is clear that early childhood educators play a major role in shaping young children's social, emotional and cognitive development and help lay the groundwork for future academic success.

Science reveals that our youngest children can experience anywhere from mild to severe mental health problems. Young children are especially vulnerable to the disruptions caused by traumatic events, as they do not have well-developed physical or psychological resources to defend against them. When children experience traumas, early childhood programs are typically the first to feel the impact of family stresses.

*Many of the children who have had disruptions in their early development and attachments present with challenging behaviors in the classroom. They may appear fearful, disorganized, inattentive and unresponsive to learning.*

The child care center and/or preschool has become, in many ways, the ideal setting for integrating the work of professionals in both disciplines. Early childhood programs are logical places to establish partnerships between mental health professionals, teachers, families and children. *A collaborative model of mental health consultation in preschool settings provides both prevention and intervention to families in safe, trusted and easily accessible environments.* Mental health consultation provides preventative services to help families support their child's full development.

THE CHILD CARE CENTER *and/or preschool*  
*has become, in many ways, the ideal*  
*setting for integrating the work of*  
*professionals in both disciplines.*

In addition, intervention services support at-risk children and families and those already experiencing problems such as depression or behavior problems before they lead to academic delay.

A strong preschool/mental health partnership can lead to decisive change and can provide families and programs with more effective tools to meet their children's needs. Children and families benefit from the combined focus on children's social and emotional development and early intervention efforts aimed at preventing more serious problems from developing later in childhood.

## PROMOTING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN YOUNG CHILDREN: PROMISING APPROACHES AT THE NATIONAL, STATE AND COMMUNITY LEVELS

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ROXANE KAUFMANN, M.A.  
AND DEBORAH PERRY, PH.D.

Over the last decade, there has been a growing awareness of the scientific evidence that effective interventions delivered to young children and their families can have long-term positive outcomes. Research on early brain development bolsters intervention studies indicating that small shifts in the developmental trajectories of young children can have lasting effects. These results have motivated policymakers and program managers to identify vulnerable groups of young children and seek out effective strategies that can be delivered to these children and families.

In recognition of these trends, the nation's governors embarked on a series of initiatives that focused on young children and their families. As governors grappled with how to best prepare young children who arrive at kindergarten "ready to learn," there was a growing realization that achieving this goal would require more than increased cognitive stimulation for our youngest children. In fact, school readiness appears to be intimately tied to social and emotional development.

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*Head Start and Early Head Start are national early childhood programs that include prevention strategies for building strong social-emotional development in young children and helping families cope with increasing stress.* Starting Early Starting Smart (SESS), an initiative between the Casey Family Foundation and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), is a demonstration effort in nine states that integrates behavioral health services into accessible, non-threatening settings where families usually take their children like early education settings and pediatric health care facilities. Vermont, the only state to build a statewide system of mental health services and supports, has integrated these services into the early child-serving system to promote the well-being of young children. The city of San Francisco has pooled more than \$2 million to provide mental health consultation services to more than 50 child care centers and more than 100 family child care homes. These represent a few of the examples of programs that promote both the social-emotional and cognitive development of young children.



If we continue as a nation to commit ourselves to meeting the social and emotional needs of young children, those children will be more successful in school and in life. Some of these children will avoid costly and more intensive remedial services at a later age, and they will be better able to mature into productive adults and ultimately nurture their own children.

*IF WE CONTINUE AS A NATION to commit ourselves to meeting the social and emotional needs of young children, those children will be more successful in school and in life.*



## IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

*The final paper outlines a policy agenda for enhancing school readiness built on the recognition that success is determined by social, emotional and cognitive competencies in young children.*

### PROMOTING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL READINESS FOR SCHOOL: TOWARD A POLICY AGENDA

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JANE KNITZER, E.D.D.

Despite the extensive knowledge about how early relationships set the stage for later academic achievement, it can be challenging to find easy language to explain the importance of social-emotional development and mental health of young children to the general public and policymakers. *In addition, very few policies provide direction or resources for linking social-emotional development with later cognitive development.*

From a broad policy perspective, the first line of defense in promoting emotional health and school readiness in young children is ensuring that their families are economically secure and able to access basic supports (including food, health care, housing and transportation) for themselves and their children. Equally important is access to high-quality early care and learning experiences. But for some children, this will not be enough.

*FROM A BROAD POLICY PERSPECTIVE, the first line of defense in promoting emotional health and school readiness in young children is ensuring that their families are economically secure and able to access basic supports (including food, health care, housing and transportation) for themselves and their children.*

Given the current economic environment at the federal and state levels, most of the policies that do exist are under-funded and do not provide resources necessary to implement the practices that science has shown lead to both positive social-emotional development and later school success. However, there is an opportunity to build on the federal agenda on school readiness. The Foundations for Learning Act introduced by Congress is intended to prevent school failure and provides for some social-emotional services for young children and families. *The characteristics of policies that promote the well-being of children socially, emotionally and cognitively include:*

- Enhancing the well-being of all children, particularly those at highest risk;
- Helping parents become more effective nurturers of their children;

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- Expanding the competencies of other caregivers and teachers to manage and prevent social and behavioral problems; and
- Ensuring that more seriously troubled children and families receive appropriate services.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

School readiness and success are both a “developmental process and an outcome.” This understanding underscores the importance of using the school readiness framework to invest not just in strategies for preschoolers, but also consider the needs of infants and toddlers, particularly the most vulnerable. *The time is right to build on the knowledge base and current initiatives targeting school readiness and success for young children and families.* In order to accomplish these goals, the following recommendations are made:

- Social-emotional development and academic achievement are not separate priorities, rather they must be understood as representing the continuum of development that is needed for children to grow up healthy and succeed in school.
- The knowledge base linking social, emotional and cognitive development exists but needs to be more broadly disseminated to parents, teachers, caregivers and policymakers in order for public investment to be made in programs and practices proven to help young children succeed in school.

- Programs need to provide training and education to promote social-emotional development and the importance of strong relationships between young children and their families, their teachers and their caregivers if young children are to succeed without the need for costly interventions in special education or juvenile justice.
- Mental health services offered to children and families in familiar, trusted, non-threatening community-based settings such as child care, schools, community centers can be a prevention opportunity to help promote strong social-emotional and cognitive development as well as an intervention service to those children and families at risk for developing delays or serious problems that will deter later achievement and success.
- Policies that enhance the social, emotional and cognitive well-being of infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their families must be a priority and receive appropriate public investment in order to achieve the goal of children entering school ready to learn and succeed.

A balanced approach to school readiness suggests that it is not a matter of choosing between promoting social-emotional development or literacy and academic achievement. Rather, helping children and families be successful at kindergarten entry and throughout school requires that programs and policies address the social, emotional and cognitive abilities of all children (particularly those most at risk, given certain economic, cultural or ethnic conditions).

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