

Newsletter

March 8, 2012 Edition

Ignite your child's love of learning

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Open House Tours Next tour: Mar. 28 8:45-10:00 am

The last Wednesday of each month is an open house for new potential parents, as well as our current families...come see all the grades in action and ask questions about what lies ahead.

Parent/Tot sessions

Fridays in March, 9:00—10:30 a.m. With preschool teacher Nina Moore. Sold-out!

Ice Break Up Contest

Buy your tickets and place your bets! Guess the date the ice will melt, and raise funds for the school.

See Peggy if you need more tickets to sell.

Family Skate Night at Olympic Plaza

March 16th, 6 p.m.
Bring the whole family
for this social committee evening. Skate
rentals available.

Special Edition newsletter:

The Work of the Waldorf Teacher

What does it mean to be a Waldorf teacher? What is the commitment, what is the training? How does the Waldorf teacher contribute to the spirit, the intention of a school?

These questions often go unasked and unanswered for us as parents of Waldorf students, simply due to the busy school days, and the natural focus on our kids schoolwork and development.

But when we dig a little, and start asking

questions about the amazing work that is being done every day before, during, and after classes...the morning and evening academic and spiritual preparation...the collegial work and support of the faculty as a whole... the reaction is often quiet surprise — followed by "I had no idea!".

Speaking personally as a Waldorf parent, I am so grateful for what our teachers bring to our school, and my children...

They inspire me daily.

- LS, editor

Dollars raised

\$10000

\$3750

\$0

Annual Giving Campaign Update

A donation to the Annual Giving is an investment in our future...please give generously... gifts received this month: \$500, \$75, \$20, \$100, \$50, \$40, \$40

Participation rate



The Unique Collegial Environment of a Waldorf School

I am fortunate to work in the collegial environment of the Whistler Waldorf School. The success of our organization depends upon the commitment of the individuals to work towards a common purpose or vision.

We approach the daily tasks of teaching and running the school as a collaborative process. As a servant leader in the school, my role is to support the faculty to be free to do their work with the students in their class. With the Ministry of Education, my primary role as Principal is to see that we follow the procedures and policies set out by the Ministry. Within a Waldorf school, my role as Principal is broader and more collaborative. Rudolph Steiner spoke of this striving in his faculty meetings in 1919-1922. "The Waldorf School can only prosper if the faculty is in harmony". This is where the work begins; creating

an environment that supports teachers to be free to do their work with the students in the classroom, while feeling supported by their colleagues, and vitally engaged in the life of the school.

How does this happen in our school? It begins with our weekly faculty meetings. As we strive in our commitment to meet the needs of the developing child, we draw support and ideas from our colleagues' rich experiences and diverse backgrounds.

One of the key reasons I was drawn to Waldorf Education was the work of the Waldorf teacher. The opportunity to reflect on my work, to share with colleagues about teaching challenges and successes in a warm and supportive environment. Waldorf teachers attend conferences and workshops

Ms. Michelle Kirkegaard

during our Professional Development days, engage in continuous teacher study, and reflect weekly on our work in the classroom...all these practices support our individual teaching, and support a strong collegial environment. As Steiner said, a strong healthy relationship between faculty is the lifeblood of a successful Waldorf school, and I feel we are blessed with an amazing association of open, talented, and dedicated teachers.

Whistler Waldorf School Faculty 2011/2012

Katherine Fawcett, Music

Ali Franklin, Math, Science and resource

Tracy Graham, Kindergarten

Alison Hahn, Special Needs Assistant

Orsa Horvath, Kindergarten

Riva Karklin, Grade 1 and 2

Michelle Kirkegaard, Principal

Andree Montigny, Preschool

Sylvie Pare, French

Karina Pena, Preschool

Mollianne Reynolds, Grade 5 and 6

Pierre Richer, Grade 3 and 4

Vicky Bunbury, Administrator

Peggy Vogler, Develop. Director

Laura Street, Comm. Director

Aegir Morgan, Grade 7/8/9

Waldorf Teacher Training

Having just returned from a enriching 3 day workshop in Sacramento, I am reminded of the breadth of study that takes place in Waldorf teacher training. When I originally chose to begin my training 11 years ago, it wasn't clear to me then all that would be entailed. When I think back, I mainly thought that I would be learning a new method to approach the variety of subjects taught in a school. As a Waldorf student, this is how I thought Waldorf Education differed from other schools.

As the weeks and months passed, however, it became very apparent to me, that this training was going to be a far more transformative education for me than I had originally thought.

The studies were not isolated to new approaches to subject matter, but involved a thorough study of child development, of human development, of the nature of humankind and our relationship to the world around us. These studies cover not only how the curriculum is laid out across the grades, but the method of instruction in the different subjects depending on the age of the child and the unique classroom constellation that each teacher might encounter before them. So, whilst we studied Steiner's texts on Theosophy and The Study of Man, we were reading Steiner's Education of the Child and adjacent to that, his book on methodology and practical application. This allowed us to develop a understanding of the holistic approach to education.

Combined with these studies, many of my classmates, myself included, also gave our attention to specific fields of study - sports, foreign language, handwork, music etc. It is important to recognize that all these fields play a role in educating and nurturing children, and will require the teacher to bring the subject matter to life in a way appropriate

for the children.

Waldorf teacher training not only demands that we study the subjects (humanities, language arts, math and sciences, and specialty fields), the children and the world around us, but ourselves as well. The children are going to learn as much from what we are teaching as who we are as individuals. Working on our own biographies and learning to recognize our own temperaments and soul qualities also helps us as educators.

One quickly recognizes when doing the Waldorf teacher training, that personal development and our ability to recognize the needs of our students, our classes and the needs of all schools, is vital in order to bring a meaningful and relevant education that meets the needs of all the children. For this reason, there are regular workshops and conferences offered at training institutes in many areas. Some workshops are subject or grade specific and are meant to refresh teachers in regards to the subject matter, the methodology and the ages of the children or purpose of the subject. For example in the summer, there may be workshops on teaching literacy in the

Ms. Mollianne Reynolds

early grades, or teaching sciences in the middle school. In addition to enlivening the subject matter, it is an opportunity for the teachers to discuss current themes or "trends" they see in the classroom or in society that may influence the classroom environment.

Other conferences are on broader themes in education, self-development or new impulses in education. The recent conference I attended in Sacramento is one example of this. There, many lectures were offered on the healing potential of Waldorf education for all ages and workshops on practical arts that help us to achieve this transformative aspect of the curriculum.

One could easily say that Waldorf teacher training never really ends. It takes place not only during active study at workshops, conferences, and colleges, but at home, in the classroom, and in the world.

It is a continuous weaving of introspective study, active research, careful observation and open discussion about ourselves, our students, and our world so that we can nurture and support our children into the future



Some key differences between teaching in a public school and a Waldorf school M. Pierre Richer

I have been asked to write about the differences and similarities between the traditional educational approach and the Waldorf approach based on my teaching experience in both systems. Before starting my new career at the Whistler Waldorf School two years ago, I taught French Immersion in North Vancouver for 5 consecutive years (Gr. 6/7) and two years for the Howe Sound School District and the Francophone Program.

Three key observations come to mind when I reflect upon the differences between Waldorf and the traditional public system. The first is the materials the students use within the Waldorf schools; the text books, notebooks, and writing utensils. During my years of teaching in North Vancouver I used standardized textbooks and exercise books such as "Math Make Sense" and "BC Science" where all the information needed to cover the curriculum was found neatly packaged and ready to be used by both teacher and student. The Waldorf philosophy does not have a one-size fits all approach. Instead the children are encouraged to summarize their learning through illustrations and writing resulting in individually created workbooks. At first, I found this approach challenging and overwhelming.

As a teacher used to following predesigned teaching materials, I was now required to think about how I was to present new subjects and concepts which included visualizing how these concepts would be interpreted by each student and what the material would look like when my students drew them in their own books. The Waldorf approach views the student's imagination and ability to think critically and analytically as important components of the learning process. As a result, while creating lesson plans, I was empowered to be more creative in the way I presented new

information to my students through the use of stories, music, poetry, movement, and other tactile ways such as modeling beeswax. This method of presenting information kept each lesson unique and engaging for the students. After a few weeks of embracing these new teaching methods, I saw the quality of the learning environment that resulted and no longer felt overwhelmed by creating unique lesson plans, though I still felt challenged in a positive way each day. Over the last two years I have rarely seen a child that does not want to take out his or her main lesson book and start creating a new page. During my years in teaching in the traditional school system, I recall seeing less enthusiasm accompanied by several eye rolls and hearing 'not again" when I would ask students to take out their text books. I attribute this to the fact the students were bored of the monotony and repetition of the same pre-designed books and exercises.

The second difference between my previous teaching experiences and how I teach at Waldorf is that I no longer assign grades or issue report cards in the subjective one-side manner that I did in the traditional schools. Instead, Waldorf teachers at the elementary level write detailed evaluations of each child, highlighting the student's progress in all subject areas while areas of concern are discussed with the parents on a regular basis throughout the year.

A third difference is that a Waldorf teacher stays with the same group throughout the primary years. This difference creates a sense of stability and security for the children. The teacher gets to know his or her students very well. As the students and teacher already have a strong relationship from the previous year, they are able to jump right into the curriculum sooner and in a more profound way at the beginning of

each year. The teacher is aware of each student's learning styles just as the students are aware of the teacher's expectations. I have experienced this benefit this year, as it is my second year teaching the same students. As of the first day of class in the second year, I had a clear understanding of each student's temperament and learning needs and was able to effectively tailor my lesson plans to deliver the curriculum to them in a fun and engaging way, while meeting their needs.

Of the three differences that I mention above and the several remaining differences that I have not mentioned, I can say that through all my years of teaching, one factor that I have witnessed and that is true to all of the schools in which I have worked is this; the key to a child having a successful education is the level of parental involvement that accompanies each child. This fosters a threefold collaborative approach to teaching and learning in which the students, the parents and the teachers are united. By having parents that are willing to learn about his or her child's developmental stage and the learning needs that accompany those stages, the student is fully supported at home as well as in the classroom. The continuity and stability that results from this quality of collaboration allows a child to grow and thrive to their fullest potential.



The path of self-development for a Waldorf teacher

The personal development and inner work of the teacher is an important part of the preparation for all aspects of the school year. From the Main Lesson blocks, to the weekly planning, to each evening's reflections and meditation; taking the time to focus our energy inwardly is a valuable practice for Waldorf teachers.

Personal development can take on many forms and is a truly personal experience for each teacher. Artistic exploration, playing music, singing, or meditating are all ways that Waldorf teachers can quiet their thinking and experience nourishment on a soul level. Rudolf Steiner gave recommendations on how to develop what he called "inner qualities". It is said that developing these qualities is essential for human beings to reach their fullest potential and focusing on them or reviewing them on a regular basis can be helpful to a teacher's inner development. They are as follows:



Ms. Karklin's chalkboard art in progress

- 1) Controlling one's thoughts and creating logic and order in the mind
- 2) Listening to your self and following self-initiated actions
- 3) Regulating one's actions to

Ms. Riva Karklin

weather the ups and downs of life in a healthy way

- 4) Seeing the goodness in everything
- 5) Meeting new experiences with openness, and
- 6) Creating balance in one's life.

Developing these six qualities can be applied to all aspects of life; in the classroom, at home with family, at work with colleagues, etc..

Focusing on one quality per day or one quality per week is a practice that some teachers like to do. We practice following self-initiated actions for one week or try to see the goodness in everything. EVERYTHING! Is it difficult to do this? Yes, it can be. But the positivity that radiates out is palpable.

The inner work of a teacher is just that, it's work. It's work that never ends, work that we take very seriously, and work that we value immensely.

Studying music, sharing songs

You won't go far through the halls of our school before hearing music; children singing, playing the flute or violin, the choir rehearsing, or even the school band. Every day of the week, students joyfully flex their musical muscles. It doesn't stop in music class, either. Children often break into song spontaneously during their handwork classes, in the hallways, and in the playground. Faculty meeting often start with a song, teachers and parents sometimes jam after school or sing in the morning, and it seems there's always someone taking extra music lessons after 3:00 as well.

As a music teacher, I'm grateful for the opportunity to witness and be part of the tremendous power of music and musical training here at Whistler Waldorf School.

However, I know it's not like this at every school. Perhaps it is because of the difficulty to "test" and "quantify" the results of singing and making music that music education is undervalued in many schools. In fact, when there are cuts to public education, music classes are often the first to go. Let's face it: not many kids will actually go on to earn big bucks as professional mu-

Ms. Katherine Fawcett

sicians. But the Whistler Waldorf School continues to put great importance on musical education.

Why? What is it about the study, practice and sharing of rhythm and melody that is so valued at our school?

In my research and over 25 years as a private piano teacher, eight years teaching young group music classes and three years in the Waldorf School—I have discovered that musical training has enormous benefits, from the neurological to the social, the physical to the spiritual.

Music is a universal language, the study of which enhances math, linguistic and analytical skills, develops creativity, and encourages discipline and cooperation. It focuses on "doing" rather than simply "observing," and teaches students to perform, participate and engage, conquer fears and take risks. It promotes intellectual and physical coordination, and is a relaxing and joyful way to increase harmony in the world and connect with our community and our selves.

As a teacher, a musician and a

parent, I can attest to all these points. I also love the fact that in Waldorf, sharing is a huge part our musical intention. At our Friday assemblies and our festival gatherings, there is always a musical element--singing, perhaps a small ensemble performing violin or flute. Our school drama productions usually incorporate music in the program, and our

seasonal concerts always have a musical element. The older violinists like to venture into the kindergarten/pre-school room for miniconcerts, and Mr. Morgan and M. Richer's School Band provides an opportunity for children with extra-curricular musical interests to jam together.

This 'community' and 'sharing' aspect of music is not something that should be taken for granted. On a personal note, the power and joy of sharing music with others is something that I didn't discover until later in life. As a classically-trained Royal Conservative of Music pian-

ist, my experience of music had always been on an individual level. Preparation for music festivals and exams was a solitary pursuit. Regrettably, I was never a member of the school band, the church choir or any summer music camps. I hated duets. Recitals were to be tolerated. For a long time, I didn't want anyone to hear me play the violin.

It wasn't until about a dozen years ago that I started opening up my music to the "group" experience—first as an accompanist for a blues singer, then for a choir. Eventually I started singing in that choir, and



discovered what fun it could be to unite voices. Soon I realized what I'd been missing. Today I love nothing more than being part of a drum circle, a choir, a jam session, the Pemberton Orchestra, or a spontaneous outbreak of song anywhere.

This new passion for sharing music was put to something of a test last summer at a Waldorf Music Teacher's Conference in San Diego. There, I met dozens of interesting and talented teachers who were working in Waldorf schools across Canada and the USA. On the opening Monday of the conference, the Conference Director told us that

Music...(continued)

there would be a special concert on the upcoming Thursday. There were posters advertising the concert, and it promised to be very popular within the community. But there was a catch: WE—this group of virtual strangers—were supposed to put on the whole show. We were supposed to figure out who wanted to do what together musically with whom, organize our performances, and rehearse during coffee breaks and after we ate our lunch. And we had Tuesday and Wednesday to do it.

Well. come Thursday, we were all buzzing with excitement. It seems that no matter how experienced inexperienced) the musician, there is an adrenalin rush in taking the stage. I was giddy, heart racing, people

took their seats. I stood in the back row and sang Mozart with a small choir, quietly at first, then with pleasure and confidence. Later, I was part of a piano/violin/oboe Bach trio. That evening, I marvelled at a group of ten or so recorder players who had put together a beautiful canon. I witnessed the magic of an accordion player who partnered with a woman who played the saw. (Really: the saw). We ended the night singing and dancing a haunting three-part Middle Eastern piece that brought the audience to their feet. I didn't exactly know what I was doing but somehow it all came together. It was a spectacular evening of sharing, vulnerability, nerves, creativity, connection, spontaneity, mistakes and mastery.

I truly believe that there's something incredible about the power of music to draw people together and uplift the energy of a room. I saw it that Thursday night in Southern California.

And I see it daily in the classrooms at our school.

La la la.



Faculty meetings with a difference

At the Whistler Waldorf school we have two regular after school meetings per week.

During our Wednesday meeting all teachers, Administrator Vicky Bunbury, Director of Development Peggy Vogler, and Director of Communications Laura Street, meet to discuss upcoming events, practical items and any issues relating to the general running of the school.

This meeting is an opportunity to share ideas on elements of the school which affect all realms and for us all to feel connected to the work of groups outside of our day to day area of working. In the busy environment of a school, this meeting ensures that we remain aware of all relevant aspects of school life.

We end the meeting with a study relating to Waldorf education. Often this is a reading of a lecture by Rudolf Steiner (the founder of Waldorf education) or an article related to an aspect of the schooling or philosophy. This regular study ensures that we all, educators and administrators, retain a living connection to the ideas and intentions which underpin a Waldorf school and keeps us in touch with what we are aiming to deliver to the children of the Whistler Waldorf School. Often we will engage in enlivening discussion and debate which will help to bring certain concepts to light or deepen our understanding of

the tenets of Waldorf philosophy.

The Thursday meeting is our pedagogical meeting and is attended by all teachers. The intention of this meeting is threefold.

Firstly we share our personal experiences, insights, successes and struggles from the week. A Waldorf school has a strong emphasis on collegial working and we acknowledge that our teaching is strengthened through the sharing and discussing of our work



with the children in our care. Through sharing our challenges as well as successes we aim to create a weekly 'teacher training seminar'. As Waldorf teachers we acknowledge that in order to be an effective educator one must strive to be in a continual state of training; that is, striving to change,

Mr. Aegir Morgan

develop and become increasingly aware of our strengths and weaknesses as teachers in order to meet the children in a living and relevant way.

Secondly we share insights and observations we may have gained of particular children that week, both from our lessons and day to day interactions with the students. In this way we aim to get to know the children more fully and remain aware of anything the children may have experienced or expressed that has relevance to our task as teachers.

Thirdly we bring a specific child into our consciousness. Every week we choose a child to focus on together in order to gain an intuitive insight into their development, again so that we can work more effectively with the students in our classes. Sometimes this can be a child who has struggles in certain areas but more often than not we choose children that we feel could benefit from more mindful observation and focus from us all. As class teachers we focus daily on the individual children in our classes but when this is done with the whole faculty a deeper, more insightful picture can often emerge.

Through our meetings we strive to work more closely together in order to ensure both the smooth running of the school and the delivery of effective, insightful, observation-based and relevant educational practice.

The Early Years Teacher's Role— Kindergarten and Preschool

Ms. Tracy Graham

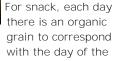
When you enter the kindergarten there is a warm glow and a familiar aroma, maybe rice or oatmeal cooking in the crock pot.

The teacher has arrived early to prepare for the day, cut the paper

build and create with the open ended toys found in the room. I as the teacher take up sewing or finger knitting with quiet ease and joy.

Children are often curious and

want to 'DO' as they are living in their will forces most strongly at this age. From example and imitation the child learns many skills and concepts. From baking and cooking to washing dishes and sweeping, the child flows through the morning with the strong rhythm of the day. Seasonal songs and stories are carefully chosen to reflect what is happening in the outside world. Fairy tales or nature tales are told each day to build up the child's language skills and mental picture images.



week, rice on Mondays, oats on

Tuesdays, etc. As snack comes to an end, the helping elves find two children to help with dishes as the rest of the class slowly cleans the room for another day. The teacher guides the children as they find their outside clothes and get ready for a na-



Ms. Graham listens to a fabulous story

ture walk in the forest and a play in the snow or sand pile. Everyday follows the same rhythm as this provides the child with a sense of trust and safety.

As the day continues, the teacher is conscious of each gesture, word and movement as the child under seven feels and sees everything in their environment. The kindergarten teacher is a model for work habits, will activities, kind words, cooperation, and friendship.



Ms. Karina prepares bread with her preschool class

for painting, tend to the nature table and gathered all the items required for snack time. In the quiet of the morning, the teacher reviews the daily rhythm of the day and focuses on balance and calmness to center her feelings before the children arrive.

Once the children have arrived, they gather with the teacher around the table to work on a craft or prepare bread for the morning snack. With each activity the teacher is mindful of the task at hand and usually hums or sings during this time. As the children finish their work they go off to



Parent Council-monthly update

The Parent Council last met Friday Feb 10th. All the committees have been hard at work planning and organizing for upcoming fundraising events and family socials.

A few of the highlights over the past month have been our first Pasta & Games night which was a huge success with in excess of 80 children and parents attending. Our next social will be a skating get together March 16th. A big thank you to Mr Morgan and M. Richer for presenting at the Dad's Night and to Michael Peier for opening his home to host the event. There has been much positive feed back from the 30 dads who attended the evening.

A reminder to parents and children that

although it's still snowing, Spring is fast approaching. Please try and sell as many of the Ice Break-up raffle tickets as possible before the barrel floats.

If you shop at Nesters and happen to forget your Nesters card, you can now donate your points to the School. The cash registers should now have a card for the Whistler Waldorf School and all point donations are greatly appreciated.

Pizza Thursday's have come to an end but the grades 7-8-9 will be providing a community lunch for grades 1-9. Please look out for the slip in your child's bag. The cost of each lunch will be \$5.

Our annual gala wine event still needs a venue! Please contact Peggy if you have

ideas or contacts.

Thank you again to all the volunteer parents who put in time and effort at our school events. We could not do it without you. Sincerely, Lee-Anne van Dongen, PC Chair

Whistler Waldorf School
Parent Council
Lee-Anne van Dongen —Chair
Yvonne D'arcy—Co-Chair
Jennifer Raffler—Secretary
Ghlee MacLeod—Treasurer
Tracy Graham—Faculty Rep
Amanda Sandahl—Class Parent Rep
Megan Fullerton— Liaison
Sheila Sherkat— Parent Education
Laura Street—Director Comm.
Peggy Vogler—Director Dev.

Reminder: "Bring it to the table" opportunity

A new opportunity for parents to be heard at the Parent Council table, was launched last month with our *Bring it to the Table* initiative.

One of our newest Parent Council members, Megan Fullerton, is taking on the role of Parent Liaison. She will be taking email submissions from parents who have questions, ideas or input for the Parent Council with regards to

events, fundraising, social initiatives, the grounds, or other Parent Council activities.

Please submit your questions to Megan at: megstar5@telus.net

Megan will bring questions for discussion at the monthly Council meeting, and respond with feedback.



Board of Directors-monthly update

The Board scheduled two meetings this past month to provide adequate time for the topics under discussion.

Budget scenarios were reviewed in depth and finalized in time for reenrolment forms to be emailed out on February 21st.

The short-term lease arrangements are actively underway, finalizing space for next year, and work continues on the permanent site options proposals.

Professional development week wrapped up, with teachers training in Whistler, Vancouver and Sacra-

mento, while the Administrative team headed south to Bellevue, WA for the Association of Waldorf Schools of North America regional conference.

The Capital Campaign planning group met and started first steps for integrating feedback from the feasibility study into our materials.

An enrolment campaign focussing on the upper grades is under way with ads and an information session planned for March 8th at 6 p.m.

Kind regards,

Laura Street, Past President

Whistler Waldorf School

Board of Directors

Fiona Cull—President
Shankar Raina—Treasurer
Paula Jeffers
Carol Tait
Laurie Grant
Lee-Anne van Dongen—PC rep
Aegir Morgan—Faculty rep
Laura Street—Past President/
Secretary
Peggy Vogler—Director of Dev.
Michelle Kirkegaard—Principal

Vicky Bunbury—Administrator



Ignite a Life-Long Love of Learning

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www.whistlerwaldorf.com

Our Mission:

Our mission is to educate each child with reverence and respect; to nurture wonder, confidence and initiative, so they may participate in the world guided by a sense of truth and responsibility.

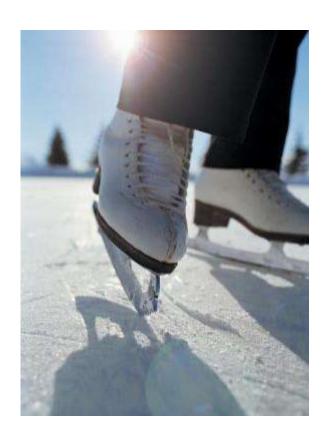


School Community Classifieds

This space is set aside for the school community to share their talents, needs and wants. Submissions should be sent to communication@whistlerwaldorf.com by the third Friday of the month.

Never Ending Bottle Drive! You can now request your bottle return money be donated to the Whistler Waldorf School! Just tell the attendant at the Whistler Bottle Depot you would like them to put it on the Waldorf School account!

NEWS FLASH!! Nesters Points You can now donate your Nesters points to the Whistler Waldorf School. Just ask at the cash...our little chip cards were created over the weekend.





March 2012

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