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Curriculum: 3 questions you should ask



Curriculum - three questions you should ask

When	What
Wednesday 6 th May 13:00-13:45	1. Why does knowledge matter?
Thursday 7 th May 13:00-13:45	2. Why is subject distinctiveness important?
Monday 11 th May 13:00-13:45	3. Where did assessment go wrong, and how do we put it right?

Key points from Webinar 1:

Key points

- Knowledge gives pupils something to *work with*
- Some pupils have richer schema than others.
- If this is THE GAP curriculum must address it
- Retention in long term memory can be helpful
- Curriculum should help pupils to retain key content, not just encounter it
- Be clear about end points and sequencing

But, is all knowledge the same?

Does it have the same properties and characteristics?

A

Revolutions bring about huge changes.

B

The French Revolution began in 1789.

Webinar 2

Why is subject distinctiveness important?



Debates are often focused on surface features, not the underlying principles.

What lays beneath?

Every department needs to use the same planning template

Every lesson must follow the school's 6-part plan

Every subject must follow the policy.

Each subject should assess pupils every six weeks

If subject X can do it this way, then so should every other subject!

In this webinar we are going to explore some reasons why we need to consider subjects on their own terms when leading curriculum.

It's not about making senior leaders experts in every subject.

But it is about creating the conditions in which subject expertise can flourish for the benefit of pupils.

1. Subjects are not static

NC KS2 Music says pupils should be taught to:

- play and perform in solo and ensemble contexts, using their voices and playing musical instruments with increasing accuracy, fluency, control and expression
- improvise and compose music for a range of purposes using the inter-related dimensions of music
- listen with attention to detail and recall sounds with increasing aural memory
- use and understand staff and other musical notations
- appreciate and understand a wide range of high-quality live and recorded music drawn from different traditions and from great composers and musicians
- develop an understanding of the history of music.

Bernstein's 3 Fields

Production

New knowledge
created

Recontextualization

Knowledge
selected and
organised (eg
National
Curriculum)

Reproduction

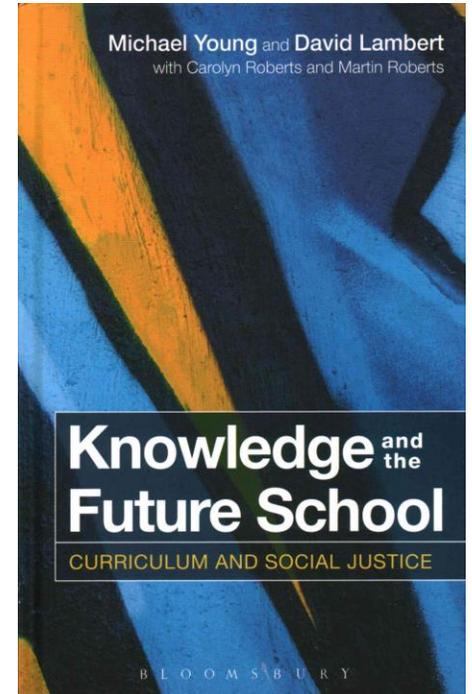
School

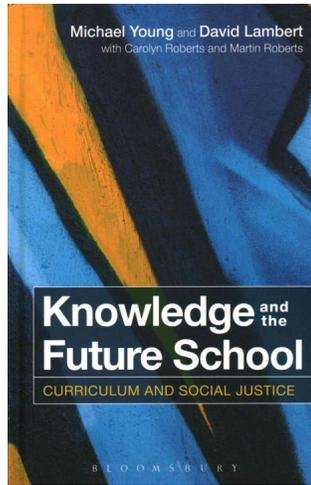
2. Knowledge is not the same

‘Knowledge and The Future School’

1. “The best that has been thought and said,” but as a return to old-fashioned notion of static ‘given’ knowledge.
2. 1990s/2000s ‘skills’ focus. Bringing the curriculum to the pupils’ experience and interest but missing the purpose of education.
3. “The best that has been thought and said” – Matthew Arnold. But as something **created** and **contested**. Taking pupils beyond their experience.

POWERFUL KNOWLEDGE





Powerful knowledge

- There is ‘**better**’ knowledge
- All pupils are entitled to this

Rooted in **disciplines**. Explores concepts.

Knowledge is contested (but there is ‘better’ knowledge)

Curriculum takes pupils beyond their everyday experiences

Involve pupils in the great debates of disciplines

- Subject disciplines are not random selections of content.
- Each is a system of knowledge and procedure that makes it possible to **search for truth**.
- This search looks different depending on what you are looking for/at = **subject difference**.
- Being able to engage in this gives you power.



Typologies of knowledge

- **Substantive** – taught as established fact. E.g. percentages, the terms of the Treaty of Versailles.
- **Disciplinary** – rules & processes of how knowledge is established in the subject. Learning this allows pupils participate meaningfully in debates.
- E.g. was the Treaty of Versailles fair?
- Was it significant?

Works differently across subjects.

LEADING ON

How do subjects find the truth?

History	Science	RE
Was 'Bloody Mary' deserving of her nickname?	Why was there a big bang?	What is the purpose of life?

3. Knowledge is structured differently within different subjects

Science:

Which order should these be taught?

- Periodic table
- Atomic structure
- Different states of matter (eg solid, liquid, gas)
- Quantum mechanics
- Chemical reactions
- Energy

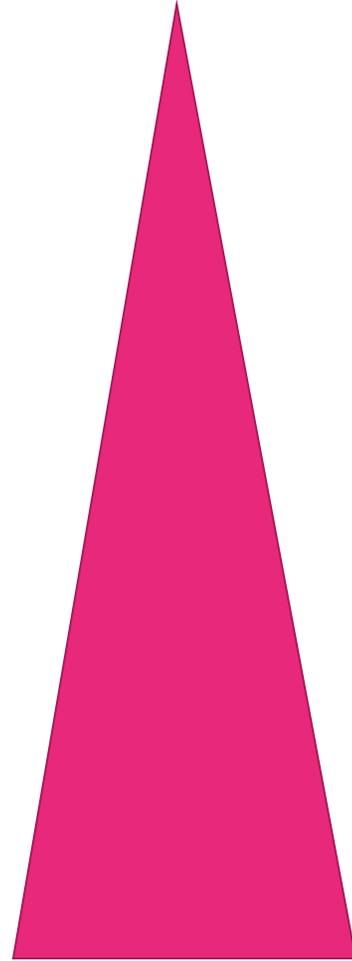
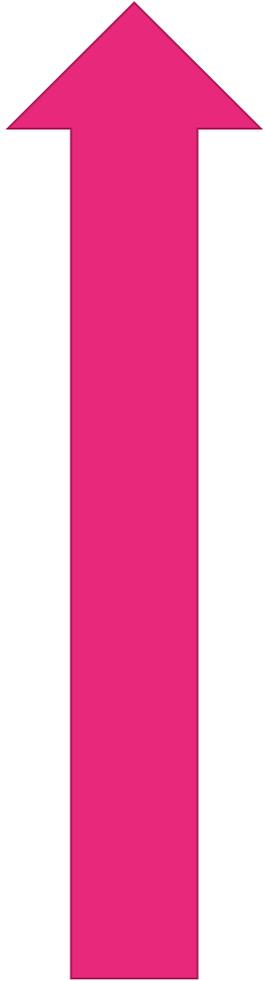
Which artists should pupils study and in what order?

- John Piper
- Wassily Kandinsky
- Kurt Jackson
- Henri Matisse
- Piet Mondrian



Order doesn't necessarily come into play when teaching artists. The "when" isn't as important as the why, what and how. I'd consider context and reason before thinking about order UNLESS the chronological history of art was the focus. Of course, we consider the influences of an artist to understand their development and interests, but we often use artists as a vehicle to teach other things pertinent to art education. Art is lucky in the fact that we are not dictated to think about which artists (if any) we have to teach so we can respond to pupils' interests and needs, and our own as teachers – which is also a factor that becomes more important than the order in which things are done.

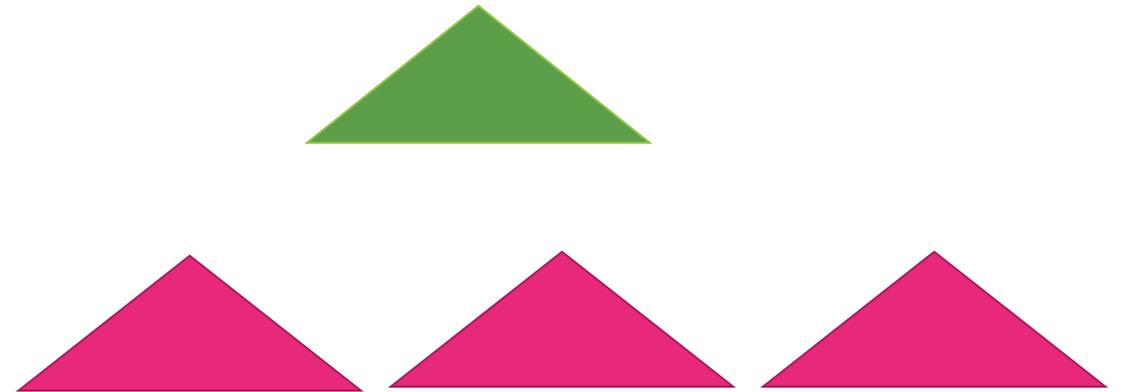
Hierarchical Knowledge Structures (Bernstein)



‘An explicit coherent, systematically principled and hierarchical organization of knowledge’, develops through ongoing integration

Horizontal Knowledge Structures (Bernstein)

Knowledge is segmented.
Languages that don't always
speak to each other.



Implications for the school curriculum

- Knowledge in subjects is structured differently
- Generic approaches risk undermining the subject itself.

E.g. Does a maths scheme of work and assessment needs to be highly granular? Maybe there shouldn't be much choice for pupils and teachers.

Maybe art schemes of work can be broader? Maybe there should be more room for personal preference.

Do our teachers think about their subject in terms of substantive & disciplinary knowledge?

- **What substantive knowledge do we want pupils to know by X? Why?**
- **How is disciplinary knowledge built over time? What are the key concepts?**

4. Subject knowledge matters

What is the basis of legitimacy in teaching?

A) What the teacher knows?

B) Attributes of the teacher?

Legitimation Code Theory

LEADING ON

Would you expect your doctor to have expert knowledge BEFORE they operated on you?



3 types of knowledge teachers need

- **Content knowledge** - teachers' knowledge of the subject they are teaching.
- **Pedagogical knowledge** - teachers' knowledge of effective teaching methods (generic).
- **Pedagogical content knowledge** - teachers' knowledge of how to teach the particular subject or topic.

Reflect on:

Q. How do you ensure teachers develop all three?

Q. How much time/support do you provide for each?

5. Curriculum planning is a bit like story telling.

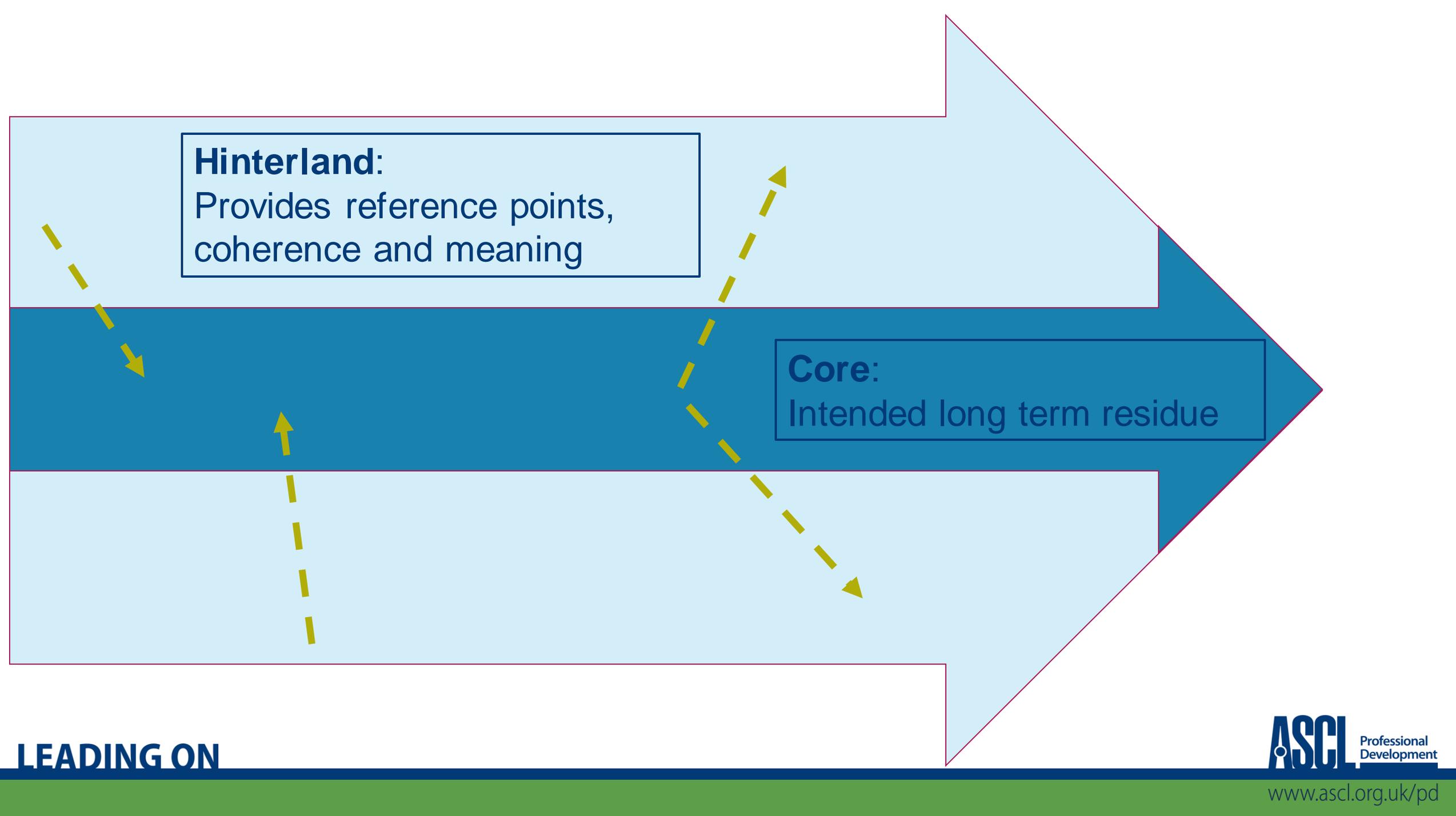
These stories are easily disrupted and distorted if the content is not respected.

Core & Hinterland

The Domain

The Specification/course

The Test



Hinterland:

Provides reference points,
coherence and meaning

Core:

Intended long term residue

Memory privileges stories

Why don't students like school?

- Dan Willingham

That's my real point in presenting these different types of teachers. When we think of a good teacher, we tend to focus on personality and on the way the teacher presents himself or herself. But that's only half of good teaching. The jokes, the stories, and the warm manner all generate goodwill and get students to pay attention. But then how do we make sure they think about meaning? That is where the second property of being a good teacher comes in—organizing the ideas in a lesson plan in a coherent way so that students will understand and remember. Cognitive psychology cannot tell us how to be personable and likable to our students, but I can tell you about one set of principles that cognitive psychologists know about to help students think about the meaning of a lesson.

The Power of Stories

The human mind seems exquisitely tuned to understand and remember stories—so much so that psychologists sometimes refer to stories as “psychologically privileged,” meaning that they are treated

differently in memory than other types of material. I'm going to suggest that organizing a lesson plan like a story is an effective way to help students comprehend and remember. It also happens to be the organizing principle used by the four teachers I described. The way in which each of them related emotionally to their students was very different, but the way they got their students to think about the meaning of material was identical.

Before we can talk about how a story structure could apply to a classroom, we must go over what a story structure is. There is not a universal agreement over what makes a story, but most sources point to the following four principles, often summarized as *the four Cs*. The first C is *causality*, which means that events are causally related to one another. For example, “I saw Jane; I left the house,” is just a chronological telling of events. But if you read “I saw Jane, my hopeless old love; I left the house” you would understand that the two events are linked causally. The second C is *conflict*. A story has a main character pursuing a goal, but he or she is unable to reach that goal. In *Star Wars* the main character is Luke Skywalker, and his goal is to deliver the stolen plans and help destroy the Death Star. Conflict occurs because there is an obstacle to the goal. If Luke didn't have a worthy adversary—Darth Vader—it would make for a rather short movie. In any story the protagonist must struggle to meet his

Implications for leaders

Avoid unhelpful genericism.

Support subjects.

- **Avoid policies that distort subjects**
- **Time for subject teachers to discuss the subject**
- **Subject specific CPD**
- **Subject specialist books**
- **Subject associations**
- **Local networks**

Understand how the subject works. Eg hierarchal or horizontal structure?

How to consider the 'value' of subjects
From 'How to Explain Absolutely Anything to Absolutely Anyone' by Andy Tharby

What's amazing about this subject?

Why do I find this subject fascinating myself?

Why do we study this subject in school?

- A) Intrinsic
- B) Instrumental

What are the main debates and disputes?

What distinguishes this subject from others?

Where are we heading? What is the story of the curriculum as it unfolds?



You don't develop a deep understanding without making it the core of what you do.

Curriculum is not a strategy or intervention.

Should be the ongoing conversation that subject teams are having.

Questions





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