



# La Cañada Unified

June 2006

Volume 01 - Issue 07

## Message from the Superintendent

by Jim Stratton, Superintendent



As another school year comes to a close, La Cañada Unified School District has much to celebrate. Academic achievement is among the highest in the state, student excellence in the arts and athletics is widely recognized, educational program quality is continually monitored and strengthened, staff development is constant and communication among district stakeholders has been broadened and improved.

As measured by the state Academic Performance Index (API), LCUSD is the third highest achieving unified school district in the state. All of our schools are now at or above 900 in API scores while the state target continues to be 800. La Cañada High School has

Scholastic Aptitude Test scores of 582 in verbal and 626 in math, which are at or above all-time highs. More students than ever before are taking the college-level Advanced Placement examinations, and more than 80% of those students continue to receive passing scores.

Among 365 class of 2006 seniors, 73 students will graduate with a grade point average of 4.0 or above. Twelve students were named this year as National Merit Scholarship finalists, one of the premier honors a graduating United States senior can achieve. Approximately 98% of the class will continue their studies next year at two and four year colleges and universities. Schools to be attended include Stanford, Berkeley, Harvard, Princeton, USC, UCLA, Yale, NYU, Dartmouth, Duke and Northwestern. At the recent Senior Awards Night ceremony, over one hundred students were recognized for a wide variety of accomplishments, and over a quarter of a million dollars worth of scholarships, prizes and awards were acknowledged.

Our students' excellence in the arts and in athletics is equally impressive. Students are regularly chosen for all-state bands and orchestras, awarded top honors at choral competitions, selected as winners in essay contests, recognized at student film competitions and honored for visual art work. Similarly, our athletic teams continue to earn winning seasons and championships. This year our boys' water polo team and our swim team both won California Interscholastic Federation (CIF) championships and 11 of our 21 boys' and girls' varsity sports team brought home Rio Hondo league championships. In addition, all 21 of those teams were recognized for maintaining an overall unweighted grade point average of 3.29.

Contributing to the high level of student success is our continual review and analysis of the educational program. Similar to business' process of research and development, this review involves us in an investigation of current "best practices" in education. Best practices are reliable, transferable, field-tested, data-supported and research-based strategies or programs to improve results in any and all aspects of education. The collaborative study of research and resource materials and the review of successful programs from other districts and schools are important ways for a staff to continually confirm what



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LC Newsline

# The Newsboard

By Scott Tracy, Board President



## TRANSITIONS

By the time you read this article, the school year will be over. However, as I write these words, I am in the midst of year-end school programs and activities including plays, concerts, award ceremonies, promotions and graduations.

Each level of progression is met by students and their families with a sense of pride and accomplishment, coupled with a bit of student angst about what lies ahead. Kindergartners anticipate full days of schooling in first grade, recent third-graders worry about moving to classrooms with more students and even longer school days, graduating sixth-graders are anxious about transferring to a new campus, promoted eighth graders are nervous about becoming high school frosh, and our graduating seniors fret about leaving LCHS and all their friends behind.

I've heard the sixth-grade graduate confess to family and friends that she "is a little nervous about leaving my wonderful teachers and school", the eighth-grade graduate admit that he "is a tiny bit anxious about next year since everything will count", and the graduating senior share concerns about "going into the real world after living in the protective bubble we know as La Cañada". Yes, continuing students are often apprehensive about what lies ahead while departing La Cañada students tend to be grateful and appreciative for the many intangibles they are leaving behind.

There is nothing particularly novel about these "passages". It may be somewhat comforting to recall that prior generations have successfully navigated this process and moved on to become productive members of society.

The La Cañada Unified School District recognizes the community's passion for superior education and commits, first and foremost, to foster a learning environment dedicated to academic achievement, character growth and the overall health, safety and well-being of each child. If the accomplishments of our senior class are any indication, I believe we are making progress.

I fully admit to awe and admiration of our high school graduates who were recognized at the annual Senior Awards Night on June 5, 2006. The range of recognition and accomplishments was truly impressive including major awards for academics, athletics, the arts, and service. Our senior class included All-American swimmers; National Merit Scholars; talented musicians honored at the regional, state and national level; Girl Scout Gold Award recipients and Eagle Scouts; Harvard Prize and Smith College Book awardees; university athletic scholarship recipients; drama students recognized by the London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art; volunteers with elected government representatives; award-winning photographers and artists; Green Club activists; varsity scholar athletes; AP Scholars and much, much more.



Helpful Links from  
the LCUSD website:

Governing Board  
Meeting Schedule

[http://www.lcusd.net/  
SchoolBoard/index.htm](http://www.lcusd.net/SchoolBoard/index.htm)

LCUSD Master  
Calendar:

<http://www.lcusd.net/Cal/>

LCUSD GATE  
Advisory Council

[http://www.lcusd.net/  
District/councils.htm](http://www.lcusd.net/District/councils.htm)

LCUSD Bond  
Oversite Committee

[http://www.lcusdnet/  
facilities.htm](http://www.lcusdnet/facilities.htm)

## *LCHS Summer School 2006*

La Canada High School will provide summer school for 9-12 grade students this summer. These courses progress at a faster rate than the regular school year. In essence, one day of summer school is the equivalent of a week of a particular class during the regular school year. This year's program begins on June 21st and runs through July 28th with courses scheduled from 7:50AM to 12:45PM Monday through Friday during that time. There are no classes on July 3rd and 4th in observance of the Independence Day Holiday. Course offerings are in the core academic areas including English, Spanish, Math, Social Science and Science. Specialized coursework in ELD, Special Education, Career Tech Computer Applications and ROP Commercial Photography are also available. Please call (818) 952-4266 with any questions.

Many of our seniors were recognized with awards and scholarships by community organizations that have invested in our youth including the La Cañada Flintridge Rotary Club, Kiwanis, Assistance League of Flintridge, National Charity League of Glendale, Community Scholarship Foundation of La Cañada Flintridge, La Cañada Thursday Club, Lion's Club, PTSA, LCHS Boosters, LCTA, and Glendale-Burbank Area Alumni Panhellenic.

Every class seems to take on its own personality and the class of 2006 was no different. The genuine support and camaraderie from fellow classmates was palpable as awards and scholarships were bestowed one after the other. The two impressive student instrumental performances at the event were met with huge ovations led by fellow students.

On behalf of my colleagues on the Governing Board of the La Cañada Unified School District, best wishes to all of our "progressing" students and their families, particularly our graduating seniors. We trust that you will find yourselves fully prepared for the challenges ahead.



## Weighted Grades and Transcripts

There seems to be a national debate in the circles of college applicants and college admissions processes regarding the role of weighted grades. Weighted grades take into account advanced courses—typically honors and Advance Placement courses-- that are granted an additional grade point above the traditional 4.0 grading scale. This weighting process then allows for student grade point averages above 4.0 based on the number of courses and the relative success students achieve in these courses. The debate centers around colleges who accept these modified averages versus those who un-weight grades and those who un-weight and then re-weight just selected courses. In working to provide LCHS students with the strongest possible advantage in all of these scenarios, we will continue to provide a total of 6 grade point averages on each of our transcripts. Students will automatically have a 9-12 overall, a 10-12 overall, and a 10-12 academic grade point average reported in both a weighted and un-weighted format. The transcripts themselves report all courses and final grades that make up a student's graduation requirement—including those taken at other accredited schools—but the grade point averages reported will be calculated from the LCHS courses as the transcript reports the LCHS grade point average. As an additional support, our students have the option of requesting traditional paper transcripts to be sent for the college application process, or they can order electronic transcripts to be sent directly to their schools as nearly all colleges and universities now accept this format. Online transcripts can be ordered at any time via the LCHS website.



## Athletics Recap

Here is a recap of the Athletic School Year 2005-2006.

We had 694 (432 Boys and 262 Girls) Athletes - 45% of all students cleared to participate in at least one sport.

We had 11 Rio Hondo League Championships out of 21 possible:

Boys Cross Country, Boys Water Polo, Girls Volleyball, Girls Tennis, Boys Basketball, Girls Basketball, Boys Soccer, Boys Swimming, Girls Swimming, Boys Volleyball and Golf. We also placed second in 5 sports.

In Girls Tennis we won the league doubles title: Lindsay Van Amringe and Jade Stenzel

In Wrestling we won 3 individual league titles: 130 lb.-Chris Wyatt, 152 lb.-Spencer Tompkins, 215 lb. Justin Luthey and 6 second places

In Boys Track we won 3 individual events in league: 800m-Chris Bruegge, 1600m-Jake Matthews, 3200m-Will Zentmyer

In Boys Swimming we won all 12 events in league: 200 yd Medley Relay, 200 yd Free-Andrew Nguyen, 200 yd Ind.Medley-Ian Mirisola, 50 yd Free-Devon Borisoff, 100 yd Fly-Jerrold Lee, 100 yd Free-Devon Borisoff, 500 yd Free-Andrew Nguyen, 200 yd Free Relay, 100 yd Back-Ian Mirisola, 100 yd Breast-Christian Lawrence, 400 yd Free Relay, Diving-Edgar Simonyan

In Girls Swimming we won 7 events in league: 200 yd Medley Relay, 200 yd Free-Natasha Nguyen, 100 yd Fly-Carolyn Boosalis, 500 yd Free-Natasha Nguyen, 200 yd Free Relay, 100 yd Back-Carolyn Boosalis, 100 yd Breast-Kristin Varraveto

In Golf we placed first in league individuals – Abe Lee

We had 19 out of 21 sports participate in CIF-SS playoffs:

Football – Quarterfinals

Boys Cross Country – CIF-SS Division III Finals-5th Place and CIF State Division III Finals-9th Place

Girls Cross Country – CIF-SS Division III Prelims

Boys Water Polo – CIF-SS Division III Champions

Girls Tennis – 2nd Round

Girls Volleyball – Quarterfinals

Boys Basketball – Semifinals

Girls Basketball – Quarterfinals

Boys Soccer – 1st Round

Girls Water Polo – 1st Round

Wrestling – Quarterfinals

Baseball – 2nd Round

Boys and Girls Track – Div. III Prelims

Boys Swimming – CIF-SS Division II Champions with 329 points, a division record. They had the 7th highest point total ever and one of only 13 teams to score over 300 points in a CIF-SS Division final. They will also place first in the nation for schools 1400 to 1900 in dual meet scoring for the NISCA National Dual Meet competitions. They placed second in the CIF-SS Masters Meet for all schools in the southern section. We had 3 CIF-SS Division II Individual Champions: 200 Ind. Medley Relay, 100 yd Breast-Christian Lawrence and Diving-John Geyer

Girls Swimming – Div. II Finals

Boys Volleyball – Quarterfinals

Boys Tennis – 1st Round

Golf – Team Sectionals and Individual Semifinals

We are now only one of six schools to ever win a CIF-SS Boys Water Polo and CIF-SS Boys Swimming title in the same school year since 1948.

Also our 21 Varsity Teams made the following academic achievements: 10 of the 21 programs finished in the top ten for all schools in CIF-SS in the 1,500 students or more category. All 21 schools qualified for entry into the Team Academic Achievement. Their overall average was 3.2915 unweighted.



## Elementary Spanish Teachers Meet for 2006-2007 Program Planning

On May 25, the Spanish Teachers and principals from the elementary schools, met with Jim Stratton, Superintendent, to discuss Spanish classes for next school year. This year, the district launched its first year of Spanish in the elementary schools. At LCE, PCY and PCR, Spanish classes for grades 3 and 4 were offered as an option for interested students. The enrollment at all campuses was extremely high with almost two thirds of the students at each grade level taking advantage of the opportunity to learn a second language.

The purpose of the meeting was to review this year's program and to discuss program improvements for next school year. Specifically on the agenda were the following items:

- \* Development of a pacing guide for instruction
- \* Determining appropriate assessments to measure student progress
- \* Identifying effective ways to communicate student progress to parents

The teachers agreed to spend the last week of this school year addressing these three areas of need.

Next year, the program will be extended to include fifth grade students. This will allow current students to continue with their Spanish language acquisition.

The goal of the program is to prepare students adequately so that when they reach the high school, they may begin with Spanish II or choose to learn an additional language. For this reason, teachers at the high school were involved in this year's program planning. Students, who will have gone through the program beginning in third grade, will have the opportunity to take an intensive summer course before going to the high school. In that course they will review of all the Spanish skills acquired in their four years of Spanish and then be assessed for Spanish II placement if they wish to continue with Spanish.

Special thanks to the wonderful teachers who have done an excellent job of implementing the program this year and for their fine tuning of the program for future students. Teachers in attendance were Robert Chacon, PCY and LCE Spanish teacher; Katie Villanueva, PCR Spanish teacher; Mary Hawkins and Maria Almansar who do a supplemental, fee based, Spanish program for students in grades other than 3 and 4 at LCE and PCR.



For More Info



## Facilities Report

This past spring we completed the modernization of the new Choral room at the high school. We also completed the Energy Management System upgrade at the high school enhancing the software program to allow us to move to a system that reduces energy costs while providing a more comfortable environment in the classrooms. In doing so, we have spent this spring repairing the mechanical systems associated with the system that were not working properly. The new elevator project at the north end of the high school campus is scheduled to be completed this summer. Summer projects at the high school include beginning the modernization of the Band and Home Economics rooms. Construction for these projects will continue into the next school year. The Band room project consists of making a larger room by modernizing the current room, the resource center and the old Choral room. This new area will accommodate the increased number of students in the Instrumental Program. The Home Economics modernization will focus on building new student cooking stations and the addition of a teacher demonstration station. We will also be repaving playgrounds at two of the elementaries.



## Summer Projects and Technology Refresh

In accordance with the district's master plan for technology, the district will be acquiring and installing over 440 new computers this summer. Due to the generous help of parent and community associations along with contributions from the district's general fund, the district will be able to place a new desktop computer in each classroom as well as replacing the computers in the main computer lab at each school. The district's oldest computers (six years and older) will be taken out of service while existing computers from the computer labs (now three years old) will be redeployed to the classrooms to help make up for some of the classroom computers that are being retired. K-8 classrooms will have a minimum of 3 computers (one new computer, and two - 3 year old computers) and 9-12 classrooms will have at least 2 computers (one new computer and one older 3 year old computer) when all of the installation and redeploying is complete. Every effort will be made to provide those classrooms that currently have more computers than listed above with a similar number of computers in the fall.

This summer, teachers from around the district will be meeting during the month of July to collaborate together to create Technology infused lessons. On Wednesday afternoons throughout the month of July, the district will be holding a Technology Curriculum Writing Workshop from 1 until 5 pm at the IRC. Teachers will receive some training and work individually and in small groups to design lessons aligned to state curriculum standards that use technology to help students learn. They will build upon the work done by the TechLITE teachers (Technology Leaders Integrating Technology in Education) who have met throughout the past school year. A key part of the task will be to create assessment rubrics for each lesson and to publish the lessons in a format that teachers around the district can use. Those teachers interested in participating should send an email to Enoch Kwok, the director of technology at [ekwok@lcsd.net](mailto:ekwok@lcsd.net).

The technology department will also be working to prepare for some new initiatives in the fall. All teachers at the high school will be using the Pinnacle electronic gradebook starting in September, which means that parents at the high school will have access to up-to-date attendance and gradebook data for all of their students' teachers. The district will also investigate using an electronic based report card at the elementary school level so that teachers can easily input the grades and print out multiple copies for distribution instead of using the current system of ncr forms. Plans are to test out the online grade reporting system (using the Aeries Browser interface, ABI) at one school in the fall, and once all of the bugs are worked out, to migrate it out to the other elementary schools later in the school year.



## Budget Assumptions

The Education Code dictates that every year, by June 30, a public school district must adopt a budget for the following fiscal year. The budget that is approved following a public hearing is a fiscal forecast for the upcoming year. Because it is a forecast, it must be based on some assumptions. Using the assumptions, the projected budget is developed. Obviously, what these assumptions are have a tremendous impact on the numbers reflected in the budget.

At our recent Board of Education meetings, the Board and Administration have been discussing what these assumptions should be for LCUSD, and how these assumptions then drive the computations for our budget. These are very important discussions and decisions and represent the best available information from the State, Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), and School Services of California (SSC). Often times, these assumptions and decisions must be made prior to the Governor and the State Legislature actually having completed and signed the State budget.

This budget will be formally approved by the Board at the June 20, 2006 Board Meeting. There must be a public hearing held on the proposed budget prior to approval of the Board. All stakeholders of the District as well as the general public are invited to attend this meeting and provide public comment if you should so desire.



## Six Retirements

With best wishes all around, School Board President Scott Tracy and Superintendent Jim Stratton presented engraved plaques to six retiring staff members at the district Breakfast on Friday morning, June 16, 2006.

Dorie Canavan has been with the district since 1971 and has taught all levels of English at the 9-12 High School. Over the years, numerous students have told her, "You know, that book you had us read turned out to be really good!" She particularly enjoys visits from former students and seeing how they turned out.

Retiring after 35 years in the district, Mary Jane Hufstedler said, "The students have always made me laugh and laughter makes the world a great place." Over the years, Mary Jane has taught history, English, and Special Education at the high school. Mary Jane has recently re-started the Academic Decathlon and will be back to help coach the team next year. Many parents know her through the 7-12 School Site Council and as the coordinator for the most recent High School accreditation review.

As the only German teacher at the High School, Phil Despard has taught all levels from 8th to 12th grade, as well as French I and II. Phil said he has "enjoyed working with his students, colleagues and supportive parents during the past 25 years."

Two math teachers are also retiring this year. Both joined the District in 1990. Pat Cross, a retiring 8th grade teacher, has devoted fifteen years to Small School 4's math program. Pat has spent many hours preparing middle school students for math contests and special competitions. Mary Weaver has also taught many levels of high school math, from Algebra I to Advanced Math Topics. In addition to math, Mary has coached volleyball for many years. In her parting comment, she said, "Thank you to the La Cañada Unified School District for an exceptional teaching experience and to the students for many happy memories. I will miss you."

Also retiring is Nicolette (Nicki) Porte. Nicki was hired in 1986 as an instructional aide at La Cañada Elementary and has been at Palm Crest since 1988. Among her positions have been remedial aide, instructional specialist, noon aide, paraprofessional I and paraprofessional II.





# District Master Calendar

<b>June 2006</b>						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				<p><u>1 (3)</u> All School Musical: 6/1-6/3 @ 7:00 pm CPC Dir. Mtg.: VHHS 7:00 am 8th Gr. Promotion Dance: LCHS Cafe 5:00-7:00 pm</p>	<p><u>2 (3)</u> 8th Gr. Disneyland Trip 9-12 Senior Salute Assembly 7th Gr. Awards</p>	<p><u>3 (2)</u> SAT Testing Spring Musical Matinee - LCHS Aud. 2:00 pm</p>
4	<p><u>5 (4)</u> Math Assessment: Grs. K-6 6/5-6/9 LCHS Senior Award Night - LCHS Aud. 7 pm Joint PTA/PTSA Installation-RBOC 9:15 am Kindergarten Welcome 8:15 am</p>	<p><u>6 (5)</u> Instructional Council Mtg.-IRC 3:00 pm PCY-PTA Meeting: Cafe. 9:15 am Elementary Staff Mtg. LCE Summer Book Fair: Library 6/6- 6/9 Band Awards: LCHS Aud. 7:00 pm</p>	<p><u>7 (6)</u> PCR - PTA Mtg. - 8:20 am LCE - PTA Mtg. Cafe 9:15 am PCY-Retirement/Farewells 3:00 pm PCR - Retirement &amp; Farewell Party 3-4:00 pm 7/Staff Appreciation Lunch 9-12 Choral Pops Awards: LCHS Aud. 7:00 pm</p>	<p><u>8 (3)</u> LCEEF Mtg.: LCE 7:15 pm LCHS Orchestra Awards: LCHS Aud. 6:00 pm 7/8 Student of the Month Reception: LCHS Aud. 3-4:00 pm</p>	<p><u>9 (3)</u> LCE-End of Year Picnic 5-7:30 pm LCHS Finals Gr. 8 &amp; 12 LCHS Drama Academy Awards: LCHS Aud. 7:00 pm</p>	<p><u>10 (1)</u> ACT Testing</p>
11	<p><u>12 (3)</u> LCE Retirement &amp; Farewell Party 3:00- 4:00 pm PTA Council Mtg. - Incoming/Outgoing Birds: Citibank, 9:15 am LCHS Finals Gr. 8 &amp; 12</p>	<p><u>13 (3)</u> PCY-Staff Breakfast 7-12 School Site Council: LCHS Rm. 305 3:00 pm LCHS Finals Gr. 7-12-Dismissal 12:25 pm</p>	<p><u>14 (6)</u> LCHS Finals Gr. 7-12-Dismissal 12:25 pm 8th Gr. Awards 8th Gr. Promotion Rehearsal 10:00 am Booster Mtg. - LCHS IRC 6:30 am LCHS Senior - Graduation Practice 9:00 am LCHS Senior Brunch Time TBD</p>	<p><u>15 (8)</u> LCHS 12th Grade Graduation - 6:30 pm END OF 4TH QUARTER LCE-6th Gr. Dance &amp; Baseball Game Foothill School Promotion/Graduation, 1:00 pm **LAST DAY OF SCHOOL FOR STUDENTS** PCR Kindergarten-All AM Grade 8 Promotion-LCHS Ftbl Field, 10:00 am LCHS Finals Gr. 7, 9, 10 &amp; 11- Dismissal 12:25 pm</p>	<p><u>16 (3)</u> LCHS Staff Mtg. 11:00 am CEC Child Care Closed Teacher Work Day - NO STUDENTS K-12</p>	17
18	<p><u>19 (1)</u> Health Service Staff Mtg. 8:00 am-1:00 pm</p>	<p><u>20 (1)</u> ****Govn. Board Mtg. - Rd. Building 4490 Cornishon @ 7:00 pm****</p>	21	22	23	<p><u>24 (1)</u> National PTA Convention: Phoenix, AZ 6/24-6/27</p>
25	26	27	28	29	<p><u>30 (1)</u> 7-12: Report Card Mailed Home</p>	

# Superintendent

(continued from page 1)

is working well and what can be fine-tuned for improvement. Best practice investigation helps a school staff to renew and rejuvenate itself.

This past year, each of our schools identified at least two areas of its program to compare against best practices in the field. Among the areas chosen were course sequencing in algebra, weighted grading, writing across the curriculum, parent communication, reading support, elementary science instruction, math problem solving instruction and special education socialization support. Staff members will continue to share their findings and to implement changes for the 2006-07 school year. Rather than be just a one year activity, the ongoing study of best practice will continue to be something that each school does on an annual basis.

To maintain high levels of success, staff members require regular professional development. Just as doctors and engineers continually update their skills, so also do teachers continually receive new training. Staff development in 2005-06 has been especially productive with in-depth sessions on classroom use of technology, differentiated instruction, brain research-based teaching and content area reading support.

Along with new training have come new components to the overall educational program also. One of only a handful of districts to have such a program, we have begun an elementary foreign language program beginning in third grade that will enable students to begin the equivalent of a second year of high school level instruction starting in seventh grade. We have also added new science courses at the high school, a special artist lecture series at the high school and a new fourth year Spanish option at the high school.

To more fully include staff members, parents and community members in the educational program, we have attempted this year to strengthen communication. Along with the start of a district newsletter, the Governing Board members and I have regularly visited school sites, observed classrooms and attended special meetings and activities to learn about specific program and to answer questions. The district and the PTA



## La Cañada Unified School District

### Cabinet

**Superintendent:**  
James Stratton

**Deputy Superint.**  
Dr. William Loose

**Asst. Superint.**  
Mike Leininger

### Governing Board

**President**  
Scott Tracy

**Vice President**  
Virginia Dalbeck

**Clerk**  
Susan Boyd

**Member**  
Cindy Wilcox

**Member**  
Joel Peterson



have collaborated to address funding and staffing issues and to support all students. We have attempted to reaffirm our existing partnerships with the Assistance League of Flintridge and the City of La Cañada and to work very closely with the La Cañada Flintridge Educational Foundation to maximize financial support for district programs. Additionally, we have reached out to parent professional expertise to assist us in areas like construction.

As all of the above examples illustrate, this is a time of great accomplishment for LCUSD. It is also a time of challenge. State funding varies widely from year to year and makes long term financial planning difficult. Declining enrollment in our lower grades raises the probability of additional financial constraints. Teacher and administrator shortages throughout California raise questions about replacing future retirees. La Cañada, however, is a place where problems are addressed and solved, and I am sure that by working together we can do just that.

Thanks to all of you who have contributed to the district's success this year and have a great summer.



**LC Newline Editor:**  
Enoch Kwok



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