

Case Study 2  
Sixth Grade Classroom Behavioral Intervention  
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### **Background Information**

Ms. L is a sixth grade special education teacher who teaches in a resource room setting. Her class consists of five students of varying ability levels. The cultural make up of her class consists of two Hispanic male students, one Portuguese/Polish male student, one African American female student, and one Caucasian female student. English is the primary language of all the students in her classroom. Cognitively, the students range from 82 to 100 for their Full Scale IQ with similar academic level skill sets. Two students in her classroom have a secondary diagnosis of Other Health Impairment, specifically Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder and are not medicated. However, the primary disabilities that are represented in her classroom are Specific Learning Disability (Reading) and Communication Impairment. Ms. L works closely with the Speech and Language Pathologist and curriculum specialist in the school to best support her students.

### **Problem Identification**

During the initial consultation meeting with Ms. L, the school psychology intern provided an introduction to the consultation process. This included an explanation of the time commitment, problem identification, data collection and intervention plan, and summative evaluation phases. A meeting schedule was then discussed and mutually agreed upon to meet regularly once per week. The collaborative nature of the consultation process was explained and flexibility was emphasized. Additionally, the teacher's expectations for this process, as well as expected student outcomes were discussed at this time.

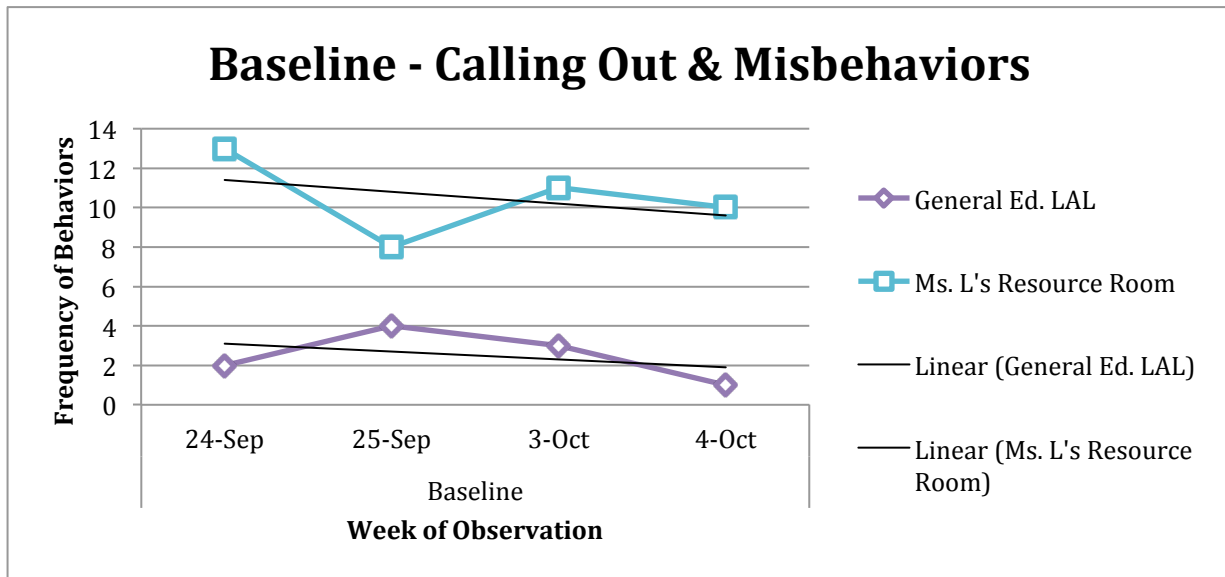
The primary goal of our first consultation meeting was to generate and prioritize a list of concerns. Ms. L indicated that one of her students was engaging in extreme disruptive behavior that would take away from the rest of the class or urge the other students to engage in similar behaviors, thus resulting in lost instructional time. She stated that she felt his behavior was constant and consistent. Upon multiple observations, it was noted that each of the students in the class were engaging in disruptive behaviors at different times and it became clear that it was a class-wide concern rather than just one particular student. It was then concluded that instead of targeting the one student, a whole class intervention would be most appropriate and beneficial for the class. The behaviors that were deemed to have the most educational impact were: calling out, which was defined as speaking when another is speaking (teacher or student), speaking when it is not appropriate, and calling out answers without raising one's hand; and misbehaviors, which was defined as not being respectful, acting silly or inappropriate, and not keeping hands to themselves.

For the purpose of this consultation process, the focus was on Ms. L's Language Arts/Literacy (LAL) resource room class, consisting of five students, during seventh and eighth period everyday. Ms. L mentioned that calling out and misbehaviors have been increasing since the beginning of the year, especially as the material gets more difficult and the workload increases. She noted that, the behavior takes away from instructional time, tends to get the class off topic and, as a group, they are difficult to refocus. Ms. L indicated that she felt that if the calling out and misbehaviors were reduced in her classroom she could provide more educational opportunities for her students. Ms. L reported that classroom rules and expectations were created collaboratively at the beginning of the year and are posted on her side bulletin board so they are visible to the class. The students were also given a print out of their classroom expectations to sign as a contract and keep in their binders.

Baseline Data Relating to Target Behavior

The school psychology intern observed Ms. L’s LAL class on four separate occasions during seventh and eighth period. Each observation was equal in length, lasting approximately 80 minutes, which is the duration of the LAL block each afternoon during the week. It should be noted that in between seventh and eighth period the students are given a “brain break” (GoNoodle.com, go to locker, or bathroom break) before returning to eighth period. Baseline data was gathered during late September and early October. During this time, narrative observations were conducted and frequency of calling out and misbehaviors (total number of occurrences) were recorded as a baseline. For comparison, a general education classroom was observed on different days during the same week for the afternoon 80 minute LAL block as well.

Taken from the four data points displayed in the graph, the class called out or engaged in misbehaviors on average about 10.5 times per LAL block, which occurs more frequently than teacher expectations of one or fewer. The general education LAL class engaged in calling out or misbehaviors on average about 2.5 times per the LAL block.



Current Performance Level

The class currently engages in calling out and misbehaviors on average 10.5 times within the 80 minute LAL period, compared to an average of 2.5 times in a general education LAL classroom. The expectation is to decrease the calling out and misbehaviors occurring in the class to meet teacher expectations of occurring one or fewer times throughout the period.

Problem Analysis

Over the course of the middle of September to the beginning of October, Ms. L was interviewed and records were reviewed of the students in her LAL class in order to gain a better understanding of the learning profiles of her students, previous interventions attempted, and under what circumstances the behaviors occur most often. As indicated above, the school psychology intern conducted observations in order to determine frequency of the calling out and

misbehaviors and gather a baseline. This information was helpful in formulating hypotheses regarding the function of the behaviors.

### Definition of Target Behaviors

The target behavior was calling out or misbehaviors. The target behavior: calling out, which was defined as speaking when another is speaking (teacher or student), speaking when it is not appropriate, and calling out answers without raising one's hand; and misbehaviors, which was defined as not being respectful (not using a respectful tone or teasing), acting silly or inappropriate (telling jokes or stories not relevant to class), and not keeping hands to themselves.

### Antecedents & Consequences

Antecedents are described as events or triggers that occur immediately prior to target behaviors. Consequences, on the other hand, describe what occurs directly following the target behaviors, including teacher and student responses.

Antecedents observed during observations indicated that call outs and misbehaviors were seen when the students were asked to do something (i.e. take out homework or classwork) and when Ms. L was beginning or continuing with a lesson. During independent work, students also called out more frequently; additionally, if classwork required writing, whether handwritten or on the computer, the class engaged in more calling out and misbehaviors. The behavior did not occur as often when the teacher was reading to the class (i.e. book club), however increased again when she paused to have the class answer a question about the reading. If another student in the class called out or was engaging in inappropriate behavior they tended to distract the other students in the class who then proceeded to call out or misbehave as well.

Some of the consequences of the target behaviors were positive reinforcement from peers and negative teacher attention; Ms. L gave constant redirection back to task to the class and reminders of what they were supposed to be doing. Previously, Ms. L attempted to give the students dots when they engaged in the target behaviors and once they received five dots they received a detention or were sent to the office. Once the class was off task it was difficult for them to regain focus and therefore much of the lesson was lost, therefore avoiding the classwork that was planned.

### Previous Intervention Attempts/What Has Been Tried

Since the beginning of the year Ms. L has tried a variety of interventions to address the target behaviors. Ms. L attempted to positively reinforce the class when they were on task in order to provide encouragement for positive behaviors, which the students responded to briefly. She attempted to provide visual warnings to the class by putting a dot on the board when they engaged in the target behaviors. If the class reached five dots the student(s) responsible for earning the dots was then sent to the office or given a detention based on the severity of the behaviors. Ms. L had the Speech and Language Pathologist come into the class to give a lesson on Whole Body Listening with Larry the Listener in order for the students to better understand expected behaviors in class. This worked briefly if the students were prompted, however, they often needed to be redirected to use Whole Body Listening multiple times throughout the period. Ms. L also tried rearranging her classroom so the students were facing the board and not in groups facing each other.

### Hypothesized Function(s) of Target Behaviors

The data, observations, teacher reports, and record review were discussed collaboratively with Ms. L. The information gathered resulted in several hypothesized functions of the target behaviors. One hypothesis is that the behaviors were the result of a performance deficit, that the students have the skills to perform well in this setting and are not utilizing them. Ms. L indicated that there are times when she can see that the students just “get it;” however, this occurs mostly when they are not distracted or being distracting to each other and the material is on their level. She noted that the students do enjoy positive reinforcement and respond well to it. The students’ behaviors could also partially be the result of a skill deficit, because Ms. L noticed they engage in the behaviors if the material becomes too challenging or when they are required to write. Phonics is a skill that all of the students in the class struggle with, which can impact their ability and willingness to write (being addressed by the reading specialist in district).

Another factor that should be considered is the school curriculum. The curriculum is much more challenging and more advanced for the students, as all students are expected to complete a typical seventh grade curriculum. Students in the resource room are receiving the same school-wide curriculum, however, at a slower pace with accommodations. For example, the students read the same books as the general education classes but they read along with the teacher in the classroom with frequent checks for comprehension as opposed to having to independently read at home and come to class prepared to discuss what they have read. District wide expectations for student’s performance are very high, which makes the workload for the student’s much more challenging. Classroom instruction and environment do not appear to be contributing factors for this particular group of students.

Each of the students in the class has different strengths and weaknesses academically and cognitively. Based on past teacher reports each of the students have had behavioral concerns in the previous years and other interventions were implemented. Each of the students in the class qualify for extended school year, although only one of the students has attended in the past. The primary functions of the behaviors are believed to be attention-seeking and work avoidance. Therefore, the intervention should fulfill their need for positive attention, maximize motivation, and allow for more instructional time in the classroom.

### **Intervention Design**

Goal: The primary goal of the intervention is to decrease the students’ target behaviors in the classroom during LAL, which will be measured by a decrease each day in calling out and misbehaviors from 10.5 to 2. Ultimately, the goal of the intervention is to decrease the target behavior to teacher expectations of only 1 or 0 occurrences per LAL period.

### Evidence Based Intervention

Since each of the students in the class engaged in calling out and misbehaviors beyond the expected level within the classroom, the intervention should address the whole class. Ms. L indicated that it was important that any intervention be something that would enforce classroom expectations, be easy to conduct while teaching, and be motivational (but not childish) for the students. According to DeMartini-Scully, Bray, & Kehle (2000), having a class affected by high rates of disruptive behavior requires having the teacher spend a significant amount of time having to gain control over the classroom and takes away from needed instructional time.

Having a “cooperative reward structure and group-oriented contingencies results in significantly strengthened cooperation among classroom groups as well as individual improvement in learning” (Lysakowski & Walberg, 2001). Lysakowski & Walberg (2001), also stressed the importance of having developmentally appropriate and motivating reinforcers. According to Chafouleas, (2012), interventions that involve group contingencies can significantly improve student behavior. A group contingency plan allows the students to engage in positive peer interaction and requires that they work together in order to achieve a goal and therefore, hold each other accountable.

Evidence supports that it is easier to manage students with challenging behaviors when the entire class is on a behavior management plan (Maag, 2001). Maag (2001), also noted that it is easier to implement a positive reinforcement intervention when the whole class is involved. The most positive outcomes arise when multiple strategies are utilized, such as when there is an agreed upon set of classroom expectations, the use of positive peer influence, consistent use of positive reinforcement, and ignoring of misbehaviors.

*Primary Intervention: Classroom Behavior Program & Positive Reinforcement*

In order to reduce the amount of calling-out and misbehaviors in the class, the use of a classroom management program as well as positive reinforcement were introduced. The classroom system that was implemented was designed collaboratively with Ms. L and named “Keeping Our Hawks Up.” We arrived at this name because we wanted to include some school spirit in the classroom and the school’s mascot is the hawk. Ms. L printed five pictures of hawks, which were laminated and hung in the front of the classroom. The class then had a goal each week to keep a previously agreed upon number of hawks up each day in order for the students to earn a reward on Friday. Ms. L wanted a simple system with visual reminders as well as a reward that would be both motivating for the students and age appropriate. The hawks were a visual reminder to the class to stay on task and not engage in the target behaviors. If a student engaged in a target behavior, a hawk was taken down. At the end of each LAL block the number of hawks still up on the board were recorded and if the students kept up the required number of hawks for that particular day they marked a star on their calendar. On Friday, if the class kept up all the required hawks for that week, they would earn free time at the end of the period.

Prior to the implementation of the new system the teacher reviewed the classroom rules and expectations as they align with the new classroom system. Next, the teacher explained the goal of keeping hawks up so they will keep up the agreed upon number of hawks each day, which will vary by week. Ms. L also explained the reward the students will earn at the end of each week if they meet their classroom goal each day. She clearly explained the types of behaviors that result in the loss of Hawks – calling out, which is speaking when another is speaking (teacher or student), speaking when it is not appropriate, and calling out answers without raising one’s hand; and misbehaviors, which is not being respectful, acting silly or inappropriate (telling jokes or stories not relevant to class), and not keeping hands to themselves.

Ms. L kept track of the number of hawks kept up each day by marking the white board calendar at the end of the afternoon LAL block. If the students keep up the agreed upon number of hawks each week, on Friday they will earn twenty minutes of free time at the end of the period (computer time, drawing, and games). At the beginning of each week as well as the beginning of the afternoon LAL block, Ms. L will remind the students of how many hawks they are expected

to keep up that week. The behavioral goal will change every two weeks as the behavioral expectations increase. The goal for eight weeks may be adjusted as needed, but are as follows:

<b>Week</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b># of Hawks Expected to be Kept Up</b>
Week 1	October 20-October 24	Keep at least 1 Hawk Up -- (4 call outs/misbehaviors)
Week 2	October 27-October 31	Keep at least 1 Hawk Up -- (4 call outs/misbehaviors)
Week 3	November 3-November 7	Keep at least 2 Hawks Up -- (3 call outs/misbehaviors)
Week 4	November 10-November 14	Keep at least 2 Hawks Up -- (3 call outs/misbehaviors)
Week 5	November 17-November 21	Keep at least 3 Hawks Up -- (2 call outs/misbehaviors)
Week 6	November 24-November 28	Keep at least 3 Hawks Up -- (2 call outs/misbehaviors)
Week 7	December 1-December 5	Keep at least 4 Hawks Up -- (1 call out/misbehavior)
Week 8	December 8-December 12	Keep at least 4 Hawks Up -- (1 call out/misbehavior)

Teacher Responsibilities:

- Go over classroom rules and expectations; explain the rules of the Hawks System
- Record how many hawks are kept up each day
- Praise the students for keeping up the agreed upon number of hawks
- Remind the class of how many hawks they are required to keep up each week and provide a reminder at the beginning of the LAL afternoon block
- Inform the school psychology intern of any issues or concerns as they arise.
- Check-in with the school psychology intern once per week.
- Complete the treatment integrity self-report sheet daily and at the end of the week (see appendix).

School Psychology Intern Responsibilities:

- Explain the intervention plan and purpose to the teacher; and make changes based on teacher feedback
- Sporadically observe the implementation of the classroom system during the afternoon LAL block weekly to determine treatment integrity
- Check-in/meet with the teacher once per week to collect data, address any concerns that arise, and review weekly intervention implementation and progress.
- Evaluate data to determine whether the target behavior is decreasing; revise the intervention plan if improvements are not being made.
- Create and review treatment integrity teacher report weekly.

Potential Unintended Outcomes/Limitations

Some unplanned outcomes or limitations may include the students not generalizing the behavior to other classroom settings or situations. Scheduling changes or other extenuating circumstances may occur and have an impact on the outcome of the classroom system, such as half-days, days off, and student or teacher absences. The weekly reward may take away from instructional time on Fridays. Conflict may arise among the students if one student's behavior results in the loss of hawks and prevents them from earning their reward. If a student has a low frustration tolerance or lack of coping skills they may not respond appropriately to the loss of hawks and therefore act out as a way to get out their frustration.

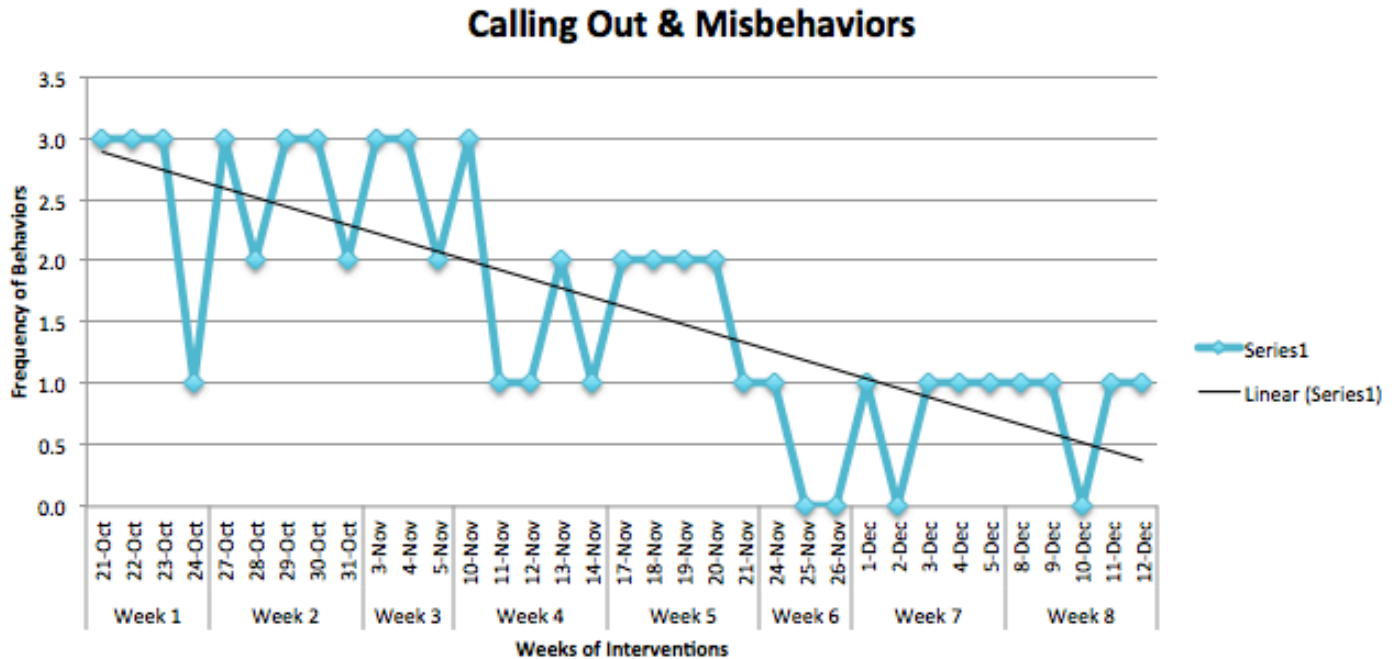
### **Intervention Evaluation**

The classroom system of Keeping Their Hawks Up was implemented beginning on October 21, 2014. The teacher has been collecting data on how many hawks are kept up for the afternoon LAL block for eight weeks. Upon collaboratively examining the data with Ms. L, we came to the conclusion that the Hawks System was successful in motivating her class and providing them with positive attention, which confirms our hypothesis that the problem was a performance based deficit. With the students no longer engaging in the target behaviors, Ms. L has been able to have more focus and instructional time in her classroom, which helps to improve upon her student's skills.

Ms. L has been impressed with the progress her student's have made. She has found that they hold each other accountable more during the class period and have been successful in keeping up the required number of hawks each day. They are highly motivated by having twenty minutes of free time on Fridays and look forward to this time throughout the week. Ms. L has noticed that the frequency of the students target behaviors has significantly decreased over the course of the weeks of program implementation and that she has been able to get more done with the increase in instructional time now that it is not being wasted by correcting behaviors.

A review of the frequency data collected by Ms. L indicates that the class's calling out and behaviors has decreased since the implementation of the classroom system and positive reinforcement, which suggests that the intervention was effective. In particular, a Percentage of Non-overlapping Data Points (PND) was calculated in order to determine the effect size that the intervention has had on students' target behaviors to date. The percentage of intervention data points (total frequency of calling out and misbehaviors) that were below the lowest baseline data point (i.e less than 8 calling out and misbehaviors) indicates that the PND is 100%. According to Riley-Tillman and Burns (2009), a PND over 80% illustrates a large effect size. Therefore, the classroom behavior system, along with positive reinforcement, was shown to be effective in reducing calling out and misbehaviors. The decrease in the frequency of behaviors over the course of the intervention is demonstrated in the graph below.





The data displayed above has already been shared with Ms. L. This data will also be shared with her class and the other teachers who have this same group of students. Providing students with a visual of their progress can result in more personal motivation and effort. Since the intervention was effective, sharing this data with teachers and other staff members may motivate them to implement a variation of the Hawks classroom system in their own classrooms, which allows for the generalization of this behavior change to occur in other classroom settings.

Next Steps:

Given the success of the Hawk program in Ms. L’s classroom she will continue to implement the intervention and provide positive reinforcement for the students in the form of free time on Fridays. Ms. L indicated that the class is highly motivated by the Hawk System. No additional modifications are required at this time. Following winter break, the students were given a reminder of the Hawks System goals as well as the classroom expectations. The students have been successful in keeping up four out of the five hawks (having only one call out per period). Data will continue to be gathered and monitored for student progress and changes made as necessary.

Ms. E, another resource room teacher who has this same group of students asked to have the system modified to work within their classroom settings. The system did not require a great deal of modification in order to work within her classroom setting. However, Ms. E wanted to come up with a more realistic reward for her class since the students see her at the beginning of the day. She works collaboratively with her students weekly to find a reward that would be motivating for that week.

Ms. L was asked to also implement the hawks system across the other subjects she has with this same group of students. By implementing the system across Ms. L’s other classes, she raised the expectations of her students to keep at least four hawks up throughout all periods of the day she

has with them in order to earn free time on Friday. So far the class has been successful in keeping their hawks up and earning their reward each week. The school psychology intern has asked Ms. L to keep her informed on the student's progress and asked for Ms. L to share any additional concerns she has for the class now or in the future.

Works Cited

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- DeMartini-Scully, D., Bray, M., & Kehle, T. (2000). A Packaged Intervention to Reduce Disruptive Behaviors in General Education Students. *Psychology in the Schools* , 37 (2), 149-156.
- Lysakowski, R., & Walberg, H. (2001). Classroom Reinforcement and Learning: A Quantitative Synthesis. *Journal of Educational Research* , 75 (2), 69-77.
- Maag, J. (2001). Reflections on the Disuse of Positive Reinforcement in Schools. *The Council For Exceptional Children* , 67 (2), 173-186.
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Appendix

Teacher: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Day of the Week: **M T W R F**

Directions: Complete this form at the end of each day regarding the Hawks System intervention.

**Daily Implementation Checklist**

Monday Only * Review weekly goal of how many hawks are required to stay up	Yes	No
During beginning of LAL block – review how many hawks need to remain up by the end of the period	Yes	No
Take down a hawk for each display of the agreed upon target behaviors (calling out or misbehavior)	Yes	No
Record whether or not the class met goal that day	Yes	No
Allow the 20 minutes of free time on Friday if students meet their weekly goal	Yes	No

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**Weekly Implementation Checklist**

\*Fridays Only

	Students Met Goal?	
Weekly Hawks Up Goal: _____	Yes	No
Student Received Friday Free Time Reward	Yes	No

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