**Meghan Moore – PJ 5**

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**Classroom Management**

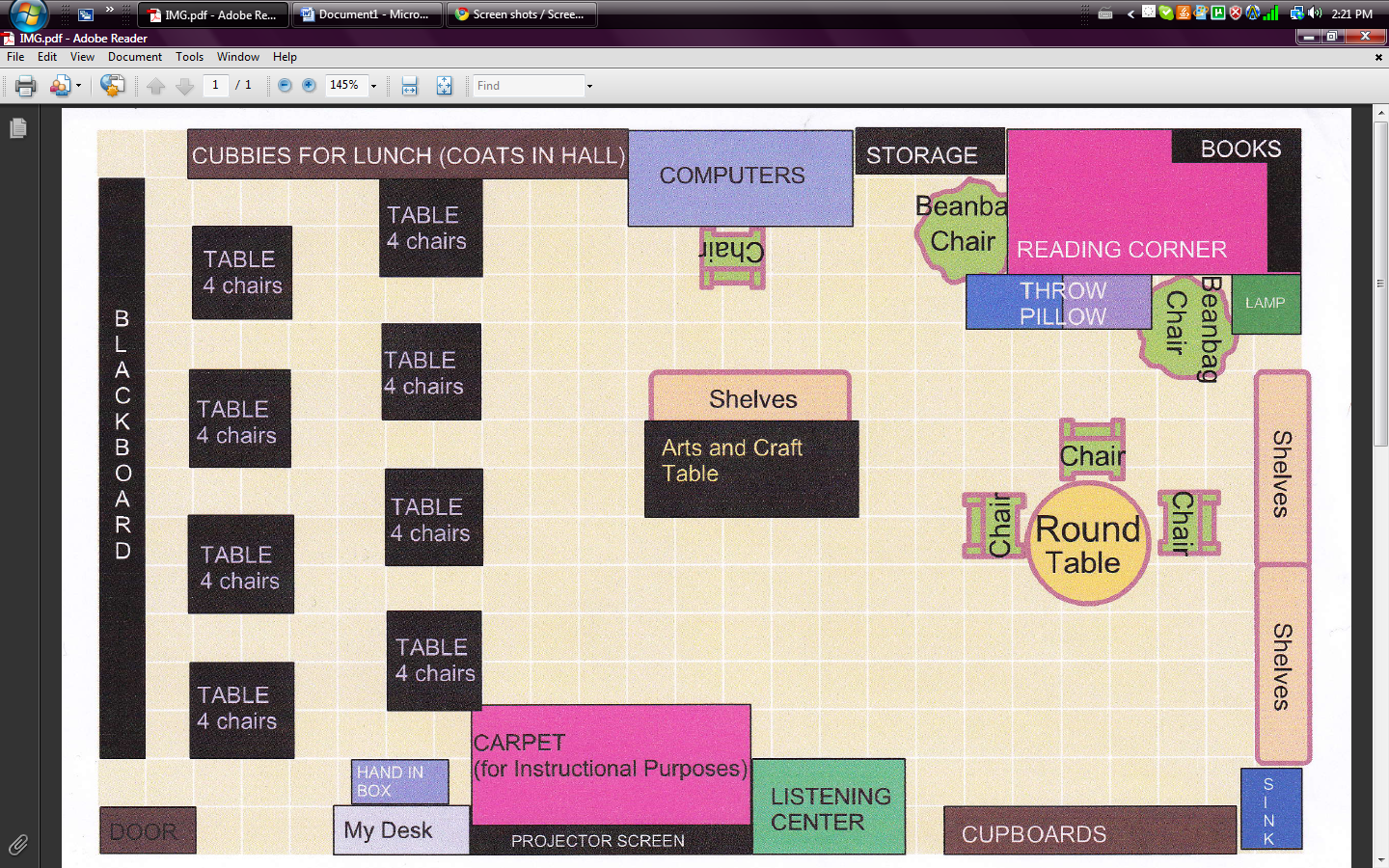
Classroom management, in my opinion, can be defined as the ability to run a classroom effectively, despite disruptions and negative behaviour that may interrupt the learning of others.  The key to a successful teacher is to be able to juggle management and teaching in the same balancing act. I believe that a classroom will run more effectively if a teacher takes some time to sit down and think about how they want their classroom to look. By establishing a classroom layout plan, although it may not necessarily fix potential behaviour issues, it does show the students that you are prepared and care enough to take time to plan things through. Classroom management is particularly important because without it your position as a teacher and as authority becomes jeopardized.

**Philosophical Statement**

I started my university degree with the hopes of going to law school and becoming a lawyer.  The more I studied youth criminal justice, the more I began to realize that my place was not in the courtroom dealing with harsh punishment. There is only one place for me: the classroom. I hope to instil my views on the importance of learning and an education to students of all ages.  Furthermore, my aim is to inspire imagination and creativity in the classroom with a strong focus on literacy and numeracy. I want to make my classroom a safe, fun, interactive, equitable place where students grow, learn and share together. All of these factors are important and instrumental in governing positive student behaviour in a classroom. I am a strong believer in group work; students in my classroom must feel safe and confident enough to interact with their peers.

To be diverse is to be made of different qualities and characteristics. I believe the role of diversity in the classroom is particularly important because every student has the right to learn and should be taught in a very individualistic way. Therefore, the focus in my classroom is diversity and inclusion. The role of the teacher reaches beyond just one adult standing in front of a classroom giving a lesson, as thirty children sit at their desks quietly and attentively.  Among many things, the role of the teacher is to responsibly teach her students in such a way that instils positive values and high expectations for all. A teacher wears many hats: a nurse, a mother, a friend, a referee, an educator, but above all a role model. I prefer a combination of student directed and collaborative approach to instruction. My role, as the teacher, is to be the “eyes, ears and mouth” of the classroom. Learning comes from not only what I teach, but also what the students teach each other. Lessons will be centred on what interests the students rather than what interests me.

My ideal teaching style is to encompass the values and views of the authoritative teacher and what Dreiker called a democratic teacher; my role is more of a guidance role rather than the rule maker and power holder. I hope to be orderly and organized as well as supportive and caring. I want students to feel comfortable approaching me regardless of the problem they have encountered. While placing limits on what a student can do, I want to encourage students to become independent learners. I believe that all students have the ability to manage their own behaviour and have the desire to please. As a result, I want students to be involved in the making of rules and routines so they are able to rationalize why each is important. Once students are able to rationalize and comprehend the need for rules and routines, management then becomes something that simply is rather than something I must act out and continuously enforce.



**Room Arrangement**

After dropping off their coats and backpacks, students will bring all their materials needed for the day into the class, including their lunch. The students will walk into a classroom that is decorated with student artwork, words of encouragement and a colourful, warm environment.  The carpet on the floor will consist of throw carpets I have rummaged up that are also bright and colourful. I will ensure to vacuum daily, as I will also be sitting on the floor and appreciate a clean carpet. I think the set up of a classroom effects the overall organization of the room and ultimately, how it is run. Students will be assigned cubbies to store lunch pails and sweaters for the day. After putting their items away they will hand in their communication bags; communication bags will hold homework, notes from parents and agendas. I will go through them as the morning announcements are on and hand back the agendas.

I thought long and hard about whether or not to include a teacher’s desk. I know myself far too well and know that if I have a desk in my classroom it will become covered in papers very quickly and will serve no real purpose other than a “catch all.” After I thought about it, I decided I would include one to show that I would have some sort of space in the classroom that is designated as “Ms. Moore’s.” My desk would be used for administrative tasks, in particular. I am not sure if I would use a desk, but I would definitely use a file folder system with plastic storage drawers to store all my resources. I will use a table for marking and conferencing that would be situated near the section I have labelled as “desk.”

I chose to have students seated in groups of 4 to start out the year. I will have picked where each student is sitting with a name card taped to his or her desk. Having students seated like this is beneficial for many reasons; it keeps the students who like to chat away from each other. By seating students in groups, individuals who excel in certain subjects can act as peer tutors to those around them when others are struggling; students are more likely to ask for assistance from their peers’ as they face each other. Because there will be such an emphasis on group work in my classroom, “island” seating will be effective as students are already in groups. I particularly like the island seating because it allows for a better flow movement within the classroom. Aisles are easily established and encourage one direction for traffic. I do recognize this type of seating may have its drawbacks such as some students having to turn if their backs are to the teacher or that during independent work students may be distracted because of the close proximity to each other, but above all else I find this kind of seating the best. I would make sure to change it up periodically so that students are not bored with who they are sitting with.

I chose to have an instructional carpet area where learning will also take place particularly during language. Read aloud will be conducted there and students will sit on the carpet and look up at me in a rocking chair. Pocket charts and chart paper will be strung up for teaching purposes.  Behind me will be a projector screen for watching movies or showing overheads/Smart Board presentations. Beside the instructional area is the listening centre which will be utilized on a daily basis with center time.  Students will be able to listen to stories and record themselves reading out loud. At the back of my classroom will be the sink and cupboards that are in close proximity to the painting center. Students will be required to clean up after themselves and ensure their areas are left neat and tidy.

I want to include materials, other than the computer, that students can use when doing research. There will be a computer in my class that the students are free to use. I may need to use my own laptop, particularly if I am using the Smart Board. Students will have access to all kinds of newspapers, encyclopaedias, textbooks, magazines and informational texts that support their research needs. One of the most important parts in my classroom is the reading corner. I am a strong believer in the importance of reading in classrooms. I hope to designate a certain amount of time to reading each week, in which students are required to do nothing other than read. In the reading corner there will be a big window where the sun can shine down with big oversized pillows and stuffed animals. My goal is to create a reading space that is conducive to the needs of the student. The reading corner needs to be a place of silence and relaxation full of books from all genres. The amount of people will be limited to five at a time and once it is full students need to wait their turn. Having a layout of how I want my classroom to look is beneficial as it helps to establish a plan when I do become a fulltime teacher and have my own classroom. Furthermore, having a plan such as this allows for more organization and less planning when the time comes.

**Rules**

In my opinion, rules need to be made by the teacher so the students know that you have expectations in the classroom and that they must be followed. I feel that establishing rules set by the teacher will not only set a good pace for the year but it will also show students that organization, balance and order are appreciated. I think it is important not to bombard students with rules and expectations because it seems unrealistic to me; I would like to limit myself to using three key rules and ensuring that these are understood and met. On placement I saw a unique way to teach the rules of the classroom using a colour coded system that was reviewed and referred to constantly. My “Golden Rule” will be one that is enforced in every classroom, or should be: Everyone in the class deserves to be treated fairly, equally and with respect. My classroom will encourage diversity and independence and independence which means my students will need to practice appropriate behaviours.

The “White Rule” of my classroom will be to raise your hand when speaking out in class. If this rule is enforced and maintained from day one, students begin to respect the rules and act appropriately. Positive praise for students who do raise their hand may encourage the behaviour further as students wish to please and be praised. Talking only when permitted encourages active listening skills, which are essential in a classroom setting. Furthermore, listening carefully promotes attentive behaviour, which may prevent disruptive or unwanted behaviour.

The “Red Rule” of my classroom is to keep body parts, unkind words and objects to yourself.  I do not want students being physically (or verbally, emotionally abusive) in my classroom. I think it is fair to say that a rule like this is enforced in every classroom across Canada. No student has the right to touch any other student and it is important that is addressed from the outset. This rule falls in line with rules set by the administration, as there is generally a “Zero Tolerance,” hands off approach.

At the beginning of the year these “color rules” are the three main rules I wish to abide by. However, I also want to include my students in the rule making process. Having students have a voice allows them to take ownership within the classroom and perhaps encourages them to follow the rules they set out more carefully. Rule following is one of those “hidden curriculum” elements in which is not explicitly covered in the curriculum expectations, but is implicitly taught to eventually become a law abiding citizen in the future. One strategy I find to be particularly effective is the use of classroom meetings/debates to discuss how things are going and any issues that have arose. Having my students become involved in such participation is one way to build a strong student-teacher relationship in which students feel safe and compelled to talk.

It is one thing to have a set of rules, but it is another task to ensure they are communicated effectively to parents, administrators and students. The rules will be communicated within the first few weeks so every player in the school system, parents and administrators, are included. Parents will be informed on my rules of the classroom by way of a newsletter that I will send home at the beginning of September. The newsletter will serve as an introduction and information piece for both the parents and the children. Parents will also be able to read the rules of my classroom on my class website, which I hope to update on a weekly basis. The rules will also be posted in the classroom so students and administrators can refer to if ever needed. They will be printed neat and big enough to read from a distance. Because students will be an intricate part of the rule making process, they will be made aware of them from the moment they walk into my classroom. Furthermore, with constant practice and repetition within the first few weeks of school, I anticipate the rules will be communicated thoroughly and effectively.

**Routines and Procedures**

I believe that the routines and procedures are what determines the pace and environment of a classroom. Through modelling the behaviour and having students practice several times, students will soon be able to understand what my expectations are from them. When students first arrive at school and after recess I hope to have their backpacks and boots/shoes go in the hallway. Students will be required to hang their coats and backpacks on the hooks provided, that have nametags fastened on, and put their boots/shoes neatly under their coats. Helping to establish an orderly and organized system for hanging up items hopefully translates to a more orderly classroom.

It will be a routine of mine that students come in the classroom in the morning and are offered a breakfast snack that is laid out on the table. This would probably be something like an apple, granola bar or muffin. We know, based on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, that if the basic needs such as food are not met, a child’s ability to function in a class is affected. I like the idea of using a pocket chart for an attendance. Students will flip over their name card in the pocket chart to sign in. Every morning I will have the day’s agenda up on the board so students will know what is to come. If there is few a minutes of free time students can come up to the board that has an envelope that contains activities to do. I want each day to start with 20 minutes of centers. This will allow students who may show up late not to miss any class and allow the students to begin the day with exploring and problem solving. If a student needs to use the washroom, a T chart will be on the back of the door. On one side the students’ names will be there on Velcro. The students are required to move their name over to the other side so I know where they are at all times. Students will be dismissed by the teacher, not the bell. One of the routines in my class will require the teacher to dismiss the class by tables when the activity is over.  When coming in from recess or lining up I will use the motto “*Hand on the hip, finger on the lip, eyes up front.*”  This routine ensures students are walking/waiting quietly and respectfully. When concluding the day I want to try to leave 15 minutes for review and consolidation of the day. It is in this time students can pack up, ask any questions and just wind down before getting on the bus for home.  Often times the final bell rings and students are rushing to pack up and leave. Managing my time wisely will ensure my students’ transition period to home time is smooth and not rushed.

Personally, I support non verbal methods to get the classes attention. Non verbal cues are not disruptive and require the same amount of effort. One strategy I like is the “Give me 5” tactic.  At the beginning of the year I would explain to  my students that when they see me put my hand up with my fingers spread open this means give me 5. Ultimately what it does is tell the students that the teacher needs the attention of the class. Another simple tactic I would employ is just clapping a pattern. I know it is effective as it is used all the time.

The method employed to get students attention is important and I think it may be based on a trial and error attempt. Some ways of getting the students attention may not be effective, but I hope to try out a few variations to find the one that works. I would not use the light flicking method in my classroom because it is extremely annoying and I do not think it is effective. One verbal strategy I have seen applied is quite simple and has not failed. The teacher would say “Class” and then would reply “Yes.” The teacher is at first modelling her expectations. Once the class was aware of what the teacher was doing the teacher would say “Class, class, class” and shortly after the class was responding “Yes, yes, yes.”  It became sort of like a game because the students would have to match the loudness or softness of the initial “Class” call. Using little verbal chants and rhymes to get the students attention may also be appropriate because the children will need to stop what they are doing and repeat the chant. This may become problematic, however, if students do not repeat the chant and my intentions were to not start again until everyone was chanting back. Time may be wasted and as a result become a non-effective management strategy.

Sharpening pencils is perhaps the most irritating classroom management issue.  I want to abolish the behaviour from day one. There will be no grey pencil sharpener that eats pencils at the back of my classroom and disrupts everyone. I will have an electric sharpener that is kept in my desk.  Students will use an exchange system for broken pencils by placing their old pencil in the cup labelled “Needs Sharpened” and taking a new one from the cup labelled “Sharpened.”  I will take it upon myself to sharpen the pencils every morning to eliminate all the possible problems that could occur at the pencil sharpener.

One of the most important routines in my classroom will be the procedure for asking questions.  A simple hand raise does work when students are being asked to respond to a prompt from the teacher. I think that using a more randomized method for calling on students, such as pulling popsicle sticks out of a cup, allows for a fair environment. One method I have come across is getting students to tell you when they do not understand something. Throughout my experience I have seen teachers ask students to make some sort of noise if they do not comprehend something such as a “hmm” or “hiss.” This eliminates the uncomfortable feeling a student may experience if they have to raise their hand and say they do not understand. One strategy I want to use in my class involves the use of “taking a number.” This allows students who need assistance to take a number from the post it pad if I am busy. I can then call out the number when I am free.

In terms of routine homework checks I think it depends on what grade I am teaching. I would not assign mandatory homework to the lower primary grades as I do not feel it is necessary.  Activities and worksheets would be available and offered to students on a nightly basis, by way of the communication bag. A communication bag will be sent home on a nightly basis and will include notes from the teacher, optional homework sheets and the students’ agenda.  I think it is important to have a routine such as this so there is always communication back and forth from the parents. Although no grade is assigned, by looking through the homework I would be able to recognize those students who may need a little extra help.

Marks will be given based on in class assignments, written work, oral work, tests and group work. I want to showcase work on a weekly basis so students can reflect and improve on their original work. One idea I want to bring to my class is having a writing board. Students will have an assigned spot on the wall and each week their new writing piece can be fastened over top of the original piece using push pins. I think it helps to establish ownership, pride and accomplishment in students. At the beginning of the year I want to supply the class with a list of dates, deadlines, test dates, etc. so that students are aware of when things are due and happening.  Starting this at a young age ensures organization and time management. Work will be collected using the “Hand In” box located in my classroom; students will simply slip their completed work into the bin and I will collect it.

My assessment strategies will include diagnostic, formative and summative assessments. I will diagnostically asses through using KWL charts, checklists and anecdotal notes to gather information on what students know on a subject area/unit. Similarly, throughout the unit I will continue diagnostic assessment, by way of anecdotal notes to judge how effectively I am teaching and whether or not students comprehend the material. I will use formative assessment when assigning projects, quizzes and assignments throughout a unit, leading up to the final assignment. In terms of the devices used to assess, I will use rubrics, anecdotal notes, checklists and rating scales.

**Positive Reinforcement**

It has been a traditional view that punishing the bad behaviour will send a message to other students. Punishing bad behaviour, in my view, does not deter students from committing inappropriate behaviours. Because of this view, I want to use positive reinforcement in my classroom as a way to prevent inappropriate behaviours from occurring in the first place.  Positive reinforcement was a term coined by B.F. Skinner. He argued that if a person was rewarded (in this situation verbally) for acting in a way that was appropriate, they would see this behaviour as the most natural way to act. Within the classroom setting, this is what teachers strive for. Positive reinforcement can be a simple oral praise or it could be classroom incentive.

 In terms of a token economy that has been discusses by Skinner, I am not sure I would want to give out material rewards. At the end of the month, if the students have acquired enough marbles in the jar for good behaviour, the class could have some sort of movie party on a Friday afternoon. I think students need some sort of incentive to “be good” other than it being the right thing to do. One strategy I would like to employ is what is known as “Golden Time.” If students have been following the rules all week I might allow them to have 30 minutes of golden time at the end of each week. Students would be allowed a free choice of activities, that are still educationally based, but different from the everyday curriculum work. Using this form of verbal praise gives students reassurance and encouragement to continue the positive behaviours. Rewarding positive behaviours says “Hey, look at me. I was able to follow rules and routines and acted in a way that was respectful.” Rewards I would consider using include such things as getting to line up first, free computer time and teacher’s helper.

One strategy to respond to positive behaviour, with hopes of getting the whole class to do the same, is known as the “ripple effect.” This means that I would praise one student for performing a task properly or if they were on track. The praise of one student encourages the other students to also conform, so that the teacher will be pleased. To encourage positive behaviour, I would want to let parents know when their child is acting appropriately. Rather than using the phone to only call home when something negative happens, keeping communication with parents and students outside of school may reinforce future behaviour.

I think I will use the student of the week idea. The student of the week is a time for each student to independently have some of the spotlight in the classroom. Regardless of a student’s behaviour on a daily basis every student will have a chance to shine. Students will be encouraged to bring in pictures, artifacts, favourite items in which they can discuss throughout the week.  Three things I have learned about positive reinforcement throughout my study are that they must be frequent, immediately following the behaviour and highly desired. With this in mind, I believe positive reinforcement can be an effective way of managing a classroom when done correctly.

**Responding to Negative Behaviour**

I need to ensure that I keep the difference between bad behaviour and misbehaviour in my head.  Bad behaviour is when a student does something and knows it is wrong, but does so to seek attention. For example: the pencil tapping student. Misbehaviour is when a student does something, but does not realize they did something wrong. An example of this may be drawing pictures when the student is supposed to be listening. My ideas of behaviour management and consequences follow a Dreiker approach. Because believe I am more of a democratic teacher, my students and I would set rules and consequences together. Rather than me just handing out the consequences the students realize that following negative behaviour there will be a consequence. Students are aware of these consequences because they have helped to make them.

Students who are behaving negatively are often doing so for a particular reason. As a teacher, I want to try to prevent behaviours before they happen. I need to ensure I look for the underlying causes of behaviour and deal with them before they spiral into a more serious behaviour.  Just talking to a student about an issue may result in a solution. The child who is tapping their desk is probably seeking attention. If a consequence is going to be given out it needs to be a logical one that is related to the offence, is respectful and reasonable.

In terms of behaviour modification, I think I would apply Skinner’s idea that I need to stop the undesired behaviour by removing the stimulus and replace it with a more desirable behaviour of reinforcement. If bad behaviour is occurring at first I want to try to simply ignore it. Students tend to stop if they are not getting the reaction they had desired.  If the behaviour worsens I want to first use non verbal interventions to try and lessen behaviour. Subtle gestures such as eye contact, pausing, a slight cough, the proximity to the student (so pointing to the desk when they are suppose to be working) may be effective interventions for managing a classroom. These non-intrusive mannerisms warn the student that you are watching them and that their behaviour will not be tolerated. More overt interventions that I may resort to include offering assistance (hoping to counteract the behaviour), relocating the student, as well as the last to line up for transition times. Students who continuously resort to bad behaviour, in which the least intrusive interventions do not seem to work, may need a behaviour contract. A behaviour contract is a written contract in which both parties the child and teacher have obligations; the students obligation is behavioural and the teachers obligation is rewarding the student. I have come to realize that I cannot make students do something just because I want them to do it. I need to make sure I offer students choices in which hopefully direct a student to make the right choice.  Allowing choices shows the student that although the teacher holds the power in the classroom, students have the right to make their own decisions.

To redirect negative behaviour I think I will use a target strategy. This means that I will give an individualized time frame for a student to complete something. I would say “Susie, your target is to be done your story when the big hand gets to the six.” I am not trying to rush the student, but keep them on target with the rest of the class by giving the student a timeframe in which it may take to complete the assigned task. Along the same lines of the target approach is also the use of timers. I find them extremely effective as students know when it is time to be completed. The approach I want to employ in my classroom in terms of management models is the “CALM” approach. The CALM model states that the teacher must first consider what is happening, come up with an action, lessen the situation and manage by going back to the lesson without stalling.  This model allows me to continue teaching while still managing the inappropriate behaviour. I need to step back and look at how I am managing a class. If things have been problematic for some time I may need to make changes. Changes in how I manage the class will hopefully create changes in how the class behaves. My ultimate goal in dealing with negative behaviour is to address it quickly, in a way that does not interfere with my teaching and the classes learning.

**Conclusion**

All in all, I believe a classroom that is managed well says to a student, “Come prepared to learn because we are going to have a lot of fun.” A well managed classroom allows the teacher to spend more quality time with students in terms of instructional and learning times as they do not constantly have to stop and manage the behaviour of other students. A classroom that is planned out ahead of time takes into consideration many of the “what if’s” that new teachers are faced with. Without classroom management a teacher has no way of controlling a classroom if things were to get out of control. Taking a few moments to plan strategies, solutions, rules, routines and consequences can save many headaches in the school year.

**Works Consulted**

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