



HUNGER IN OUR SCHOOLS

Share Our Strength's Teachers Report



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Bill Shore with students from Elsie Whitlow Stokes Charter School in Washington, DC.

A Note from Bill Shore

Several years ago, while visiting a school in Washington, DC, I asked a young teacher about hunger in her classroom. In response, she simply opened her desk drawer to show me the snacks that she buys for the hungry kids in her class. It drove home to me that teachers, perhaps as much as any other group, have powerful stories to tell about child hunger in America.

Share Our Strength's Teachers Report aims to give a voice to those stories. It confirms that childhood hunger is widespread and on the rise. Children bring their hunger to school and it affects their concentration and behavior in class. Many of these children rely on school meals as their primary source of nutrition.

The study affirms that our No Kid Hungry Campaign, and programs like in-class breakfast and summer meals, can make a significant difference in the lives of children who struggle with hunger. Please share this important story with America and help us find solutions for countless children who come to school hungry.

Billy Shore
Founder and Executive Director

ILLNESS. ANXIETY. THE INABILITY TO FOCUS.

Every day across America, teachers see the unfortunate effects of childhood hunger. However, all too often, these silent pleas aren't heard by those outside the classroom. Through *Hunger in Our Schools: Share Our Strength's Teachers Report*, we share teachers' unique perspective on an often invisible American crisis: childhood hunger.

To gain insight on exactly what our nation's educators experience each day, Share Our Strength enlisted Lake Research Partners to conduct a formal national survey on hunger in the classroom.

The survey was conducted online among public school teachers grades K-8 from September 20 through October 3, 2010. The results are eye opening.

Key Insights

The following are some general beliefs found among teachers participating in the report:

- Hunger in the classroom remains an ongoing, frequent problem.

- School meals are often the primary source of nutrition for children.
- There is a strong correlation between eating a healthy breakfast and a student's ability to concentrate, behave and perform academically.
- Teachers often take action on their own to combat hunger in the classroom.
- Both schools and the education community have a role to play in addressing child hunger.

TOO HUNGRY TO LEARN: HUNGER
REMAINS RAMPANT IN THE CLASSROOM



Hunger in the classroom—that is, students regularly coming to school hungry because there is not enough to eat at home—is a significant, ongoing problem. Public school K-8 teachers nationwide report seeing child hunger as a problem manifesting itself in their classrooms, with no sign of receding.

- More than 40% of teachers say that children coming to school hungry because they have not had enough to eat at home is a serious problem at their school.
- Two-thirds of teachers say that they have children in their classrooms who regularly come to school hungry because they are not getting enough to eat at home.
 - > Nearly nine in 10 estimate they see this happening at least once per week.
- > This means that nearly half of K-8 teachers see one quarter or more of their students coming to school hungry on a weekly basis.
- Teachers in rural and urban areas see hunger among students as a more prevalent and serious problem.
- Over six in 10 teachers say the problem of children coming to school hungry has increased in the past year. Another third say it has stayed about the same.



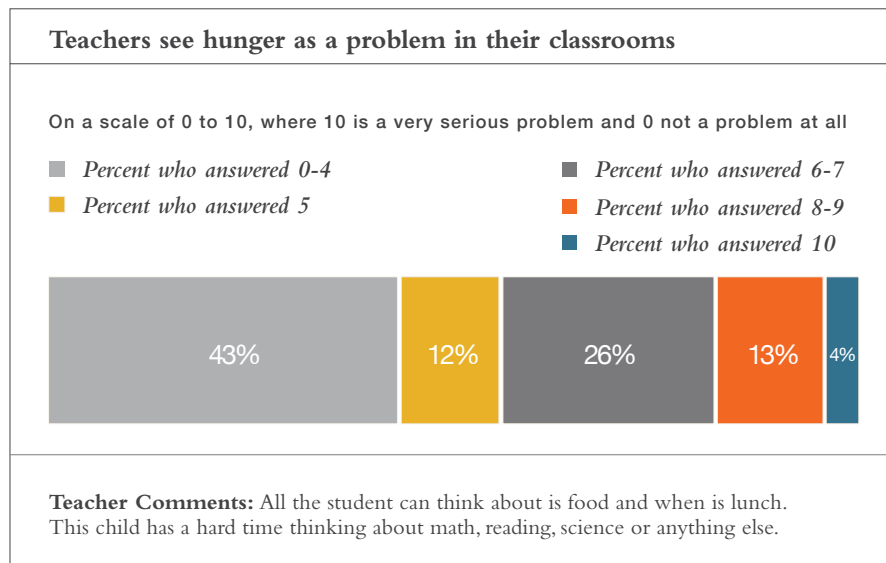
ERICA ROSE
1st grade teacher,
Washington, DC


At Erica Rose’s school, where 99 percent of the students qualify for free/reduced price meals, hunger is a constant topic. “For most of our students, the meals that they receive at school—school breakfast and lunch—are the only food they receive all week. And when they do have food outside of school, it often isn’t healthy or filling.”

Every Monday, Erica knows that many of her students will arrive at school hungry because they haven’t had much to eat over the week-ends. They can’t focus on the lessons because they are battling fatigue, stomach aches, headaches, anxiety, and frustration.

Erica realizes that she really only has two full effective days to teach: Wednesdays and Thursdays. “Mondays and Tuesdays are lost because of the hunger from the weekend and on Fridays most of the students can’t concentrate because they are filled with anxiety and aggravation, knowing the weekend is coming and that means not enough food at home.”

“OUR KIDS AREN’T GETTING WHAT THEY NEED TO EAT. THEY DON’T HAVE ENOUGH FOOD AND THEY DON’T HAVE THE RIGHT FOOD. IT’S HAVING A HUGE EFFECT ON THEIR EDUCATION AND ON THEIR ENTIRE LIFE.”



A close-up photograph of a hand in a red sweater pointing at a chalkboard. The chalkboard is covered in white chalk writing, including the chemical formula $N_2 + H_2O$. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the chalkboard and a vertical orange and blue gradient on the left side.

SCHOOL MEALS SERVE AS A **FOOD SAFETY NET**

When food isn't readily available at home, school meals can become the only option. Teachers believe an alarming percentage of kids rely on school meals as a primary source of nutrition—and teachers find it appropriate that schools play a major role in combating hunger and making sure that kids succeed.

- Two-thirds of K-8 teachers say that “most” or “a lot” of their students rely on school meals as their primary source of nutrition.
- This reliance is widespread across urban, suburban, and rural areas, but reliance is particularly strong in urban and rural areas.
- Nearly all teachers agree that, “schools can serve as a food safety net for children who do not get regular meals at home.”
- Three-quarters believe addressing

child hunger should be a high priority for the school system in their area (76% saying it should be a top, one of the top, or a high priority).

- A majority of K-8 teachers say their schools provide free breakfast and snacks on testing days—suggesting that administrators make the connection between a healthy breakfast and a student’s ability to concentrate and perform academically.

“I WISH I COULD AFFORD TO BRING IN SNACKS EVERY DAY. THE KIDS IN MY CLASS ARE SO YOUNG. THEY ARE NOT ABLE TO PROVIDE FOR THEMSELVES. IF THEY ARE ALWAYS WORRIED ABOUT THEIR BASIC NEEDS, HOW CAN THEY GROW AND LEARN?”



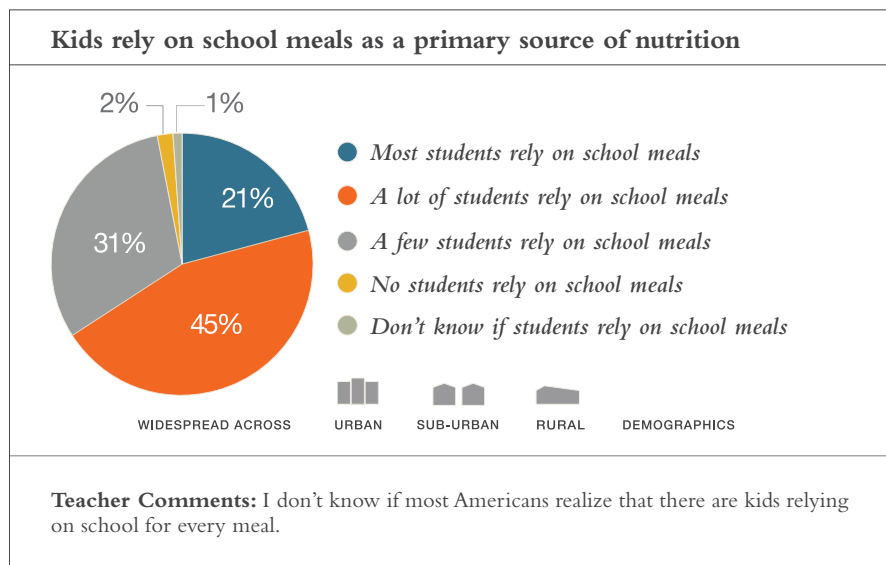
CHRISTINE GOTTSALL

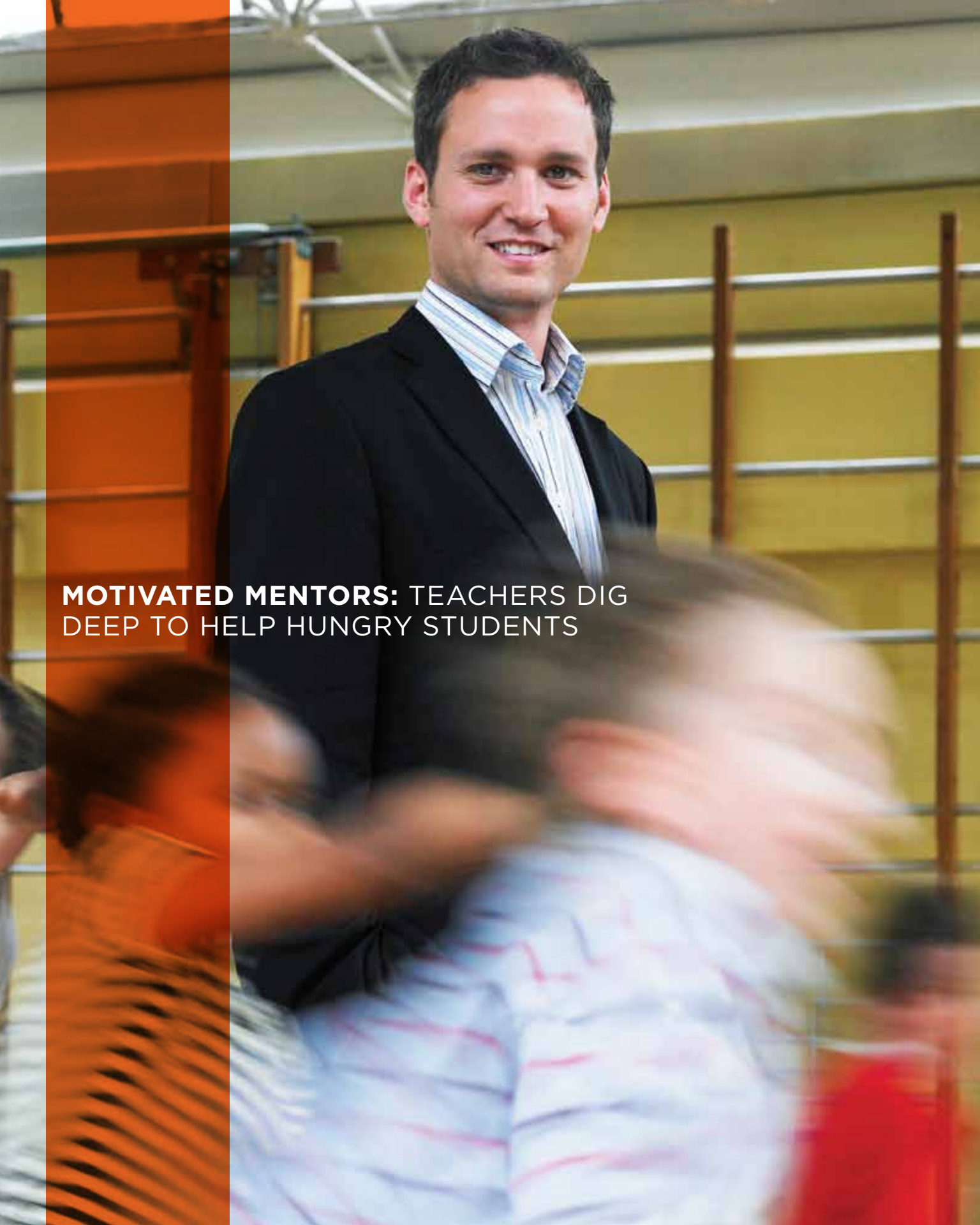
*5th grade teacher
Roxbury, Massachusetts*

When Christine began her teaching career in the Harlem section of New York City, she quickly discovered that the closest fresh food option was 35 blocks away. “There are only corner stores,” she says. “All of the produce I could find was bruised. If I had kids and a full time job, when would I have to time to ride the subway 35 blocks just to get them apples?”

In Roxbury, Christine’s students face similar challenges. Of her 25 fifth graders, five or six come to school hungry most days. Every student at her school qualifies for free lunch, and for some of her students “the free breakfast and free lunch are the only meals they get in the day.”

Lunch isn’t until 1:15 for her class, so Christine brings healthy snacks for her students when she can. “I wish I could afford to bring in snacks every day,” she laments. “The kids in my class are so young. They are not able to provide for themselves. If they are always worried about their basic needs, how can they grow and learn?”





MOTIVATED MENTORS: TEACHERS DIG DEEP TO HELP HUNGRY STUDENTS

As the front line of defense for students who regularly come to school hungry, teachers often take matters into their own hands. When these educators see hungry students struggle to thrive academically and personally, they take action—even if that means reaching into their own pockets to help.

K-8 teachers report taking action in a variety of ways to address the hunger they see in their classrooms:

- 41% purchase food for their classrooms from their own personal funds, spending an average of \$25 per month.
- And of the teachers who say that they regularly see hungry children at school, 74% of them help students sign up for free or reduced price school meals.

But teachers know they can't tackle the problem alone. There is very strong and broad agreement among teachers that schools and the education community have a role to play in addressing childhood hunger.

More than nine in ten teachers agree that, "if communities focused on addressing child hunger, then we would make significant impacts on education."

STACEY HAS PROVIDED SNACKS TO STUDENTS WHO DO NOT HAVE ENOUGH FOOD AT HOME. SHE HAS EVEN PAID FOR A STUDENT'S SCHOOL LUNCHES BECAUSE HIS FAMILY QUALIFIED FOR REDUCED PRICED MEALS BUT STILL COULDN'T AFFORD THE 35 CENTS PER DAY FOR LUNCH.



STACEY FRAKES

3rd, 4th, 5th grade teacher and instructional coach, Madison County, Florida

Stacey has witnessed first-hand the way hunger affects a child's ability to learn and thrive. "I have taught many kids who couldn't focus at all because of hunger," she says. "All they could think about was food. They would ask, 'What time is lunch? Is it lunchtime yet?'"

In an attempt to help, Stacey has provided snacks to students who do not have enough food at home. She has even paid for a student's school lunches because his family qualified for reduced priced meals but still couldn't afford the 35 cents per day for lunch.

"I have seen many children who have hard-working parents who are doing their best to provide for their kids, but even with a full time job, the parents struggle to feed their families," says Stacey. "Hunger is a real problem in our country and I believe there are steps we can take to help ensure that hunger doesn't keep our children from succeeding in school."





BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM:

A Great Way to Start the Day and Help End Childhood Hunger

Nearly 60% of teachers favor moving breakfast out of the cafeteria and into the classroom. They know it's hard for kids to get to school early to eat in the cafeteria and also hard for children to stand out as "free breakfast kids." Share Our Strength promotes efforts to eliminate the stigma and hassle by making breakfast available in the classroom to all students, regardless of income. We work with schools, elected officials, agencies, and non-profits to implement effective programs and reward schools for increasing participation in school breakfast. We also provide schools with grants for essentials such as carts to deliver the breakfasts and janitors to help clean up. Our collaborative efforts are creating new ways to eliminate barriers and feed hungry kids.

ENCOURAGE BREAKFAST, AND **NOURISH OUR FUTURE**

If you haven't eaten since yesterday's lunch, how do you think you'd score on a pop quiz at 10 a.m.? Teachers know that a proper breakfast can make a world of difference for students who regularly come to school hungry. From first-hand experience, they believe there is a strong connection between eating a healthy breakfast and a student's ability to concentrate, behave, and perform academically.

- 98% of teachers see breakfast as extremely important or very important to academic achievement.
- There is almost unanimous agreement that "students who eat breakfast are better able to concentrate and learn throughout the day" (94% strongly agree).

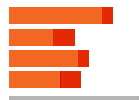
But just offering free breakfast isn't enough to solve the problem. Even when schools offer free and reduced-price breakfasts, all too often, children who qualify for the programs do not participate. Teachers believe this has less to do with the enrollment process and more to do with transportation logistics, students having to

show up early to get breakfast, and stigma among children and parents.

- Only 55% of K-8 teachers believe that all of the students who qualify are enrolled in free and reduced price breakfasts.
- In-classroom breakfast—breakfast served to all students at the beginning of the school day—may be a potential solution.

- > 71% of teachers who had experience with the program say it was positive.
- > More than half of all K-8 teachers support having an in-classroom breakfast program in their school.

Share Our Strength supports innovative programs that are increasing participation in school breakfast.



ASSESS



EDUCATE



ADVOCATE

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Teacher Comments: As big of a problem as it is, it's a solvable problem. Children in our schools have the ability to excel and it starts with having that feeling of safety and enough food and nutrition. It all plays a factor.

SHARE OUR STRENGTH'S NO KID HUNGRY® CAMPAIGN

Reaching Kids Where They Live, Learn and Play

At Share Our Strength®, we see a future in which no child in America grows up hungry. We believe it is entirely possible to end childhood hunger in America, and we have launched Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry® Campaign to end childhood hunger by 2015. The time to end childhood hunger is now!

Through the No Kid Hungry campaign, Share Our Strength is working with governors, mayors and state, community, faith and private sector leaders across the country to connect families facing hunger with the programs that can help them. Our focus is on long-term change, the difference between just feeding a child today and making sure that children in the United States never go hungry again.

Nationally, Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry campaign provides leadership, raises awareness, and advocates for change that will end childhood hunger in America. Locally, Share Our Strength funds the most effective anti-hunger organizations and builds innovative partnerships that bring together private funders, public officials and nonprofit organizations to create a campaign plan, with measurable goals, to end childhood hunger in a particular state or city.

Share Our Strength's No Kid Hungry campaign gives more kids a healthy start to the day by promoting innovative programs that boost school breakfast participation; ensures kids have food at home by helping eligible families enroll in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (food stamps) and the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program; and keeps kids nourished outside of school hours by ensuring access to afterschool snack and meal programs and increasing the availability and accessibility of summer meals programs.

Read the full report and learn how you can take action in your community at strength.org/teachers



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NO KID HUNGRY

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