

STATE RANKINGS: How local schools stack up

Do rankings show poverty, socioeconomics or tangible No Child Left Behind progress?

By **STEPHEN KLOOSTERMAN**
The Holland Sentinel
Posted Jun 29, 2010 @ 05:39 AM

West Michigan — Saugatuck went to the top of the class last week — in the state’s ranking of local schools. The high school was named in the 99th percentile — the top percent of Michigan schools — in a list from the Michigan Department of Education Superintendent Mike Flanagan.

The list ranked public schools according to their scores on the MEAP and MME standardized tests, based on the number of students who scored well enough to be considered “proficient” in English language arts and math and on how much schools were able to improve the scores between the 2007-2008 and 2008-2009 academic years. This is the first year the schools have been ranked comparatively.

Only 28 of the state’s 3,381 school buildings received a higher ranking than Saugatuck on the list, originally compiled by state officials to determine which were the lowest-performing schools eligible for federal grant money.

“I think this is a validation of our teaching and support staff, all their hard work and their commitment to leave no child left behind,” said Saugatuck High School/Middle School Principal Tim Travis.

Black River Public School, Eagle Crest Charter Academy, Hamilton High School and Hamilton Middle School also posted scores at or higher than the 90th percentile.

Holland High School was ranked in the 42nd percentile, making it one of the lowest-ranked high schools in the greater Holland area. Holland Superintendent Brian Davis said that Holland’s score may be due to a state-wide trend of schools in poorer neighborhoods performing worse on standardized tests.

“If we pull out data and look at it based upon demographic factors, we continue to see that poverty does have an impact in Holland specifically,” Davis said. “We are taking this information, albeit limited, to prioritize our work and build upon successful programs that we initiated last year.”

West Ottawa Public Schools showed a wide disparity among its elementary schools. While the urban Pine Creek Elementary School ranked in the 14th percentile, Lakewood and Waukazoo elementary schools in more upscale Park Township neighborhoods both scored in the 87th percentile.

Hamilton Community Schools Director Barb Ferguson said that she wasn’t used to seeing her scores ranked as opposed to other schools. The MEAP and MME tests are mostly used internally, to highlight problems in particular classrooms, she said, or even learning problems for particular students.

“I think most districts look at their MEAP scores that way, because you want to have the highest percentage proficient as possible,” she said.

RANKINGS FOR AREA HIGH SCHOOLS:

School	Percentile
1. Saugatuck High School	99
2. Black River Public School	97
3. Hamilton High School	90
4. Zeeland West High School	81
5. Zeeland East High School	74
6. West Ottawa High School	63
7. Holland High School	42
8. Fennville High School	24

RANKINGS FOR OTHER AREA SCHOOLS

Charter Schools

School	Percentile
Black River Public School*	97
Eagle Crest Charter Academy*	95
Vanderbilt Charter Academy	78

* Scores based on performance of the entire school building. Black River Public School serves grades K-12, Eagle Crest, Vanderbilt K-8.

Fennville Public Schools

School	Percentile
Fennville High	24
Fennville Middle	31
Fennville Elementary	30

Hamilton Community Schools

School Percentile

Hamilton High 90
Hamilton Middle 91
Hamilton Elementary 65
Blue Star Elementary 42
Bentheim Elementary 76
Sandyview
Elementary 74

Holland Public Schools

School Percentile

Holland High 42
Holland Heights 21
East K-7 School 35

* Results for some new schools not available. Data based on data from 2007-2008.

Saugatuck Public Schools

School Percentile

Saugatuck High School 99
Saugatuck Middle School 82
Douglas Elementary School 47

West Ottawa Public Schools

School Percentile

West Ottawa High School 63
North Holland Elementary School 54
Sheldon Woods Elementary School 44
Great Lakes Elementary School 38
Woodside Elementary School 33
Glerum Elementary School 28
Pine Creek Elementary School 15
Lakewood Elementary School 88
Waukazoo Elementary School 87
Harbor Lights Middle School 86

Zeeland Public Schools

School Percentile

Zeeland West High School 81
Zeeland East High School 74
Quincy Elementary School 78
Roosevelt Elementary School 76
Cityside Middle School 69
Creeside Middle School 67
Woodbridge Elementary School 60
New Groningen Elementary School 54

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Comments (30)

ThinkThrough

11 hours ago

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What has happened to West Ottawa Public Schools? I'm glad my kids got out when they did (last one graduated in 2008). Looks like they've really gone downhill from years past. What : shame.

MorninJoe

10 hours ago

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Holland High School was ranked in the 42ND percentile, making it one of the lowest-ranked high schools in the greater Holland area.

I am sure the \$700K soccer field turf, 1/4 Million for athletic concession stands and over \$2 Million dollars in locker rooms and dressing rooms will change all that!!

All those who voted to send others to the poor house with their Yes votes in May for ridiculously higher taxes, do you feel the expenditures justified now? HPS is clueless on what it takes to be a better school system and all the paint and fake grass will not change it.

Jasperware

10 hours ago

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How do you explain the 47 at Douglas Elementary and the 99 at their High School in Saugatuck? Is West Ottawa High at 63 better than Douglas elementary?...that is why the 'easy' explanation of these scores mean nothing.

adutchguy

10 hours ago

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Actually, MorninJoe, all those improvements may change all that, or at least help. When people choose where to live, one of the main factors for their decision is the schools their children will attend. And whether we like it or not, they choose their schools based on things like soccer fields, other sports features, technology features and so forth.

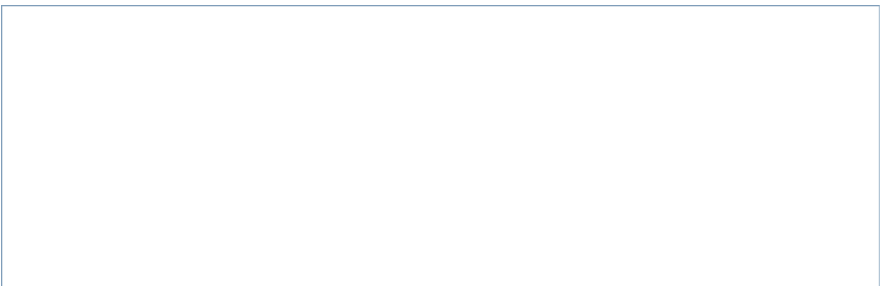
I understand your frustration, but that's the way it works whether we like it or not.

WO Parent

10 hours ago

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West Ottawa is just fine. I have kids that excelled and currently excel at WO. The scores shown are overall and include both 'upscale', poor, and minority students. It's quite a mix at WO. Something other area schools (with the exception of Holland) may not have to deal with.

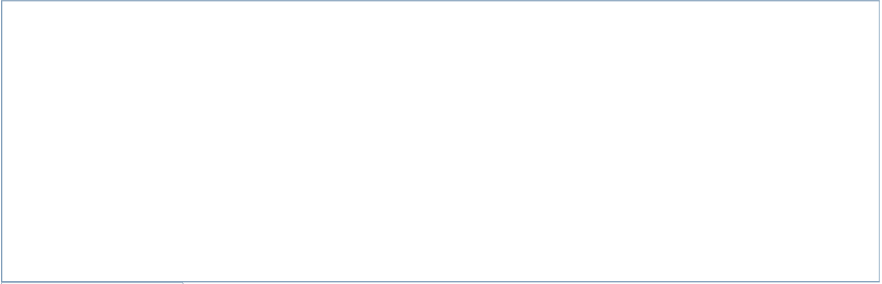
Each parent can do their own thing but we are supporting WO and their great academic, athletic, and performing arts.

Saugatuckguy

10 hours ago

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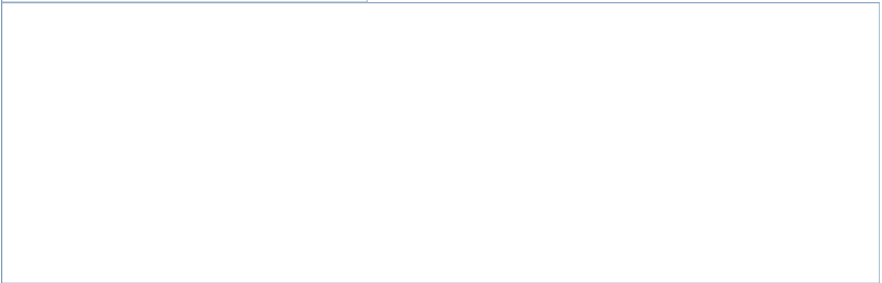
Congratulations to Saugatuck High students, teachers and staff.

jackpinestump

10 hours ago

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I am confused about the numbers. Check out the website and see what you think

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/vs-allschools_325683_7.pdf

The title of this article makes me wonder what the numbers really mean 'Do rankings show poverty, socioeconomics or tangible No Child Left Behind progress?'

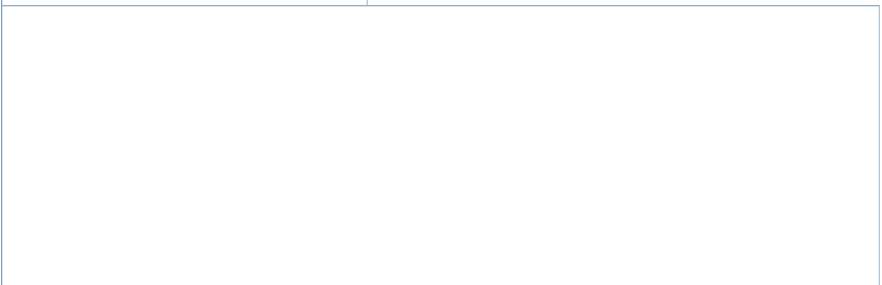
Are the nchools ranked by the number of students meeting standards or the percentage of improvement (nclb). With rankings all over the place within school districts, some clarification would be helprul. Anyone venture an 'educated' guess?

anotherviewpoint

9 hours ago

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These really are meaningless unless you also look at the demographics ... the impact of Charter Schools that only take the elite students out of public schools, how many students that are hear for the harvest then leave to follow the crops and many other reasons. Pulling out the test scores without understanding other factors is plain wrong!

kelli

8 hours ago

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Success depends on the individual. If there is a determined student he/she will do well. One can't blame an entire school system. Many successful people have graduated from both Holland High and West Ottawa. Sure these tests can give an overall view, yet, it is up to each individual to make the proper choices.

spartangreen

8 hours ago

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Supports my theory that poor people are not smart.

Thats why they are poor in the first place, because they are unintelligent, unsuccessful , and most often times lazy.

Its not the school, its the kids attending the school. A teacher can only do so much, its up to the parents to work with the kids to fill in the blanks. But when the parents are absent, high, drunk, lazy, or dont care. They produce kids that do the same.

And these people are reproducing!.

I support embedding birth control in cigarettes, and scratch off lotto tickets.

cgda

8 hours ago

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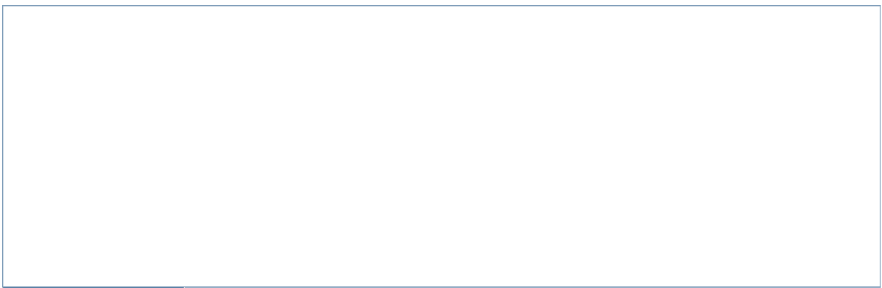
another viewpoint - that is not correct. Charter schools cannot pick and choose who their students are any more than a regular public school. If there are openings and you apply for your child, you are 'in', barring some sort of major behavior problem (expulsion from previous school) that would require deliberation. If the grade is full then they go to a lottery system, still not able to 'choose' which student will be accepted.

Jfreak12000

8 hours ago

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MorninJoe
 No one is going to send thier kid to a school with sub par facilities.
 It's called marketing. As a former support staff member of HPS, I know first hand how run down those facilities were. (The locker rooms in the Dutch Dome were last renovated decades ago, and the conditions there were hazardous, despite the efforts of the cleaning and maintenance staff.)
 The money spent on the soccer field, concession stands, and locker rooms / dressing rooms won't change all that, but it will certainly help.
 Changes at HPS are being done for the better of the kids, and the community. HPS administrators are not about to throw in the towel and go belly up. a la Grand rapids Public Schools.
 All that being said:
 The 2 biggest hurdles HPS still needs to overcome (IMHO) is thier late start in marketing to thier target 'customer' They started many years after other area schools.
 The second is the perception of thier target 'customers' Yes, HPS administrators made some mistakes in the past, but lets leave the past in the past and choose to either be part of the solution, or get out of the way. The kids in our community are depending on us!!

meliweli
 8 hours ago
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Spartangreen,
 How ignorant are you???? Intelligence depends on the person not if someone is poor. I know many children (who are now adults) who came from not so rich families; that apparently you are part of, who have went onto college and graduated with 4.0 and they make 6 digit figures now.
 If a child receives love and support from their parents, teachers, grandparents and so on they will too succeed. It does not depend on if they are poor.
 Birth control in cigarettes and lotto tickets....are you serious? I think that you are showing your true intelligence by writing something so stupid in the first place.
 T4sunshine365
 8 hours ago
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Two words: PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT.

cgda

7 hours ago

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(I wonder why some folks like to leave such a large expanse of white space under their text, is it really just to be annoying?)

Anyway, congrats to the schools - students, parents, and teachers, for doing well in the placement.

jaja

7 hours ago

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cgda-anotherviewpoint is 100% correct. Charter Schools, even though they received state financial aid as the public schools, operate under different rules. They may and do select their students under a variety disguises -- one of which is the 'wait list.'

Sailor

7 hours ago

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jaja - you have some proof of your accusation I assume? Or did you just hear it parroted in the teachers lounge at one of the traditional public schools?

T4sunshine has it spot on, nicely done. That is the absolute correct answer.

Oh, lets not even bring up the corrupt teachers unions.....

Citizen BigPockets

7 hours ago

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jaja:

Nope, both you and another viewpoint are wrong. 've consistently addressed these fabrications you and other charter school haters have tried to post. Charter schools are public schools, and operate under many of the same rules. They are bound by law to take anyone that applies. Now, I'll freely admit that a particular charter school is not the right choice for every child, but that is the whole point of charter schools... choice. You want uniforms and a back tp basics form of education... you pick eaglecrest. Arts and sciences (and no football team), you pick Black River.

Please read the FAQ link below before posting more wives tales about charter schools:

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/PSAQA_54517_7.pdf

adutchguy:

The changes you think will 'help' would only help if the school was fundamentally sound. As a new resident, the FIRST thing I looked at at a school was test scores... then and only then, would I look at the 'extras'. Holland High School didn't even make it past the first step.

The priorities of HPS millage voters, in my opinion, are backwards. Sports is all well and good, but only when the school is fundamentally sound.

sprbnon

6 hours ago

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My kids got a great education at HPS and I'm sure they would have gotten the same at any of the other local schools around the area. We have great schools. The main difference between all the schools in the area is demographics; economic, not race. I think our task as a community is to understand the different needs of changing demographics. There are great examples of schools doing that throughout the country, but it is obvious our community hasn't figured it out yet. We need to or it will effect our whole community, it doesn't matter what school you support.

tulip

6 hours ago

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I didn,t see Holland Christian or did I miss it?

spartangreen
6 hours ago
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Re: meliweli- 'You proved my point. They were smart and made something out of themselves.' If they were dumb they would have stayed poor.

'Intelligence depends on the person not if someone is poor. I know many children (who are now adults) who came from not so rich families; that apparently you are part of, who have went onto college and graduated with 4.0 and they make 6 digit figures now. '

BTW- I started off working nights at Taco Bell, I now own 6 of them.

Citizen BigPockets
6 hours ago

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Holland Christian is a private school, and not required to take the MEAP.

adutchguy
3 hours ago
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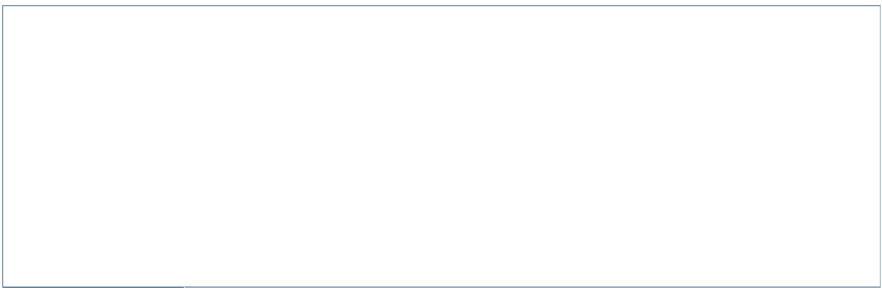
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CitizenBigPockets,

Your point is well taken, but many people looking for a school district in which to live will consider both academic achievement AND facilities.

GetItRight
2 hours ago
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Recipe for Success: Make excuses for your poor performance and then attempt to rectify it by bribing smarter students with \$73million to attend. Are we sure the HPS school administration didn't take the MEAP test by mistake? Since when is teaching and discipline not part of the equation?

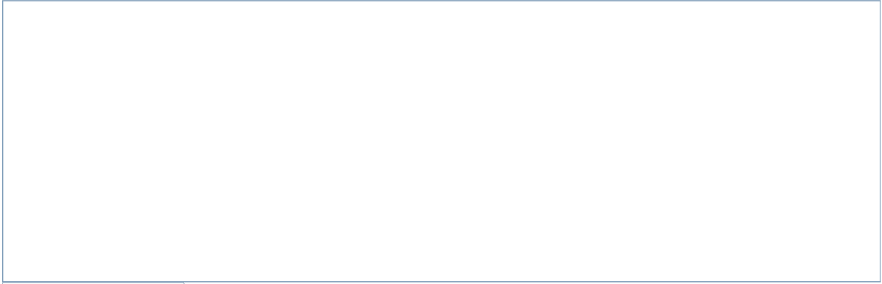
Prediction: Future failure at increased cost - gaining speed and losing altitude.

Y U Crying

2 hours ago

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Citizen Big Pockets - you even state it your self that charter schools are not the same as public schools.

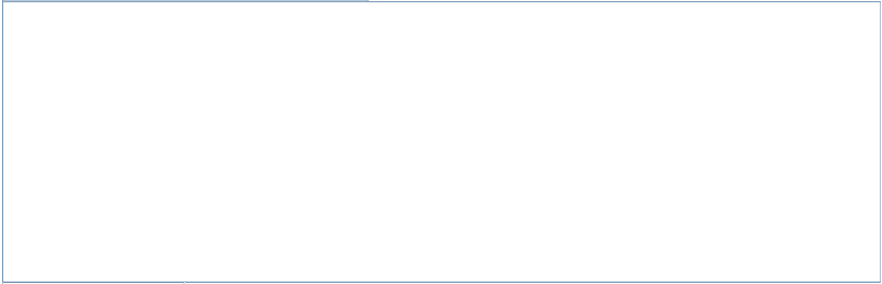
Quote - 'and operate under many of the same rules.' It should be... operate UNDER THE SAME RULES not many of the same rules. To me, one then is comparing apples to oranges if they are not under the same rules.

cgda

2 hours ago

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I don't understand the sour attitude toward charter schools. They seem to fill a need, and do it well. All else being equal, I prefer the smaller schools, even if they do not offer all the larger public schools can in the way of music, drama, sports, or whatever. I think the larger schools (public) obviously have much to offer as well, and if they are a good fit for your child then great, enjoy.

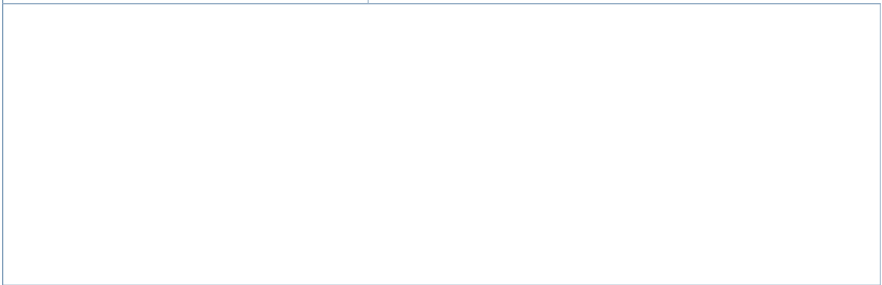
I have lived in 3 distinct areas of the state that offer charter school education and from my observation, entrance is very fair and also, very much in the public for inspection. Waiting lists can be long and it sucks to not get in, but that doesn't mean they are not being run in as fair a way as possible.

cgda

2 hours ago

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What 'same rules' are we worrying about, YUCrying? Starting before labor day, number of attendance days per year, teacher unions? What is the disparity of rules that have you in such a bunch?

hollander2

1 hour ago

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One thing to remember is any school who has more than 29 juniors (the year they take the MME) who receive special education services are considered to have a sub-group and those students' scores count with the general population. If a school has less than 29 juniors - thier scores do not count. Now I know just because they receive spec. ed. services does not mean they will score poorly but on average they do. Bigger schools typically have more than 29 students and their scores are lower than the smaller schools.

Congrats to Saugatuck! Great job students, staff, parents, and administrators!

adutchguy

1 hour ago

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A significant difference between charter and district schools is district schools must accept as a student every child who lives in the district. Charter schools can cap the the number of students they will teach.

Charter schools can also have a focus. Black River, for example, markets itself as a college prep school. If Black River's curriculum is geared toward college bound students, do you think parents whose children struggle academically will send their kids to a college prep high school? Probably not. So where do the academically struggling go? You got it. The district schools.

School districts must provide services for K - 12th grades. Charter schools can pick the grades they wish to service.

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