



December 2024

The Educator

A newspaper for School Councils in Newfoundland and Labrador



Message from the NLFSC President



Hello Members!

As we approach the Christmas season, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish our school council members, parents, students, school and all working at the Department of Education a very happy and safe Christmas and a peaceful 2025.

While Christmas brings festive cheer and cause for celebration for most, for others it is the most difficult and challenging time of the year. The loss of a loved one, depression, poor health, and financial difficulties prevents many people from feeling merry and jolly this time of year.

NLFSC has already heard from numerous parents who are struggling to make Christmas for their families. Many are living paycheck to paycheck and there's no spare money for buying gifts.

Sadly, not all kids will wake up to a tree laden with gifts on Christmas morning.

It's important to remember those less fortunate and do what we can to help them over the holiday period. Christmas invites us all to show kindness, especially towards families facing financial hardship. Donating gifts to a charity or giving to a food bank are just a couple of ways we can participate in the season of giving and help those in need. These acts of kindness will not only literally make someone else's Christmas, but also brings inner peace and joy to those who give.

While we await the establishment of the Provincial Advisory Council on Education I continue to serve as President of the NL Federation of School Councils. This role has allowed me to see all the remarkable work being carried at the school level by parents and councils who truly care and want the best for their schools and students.

Many school councils are aware of the benefits of parental involvement in education and are encouraging more parents and guardians to volunteer at school events. Some council members are assisting with breakfast and lunch programs and organizing winter coats/clothing fairs in order to ensure all students at their school are properly outfitted for winter. School Councils in NL are fully aware of their advisory roles and are actively engaged in and

actions are focused on improving the quality of school programs and increasing the levels of student achievement. Many school councils are also having discussions and providing information on the School Development Plan at their respective schools. It is good to see the school council and school staff working together to establish academic goals and improve student learning.

During the holiday season, I encourage you to take time in your busy day to pause and reflect on the meaning of the season. Look to your children for the joy you need and embrace the small moments that make this time of year so special.

I wish you a very Merry Christmas filled with peace, joy, special family moments, and a happy, healthy New Year.

Have a festive season. Take care, stay safe.

Don

Email: Don.Coombs@easternhealth





Province Unveils Proposed Policy for Cell Phones in Schools

The provincial government is proposing that all cell phones and personal electronic devices be barred from being seen or used in all schools and on school grounds.

It comes after a number of jurisdictions introduced similar policies to address what many consider to be a serious and growing problem.

The new proposed policy was released today and comes as evidence mounts regarding the negative effects of cell phone use on students.

The proposed policy quotes highlights from the 2023 UNESCO Technology in Education Report, which suggests a negative link between excessive information and communication technologies and student performance. It also

cites use of smartphones in the classroom as leading to students engaging in more non-school-related activities affecting recall and comprehension.

That includes the negative impact on a student's physical and mental well-being.

The policy proposes that students in K-6 will not be allowed to have personal electronic devices in schools, and students in 7 to 12 who bring a cell phone or other device to school must switch it off and store it out of sight.

Feedback is being gathered until December 6th with a final decision to be made in time for implementation in January.

Facts on School Violence in NL Schools

The total number of reported violent/aggressive incidents has risen from 3,659 in 2018-19 to 4,052 during the 2023-24 school year (an average of 22 incidents inside of schools in the province every school day).

The Royal Newfoundland Constabulary, which patrols in St. John's, Corner Brook and the Labrador West region, was called to schools 178 times in the 2023-2024 school year, compared to 111 times the year prior.

The Signal

Written by Anna Rak

Experts disagree on whether banning smartphones is a silver bullet or just a band-aid solution for classrooms

“Excuse me, phone away,” Dante Luciani tells his students. “Phone away.”

Luciani said he constantly reminds his students to stay off their devices to comply with the ban implemented at Cathedral High School, where he teaches, in Hamilton, Ont. He says these “micro-conversations” disrupt his classes.

The problem extends beyond the classroom, too. When coaching a soccer game during a physical education class, he noticed the goalie with his head down in his cellphone.

“There’s no reason to have a phone on you,” while on the soccer pitch, he said.

Smartphones in schools.

Teachers all across Canada find themselves competing these days with the ubiquitous mini-computers in everyone’s pocket. Nearly 90 percent of teenagers carry a smartphone, studies say, so educators are concerned about how phones affect students’ grades and well-being. Many teachers let students use their phones as

learning tools. But it can be difficult for students to pull themselves away from the little screen and focus during a math lesson.

A 2023 report from a United Nations agency said it can take students up to 20 minutes to refocus after being distracted from the task at hand.

The Global Education Monitoring Report, *Technology in Education: A Tool on Whose Terms?*, produced by UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), said some technology can be helpful, but not when it is inappropriately used or abused in the classroom.

The study said removing phones from schools in Belgium, Spain, and the United Kingdom improved student performance.

After the study UNESCO called for a global ban on smartphones in schools. In the report, the agency said that a “human-centred vision” of education is better than a digital one.

Canadian schools’ reaction

In response, eight provinces restricted phones in classrooms at the start of the present school year, but there are some outliers.

Quebec restricted student phone use almost a year earlier, in December 2023. Newfoundland and Labrador are drafting a policy on the issue. The territories’ education systems don’t have a policy.

What does a ban entail?

Every province has different guidelines and schools use different enforcement strategies. Some require students to keep their phone off and away for the entire school day. Others only ban phones during instructional time or leave it up to teachers.

Some schools use the phone hotel, a plastic sheet with pockets that is hung on a wall in the classroom. When students enter the room, they put their phone in the hotel.

Luciani teaches physical education, science, and drama. A phone hotel does not help him since he moves between the stage, science lab, gymnasium, and field every day.

“Would I carry this hotel around with me all day?” says Luciani, shaking his head. “Even if we buy them, that’s another expense on the school.”

At Carleton Place High School in Carleton Place, Ont., math teacher Mike Lieff uses coloured-coded, laminated signs to tell students when they are allowed to use their phones. A red X means stop and a green checkmark means go. He says the system helps, but he is still struggling.

“As soon as the math lesson was done, some of them wanted to play games,” says Lieff, “and it was like Whack-a-mole trying to get them to stop.”

The Anxious Generation

Games, social media, and notifications pull students’ attention away from class and into the online world. According to New York University professor Jonathan Haidt’s 2024 book, *The Anxious Generation*, the average young person’s social and communication apps deliver 192 notifications a day.

That number gets even bigger when other apps like games, reminders, and news alerts are loaded on their phones.

Haidt’s book covers the “great rewiring” of childhood. He says play-based childhood has ended, and phones have taken over. Cellphones, he says, are addictive and designed to monopolize attention.

Haidt said schools should be phone-free all day, every day.

“Many students with access to their phones use them in class and pay far less attention to their teachers,” he writes.

A 2020 study by a University of Toronto professor found that excessive cellphone use can harm life satisfaction, self-esteem, and self-reported happiness.

In a Canadian Medical Association Journal article titled *Smartphones, social media use and youth mental health*, psychiatry professor Elia Abi-Jaude also reported that mobile phone addiction disrupts sleep and concentration, so students are bored quicker.



RNC Issues Warning After New, Highly Dangerous Drugs Found in Province

RNC Issues Warning After New, Highly Dangerous Drugs Found in Province

The RNC is warning the public after a recent drug seizure resulted in the confirmed presence of drugs never before detected in the province. Health Canada has confirmed that it's the first time that the presence of carfentanil and methylfentanyl – found as part of a recent seizure on the northeast Avalon, has been detected in Newfoundland and Labrador. Carfentanil is a synthetic opioid normally used as a sedative for large animals, like horses, and may be 100 times more toxic than fentanyl. It looks similar to table salt and according to information released by the RNC, ingesting just one or two grains can be fatal to humans. Methylfentanyl meanwhile, is one of the most potent opioids – estimated to be between 400 and 600 times stronger than morphine. Both drugs were being sold as fentanyl and could increase the risk of overdose and death. Police are offering a reminder to anyone who

uses illicit drugs or knows someone who does, to have a naloxone kit nearby. Free naloxone kits are distributed by the Department of Health. Meanwhile, RNC say the Good Samaritan Act protects those experiencing a drug overdose or anyone who is present, from possession charges when they call 911 for help.

Province Accepting Public Input for 2025 Budget

The province is seeking input from the public on their priorities for the 2025 budget.

A pre-budget questionnaire

<https://www.engagenl.ca/en/budget-2025>

is now available on government's engageNL site, which focuses on understanding concerns and assessing priorities.

All feedback received will be used in planning for the budget, which will be delivered in the spring. In addition to the questionnaire, written submissions are being accepted by email (Budget2025@gov.nl.ca) or by sending submissions directly to Confederation Building: Department of Finance Main Floor, East Block, Confederation Building P.O. Box 8700, St. John's, NL, A1B 4J6 The deadline for feedback is January 6.



The SNAP program is now accepting clients for group in the new year!

SNAP, which stands for Stop Now and Plan, is an evidence-based cognitive behavioural model that provides a framework for teaching children, between the ages of 6 and 11, who are struggling with behaviour issues effective emotional regulation, self-control and problem-solving skills.

SNAP has been developed by the Child Development Institute (CDI). Key Asset NL has an annual license to offer this program in both St. John's and in Happy Valley Goose Bay, Newfoundland & Labrador.

The primary goal of SNAP is to keep children and youth in school and out of conflict, increase problem solving and decision making, and improve relationships.
comfortable.

For more information on how to apply for the SNAP program please

Email: fbcr.ecruitment@keyassetsnl.ca

Call: 709-579-1624



Moose Goulash Offered at Select Schools

The NL School Lunch Program has introduced a special Moose Goulash on their December menu, available at select schools. Made with locally-sourced moose from our not-for-profit license, this hearty dish is crafted thanks to a generous donation from hunter Kenneth Griffiths and expert preparation by Anderson's Butcher and Takeaway.

This contribution will allow the School Lunch Program to serve 2,500 meals across ten schools, supporting our mission to provide nutritious, locally-sourced food.

Schools Serving Moose Goulash:

Admirals Academy, Anthony Paddon, Clarenville Middle School, Clarenville High School, Gander Academy, Goulds Elementary, Holy Cross – Holyrood, Holy Trinity Elementary, St. Bernard's Elementary, St. Paul's, Gander.

Thank you for supporting our commitment to quality, health, and community!



Congratulations to Jo Anne Broders, a teacher at Smallwood Academy in Gambo, on receiving the Governor General's History Award for Excellence in Teaching.

Throughout her career, Ms. Broders has championed the understanding of Newfoundland and Labrador's rich history and culture. Recently, Ms. Broders' Grade 8 students consulted archives and worked with Saqamaw Mi'sel Joe, then-Chief of Miawpukek First Nation, and Fred Jeans of the local area's heritage committee to explore the identities of the 13 people believed to be buried in a Mi'kmaq cemetery in their town. Students used their learnings from the project to help design a plaque to honour the individuals and then collaborated with the town to erect signage at the cemetery. As a testament to Ms. Broders' approach to fostering lifelong learning, the students committed to continue visiting the site in the future and share its history with others.

The Governor General's History Awards recognize excellence in five categories: Teaching, Museums, Scholarly Research, Community Programming, and Popular Media. Each award category has its own jury, selection process, and prize structure. Each award is accompanied by a \$2,500 prize as well as \$1,000 for the teacher's school.

Ms. Broders is also a past recipient of the 2023 Premier's Award for Teaching.

Thank-you Ms. Broders for your commitment to the preservation of this important part of our history. The Federation and all school council members are very proud of you!

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Teaching them how to read is probably one of the most important duties a civilised society owes to its children.

Professor Pamela Snow

Student Intake Upcoming for Expanded 2025 Trail of the Caribou Commemorations Program

Student intake for the expanded 2025 Trail of the Caribou Commemorations program will begin this week through the [Historic Sites Association](#).

Following the repatriation of Newfoundland and Labrador's unknown soldier in May, the Honourable Dr. Andrew Furey, Premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, announced the program would increase from 30 to 100 Newfoundland and Labrador students annually.

The Trail of the Caribou Commemorations Program supports junior and senior high students' travel to Northern France and Belgium to attend remembrance ceremonies at the five caribou monuments, as well as the July 1 ceremony at the Beaumont-Hamel Memorial. This program prioritizes the inclusion of students from all geographic regions of the province. To support this priority, the 5th Canadian Rangers Patrol Group has been added as a new partner in 2025, providing a conduit to more than 200 communities across the province. Last year, the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts and Recreation partnered with the Office of Indigenous Affairs and Reconciliation

to include Indigenous youth on the delegation and this component will continue in 2025.

The Trail of the Caribou Commemorations Program is a partnership between the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, the Royal Canadian Legion – Newfoundland and Labrador Command, the Historic Sites Association of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the 5th Canadian Ranger Patrol Group.

NLTA Elects New President



Congratulations to Dale Lambe on being elected as President of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association for 2025-27. He begins his two-year term of office on August 1, 2025.

Mr. Lambe is the current Vice-President of the NLTA and the Principal of Villanova Junior High in Conception Bay South.

Members of the NLFSC executive look forward to working with Mr. Langdon on shared education concerns.



Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week February 9-15, 2025

Teacher/Staff Appreciation Week will take place from February in Newfoundland and Labrador. During this week the NL Federation of School Councils encourages communities from across the province to recognize the contributions of those who inspire, motivate and care for students.

Every school has dedicated teachers and school staff who play a vital role in ensuring that students receive the quality education they need to become the leaders of the future.

Please take time to acknowledge your school staff for all they do and give to our students. The activities do not have to be costly - even a simple handwritten note or thank you card goes a long way in letting our educators and school staff know they are appreciated and valued.

Our educators and school staff play an integral role in the success of our students and TSAW provides us with an opportunity to highlight and thank them for their hard work.

Looking for Ideas for TSAW?

(Don't forget the Principal, Vice Principal bus drivers, secretaries, student assistants, custodians and district staff).

- Hang a "We Love Our Teachers/Staff" banner on the front of the school.
- Place an apple with a note from the School Council in each mailbox or on each desk.
- Breakfast (or lunch, or snacks.... food is always good!)
- A draw for prizes donated by parents and local businesses
- Engage students in showing appreciation by writing notes of appreciation.
- Place a basket of apples, cheese and fruit platters in staff room
- A Wall of Appreciation: posters or a banner demonstrating appreciation
- Host a 'Teacher and Staff Appreciation Tea/Lunch'



Kids Help Phone -NL

Kids Help Phone provides immediate help and hope that young people need and deserve 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Every day, Kids Help Phone counsellors answer calls and online questions from across Canada. No matter what the problem or concern our counsellors are there to provide immediate and caring support, information and referrals to the kids who reach out to us.

The mission is to improve the well-being of Canadian children and youth by providing them anonymous and confidential professional counselling, referrals, and information through technologically-based communications media. Last year, Kids Help Phone helped Canadian kids in need well over two million times through our phone and online counselling services.

Kids Help Phone's professional team provides support on a range of topics (grief, sadness, stress, anxiety, depression, suicide, etc.) and questions that children frequently ask. Toll-free phone: 1-800-668-6868

Stats Canada Survey on Disability

Released: 2024-10-08

In 2022, 5.6% of Canadians aged 15 and older had a learning disability, 1.5% had a developmental disability, and 4.9% had a memory disability. Consistent with the trend in the overall disability rate, all three of these disability types increased in prevalence from 2017 to 2022.

The prevalence of learning disabilities was slightly higher in women (5.9%) than in men (5.2%), and the same was true for memory disabilities (5.5% vs. 4.3%). Developmental disabilities were more common in men (1.8%) than in women (1.3%).

Learning and developmental disability rates were highest in youth aged 15 to 24 years. Among this age group, 9.2% of Canadians had a learning disability, compared with 5.3% of working age adults (25 to 64 years), and 4.1% of seniors aged 65 years and older.

Similarly, the rate of developmental disability was higher among youth (3.8%) than working age adults (1.4%) and seniors (0.6%). By contrast, memory disabilities were more prevalent among seniors (6.6%) than youth (4.0%) or working age adults (4.5%).

Mental health-related disabilities commonly co-occur with developmental and memory

disabilities More than 9 in 10 persons with developmental disabilities (92%) or memory disabilities (98%) had at least one other disability type.

Among those with developmental disabilities, the most common co-occurring types were learning disabilities (69%) and mental health-related disabilities (66%).

For those with memory disabilities, the two most commonly co-occurring disability types were pain-related and mental health-related disabilities.

Mental health-related disabilities were the most common co-occurrence among those aged 15 to 24 (80%) and 25 to 44 (81%), while pain-related disabilities were most common among those aged 45 to 64 (81%) and 65 years and older (75%).

Majority of persons with memory and developmental disabilities have unmet needs for disability supports.

In 2022, 56% of persons with disabilities had unmet needs for assistive aids and devices, medications, and healthcare therapies and services. Those with memory (62%) and developmental (70%) disabilities were more likely to report unmet needs. As well, the percentage of unmet needs differed between those with more severe (70%) and milder (56%) developmental disabilities.

Nearly one in four students with learning disabilities study part-time.

Nearly one in four (24%) current or recent students aged 15 to 24 years with learning disabilities were studying part-time, and half of them (50%) reported that this was due to their condition.

Additionally, many students with learning disabilities received educational accommodations.

The most common were extended time during tests and exams (27%); a computer, laptop or tablet with specialized software or applications (13%); and a quiet room or sensory room (10%).



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Membership Renewal

Many thanks to the school councils who have renewed their 2022-23 membership with NLFSC.

If you have not renewed membership and would like a renewal form, please email us at nlfsci@gmail.com

Why should your school be a part of NLFSC?

Your continued membership will help support our mission to advocate for excellence in education for all students in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Your membership also allows NLFSC to continue to represent the concerns of School Councils.

The NL Federation of School Councils is the provincial umbrella group for School Councils, provides school councils and parent groups with a voice on education issues, and encourages positive parental involvement at all levels of education.

The Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils also offers information, support, and guidance to parents and school councils to help them better understand the policies and procedures of their local schools, school districts, and the Department of Education.

African and Afrodescendant Culture Day

Held every year on 24 January, World Day for African and Afrodescendant Culture celebrates the many vibrant cultures of the African continent and African Diasporas around the world, reinforcing UNESCO's mandate to promote respect for cultural diversity and human creativity around the globe. As a rich source of the world's shared heritage, promoting African and Afrodescendant culture is crucial for sustainable development, mutual respect, dialogue and peace.

Celebration of this day also aims to promote the widest possible ratification and implementation of this Charter by African States, thereby strengthening the role of culture in promoting peace on the continent.

English School District Weather Protocol

The main goal of any closure or delay, be it for weather or a mechanical issue, is to ensure the safety of students. With respect to weather, the District recognizes that it cannot account for every conceivable circumstance and that families are in the best position to judge whether a student can travel safely to and from school and bus stops.

The Decision Makers

Authority to close schools and/or school zones due to weather is delegated to the authorized zone administrator - which is usually a principal or assistant principal. Where a school system (that is schools in close proximity) is impacted, the authorized zone administrator is advised to consult with the other school administrations. In areas where District Offices are located (St. John's Metro, Gander, Corner Brook, & Happy Valley - Goose Bay), delays or closures are managed by District staff.

The Time Frame

Closure or delay decisions are generally announced between 6:30 a.m. and 7:00 a.m. Communication will be made through local media - generally radio - as well as through Status Central on the main page of the District's

Website. Many schools also use Synervoice technology and Twitter.

Notices of closure will normally indicate that there will be a further update later in the morning, generally around 10:30 a.m. or 11:00 a.m. Delays should be communicated for a specific number of hours - for example, one or two hours. If a morning delay is longer than one-hour, scheduled Kinderstart sessions for that morning will be cancelled.

Typically, closures for the entire day are only announced in the circumstance of a major weather event.

Schools may not necessarily close early because the weather is deteriorating while school is in session. It may be prudent and safer for students to remain in school during the peak of a storm.

Weather criteria taken into consideration when deciding a delay or closure include: snowfall; wind; visibility, temperature; and, road conditions.

Authorized zone administrators are provided weather forecasts from a contracted weather service and they can also consult with their student transportation staff or contractor, local municipalities or the Department of Transportation and Works.

The weather policy provides wind chill temperature thresholds at which schools will close. These are:

Grade	Temperature
K - 3	-45°C
K - 7	-50°C
K - Level III	-55°C

Occasionally, as with anyone making decisions dependent upon weather and a forecast, things can change quickly and the District attempts to make prudent decisions in the best interest of student and staff safety.



Weather Safety Reminders

As we all know, Newfoundland and Labrador weather is highly unpredictable and can cause challenges for families and schools. Here are some safety reminders to help everyone be prepared for our weather. Parents and Guardians are in the best position to judge weather, road, and safety conditions for their children.

- All students should be appropriately dressed for the season, particularly winter weather and changing conditions.
- Families should have alternate/back-up arrangements in place should an issue occur with student transportation, such as a delay caused by poor weather or road conditions.
- Families are reminded that in most circumstances, Kindergarten students must have an adult present for after-school drop off by the bus.

NL Schools

NL Schools is an entity of the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador tasked with the education of all English-speaking students and K to 12 public schools in the province.

As of January 1, 2024, NL Schools includes:

- Over 63,000 students;
- Over 250 schools, including five alternate sites; and
- Over 10,000 employees.

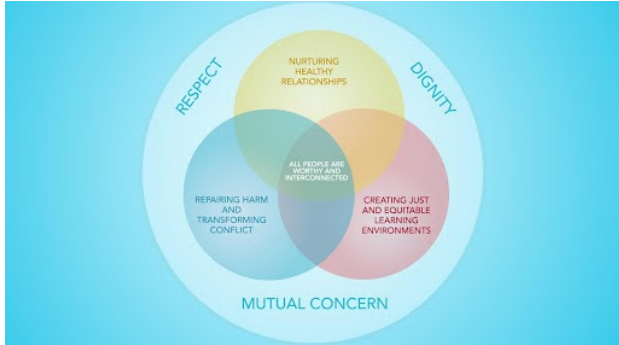
There are four NL Schools regional offices, located in:

Happy Valley-Goose Bay (1-709-896-2431)

Corner Brook (1-709-637-4000)

Gander (1-709-256-2547)

St. John's (1-709-256-2547)



Restorative justice in schools represents a transformative approach to discipline that focuses on repairing harm and rebuilding relationships rather than punishing students for misbehavior. This practice is based on principles of empathy, respect, and accountability, encouraging students to understand the impact of their actions, take responsibility, and actively participate in the healing process.

The goal of restorative justice is to “build community and repair relationships while supporting reflection, communication, and problem-solving skills for staff and students,” which can lead to more effective learning and teaching. It emphasizes dialogue and mutual agreement, involving all parties affected by a conflict—including victims, offenders, and the wider school community—to address issues collaboratively.

By shifting from a punitive model to one that seeks to understand and resolve the root causes of behavior, schools implementing restorative

justice report significant reductions in suspensions, improved student behavior, and better overall school climate. This approach not only helps in managing individual incidents of misconduct but also fosters a culture of care, respect, and community, essential for educational success and social development.

Since 2014, significant work has been made to re-imagine education delivery through a restorative justice lens in Newfoundland and Labrador by **Relationships First NL**. Many of the schools, with the support of the Department of Education, are engaged to varying degrees to help promote and implement restorative justice principles and practices. This includes NL Schools, Indigenous schools, independent schools, and the Conseil Scolaire Francophone Provincial.

To learn about Relationships First NL, and restorative justice in education,

visit: www.rfnl.org

Prime Minister’s Award Selection Committee

NLFSC has been asked to evaluate the nominations for the 2024 Prime Minister’s Award for Teaching Excellence selection process.



Christmas Greetings from the NLFSC Executive

There is nothing more meaningful than spending time with family, especially during the holidays. May the Christmas season warm your soul, bring love to your heart and bless you with everything life has to offer.

On behalf of the NLFSC Executive
(Don, Craig, Dave, Lori, and Denise)

**Merry Christmas and sincere wishes for a
healthy and happy new year!**

2025
HAPPY NEW YEAR

The Educator is a benefit of membership in the Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils.

Annual membership dues are based on school enrollment. Individual subscriptions are available at \$15 per year.

The views expressed or implied in this publication are not necessarily official positions of the Federation.

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