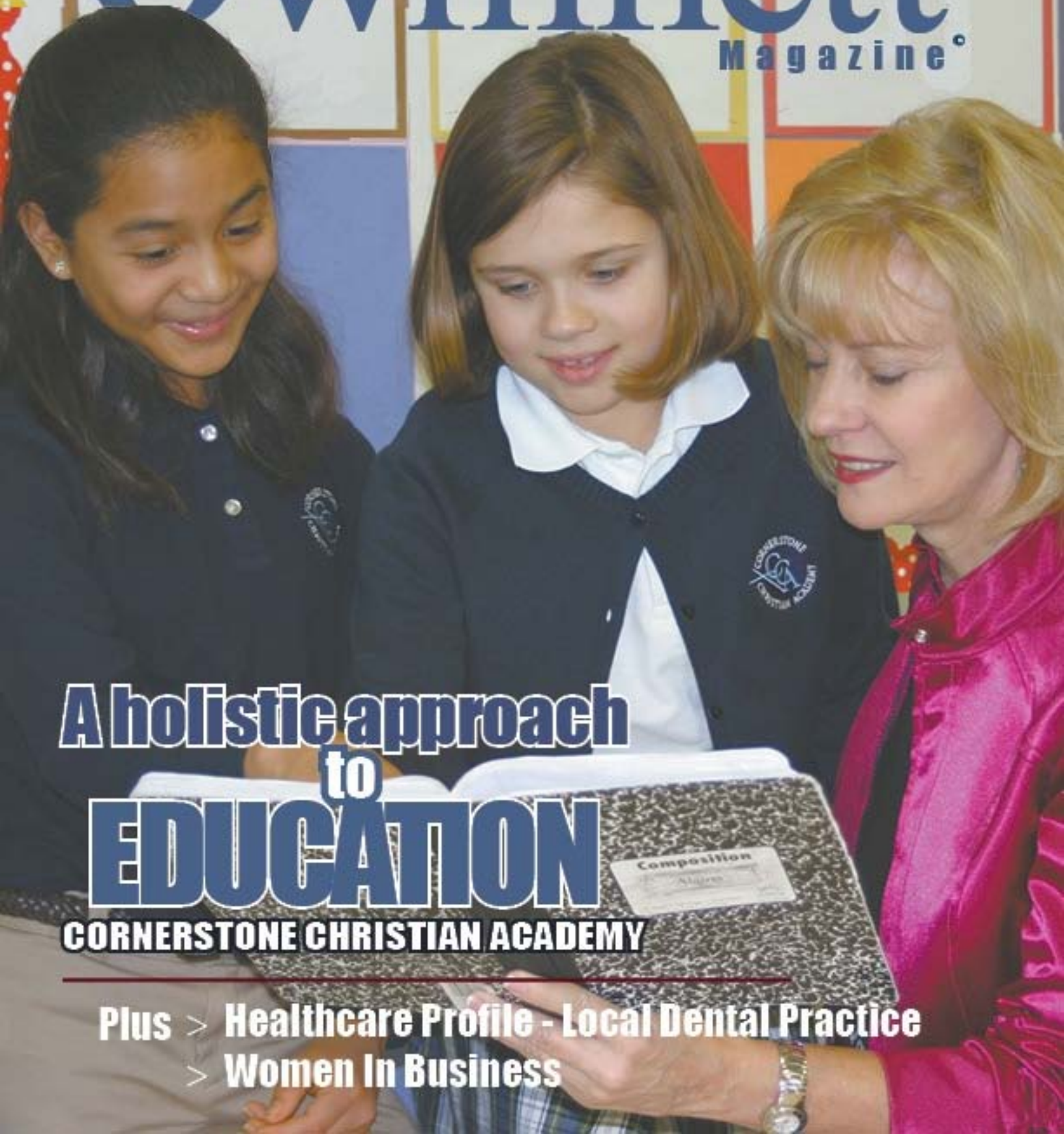


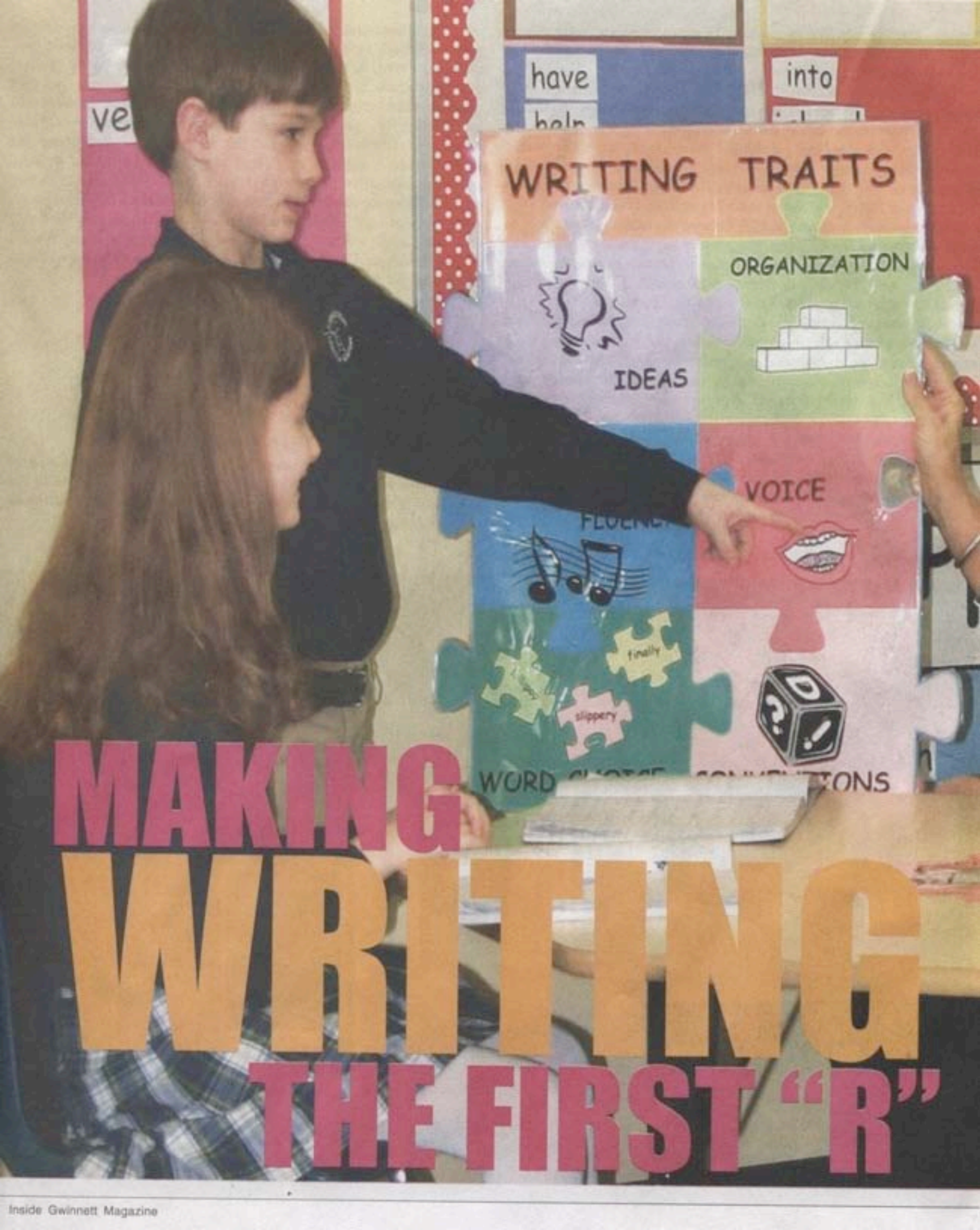
# inside Owinnett Magazine



## A holistic approach to **EDUCATION**

**CORNERSTONE CHRISTIAN ACADEMY**

Plus > Healthcare Profile - Local Dental Practice  
> Women In Business



# MAKING WRITING THE FIRST "R"

have  
help

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## WRITING TRAITS



IDEAS

ORGANIZATION



FLUENCY



VOICE



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slippery

WORD CHOICE

CONVENTIONS





Photos By Mick Danskin

Reflecting on the unique relationship that exists between God, humanity, and writing, Nobel Laureate, Elie Wiesel, has suggested on more than one occasion that writing is essential not only to understanding what transcends humanity, but also to remembering what transcends the human experience. Cornerstone Christian Academy has embraced this idea wholeheartedly. Determined to be an innovative community of learners, CCA is leading the way for private Christian schools by focusing its energy and resources on developing students who excel in the art of writing.

Since 2001, it has been CCA's mission to provide students (grades K-8) with a superior education that lays a foundation for Christian leadership in the world. Taking a holistic approach to education that includes everything from technology classes to competitive sports programs, to providing students ample opportunities to serve in the local community, CCA asserts that the total learning experience the school provides must be firmly rooted, not just in CCA's rigorous math and science curriculum, but also in the development of keen writing skills.

CCA is not alone in this conviction. Recently, the College Board (the same organization that produces the SAT) released a document from the National Commission on Writing that

revealed to families and schools across America what CCA has always known: "Writing is the neglected R in school reform."

Among other qualifications, the commission called writing a "marker attribute" and a "gatekeeper" for high-wage employment and/or entrance into coveted universities.

The commission also concluded that writing is not a skill that is cultivated quickly or easily; therefore, it needs to be a focal point in a child's education from as early as kindergarten. CCA is not surprised by this endorsement from the College Board and exists as one of only a few private schools in the Gwinnett County area to commit significant resources to enhance students' writing skills.



*Cornerstone Christian Academy's Gail Davis reads with two students.*

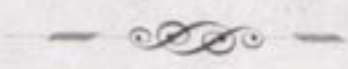
**D**e Ann Crawford, CCA Head of School, has spent the past seven years working alongside active parents to build a Christ-centered learning community. However, the vision of CCA has been extended past the standard concerns of teacher to student ratios (CCA's is an impressive 12:1) and fine arts programs (CCA offers music, drama and art) to include the additional talents of Gail Davis, the school's Reading and Writing Specialist.

Davis, whose 30 years of experience and numerous teaching awards speak volumes to the dedication to her role, has spent the past three years perfecting a writing program at CCA that continues to astound her peers and students. Her approach to teaching writing is to coach students by nurturing their hard work and celebrating their creativity, all while taking them step-by-step through a very complex process that includes organization, diction, the selection of voice, and such literary skills as syntax and convention. "We actually think of our writing as talking on paper," she shared.

Davis contends that children are practically built to write, with the earliest evidence appearing on the walls and furniture of our houses via crayons and parents' misplaced permanent markers. Using writing labs, small groups of students in CCA's earliest grades share their ideas, provide helpful feedback, and encourage each other toward creative expression. "Our revision process is seen as an opportunity to stretch and grow, not as a time to fix mistakes" Davis explained. "You've never seen a child sit taller than when he is sitting in the author's chair."

CCA is not just trying to produce authors, though Davis is quick to point out that the purpose of the program is to build a foundation for writing that will help students become effective communicators, as well as develop a sense of self-worth, personal initiative, and an appreciation of others' ideas. These goals harmonize perfectly with the standards for writing across the curriculum that major universities, such as Brown and Marquette, are implementing. In fact, Marquette University explicitly states on its web site that, beyond being merely a necessary job skill, writing is the primary basis upon which a person's learning and intelligence will be judged.

**A**ccording to Crawford, the focus on writing serves multiple purposes at CCA. Her young school has maintained a 100% acceptance rate at local private schools after graduation from CCA, which implies that the aggressive writing program has produced academically strong students. Even more importantly, though, CCA is passionate about building a platform for its students to experience a holistic education by creating opportunities to serve others, while simultaneously providing students a biblical foundation upon which to stand.



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