School consultant John Littleford returned to Post Oak last week to explore that question. Littleford met with six groups of parents over a two-day period, and POS trustee Stuart Dow met with another. Altogether, 85 parents joined the discussions. This was not a sales pitch for a Post Oak high school, but rather, an effort to discern the depth of support for an idea that first emerged in parent focus groups this past fall, and to hear both what parents like about that idea as well as their concerns.

For a taste of parent responses, here are several e-mails that I received in the days before and after Littleford’s visit:

Dear John:
When I first got the flyer about the Post Oak High School, I was very intrigued. I have three kids in Primary, so I have a very special interest if this high school endeavor comes into fruition. I went to the meeting today headed by John Littleford. His first question was, “How interested are you in having a Post Oak High School?” All the parents were then asked to voice out what they like about the idea of a Post Oak High School?
Oak High School and their concerns. As I sat there listening, I suddenly had a realization. I send my kids to Post Oak School because I believe in the Montessori philosophy of raising a child. Why can’t I just let them continue to grow in this learning environment? I get this intense fear that if this Post Oak High School does not happen, I might have to send my kids to a traditional classroom with its day in and day out drudgery and humdrum. Maybe we should rephrase Mr. Littleford’s question. “We are going to have a Post Oak High School in 2012, what can we, as a community, do to make this happen?” I see the creation of the Post Oak High School as the beginning of something beautiful… a challenge that we should all take for our kids’ future... The time has come… Let’s take the first step and move forward.

Sincerely,
Amelia Ng

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John

You may have already heard this speech by Ken Robinson. If not, give it a listen (link below). Bonus is he has a wonderful sense of humor.

I think you will find it on point with your work at Post Oak and consideration of a high school program.

Best,

Aaron Thomas


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John,

I am personally very interested in this. I’d love to be able to send my kids to a school where we’ve grown to love Montessori in general and POS in particular, and to despair of our options for high school—there seems to be a shortage (as usual, the result one way or the other of state intervention—whenever there is a shortage you can bet on this) of good high schools. And the ones available are difficult to get into, without politics—and suppose we got into St. John’s...the idea of the conventional schooling, extreme competitiveness, too much homework, etc., does not entice me. (Though I like a lot of its rigor and the emphasis on classical education—Greek, Latin, etc.) I honestly think I might just quit working and homeschool until ninth grade if we have no POS High. I am not as negative on homeschooling as most people are—I think it can be excellent; but I personally think a good private Montessori school is a better choice. I’d be happy to participate or give any input if the committee needs it.

Stephen Kinsella

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John,

Beth and I have had some great discussions over the last few days. Beth will hopefully be at one of the Littleford sessions in the morning.

For me, this is the bottom line:

I think is a fantastic human being, with a good heart, a real thirst for knowledge, and a great drive to make things better. I credit POS as much as anything else for her ideals, self confidence, and innate ambition.

Ever since you introduced us to the Cleveland example, with and other future students in mind, I can’t think of a more worthwhile effort to work toward. We need students to make it work. You can count on us.

I commit today: at least toward the POHS capital campaign.

Frank Apollo

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John Littleford’s conclusion? Post Oak has the parent support needed to launch a high school if the board and administration are ready, willing and able to do so. Littleford has worked with literally thousands of schools over the past 25 years, including a number that were evaluating the addition of a high school. He said that he rarely sees schools with such enthusiastic support from its parents – and that he rarely sees schools with such a low level of complaint or criticism. He believes, based on what he heard and what he has observed long-term about schools, that a high school would only strengthen Post Oak.

Were there concerns raised? Yes, by some parents – though most of the concerns were more in the manner of questions about the high school program that appeared to be answerable. The most deep-seated concerns seemed to be from people who feared we might lose our focus on the existing program – Infant Community through Middle School; that we have issues already on the table and facility enhancements that need to be pursued. Not surprisingly, the question of how we would pay for all of this was a concern form many.

So what’s the bottom line? The board is awaiting Littleford’s formal, written summary, and is also in the process of completing a pro forma business plan for the high school, in order to understand the financial dimensions of the project. It is also considering how the effort to start a high school might impact other school priorities, and readdressing the conclusions of the study done last year on the potential for a Post Oak capital campaign. In an upcoming special session the board will discuss the high school question, determine whether to go forward, and if so, what the next steps would be.

We’ll keep you informed.

Copyright John Long and The Post Oak School
Buy your Pearl DVD now!

Get it on the Post Oak website or fill out the form below:

Opera • Pearl pre-order your DVD from JH Photography

Use this form or order online with a credit card through the link on the left side of the Post Oak website. Please return this form to the front office at Post Oak.

Student's name: ________________________________

Class (of oldest child): ________________________________

Phone number: ________________________________

Number of DVDs: _______ X $30/each = _______________

Write checks to "JH Photography," with "Post Oak Opera DVD" in memo line. Order online with a credit card through the link on the left side of the Post Oak website. DVDs will be available for pick-up on Monday, May 10, at Post Oak. Photos from Pearl will be available to view and purchase starting May 10 at www.JHPhotographyOnline.com/Clients/PostOakOpera2010
What makes students who left after Lower El or Primary return to visit their school after they are grown up? Something special. Sophie Haase and her parents, Karrie Ford & Brian Haase visited Post Oak together recently while Karrie and Brian were here from New Jersey visiting Sophie, now attending Rice University. Sophie and her sister, Molly Ford, attended Post Oak until 1996, when the family moved to New Jersey. Now the girls are back, and still feel strongly about Montessori—especially Post Oak.

When they moved away, the two attended The Albrook School (a Montessori school) in New Jersey before attending a traditional all-girls school there (Kent Place).

“When I switched from the Montessori school in New Jersey to a non-Montessori school, it made me realize how great Montessori was—especially Post Oak—because even though [Post Oak] wasn’t a very big school, just the way that the entire system is set up is really good,” Sophie reflected.

Older-sister Molly, agreed. “It was a lot more self-paced,” she said. “I remember when I finally switched out of Montessori school, I thought, ‘What do you mean we’re not supposed to be friends with people who aren’t in our grade?’ In middle school and high school, I rarely intermixed with other grades, but here, it was a couple of grades mixed. I really liked that.”

Part of that “intermixing” of grade levels allowed the students to help and learn from each other. “I think that’s a definite advantage of Montessori because you learn so much from your peers,” said Molly. “I also felt like because it was so self-paced, you were motivated to catch up to the people who were older than you, and it was fun if you were working on the same workbooks as they were.”

Molly attended Post Oak through Lower Elementary, and Sophie attended through Primary before they moved away. Despite attending Montessori school for only a few years beyond that, it made an impression on the sisters.

“I think it carried over into later years,” said Sophie. “A lot of the people I know from Post Oak are in really good schools. I think that having [a Montessori education] really helps you self-pace your life.”

Sophie is completing her freshman year at Rice, and Molly graduated from Rice last year. Molly works full-time at St. Luke’s Hospital in the health-charities department as a grants associate, and is also working on a masters degree in public health at the University of Texas Health Science Center.

Sophie majored in history and would like to pursue a career in business or marketing. Sophie applied to Rice as an early decision candidate since Molly was attending Rice, and their parents and grandfather attended Rice for various degree programs.

Molly had been accepted to Wellesley College in Massachusetts (where her mother attended) but chose Rice instead. While the sisters did not attend Post Oak through Middle School (where many of our students learn to love community service), they still felt they learned to love community service at a young age here. Sophie later completed more than 150 hours of community service for her high school International Baccalaureate diploma, and Molly worked in a fifth-ward Boys and Girls Club while in college, which sparked her interest in public health. Sophie participated in an Earth Watch expedition to save diamondback terrapin turtles. And it started with Post Oak:

“I think with the mixed-level classrooms at Post Oak, you have the community spirit,” said Molly. “One thing I remember is that we got to play with the really little [infant community] kids at the end of the day. I think that’s a unique opportunity that you wouldn’t get in most schools, but I felt like it was important to be able to have eight- or nine-year-olds helping wash their faces, change clothes, and play with them. You get some responsibility at such a young age. People trust you.”

Post Oak has a community environment,
the sisters agreed, and Molly said, “I feel like the culture here does breed your confidence and I feel you can really do anything with your education. When switching to a new bigger school it can be overwhelming, but more important than your class size or environment is believing that you can be successful rather than just sitting in the back of the class and not wanting to interact.”

“I think Montessori is good not only because it gives you a good experience while you’re there, but it really changes the way you think about education for your entire life,” said Sophie. “I was in a class on Brown v. Board and educational reform last semester, and we were talking about ideal types of education systems, and we talked about Montessori. I think that’s the ideal education system.”

Molly said, “I hear all these stories of some of the girls in Elementary school in West U, and all they do is study for the TAKS test with huge workbooks and they’re seven- or eight-years-old. Is that what school is really like? I don’t feel like that was ever my relationship with learning; just because of the foundation here.”

Independence and exploration were themes Sophie and Molly remembered. “This year I took a lot of intro courses at Rice, and I think I was better able to help guide my interests,” said Sophie. “Even at a young age, Montessori is about finding what interests you. It lets you look at alternatives and not just at one set path.”

“I think it also encourages confidence in work,” said Molly. “I never really liked math, but I never felt like I wasn’t good at it. There are tons of other things that I could do, and I still got the support to do math. You can choose what you want and you get the guidance—you’re not stuck for half the day working on something that makes you hate school.”

Though the sisters have never heard about any Montessori high schools, they are interested in hearing Post Oak’s possible plans for one. “I’d be interested to see it,” said Molly. “One of the programs I’m in charge of at one of the charities I work with is on after-school programs, so we do research on programs and whether they’re actually effective...But I would go! I think Montessori is great. I want to send my kids (she doesn’t have any yet) to Montessori school—it’s so much fun.”

“We just loved Post Oak,” said Sophie. “Even within Montessori school—and our Montessori school in New Jersey was good—it wasn’t at all as well-designed as Post Oak."

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**Calling A’s, B’s, AB’s & O’s**

by Tanya Gee, Parent

As Uncle Sam would say, “We Need You!” Everyday, men, women, children, and babies need blood and blood products to survive and thrive. Whether because of a traumatic injury, surgical emergency, cancer, or other medical conditions, whole blood and components like red blood cells, platelets, and clotting factors are utilized by people just like you and me every minute of every day. In Houston alone, the Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center must collect 1,000 units of whole blood daily. Yes, 1,000 units.

A few weeks ago, one of those people in need of blood was Post Oak Parent Karen Swerdlin. While in the hospital for a routine procedure, she developed a medical condition that necessitated her receiving a large amount of blood products. Because of generous blood donors in the Houston area, Karen’s hospital had all the blood and blood products that she needed. I am pleased to report that Karen is doing well and recovering at home.

In an attempt to keep the local blood bank “stocked” for those in need of blood, Post Oak Parent Laura Citardi has organized a blood drive in Karen’s honor. The Gulf Coast Regional Blood Center will be bringing their donor coach to The Post Oak School on May 6 from 8:30 am–2:30 pm. Donation time slots have been arranged, and you can reserve a spot online by following the instructions below:

1. Copy the following link  **https://www.commitforlife.org/gcrbc/mobile_schedule/register.php** into your browser.
2. Once you have entered your contact information, click “continue scheduling your appointment.”
3. On the next screen choose “sponsor code” then enter **UU59** and “submit.” The Post Oak School Blood Drive will appear at the bottom of the screen.
4. Click on the May 6, 2010 link and a list of available times will pop up and you may choose your time and then “confirm.”

If you have any trouble with this process, please contact Tanya Gee and she will work to help you find a solution. Our target is to have 60 people to donate. If time slots are filled online, please stop by the van as a walk-in.

Breakfast munchies and a lunch sandwich will be provided for those who donate. If you are planning to donate in the morning hours, please eat a nutritious breakfast and try to hold off on your morning caffeine until after your donation.

Thank you for making a donation that will help save at least one life!
**Opera • Pearl**  
April 24, 7:00 pm at Episcopal High School

**Pearl** was a string of successes!

I held my breath for a moment as I watched the large octopus and his first-grader legs curl and slide onto center stage during the prologue. “They did it perfectly!” I almost said out loud, but held back as I was standing in the wings trying hard to be quiet. One by one I watched costumed, colorful performers float across stage to create the watery world setting for **Pearl**. The octopus in many ways paralleled our whole production of **Pearl**. At other schools the octopus is one child—since Post Oak has double the number of students to include, our octopus was turned from one role into nine. The octopus costume was a mechanical marvel (thanks to the creative costume engineering of Catherine Kaldis and Heather O’Neill)—the hundreds of details to create this opera were carefully coordinated by co-chairs Munira Janmohamed and Claudia Jimenez to run like an amazing machine moving with precision. It was all about the details, such as the intricate scheduling to allow cast and crew to have a meaningful role, the costumes, the set production, the ticket selling, the program, the marketing, the unbelievable organization needed to coordinate who should be where at what time, the communication needed to make sure the right people knew what was going on. Like the octopus, it all had to move together and in the right order. Like the octopus, sometimes there were small tangles to work through (the set crew with Darwin’s help created a magnificent pier for the stage, only to find when we arrived at the theater that it couldn’t be used). And, like the octopus, in the end it all flowed beautifully.

The **Pearl** tradition continues at Post Oak from Jessica Wagner’s **Pearl** in 1991 to today. Throughout this whole year, the students, the parents, the teachers, and the staff have worked very hard, and the end result was evident. Special thanks to Munira, Claudia and the subcommittee chairs. And thanks to one and all for giving so much to this performance. It is a memory these Post Oak Elementary students will keep for a lifetime.

We hope you enjoy the pictures in this **Weekly Post** section. For more **Pearl** photos, please visit the Post Oak website.

Christina Kopanidis-Cantu  
*Development Director*
stories from the crew

The following stories were written before the opera performance.

When I was in the crew, the props I made were the silver fish, the sea turtle family, coral, and the jellyfish. My favorite part of being in the crew was the extra time I got to spend with my friends and all the hard work I did. I think crew is a very important part of the opera because if the cast didn’t have the crew they wouldn’t have all the beautiful props and costumes. What the opera is about is that there is a river goddess, Sirenia, and her daughter, Pearl, and an evil king the Oyster King. The Oyster King kidnapped Pearl and only returns her when a water nymph explains to him that if he takes a grain of sand and puts it in his shell, he can make his own pearl. Next year I would be delighted to be in crew again because I loved making props.

Grade 3

I like being in crew because you get to paint, color, and do arts and crafts. I wanted to be narrator. My favorite dance moves are the Water Nymphs and the Rainbow Trout. The opera is about Pearl being captured by the Oyster King. The Oyster King wanted a pearl too. Now everyone is trying to save her. These are the sea creatures of the opera: Starfish, Grayfish, Frogs, Sunfish, Rainbow Trout, Oyster King, Water Nymphs, River Reeds, Minnows, Octopus, Snails, Catfish, and Pearl. Opera is really fun. The cast members work really hard on their songs, dance, and costume fitting. I wish I could also be performing next year. My favorite group is Rainbow Trout. Water Nymphs are good too! The opera is in two days. I’m very excited!

Grade 2

I think being part of the crew is important because you make the props for the opera. My favorite thing to make was the fish. We made almost everything. We made jellyfish, fish, coral, and seaweed. It is going to be a great opera. In the next opera, I would like to be crew again because I want to see what new props will be needed for that opera.

Grade 2

I liked being a crew member because I got to finish my follow-up and I got to watch a movie and I heard a great story from the teacher. But next time I would like to perform so my mother and father can see me sing. This time my choice was crew. My mother and father also said I could be crew this year and I am very excited that the opera is coming up this week and on Friday, I am going to the Episcopal High School to watch the dress rehearsal. On Saturday, it is the opera.

Grade 2
John Long ‘Profile’ featured on PBS

Head of School John Long will be featured in an episode of “Profile with Greg Scheinman” on PBS. Scheinman, father of Primary student Auden Scheinman, shadowed and interviewed Mr. Long at Post Oak in January for the piece. Past episodes of “Profile” have featured some of Houston’s most influential and successful leaders and entrepreneurs such as Tammie Khan, executive director of Houston Children’s museum, Scott & Stacy Simons of Chez Nous restaurant, Brock Wagner, founder of St. Arnold’s Brewery, and Deborah Canon, CEO of Houston Zoo.

Tune into PBS on Thursday, May 6 at 10:30 pm

Primary student selected in art contest

Primary student [redacted] from Barbara Hacker’s class has been selected as one of 40 winners out of 5,665 entries in the “Treasures of the Texas Coast” 2010 Children’s Art Contest through the Texas General Land Office. There were 10 winners in each grade K through 6. The winner artwork will be featured in a calendar that will be distributed throughout the state in December of this year. The artwork will also be on display in the Texas Capitol’s south central gallery from 3:00 pm Thursday, May 27 through 2:00 pm Tuesday, June 1. For more information, visit www.TexasAdoptABeach.org.

Parenting with love & logic

with the emphasis on adolescents, including pre- and post-adolescents

School Counselor Phylis Tomlinson’s follow-up group especially for parents of children in Upper Elementary and Middle School will meet Thursday, May 6 from 3:10–4:00 pm in Middle School.

RSVP to debbiehenderson@postoakschool.org

After twenty-one years of dedicated service to The Post Oak School

Darwin Matusek announces his retirement

Please join us for a celebration

Tuesday, May 11

4:00–5:00 pm

in the Post Oak Gym
POPA Parent Party!

Let us say thanks to all the volunteers for all you’ve done throughout the year, with special thanks to our Opera Volunteers.

Did you ever volunteer in the classroom, plan a luncheon, chaperone a field trip, work on an event or an errand for a teacher? Are you a room parent or a class captain? Have you done any work at school in support of your child and Post Oak? Then this event is for you! Let us say thanks for all the work that parents do to make Post Oak such an exceptional school. Drop by to mix and mingle, enjoy a treat, and let us honor you.

POPA Parent Party
Tuesday, May 4, 9:00–11:00 A.M.

At the home of: Claudia Rojas-Jimenez

Crepes and breakfast treats

Alumna wins award from Theatre Under the Stars

Post Oak Alumna Stephanie Styles received the Best Actress Award at the Eighth Annual Tommy Tune Awards presented by Theatre Under the Stars at the Hobby Center April 20. Stephanie performed the role of “Janet van de Graaff” in Episcopalian High School’s production of The Drowsy Chaperone, where she is a senior. She also received the Tommy Tune Scholarship Award and plans to attend The University of Michigan’s prestigious School of Music, Theatre and Dance in the fall. Stephanie will advance to the National High School Musical Competition in New York where she will perform on Broadway at the Marquis Theatre June 28.

Middle School book corner

Across Five Aprils, by Irene Hunt, is about a boy and his ideas and thoughts during war. His name is Jethro. Jethro Creighton, the protagonist, is young and idealistic when the Civil War begins. At first, he thinks the war will be neat, full of marching soldiers and demonstrative patriotism. He learns the realities of war soon enough as he watches his three brothers, his cousin, and his teacher go off to fight. One of his brothers, Bill, chooses to fight for the South in a decision that plagues him for a long time. Jethro and his family follow the progress of the war through newspapers, but it is hard to tell exactly what is happening. Each day, the paper is full of praise or criticism for one of the Union generals, and Jethro has trouble sorting out what is actually going on. This book gives you a good look at reality. It is also a good way to give young people a look at humanity.

— Grade 7

Across Five Aprils, by Irene Hunt, is about a boy and his ideas and thoughts during war. His name is Jethro. Jethro Creighton, the protagonist, is young and idealistic when the Civil War begins. At first, he thinks the war will be neat, full of marching soldiers and demonstrative patriotism. He learns the realities of war soon enough as he watches his three brothers, his cousin, and his teacher go off to fight. One of his brothers, Bill, chooses to fight for the South in a decision that plagues him for a long time. Jethro and his family follow the progress of the war through newspapers, but it is hard to tell exactly what is happening. Each day, the paper is full of praise or criticism for one of the Union generals, and Jethro has trouble sorting out what is actually going on. This book gives you a good look at reality. It is also a good way to give young people a look at humanity.
**CALENDAR**

For more, visit www.postoakschool.org

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>MAY 2–8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mon-Fri 05/03-07</td>
<td>6th-graders to Williamsburg Middle School to D.C.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tue 05/04</td>
<td>POPA Parent Party 9:00–11:00 am off campus</td>
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<td>Thu 05/06</td>
<td>Blood Drive 8:30 am–2:30 pm</td>
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<td>Thu 05/06</td>
<td>New Infant Community parent gathering 7:00 pm</td>
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<td>MAY 9–15</td>
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<td>Sun 05/09</td>
<td>Mother’s Day</td>
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<td>Tue 05/11</td>
<td>Darwin’s Retirement Party 4:00–5:00 pm</td>
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<td>Thu 05/13</td>
<td>New Primary Parent gathering 7:00 pm</td>
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<td>Fri 05/14</td>
<td>Spring ASEP ends</td>
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<td>MAY 16–22</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wed 05/19</td>
<td>Upper Elementary History Fair 7:00–8:00 pm</td>
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<td>Thu 05/20</td>
<td>New Elementary Parent gathering Lower El 6:30–7:15 pm Upper El 7:15–8:00 pm</td>
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Keep track of school events with our online calendar—or download a fresh copy of the school’s printed calendar, all at http://www.postoakschool.org

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**NOTICE BOARD**

**Lost & Found box to be emptied soon**

Parents: please come and have a look for your children’s things in our Lost & Found box in the front lobby. The box will be emptied next week and its contents will be donated to charity.

**Barbara Hacker’s green tip of the week**

**Icebox Essentials I:**

Set your fridge temperature between 37 and 40 degrees Fahrenheit for the fresh food compartment and at 5 degrees Fahrenheit for the freezer. Every six months, unless you have a “no-clean condenser” model (check your owner’s manual), gently vacuum or brush off the condenser coils, located on the bottom or back of your fridge; also, check the door seals by closing the door over a piece of paper so it is half in and half out. If you can pull the paper out easily, the latch may need adjustment.

**Parent Basketball**

**Wednesday Nights**

If you are interested in joining this informal Wednesday pick-up game at 8:00 pm in the Post Oak gym, add your name to the weekly notice by emailing parent Alan Yang at alan@postoakschool.org

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**ABOUT THE WEEKLY POST**

The Weekly Post appears on most Fridays of the regular school year.
You can receive a printed copy from your oldest child, or a PDF version online.

Submit letters, articles, or photos in electronic form by 5 pm on the Tuesday before publication to Communications Coordinator Shannon Neufeld (shannonneufeld@postoakschool.org).

THE POST OAK SCHOOL: founded in 1963 and accredited by both the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) and the Independent Schools Association of the Southwest (ISAS)

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