



The Carmel Hill Fund
Education Program

North Louisiana

**20 years of
cultivating literacy
and a lifelong love
of reading**





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Message from the Director

There's something magical about watching a child fall in love with reading - the joy of being lost in a book and the excitement of exploring a world of possibilities larger than themselves is an incredible transformation to witness.

Of course, in order for a student to become a voracious reader they first need the support and resources to develop the skill of reading in a structured and deliberate way. That's where the Carmel Hill Fund Education Program (CHFEP) has made a sizable impact in our local community; one that extends beyond the love of a good book.

Like many in our community, I am deeply rooted in Monroe. I was raised in this community, attended the same schools in which our program operates, graduated from the University of Louisiana at Monroe where our intern program is housed, became a teacher and in 2008 started working at the Carmel Hill Fund Education Program where I've been the



Director since 2019. As an Area Director, my greatest joy has been to grow the program by adding partner schools, staff, interns, and opening our own office space all while managing the acute and ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The majority of the students we support don't have the opportunity to leave the neighborhood in which they live, and books provide an immersive experience that transports them through time, place and culture. In the past five years alone, more than



1.2 million books

current and relevant to our student population have been circulated through our partner schools.

Rewards that incentivize student reading growth also provide a tangible opportunity for our students to have new experiences through field trips and scholarships through the Summer Institute for the Gifted.

Above all, the ability to read translates to success in other areas of academic life. More than one-third of the population of Monroe lives at or below the poverty line and I've seen firsthand how reading has transformed lives by providing students the opportunity to turn the pages of their own story, end the cycle of poverty and create a better future for themselves and their family.

Take Jesse, a student in Monroe City Schools who attended the Summer Institute for the Gifted, worked as a Carmel Hill Fund Education Program intern, was the first in his family to

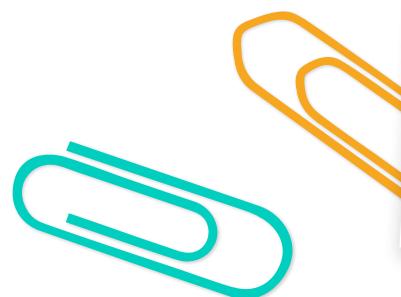
obtain a college degree and now holds two Masters Degrees, is studying for his PhD and teaching middle school in Monroe City Schools where he shares his love of reading with a new generation of students. Jesse exemplifies to me the path to success that reading enables, and later in this report you'll hear from him in his own words.

Finally, it takes a community of dedicated educators, administrators, volunteers, and parents to support our students' achievements. I am eternally grateful for the opportunity to have shepherded this coalition in our community to meet students where they are and help provide the tools they need to succeed. **Together, we've helped students turn the page on their own story to become skilled, independent readers and pave the way to academic and personal success.**

In gratitude,

Allison Painich
Louisiana Area Director

Image: Carmel Hill Louisiana staff pictured from left to right: Kayle Waren, Allison Painich, Megan Broussard



Our Programs

We are honored to partner with 27 schools in North Louisiana during the 2024 - 2025 school year. We've serviced more than 600 educators and over 10,000 students each year, providing the tools needed to foster a culture of successful readers. **Our dedication to these teachers and students has provided necessary resources to assist our program within each of our schools.**



27 schools partnerships



600+ educators serviced



10,000+ students serviced



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Libraries have been the cornerstone of communities, providing not only books but a space for collaboration, community engagement, and digital literacy. Our library is a vital resource on our campus and plays a critical role in the academic and personal growth of our students. Carmel Hill Fund Education Program has allowed us to provide our students with a wide range of books to cater to their different interests, learning styles, and academic needs. Offering a diverse collection is important for supporting both curriculum requirements and independent learning. Within the past three years, circulation has nearly doubled.

Last year, our library checked out the highest amount our school has seen. This can be attributed to the growing reading culture CHFEP has instilled on our campus.

*Dr. Cleveland Mouton, III
Principal, Caddo Parish Public Schools*



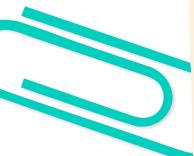
School Partnerships

Our school partnerships have been centered around developing successful independent readers. Most of our students begin school without the background knowledge needed to read on grade level. We've provided assessments to identify each child's independent reading level, and our librarians, teachers, and interns have assisted students in selecting appropriate books to ensure reading growth.

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We want the libraries in our partner schools to represent the population at that school, so we provide each librarian the freedom to select books based on their student population and reading levels. And if you can make reading fun, you're going to really grab a lot of the student population that normally would be left behind.”

Allison Painich, Louisiana Area Director



Champion Program

The Carmel Hill Louisiana Project offered the Carmel Hill Champion Program to every classroom and school each school year. Each classroom must reach certain goals to be considered a Carmel Hill Champion, and each school must have a certain number of Carmel Hill Champion Classrooms to be considered a Carmel Hill School of Champions.

Pre-K

We have been fortunate to partner with our Pre-K classrooms to introduce our program to our youngest readers. These students have learned about independent reading levels, different genres of literature, and how to select appropriate books to ensure reading growth.

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I can't imagine school without Carmel Hill. They motivated me to read at a young age, rewarded my reading, and gave it a measurable value. It made reading a sport for me, and made me want to read more and more each year.

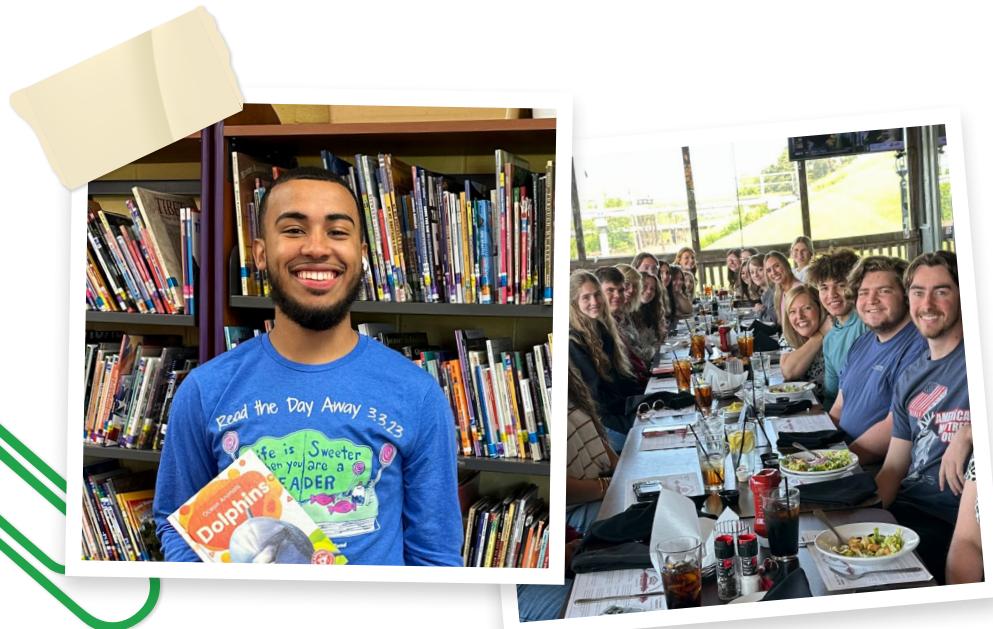
Cyrus, student



Internship Program

Our Internship Program was born from a collaboration with the University of Louisiana at Monroe that has provided interested education majors the opportunity to get real world experience in their chosen field. Intern responsibilities have included reading to our youngest students, assisting with book selection and STAR testing, helping librarians with their duties, and working on data compilation. Many interns have taken jobs at Monroe City Schools or Ouachita Parish Schools after graduation, **illustrating the impact the program has on these college students** and their interest in helping children learn and be excited about reading.

Left Image: program intern Jarron; Right image: program interns lunch



The Monroe Literacy & Art Bus

The Monroe Literacy and Art Bus (LAB) is a mobile classroom focused on increasing literacy and arts education in South Monroe. The bus travels to a different school each month and certified educators teach sessions targeted to specific grade levels and content. As part of our partnership, CHFEP has provided necessary technology, materials, and books to ensure each student is equipped, ready to learn, and has books to take home.

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The Carmel Hill Fund Education Program has been an invaluable partner in advancing the missions of our nonprofits, The Jones Center of Arts & Academic Excellence and the Monroe Literacy and Art Bus. Their generous support has profoundly impacted literacy and arts education throughout the Monroe community and has enabled us to inspire creativity, enhance literacy, and nurture academic excellence in countless young lives.

Dr. Alicia Jones, Board President, The Jones Center of Arts & Academic Excellence; Director of Curriculum, Monroe Literacy & Art Bus



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Through being a Carmel Hill Intern, I learned to handle student concerns with their own reading and that listening to what children have to say about their own reading experiences is just as vital to growing them as readers as what their teachers do in the classroom. Being a reading teacher was the plan; however, my experience with Carmel Hill and my role as an intern made me realize that my love of literature and books was much better suited to being a school librarian.

My first employment opportunity was as a school librarian at Barkdull Faulk Elementary working with students in pre-kindergarten through sixth grade. When I was hired, the principal told me that it was not my background as a ULM student, but **my hands-on experience from working with Carmel Hill that made him feel I was qualified to be their librarian.**

*Summer Hines, M. Ed., Librarian, Sallie Humble Elementary;
ULM Adjunct Instructor; Former Carmel Hill Intern*

Our Partners

Since 2004, CHFEP's partner schools have grown from a single elementary school to **23 elementary schools, four middle schools, and seven community partners across four different school districts**. We have engaged with partner schools based on a number of factors, including their Title One status, the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch, the school administrator's interest and receptivity in implementing an independent reading program, and utilization of the school library.

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Thanks to Carmel Hill and Renaissance, the culture at our school has shifted through the years and now I find that our students have a newfound pride in the confidence that being a reader provides. **The students are all reading on or above grade level within our school, something that most schools are not currently achieving.**

Lisa Patrick, M.Ed., Principal, Jesus The Good Shepherd School



What has made these partnerships impactful is the dedication and commitment of teachers, librarians, administrators and community members who understand that a child's ability and interest in being a voracious reader can have far-reaching impacts on their life well into the future. In just the past five years, we have invested a significant amount of books, resources and staff time to support students on their reading journey and the data reflects that:



38,097 students serviced



2,174,792 quizzes taken



1,952,349 quizzes passed



1,276,559 books circulated



96.7% of schools participated



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The ability to read and read well has a major impact on everything that we do. The Accelerated Reader program at my school not only motivates my students but also gives them a sense of accomplishment and pride. The potential for growth, increased literacy skills, and continuous improvement in reading is possible due to our involvement with the Accelerated Reader program and the support of The Carmel Hill Fund Education Program.

LaWanda Elliott, Librarian, Thomas Jefferson Elementary

School & Community Partners

Elementary School Partners:

- Barkdull Faulk Elementary
- Berg Jones Elementary
- Boley Elementary
- Caddo Heights Math and Science Magnet School
- Carver Elementary
- Central Elementary
- Clara Hall Elementary
- Cypress Point Elementary
- Drew Elementary
- Highland Elementary
- Jesus the Good Shepherd Elementary
- JS Clark Magnet School
- Lenwil Elementary
- Lexington Elementary
- Madison James Foster Elementary
- Minnie Ruffin Elementary
- Our Lady of Fatima Elementary
- Roy N. Shelling Elementary
- Sallie Humble Elementary

- Sterlington Elementary
- Swartz Lower Elementary
- Thomas Jefferson Upper Elementary
- Woodlawn Elementary

Middle School Partners:

- Carroll Junior High School
- Martin Luther King Jr Junior High
- Neville Junior High
- St. Frederick's Junior High

Community Partners:

- The Literacy & Art Bus
- Green Oaks Juvenile Detention Center
- Monroe Housing Authority
- Academy of Collaborative Education
- Virginia House
- The Center for Children & Families
- The Jones Center
- ULM Intern Program



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The Carmel Hill Fund Education Program has made an enormous, long-lasting difference in the lives of my students and their families. Carmel Hill's generosity has allowed us to have access to resources we couldn't have otherwise afforded.

Additionally, The Carmel Hill Fund has renewed my excitement for my career. After being in this profession for almost twenty years, it was easy to become complacent and burned-out. Having new incentives and challenges made possible by Carmel Hill made me excited to come to work every single day.

Leslie Porter, Librarian, Swartz Lower Elementary

Signature Initiatives

The Carmel Hill Fund Education Program's Louisiana Project signature initiatives have brought interest and excitement to reading in a fun and creative way.

Read the Day Away

Read the Day Away has been an annual one day reading celebration in our partner schools. Teachers and students have dressed as book characters, and community leaders, local high school and college students and athletes have returned to the schools to read to students. This highly anticipated annual celebration has been a great way to engage people across generations and showcase the joy of reading.

Top image: Lexington Elementary School

Middle image: Jefferson Upper Elementary School

Bottom image: Madison James Foster Elementary School



Book Vending Machines

Once we were introduced to the idea of a book vending machine, we knew each partner school would benefit from one of their own and have worked diligently to ensure each school both has one and that it's been kept fully stocked. Partner schools use these unique book delivery systems to both promote literacy and encourage positive behavior. As students earn tokens for the book vending machine, they are also building a print-rich home library. This is significant because many of the students we serve do not have many, if any, things they can call their own. These chosen books are not only a reward but a symbol of their individuality, choice, and hope.



A's for J's

In 2022, we implemented a new incentive program, A's for J's, in the upper elementary grades and middle schools. With every Accelerated Reader quiz taken within the appropriate Zone of Proximal Development and a score of at least 90% correct or higher, each student can enter a drawing for a pair of Jordan sneakers per grade level.

This program was so successful that several administrators, local business owners and community members donated additional pairs of sneakers to increase the students' chance of winning. A's for J's both increased literacy and reading success and fulfilled a basic need for our students.

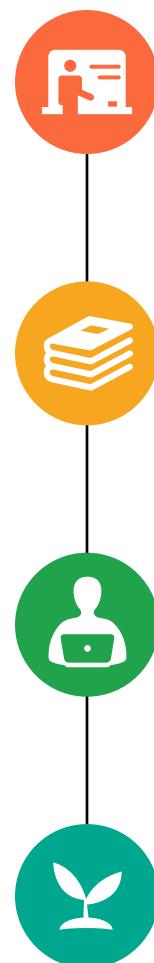


Our Impact

While there are many stories of impact, we have used the data-driven **Accelerated Reader Program** from Renaissance that includes Star Reading Assessments to measure student success.

Star Early Literacy and Star Reading Growth Assessments show the progress students are making over time in their reading goals, and provide actionable information for educators and administrators to help inform instruction. Post-pandemic, we have begun to see an increase in student achievement across schools and grades, with anywhere from single digit increases to a **37% increase in one school's second grade** (Clara Hill Elementary School).

Accelerated Reader Framework



GUIDE

Personalized goals help students stay focused on the factors that matter most for reading growth—and help teachers monitor their progress and provide feedback to keep learners on track.

ENGAGE

Individual reading recommendations use students' interests and reading levels to suggest titles, or students can self-select from over 220,000 choices.

PRACTICE

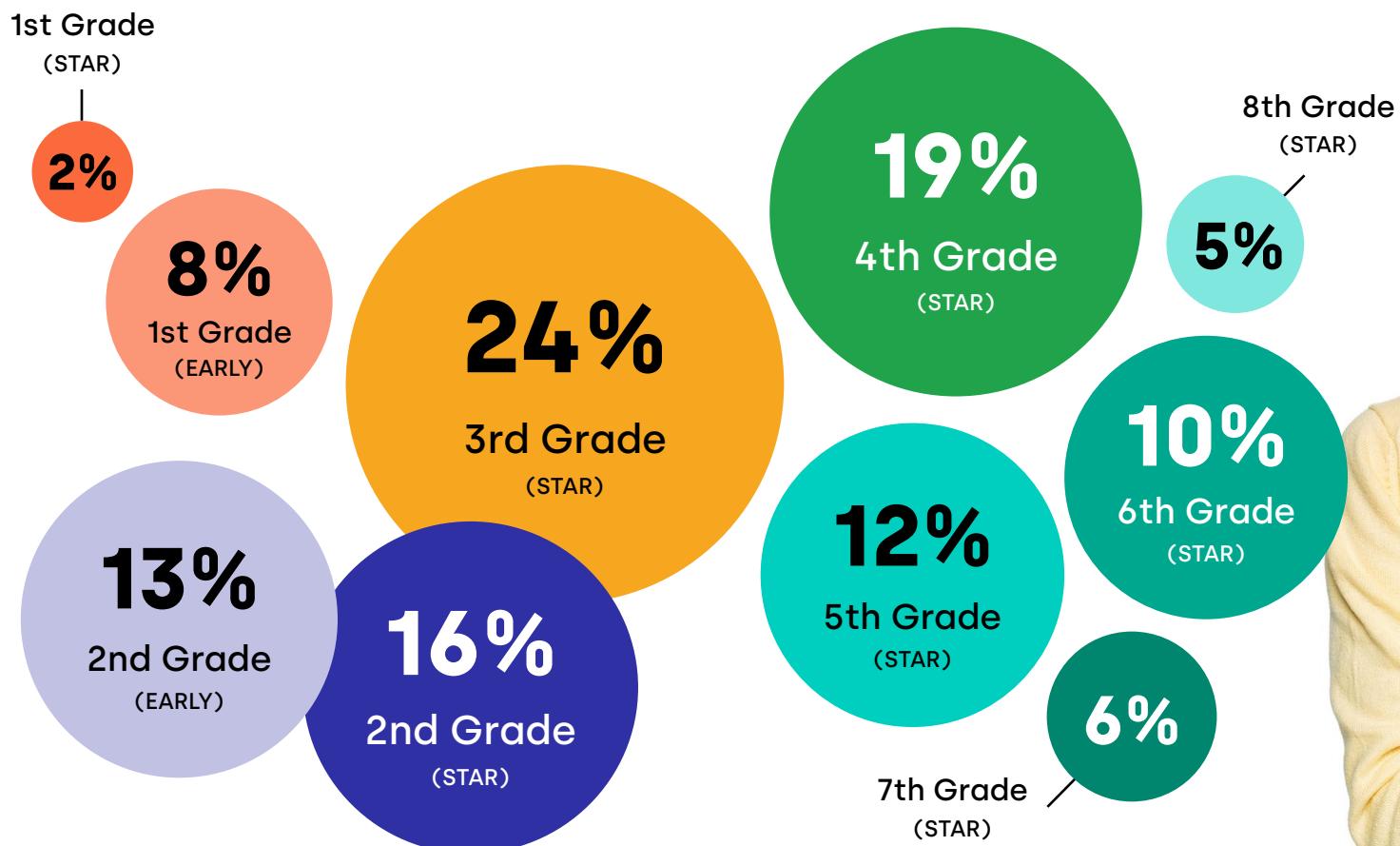
With Accelerated Reader, students read widely to build word recognition and language comprehension skills. Reading quizzes monitor overall comprehension, while literacy skills and vocabulary quizzes connect to skill-based classroom instruction.

GROW

Detailed reports provide insights into students' progress. Paired with Renaissance Star Reading, teachers can track students' mastery of focus skills aligned to state-specific learning standards.

2021 - 2024 Average Reading Growth by Grade

The Star reading assessments illustrate growth over time, with the largest percent increases in third to fifth grades. As students progress from emerging readers in early elementary to fluent readers in late elementary and middle school, there's typically an explosion of growth and then expected increases naturally level off. Once students move through the different stages of reading - from picture books to graphic novels and, finally, to chapter books - there tends to be slower progress because fluent readers in upper grades tend to continue reading at that higher level.



Jesse's Story

The Carmel Hill Fund Education Program (CHFEP) has been a profound influence in my life, shaping my educational path, expanding my horizons, and cultivating my dreams.

I grew up in the Monroe City School System and when I entered Wossman High School I encountered the program. There, I met Margie Godwin and Allison Painich, two women who became second mothers to me and mentors through pivotal years. Under their leadership, I experienced educational and social opportunities that transformed my life. **CHFEP Monroe's impact has played a vital role in supporting my dreams and aspirations through every aspect of my life.**

During my senior year of high school, they helped me secure my first job as an intern. Ms. Godwin and Mrs. Allison even accompanied me to the bank to open an account and deposit my first paycheck—a milestone that symbolized a

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CHFEP Monroe's impact has played a vital role in supporting my dreams and aspirations through every aspect of my life.

*Jesse D. Flunder
MPA Junior High ELA Educator*



new level of independence. That support continued into my college years, as I was able to extend my internship through CHFEP Monroe's partnership with the University of Louisiana at Monroe, assisting with program logistics and internships in the School of Education. Eventually, I transitioned to the classroom, beginning my career as an educator. Their impact was instrumental in helping me leverage my love for learning and fueled my commitment to the next generation of young readers which has resulted in earning Teacher of the Year in two different parishes.

My journey since the early days in the CHFEP program has come full circle, as I now strive to create similar opportunities for my students.

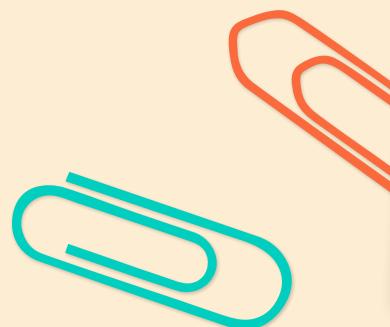
I will never forget how they made it possible for me to visit New York City for the first time, share my experiences with the Carmel Hill Fund board and see my first Broadway play – another inspiring world of storytelling. I wanted my students, some of whom had never left our home state or city, to experience new places and broaden their educational and social perspectives, just as CHFEP had done for me. Inspired by CHFEP Monroe's influence, I founded a Travel Club at my school, enabling students to experience new places, like Washington, D.C. and New York City. **I want my students to see the world not only through the wonder of reading but also beyond their neighborhoods and to believe that their dreams are achievable.** Recently, one of my students received the National Jack Kent Cooke Young Scholar award,

which will offer her educational and cultural experiences that echo my own. Her success, like so much of mine, reflects the legacy that CHFEP Monroe has fostered.

As I look back on my life, I know it would have taken a very different path without the influence of CHFEP Monroe. Their investment in me, paired with the love and values instilled by my mother, propelled me toward success in high school, college, and my teaching career. **The gratitude I feel toward CHFEP Monroe, its leadership, and particularly Ms. Godwin and Mrs. Allison, is boundless. They opened doors I didn't know existed, empowering me to dream, to achieve, and to give back. CHFEP Monroe has shaped who I am, and every day, I strive to honor that legacy by passing it on to the next generation.**

Jesse D. Flunder, MPA
Junior High ELA Educator

Image from left to right:
Allison Painich, CHFEP Louisiana Area Director & Jesse D. Flunder, MPA, Junior High ELA Educator



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Thank you so much to Carmel Hill for supporting my school the past couple years. Between books, funding, and lots of other things, Carmel Hill helped make reading more accessible and fun during the year and I became a **Million Word Reader** faster thanks to their support and incentives. Last year, we were able to do multiple activities during our library time, including making a word bracelet to describe myself. Our Accelerated Reader parties were great - we had the Lego truck come, glow parties, and movies - and for the end of year party we were able to leave campus and go to Spartan, our local jump park. We celebrated Read Across America Rock 'N Roll style. We all dressed up, had special treats, and got a full day of people reading to us. It was so much fun!

Remington, 6th grade student





The Carmel Hill Fund Education Program

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