



Growing Up HEALTHY in an Island of POVERTY

Nine-year-old Francisco and his grandmother, Maria, are just one of many families who have benefited by participating in Creciendo Saludable activities.

photo: Gabriel Koneta

The future seemed bleak for 10-year-old Carolina. Her three brothers were in prison. Her mother, Theresa, was single-handedly raising Carolina and her younger sister on a below-poverty income. What's more, 46-year-old Theresa, frustrated and angry, often lashed out at her children.

It's no wonder Carolina struggled academically and socially. Carolina needed help, and Creciendo Saludable was there to provide it.

Creciendo Saludable (translated: Growing Up Healthy) is a school-based research project conducted by WestEd's Educational and Community Initiatives in collaboration with Lowell Elementary School in Santa Ana, California. Lowell Elementary's neighborhood is a two-mile island of poverty in one of the most affluent counties in the nation. It is the most densely populated area of the city, with the lowest rate of adult educational achievement. The neighborhood also has the city's highest crime rate, gang involvement, and number of homicides.

About 16,000 students attend school in crowded buildings filled to double their capacity. The transient rate at Lowell Elementary is well over 50 percent; 97 percent of the K-5 students are limited-English proficient; 85 percent live below the poverty level; and the school ranks in the bottom 10 percent in statewide test scores.

The indicators of risk that make academic success difficult to achieve abound.

(continued on page 6)

inside

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| 2 | From the CEO | 7 | School-Community Teams Translate to Education Support for New Hampshire |
| 3 | The FaCTs About Collaboration | 7 | Taking Positive Approaches to Help Children Succeed |
| 4 | Teens Take Action Against Tobacco Use | 8 | WestEd to Co-Launch Child Maltreatment Prevention Research Center |
| 5 | Support Systems for Homeless Students | 9 | Supporting 21st Century Community Learning Centers |
| 5 | Helping Children of Substance-Abusing Families | 9 | Rudy Crew's New WestEd Initiative |



From the CEO: A Community Effort

Welcome to the Spring issue of *R&D Alert*.

“It takes a whole village to raise a child” may sound like a cliché, but it is accurate. No *one* segment of the community alone is responsible for the welfare of our children.

Never has the welfare of our nation’s children been so urgent. The number of children living in poverty has increased 42 percent since 1970. Today, one in four American kids lives in poverty. What’s more, the life chances of many of these children, and their peers, are worsened by discrimination, neighborhood decay, violence, and/or parental substance abuse.

Ensuring the well-being of all children is a daunting task, yet one I believe can be accomplished. Responsibility starts at home, with loving and supportive

adults. Schools play an important role in ensuring that all children achieve academic success. Also important are the collaborative efforts among families, caregivers, and community and other public agencies. Each must play a part — together — if our children are to succeed both inside and outside of the classroom.

At WestEd, we are committed to working with this entire “village,” and our commitment is demonstrated through a variety of initiatives, some of which are featured in this newsletter.

Our feature article looks at a large, school-based study that will help enable schools — working with families, caregivers, and community agencies — to build the resilient capacity of children to succeed in high-risk environments.

Other articles describe WestEd’s findings on what it takes for schools, community agencies, and other organizations to work collaboratively; a sourcebook for educators and social service providers to help homeless students succeed in school and in life; and a community action research project that promotes positive youth development.

At WestEd, we strive to identify what’s best for every child by creating a web of support — among educators, federal and state agencies, families, and communities — so that we can help all children build resiliency skills to achieve academic success.

Glen Harvey
Chief Executive Officer
WestEd



THE FaCTs about collaboration

She was immediately connected to the services of not one, but three agencies that, together, offered her the support she needed. The hospital counselor who took the woman's call lined her up with an eight-week in-home counseling program offered by another agency. She was then offered the opportunity to bring her children to a center for family activities run by a third organization.

Success stories like this are what those responsible for social services in Orange County were hoping to accomplish six years ago when they asked local community-based agencies to collaborate to better serve clients.

One Saturday afternoon, a young single mother called the South Orange County Family Resource Center in Southern California for help. She reported being at the end of her rope, trying to raise three children on her own and hold down a job, while struggling to get support from her former husband.

"Through a combination of evaluation findings, research-based solutions, and a bit of trial and error, everyone involved learned what collaboration truly entailed," says WestEd Senior Project Director Jordan Horowitz, who headed up a WestEd evaluation of the project.

As in other counties, human service organizations in Orange County often worked separate from one

to what they need — sometimes with one simple phone call — and provides a model for effective agency collaboration.

WestEd's Evaluation Research Program evaluated the processes by which the agencies collaborated (how they shared client information and created rules for dealing with one another), as well as the collaboratives' outcomes. The researchers' observations and recommendations were key to helping the partnering agencies improve their services.

When the collaboratives were unable to provide evaluation data, other

A key to the success of the FaCT model is the significant technical assistance provided to the 100-plus agencies involved in the seven collaboratives.

another, providing clients with a specific offering of services. Clients in families at greatest risk, however, rarely struggle with one problem alone. To coordinate services from multiple agencies in targeted communities, Orange County created FaCT (Families and Communities Together). The result is an approach that connects clients

issues related to governance and communication needed to be resolved. A key to the success of the FaCT model is the significant technical assistance provided to the 100-plus agencies involved in the seven collaboratives.

For more information about FaCT, contact Horowitz at 562/799-5122 or e-mail, jhorowi@WestEd.org 



teens take action **Against** TOBACCO USE

Smoking is cool, macho, and quintessentially American, advertising has told us. But these teenagers know better.

The youth activists behind Tobacco Industry Gets Hammered by Teens (TIGHT) — a collaborative community action research project of the Contra Costa County Health Services Department and WestEd — help counter moves by the tobacco industry to target younger populations.

More than just fighting the tobacco industry, the project promotes positive youth development, says Norm Constantine, Director of the

School and Community Health Research Group of WestEd's Human Development Program. "Having caring relationships with adults, high expectations for success, and opportunities for meaningful participation are the critical components of positive youth development, and these are at the core of TIGHT," he adds.

The project was started in underserved communities of Contra Costa County, California, in 1997 in the wake of studies showing that while the number of adult smokers has decreased, smoking among teenagers has risen.

Since the program's creation, more than 1,200 teenagers have participated either as paid outreach workers or volunteer youth advocates. They conduct research on youth-targeted tobacco marketing in their own communities. They then use these data to define strategies in community education and lobbying for the

adoption and enforcement of tobacco-free youth ordinances, as well as tracking the effectiveness of their efforts.

The project has so far succeeded in having ordinances — aimed at reducing teenagers' exposure to marketing and access to tobacco products — approved and enforced in 11 of 20 municipalities in Contra Costa County.

As one youth outreach worker declares: "TIGHT is youth-driven and youth-led, and we can take action. Kids can do something about our community and our problem with tobacco."

For more information, contact Constantine at 510/302-4215; e-mail, nconsta@WestEd.org; or visit WestEd.org/schrg/projects/TIGHT.shtml 



"TIGHT is youth-driven and youth-led, and we can take action."

support systems for HOMELESS students

On any given night, more than one million children sleep in cars, tents, homeless shelters, hotels, and on the street. Three fourths of them are school age. These children have four times the rate of developmental delay and three times the rate of emotional and behavioral problems as other children. They are twice as likely to repeat a grade and often don't attend school due to the chaos in their lives.

What can we do to help homeless children attend school and achieve once there?

"Educators and social service providers tell us they don't know where to begin," says WestEd Researcher BethAnn Berliner.

"They want help organizing information into awareness presentations to their school communities, informing school secretaries about easing enrollment, building content-rich workshops for teachers and principals, or even just putting together information materials."

In response, WestEd is developing a comprehensive sourcebook — the first one ever — that includes research-based information in the form of fact sheets, pamphlets, overheads, training activities, and even ready-to-use sample presentation and workshop agendas. Also included are detailed, concrete strategies that educators and social service providers can use to



photo: Corbis Images

promote better teaching and learning for students experiencing homelessness.

"We call this sourcebook *Imagine the Possibilities* because we want to communicate that there *are* things people can do to help homeless students succeed at school and life," Berliner concludes.

Imagine the Possibilities will be available this summer. For information, contact Berliner at 510/302-4209 or e-mail, bberlin@WestEd.org [W](#)

Helping Children of substance-abusing families

The walls of the principal's office were becoming quite familiar to its 9-year-old daily visitor. Darrin's defiant behavior was troubling to many. The child of a substance-abusing parent, Darrin is not alone. According to the *Journal of Public Health* [January 2000], one in four children under the age of 18 lives in a home affected by substance abuse.

WestEd's IRIS Project works with community agencies in Riverside County, California, providing services that help families like Darrin's overcome the effects of substance abuse. The ultimate goal, according to Study Coordinator Cecilia Mutia, is to prevent children from following their family's path of substance abuse.

Ten weeks after participating in IRIS Project activities, both Darrin and his mother have demonstrated positive changes. His mother now pays more attention to Darrin and his needs. Darrin, himself, has not been called into the principal's office in more than a month. What's more, he recently brought home a "most improved child at school" certificate.

For more information about the IRIS Project, contact Mutia at 909/782-2836; e-mail, cmutia@WestEd.org; or visit www.IRISproject.com [W](#)

Growing Up Healthy

(continued from page 1)

"Lowell Elementary is a mirror of the challenges facing many schools today," says Cynthia Peck, Creciendo Saludable's Project Director. "How can teachers count on children to focus academically? Often children in these environments come to school anxious, worried about their parents, their home, their siblings, and their own safety."



Francisco and his children, 6-year-old Francisco, Jr., and 10-year-old Concepcion, attend weekly Strengthening Families Program training sessions. "We learned how to improve our family discipline," says Francisco, Sr. "We really like this program."

photo: Gabriel Koneta

"It is a struggle to think clearly and learn English as a new language," Peck continues. "Caring and dedicated teachers are being asked to respond to societal issues of poverty and family dysfunction that can divert their energies from their academic mandates. Teachers and students need a process to address the issues that occur outside the classroom that can hinder learning."

Creciendo Saludable's goal is to ensure that every child is ready and able to learn, not in the traditional use of the phrase —when they first appear at the kindergarten door—but every school day.

To address the challenge that Carolina and her teachers face, WestEd designed a comprehensive model to reduce risk and promote resilience among students repeatedly exposed to high-risk

environments. The Creciendo Saludable design incorporates four strategies:

Strengthen the school's response to early academic and behavioral problems by implementing a Student Assistance Program (SAP). Modeled after Employee Assistance Programs in the adult workplace, the school's SAP expedites student and family access to appropriate interventions and services at the school and in the community. Three hundred Lowell school children have been referred to the SAP by a parent, caregiver, teacher or friend, and assigned an outreach worker. A SAP plan has been established and implemented for each student.

Strengthen the student's capacity to develop strong bonds to school, family, and positive role models by increasing the student's social competency and life skills. All students at Lowell take part in a life skills curriculum, and students referred to the SAP receive life skills coaching and counseling. Fourth- and fifth-grade students may participate in the Peer Leadership Club to learn and use their leadership skills.

Strengthen access to school services and community resources through personal outreach contacts and community partnerships. More than 15 agencies provide services to Lowell families. Outreach workers have made more than

"I have a student, Jorge, who lost his dad to cancer in December. His mother is not present either. He lives with his grandmother. He has stopped turning in homework and is falling behind in his work."

— Teacher referral to the Student Assistance Program

Strengthen the family support for school success.

Families of students referred to the SAP receive a visit from an outreach worker inviting them to attend the Strengthening Families Program. Students, their siblings, and parents attend 14 weeks of family training sessions designed to improve communication and family management practices. Over 85 percent of Creciendo Saludable's enrolled participants stay involved throughout the 14 weeks. More than 110 families attend the program each year.

4,000 contacts to ensure student and family access to and attendance at SAP-recommended services in the first year of the project.

These strategies have paid off well for Carolina and her mother, Theresa. Both mother and daughter attended the Strengthening Families Program. Carolina met with a counselor and attended tutoring sessions. Her outreach worker helped her obtain a mentor from Youth Connect, a community prevention program for

(continued on page 8)

It is said that out of crisis comes opportunity. Since 1997, when New Hampshire's State Supreme Court found that the state's approach to funding public schools through local taxes was not equitable, officials there have struggled to agree upon a new system.

While a number of states continue to use local property tax to pay for education, only New Hampshire has no state income or sales tax in place to supplement local funding. For that reason, coming up with a statewide plan to improve and pay for education has been a major challenge.

It was during a statewide education summit that an idea emerged—an idea that has grown into a pioneering model to improve the state's public schools by capitalizing on its value for local community involvement. The model is called the Best Schools Initiative (BSI). It is coordinated by WestEd staff in the agency's Learning Innovations office in Stoneham, Massachusetts.

"In so many places, schools come in and tell the community what's going to happen," says BSI's Director

of Outreach, Cheryl Williams. "We're looking at statewide school reform that adapts to what the school-community identifies as priorities."

SCHOOL-COMMUNITY TEAMS translate to EDUCATION SUPPORT for New Hampshire

At the core of BSI are school-community teams designed by each site to determine the constituents' own school improvement agendas. BSI teams get a three-year commitment from a facilitator who helps clarify the team's goals and desired outcomes, as well as identify numerous resources to help them in their work. Signs of success are emerging at the close of its first year. BSI has seen major breakthroughs in the way teams approach their work. Team members focus on process, content, results, and impact by continuously clarifying their task and involving those people best able to help.

For more information about BSI, contact Williams at 781/481-1100 or e-mail, cwillia@WestEd.org 

TAKING POSITIVE APPROACHES TO HELP CHILDREN SUCCEED

For many years, researchers have studied why young people get in trouble.

The researchers often then generated lists of "risk factors," or reasons why children engage in problem behaviors—such as alcohol and other drug abuse, delinquency, violence, and risky sexual behavior. Intended to be helpful, says WestEd Senior Program Associate Bonnie Benard, these lists often were not.

In fact, she has found such descriptions of risk have been harmful. "They have led to stereotyping and labeling of children from certain families and communities," says Benard, nationally known for her expertise in promoting the healthy development of youth. "This work has too often eroded educators' confidence in the students' capacity to overcome the odds and succeed."

Benard has found that young people need to be regarded not as problems to be fixed but as assets to be nurtured, encouraged, and supported by caring relationships, high expectation messages, and an abundant array of opportunities.

This kind of support system enables even children struggling in abusive families and violent communities to have healthy and successful lives.

Responding to this need, WestEd's Human Development Program created the Center for Resilience and Youth Development. The center links schools, families, and communities, and enhances their capacity to implement effective strategies to promote the healthy development of the youth.

For more information about the center, contact Benard at 510/302-4208 or e-mail, bbenard@WestEd.org 

WestEd to Co-launch Child Maltreatment Prevention RESEARCH CENTER

WestEd and the Children's Bureau of Southern California (CBSC) are collaborating to launch the Child Maltreatment Prevention Research Center. The center will examine community-based interventions to prevent and treat child abuse, neglect, and maltreatment.

Building community capacity to achieve this purpose is a broad-based endeavor touching on families' needs for parenting education and activities that enrich children's lives. WestEd's Evaluation Research Program will apply research-based models to programs and services of CBSC, as well as to promising programs of other organizations.

"Our products will be effective, field-tested programs and initiatives that can be implemented in communities with similar needs and characteristics," says WestEd Research Associate Karen Wade, who will coordinate the center. Research findings also will be disseminated in formats usable to policymakers.

For more information, contact Wade at 562/598-7661 or e-mail, kwade@WestEd.org 

Growing Up Healthy

(continued from page 6)

children whose siblings are in the criminal justice system. And Carolina's mother has improved her communication skills.

"[The project] helped me to talk to my children and guide and support them, and not hit or yell at them," says Theresa.

The challenge, according to Peck, is to set up the four Creciendo Saludable strategies in a manner that schools can adopt and institutionalize using their existing school and community resources. Peck hopes that the project's early indicators of success will continue over the next three years and motivate other schools to adopt the model. The planned production of a software program to implement student assistance programs is expected to help schools adopt the model.

"Most elementary schools can become overwhelmed by the needs of students in communities with high levels of poverty," says Lowell Elementary School Principal Eleanor Rodriguez. "Schools don't have the resources to meet those needs."

"Schools need a process to help students and their families access the needed services without draining on the school's academic mission," adds Rodriguez. "One of the greatest impacts of Creciendo Saludable is that we've been able to address concerns that affect our neediest at-risk students' ability to learn. We do this by providing a response team that involves the family, school personnel, and community agencies."

For more information about Creciendo Saludable, contact Peck at 714/648-0333; e-mail, cpeck@WestEd.org; or visit www.healthy-ninos.com 

Ana Morales,
Strengthening
Families Program
Facilitator, explains
an activity to Ariana
(left) and Gabriel,
both 5 years old.



photo: Gabriel Koneta

How can we extend learning for children after school? On weekends? During the summer?

Finding good programs that do this job is a topic of increasing national interest. At the federal level, the interest comes with generous funding. Since the inception of the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program, federal funding for school-based, out-of-school-time

programs has grown from \$40 million in 1998 to \$450 million this year. Programs in rural and inner-city communities are eligible.

In an attempt to level the playing field for programs that may have boundless passion for their work but little experience in the world of federal funding, WestEd and the other Regional Educational Laboratories have stepped in to help.

"Our job is to support all applicants and to be available to successful applicants for assistance and evaluation services," says Len Beckum, who directs WestEd's Center for Educational Equity. "If a program sets out

to improve reading skills, we want to help them do it. If their proposal says they will reach 250 kids and only 150 are showing up, we want to help them figure out why.

SUPPORTING 21st CENTURY Community Learning Centers

"Our goal is to bring attention to what is effective, as well as identify what is less effective, then to get programs thinking about how to maximize their efforts to benefit children."

For more information, technical assistance, or evaluation services, contact Beckum at 510/302-4207; e-mail, lbeckum@WestEd.org; or visit www.ed.gov/21stcclc 

Leading a new collaborative effort to invigorate leaders in education, former New York City Schools Chancellor Rudy Crew has joined WestEd and the University of Washington to create an innovative initiative aimed at bringing the best available leadership strategies to school- and district-level administrators.

"There are teachers, principals, and superintendents who operate in complete isolation and don't know what to do to improve low-performing schools," Crew says. "We have the choice to respond with quick-fix 'silver bullets,' or we can create a new culture where principals from low-performing schools begin a lengthy conversation with principals at high-performing schools."



RUDY CREW'S new WestEd INITIATIVE

The K-12 Leadership Initiative is planning a kick-off convocation later this year. Educators, scholars, and other professionals will be invited to address the role of leaders in closing the achievement gap.

Crew is an innovator who led the New York City schools longer than any chancellor in two decades. He is a former superintendent of several Western school districts, including Sacramento, California. He will split his time between the campus of the University of Washington and WestEd's San Francisco office. 

For ordering information, please refer to the product order insert.



Effective Instruction: Linking Schools and Communities

Producers: Doug Weinacht & Kathleen Tyner, 1996

Teaching and learning begins by building on the knowledge that children bring from their experiences outside the classroom. This video takes a look at the way that three schools work with parents and communities to ensure that learning grows from the culture, knowledge, and skills of students. By linking schools and communities, children can broaden their horizons from a foundation rooted in local culture.

20-minute VHS video Price: \$15 Order #: VD-96-01

WestEd's SCHOOL-COMMUNITY Resources



Putting the Pieces Together: Comprehensive School-Linked Strategies for Children and Families

U.S. Department of Education & the Regional Educational Laboratories Network Program, 1996

This guidebook for schools and community partners addresses how to develop comprehensive strategies to support children and families. Topics include building collaborative partnerships, conducting community assessments, finding/developing resources, evaluating school-linked strategies, and maintaining momentum.

98 pages Price: \$8 Order #: REL-96-01



Continuity in Early Childhood: A Framework for Home, School, and Community Linkages

Regional Educational Laboratories' Early Childhood Collaboration Network, 1995

Strong home, school, and community connections enable families to move from setting to setting with ease; a consistent family focus is key. This practical document identifies eight elements for early childhood continuity and includes indicators of effective practices used by community partnerships to link and improve services for young children and their families.

139 pages Price: \$15 Order #: REL-95-03



Creating New Visions for Schools: Activities for Educators, Parents, and Community Members

1994

This publication includes seven activities that foster reflection and focused action. The activities help staff developers, teachers, school administrators, parents, and community and business leaders form concrete images of a learning-centered school, align the vision and mission, and develop plans for action. Used by thousands of educators, these activities are catalysts for discussion and action.

36 pages Price: \$10
Order #: L-9413A



Fostering Resiliency in Kids: Protective Factors in the Family, School, and Community

Bonnie Benard

Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development & the Western Regional Center for Drug-Free Schools and Communities, 1991

Every teacher knows the special student who overcomes the hazards of a risk-filled environment — poverty, violence, drugs — to become a healthy, competent young adult. This research synthesis discusses how such resiliency can be fostered in school by looking beyond the deficits of a child's life to capitalize on strengths.

Also available online at nwrac.org/pub/library/f

27 pages Price: \$5 Order #: WC-91-01

What's new, hot, and useful



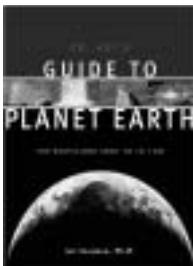
Lifelines to the Classroom: Designing Support for Beginning Teachers

Knowledge Brief

Kendyll Stansbury & Joy Zimmerman, 2000

This Knowledge Brief provides the rationale for giving new teachers explicit support, identifies the critical challenges for new teachers, and describes the components of both a low-intensity support effort and a high-intensity effort.

16 pages Price: \$6 KN-00-01



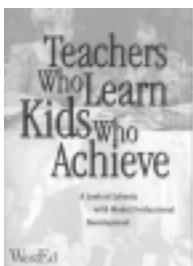
Dr. Art's Guide to Planet Earth: For Earthlings Ages 12 to 120

Art Sussman

Co-Publishers: Chelsea Green Publishing Company & WestEd, 2000

This full-color, engaging book explains with three easy-to-understand principles how Earth works and what we can do to protect it as global and local citizens. Also visit www.planetguide.net

120 pages Price: \$14.95 Order #: ERTH-00-01



Teachers Who Learn, Kids Who Achieve: A Look at Schools with Model Professional Development

2000

What does it take to translate teacher professional development into impressive learning gains for students? A research study of eight schools that won the U.S. Department of Education's National Award for Model Professional Development has been distilled into this brief and compelling story of successful school reform.

76 pages Price: \$9.95 Order #: PD-00-01

For ordering information, please refer to the product order insert.

WestEd Resource Catalog – 2000



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INSIDE



READ ABOUT
Rudy Crew's
new work
with WestEd

(see page 9)

Helping Homeless Youth

(see page 5)

A new youth-driven
activists group
that's fighting the
tobacco industry

(see page 4)



R&D Alert covers issues affecting schools in WestEd's four-state region—Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah—and nationwide.

Your letters are welcomed. Please send comments to Colleen Montoya, WestEd, 4665 Lampson Avenue, Los Alamitos, CA 90720-5139; fax, 562/799-5138; or e-mail, cmontoy@WestEd.org

Chief Executive Officer
Glen Harvey

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Max McConkey

R&D Alert Editor
Colleen Montoya

R&D Alert Contributors
Glen Harvey
Colleen Montoya
Lynn Murphy
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Copy Editors
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Lynn Murphy
Nimfa Rueda

Graphic Designer
Christian Holden

Photographers
Corbis Images
Gabriel Koneta

WestEd is a research, development, and service agency working with education and other communities to promote excellence, achieve equity, and improve learning for children, youth, and adults. Drawing on the best knowledge from research and practice, we work with practitioners, policymakers, and others to address education's most critical issues. A nonprofit agency, WestEd, whose work extends internationally, serves as one of the nation's designated Regional Educational Laboratories originally created by Congress in 1966 serving the states of Arizona, California, Nevada, and Utah. With headquarters in San Francisco, WestEd has offices across the United States.

For more information about WestEd, visit our Web site at WestEd.org; call 415/565-3000 or toll-free, (1-877) 4WestEd; or write: WestEd / 730 Harrison Street / San Francisco, CA 94107-1242.

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WestEd®

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San Francisco
California 94107-1242

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