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DCDT

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Colleagues,

Thirty years as an organization! Started in 1976 as the Division of Career Development, we have grown in both our mission and membership. DCDT will celebrate our 30-year anniversary during the 2007 DCDT conference in Orlando. Stay tuned for details!

The traditional gift for a 30-year anniversary is pearls, and in commemoration of DCDT's thirty years, we too have been given pearls! Indeed, we have been offered pearls of wisdom and tradition from our presidents and leaders in transition. Each year at the CEC conference, the outgoing president presents the DCDT gavel to the incoming president. As I studied the aging bronze plate and indentations in the wood, I thought about the pioneers in career development and transition who had presided over meetings and steered our rich history. This tradition will continue in the able hands of Colleen Thoma as she begins her year of presidency in July.

DCDT has embarked on ambitious plans for our organization's future. In October, the DCDT board participated in an organizational PATH facilitated by Cheryl Lisle and Vicki Barnitt from the Florida Inclusion Network. By October 2009, we are aiming for the following positive and possible results:

1. DCDT will have (a) developed user-friendly training and technical assistance, and (b) established a coordinated research agenda.
2. DCDT will have 600 student members



3. DCDT will have affiliation with at least six state conferences
4. DCDT will have helped place transition back on the national agenda through (a) national conferences, (b) products, (c) policy-making actions.

As you consider our organizational dreams, take an additional moment to think about how you can contribute to the effort. Committees, state subdivisions, conferences, journals, and newsletter information are but a few of the ways in which DCDT members can help guide the next thirty years.

Finally, plan to attend the 2007 DCDT conference in Orlando (see additional information in this newsletter). As I was standing at the DCDT booth at the recent CEC conference in Louisville, a visitor to the booth saw our display and stated, "DCDT—you are the people who do the awesome conferences." What a legacy to bring to our field! Come experience our "awesome conference" in October! See you in Orlando!

DID YOU KNOW ...

As a member of DCDT, you receive free online access to *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals* as a member benefit.

Please follow the registration process as outlined on Ingenta Connect (<http://www.ingentaconnect.com>). Partway through the reg-

istration procedure you will be prompted for your subscriber number; enter DCDT.

Once you've completed the registration, Ingenta will email PRO-ED to confirm and activate your subscription term. If you encounter a problem during the registration process, contact Ingenta's Help desk (help@ingentaconnect.com).

ASSUMPTIONS IN TRANSITION PLANNING: ARE THEY CULTURALLY SENSITIVE?

David W. Leake, Rhonda S. Black, & Kelly Roberts

Transition policies and practices typically assume that youth with disabilities and their families give priority to such individual-oriented outcomes as self-determination, self-reliance, and independent living. However, these values are not shared by *all* youth and families, especially those who are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD). In this article, we identify common assumptions that may hinder efforts to support CLD youth with disabilities and their families through the transition process and discuss how to make such efforts more culturally sensitive.

The major ethnic/racial categories of the US Census Bureau include White, Hispanic, Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaskan Native. Within each of these groups there are numerous subgroups, and among individuals within subgroups there is much variability in terms of identification with their traditional culture, facility with standard English, and so on. Despite this variability, it is possible to identify an area of contrast particularly relevant to the transition to adulthood, namely, the contrast between the “individualistic” orientation of mainstream US culture and the “collectivistic” orientation of most non-Western cultures.

INDIVIDUALISM AND COLLECTIVISM

Individualism is rooted in the view that people are discrete entities who, as they transition to adulthood, should move from dependence to independence and self-reliance. Collectivism is rooted in the contrasting view that people are woven into the fabric of groups (e.g., family, neighborhood, tribe), and as they transition to adulthood they should move from dependence to interdependence (Ewalt & Mokuau, 1995). Individualistic cultures tend to stress individual rights, pursuing personal interests, setting and achieving personal goals, and being true to one’s own values and beliefs, while collectivist cultures tend to stress obligations that go along with one’s group roles, being an interdependent member of a group, working with others to achieve group success, and adhering to the group’s traditional values (Yamauchi, 1998). In traditional Pacific Island cultures, for example, “The person is not an individual in our Western sense of the term. The person is instead a locus of shared biographies: personal histories of people’s relationships with other people and with other things. The relationship defines the person, not vice-versa” (Lieber, 1990, p. 72). In short, from the individualistic perspective people create their relationships, while from the collectivist perspective people are defined by their relationships.

The contrast between individualism and collectivism is reflected in the concept of self-determination. According to Wehman (1996), “Self-determination—control over one’s life and choices—is the critical difference separating people with disabilities from those without disabilities.” This view has become widely accepted in the social service and academic fields concerned with disabilities, resulting in growing commitment to promote self-determination. For the transition process, best practice is likely to include providing students with disabilities

with the requisite attitudes and skills for self-determination, along with opportunities for practice. However, such efforts are almost always based on a concept of self-determination rooted in individualism, typically incorporating the ideas of personal control and freedom to choose, which require skills such as decision making, problem solving, goal setting, self-observation, self-evaluation, self-reinforcement, self-awareness, self-knowledge, self-advocacy, and so on. From the interdependent collectivist standpoint, however, the most highly valued skills are likely to be other-oriented rather than self-oriented, such as understanding one’s roles in the group, perceiving and responding appropriately to the emotional status of others, and being able to work as part of a team. Such considerations lead Ewalt and Mokuau (1995) to point out that for most Western-trained social service professionals, “Rarely is contributing to the group’s well-being considered integral to self-determination, and rarely is placing the group’s well-being first seen as signifying maturity” (p. 170).

Listed below are some examples of individualistic values that commonly underlie transition policies and practices along with possible alternative CLD values:

- Individual competitiveness and personal achievement versus group competitiveness and group achievement;
- Self-determination and individual choice versus group or hierarchical decision-making;
- Postsecondary education versus contributing to the family (wages, housework, etc.);
- Independent living and self-reliance versus residing with kin and interdependence (and possibly being cared for); and
- Creating a transition plan on paper versus establishing a close personal relationship between professional and youth and family.

ACHIEVING CULTURAL SENSITIVITY IN TRANSITION SERVICES

Given the variability among CLD youth with disabilities and their families, there are no hard and fast rules for transition planning aside from one: the principle of *individualization* must be adhered to. Culturally sensitive strategies need to be used to help CLD students with disabilities and their families to express and develop their own transition goals and appropriate ways to achieve them. As Harry and her co-authors (1999) point out, it is not necessary to have a great deal of culturally specific information. Rather, they recommend “cultural reciprocity,” in which professionals develop cultural self-awareness (meaning they recognize and understand the cultural underpinnings of their own views and practice) and take the lead in establishing a two-way process of cultural learning. The process of cultural reciprocity with a particular CLD youth and family involves the following steps:

Step 1: The professional identifies his/her cultural values underlying interpretations of the youth’s situation. For example, the professional may realize that values like independence

and self-reliance lead to recommending that a young adult with developmental disabilities move from the family home to supported living and, eventually, independent living.

Step 2: The professional finds out the extent to which his/her values and assumptions are recognized and accepted by the youth and family. If they do not view independent living as a milestone to adulthood, then this may not be an appropriate transition goal.

Step 3: The professional acknowledges any cultural differences identified and explains to the youth and family how and why mainstream American society promotes different values. The value of independent living and its benefits to other youth and families might be described, helping the youth and family to understand the cultural basis for professional recommendations.

Step 4: Through discussion and collaboration, the professional, youth, and family collaboratively determine the most effective way of adapting professional interpretations and recommendations to the family value system.

By taking a stance of cultural reciprocity, professionals are well on the way to establishing effective collaborative relationships with CLD youth and families. However, some cultural differences may represent barriers to such relationships that may require skill, time, and patience to address (Boone, 1992). For example, family members may be reluctant to participate in discussions, and if they do participate they may be unwilling to be forthright with strangers, as the result of cultural and personal proclivities and/or unpleasant experiences with professionals in the past. The belief that families should *take care of their own* is also common in many CLD cultures, so accepting assistance from outside agencies may be viewed as evading family responsibilities (Boone, 1992). In addition, generational differences are sometimes aggravated in CLD families as youth strive for acculturation to mainstream (individualistic) culture while their elders focus on maintaining (collectivist) cultural traditions (although in a few families the youth may be the ones more committed to traditional ways). Professionals who come across situations of family conflict may face delicate decisions regarding how hard to push for individualistic values versus honoring family desires that emerge from collectivist values, which professionals may sometimes view as limiting and inequitable for youth with disabilities.

In addition to culturally sensitive individualization, professionals would do well to focus on developing and sustaining natural supports when working with CLD youth and their families. The term *natural supports* (also called informal supports) refers to people and resources in the community who are outside the professional service system but have the capacity to effectively

provide supports. They may be friends, relatives, neighbors, clergy, or service organizations. Potential major advantages of natural supports are that people providing them may share and deeply understand the cultural values of those being supported, may have already established trusting relationships, and may continue providing supports long after professionals leave the scene. Natural supports are sometimes the only way for professionals to effectively work with people who otherwise avoid dealing with professional service systems. An example of a natural support for a CLD youth with disabilities wanting to transition to college would be to recruit and train a mentor from the same CLD group who has achieved college success and already knows the youth. Taken to a higher level, a "circle of support" consisting of key persons in the youth's life would be created to provide formal and natural supports beginning in high school and extending into the college years.

SUMMARY

Because transition systems are typically rooted in individualistic cultural assumptions, they often fall short in accommodating collectivist values and behaviors. In order to effectively support the transition of CLD youth with disabilities, professionals need to be aware of the contrasts between individualism and collectivism and of the cultural basis of their own values and practice. They also need to master and use strategies for: (a) developing collaborative interpersonal relationships with CLD youth and families; (b) eliciting youth and family views of their own values, dreams, strengths, and needs; and (c) individualizing transition planning, services, and supports.

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PROMOTE MEMBERSHIP IN DCDT

One of the best ways to promote membership in DCDT is to encourage a friend or colleague to join. Try these strategies to build our membership:

- Share this issue of the journal and newsletter with a friend (enclose membership information from our Web site).

- Add DCDT membership information to your handout packets for workshops and conference presentations.
- In your presentations, add a slide promoting DCDT.
- Create DCDT Stickers that include our Web site (<http://www.dcdt.org>).

COLLABORATING WITH DIVERSE POPULATIONS INCLUDES PROVIDING ACCESSIBLE AND ACCURATE INFORMATION

Audrey Trainor

The cultural and linguistic diversity of our nation's population provides a robust resource of knowledge, perspectives, and traditions. In the area of transition planning and instruction, acknowledging and addressing diversity is part of being effective educators and service providers (Leake & Black, 2005). Because parent and family involvement is so important to successful postsecondary transition (Wandry & Pleet, 2003), culturally responsive approaches to special education include providing information to families and youth so that they can consider all the options that are available to them (Kalyanpur & Harry, 1999).

A recent analysis of the readability of parents' rights and responsibilities in special education revealed that the English language reading level of states' documents explaining procedural safeguards to parents were written at a 9–10th grade reading level, well above the reading levels of many parents (Fitzgerald & Watkins, 2006). Information regarding the number of states that offered documents in languages other than English, or the readability and accuracy of translated materials, was not included in the study. The article calls into question our efforts to reach out to families and individuals. Creating documents that are consumer-friendly seems possible and the potential benefits (increased participation and collaboration, decreased frustration and alienation) would be well worth our efforts.

How can we make information more accessible to all families?

- Take time to get to know families and understand the specific barriers to participation that they face.
- Provide information orally and on paper. Offer to read important documents (or parts of a document) aloud with family members, asking first about their preference for this.
- Provide documents in the family's dominant language.
- Invite families to ask questions during formal and informal interactions.
- Invite families to have the members of the extended family, friends, or community leaders join transition planning meetings.
- Follow up with family members and give them the opportunity to revisit issues or ask questions at a later date.

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POLITICS, POLICIES, AND PEOPLE IN TRANSITION AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Donna Martinez, DCDT Government Relations Committee Chair

WHO IS DONNA?

As the new DCDT Government Relations Chair, I am honored to be following the wonderful leadership of Laura Eisenman and aspire to do as good a job as she has for our Division. I'm happy to say she has promised to linger in the background until I get my feet under me in this new position. I hope you will consider participating in The Government Relations Committee with me as we encourage and effect policy that improves career development and transition services leading to community inclusion for individuals with disabilities.

My interest in Policy and Transition is a result of my professional and personal life. I have been a special education teacher for 13 years. I am a doctoral candidate expecting to defend my dissertation by summer of 2007. I am also a parent of a young man with disabilities who is emerging into adulthood. I have been an adjunct at GW and the University of Phoenix, Online. In January, I will be leaving my current position as Proj-

ect Director of the Candidate Performance Assessment System in the Office of the Dean to take on the directorship role of The George Washington University HEATH Resource Center (<http://www.heath.gwu.edu>).

I hope to bring my long history of involvement in inclusion and transition issues to my newest position as your Government Relations Committee Chair. I encourage your continued active participation in DCDT and the Government Relations Committee by joining the committee or sending me your suggestions and comments. I hope to meet you in April at the CEC 2007 Annual Convention and Expo in Louisville, Kentucky. I will be facilitating the April 20 panel presentation *Transition Policy and the Public Agenda: Today, Tomorrow, and for the Future*. Panelists include Jane E. West, PhD, AACTE Vice President Government and External Relations; Patti Ralabate, NEA Special Education Policy Analyst; Debra Hart, Coordinator of School and Community Projects, ICI; Ed O'Leary, Program Specialist for Mountain Plains Regional Resource Center; and DCDT's Carol Kochhar-Bryant, Representative to Knowledge and Skill. See you there!

WHAT'S NEW IN THE GOVERNMENT RELATIONS COMMITTEE

The Government Relations committee, supported by Laura Eisenman, Meg Grigal, Mike Ward, and the Executive Committee, has been exploring ways to effectively communicate information regarding policy and calls to action. During the summer we explored the establishment of a listserv hosted on Yahoo! Groups. A tremendous offering of thanks to all of you who tried to sign up during that summer's transition of committee leadership (and kudos to all who were successful)!

Unfortunately, many were not successful. In an effort to understand how the Board could meet the needs of information distribution we asked you to participate in an online survey. The results of that survey indicated that you valued receiving information via email (97%, N=180). However those of you who responded were closely divided regarding joining a membership only listserv (55% yes, 45% no), and using the other features of a listserv (53% yes; 47% no).

We are excited to announce we are improving our distribution of news, policy, and calls to action for our DCDT membership. In mid-January your membership from the previous lists (Yahoo and the Laura Eisenman's) will be moved onto a new CEC sponsored list service. The beauty of this service is that sign-up will be automatic and pain free. We thank you for your continued patience as we improve our means to serve you better.

CEC POLICY UPDATE—SUCCESS STORIES NEEDED!

CEC is gearing up for next year's CEC Federal Outlook for Exceptional Children and we need your help! As you may know,

every year CEC produces the Federal Outlook for Exceptional Children as a way to provide members of Congress, their staff, and officials at the Department of Education with CEC's funding recommendations for special and gifted education. To give these facts and figures a human touch, we include stories of children who have benefitted from IDEA and the Javits program for students with gifts and talents. The Outlook is a vital grassroots tool that CEC staff and CAN Coordinators use regularly on Capitol Hill. Please don't miss this chance to have DCDT represented! Please help us collect these stories! The deadline for submitting stories is January 15, 2007.

- Please consider submitting a story showing how funding from IDEA and the Javits program have benefited students and/or educators. As Congress continues to drastically underfund special and gifted education, we are hoping stories can highlight the impact of federal funding (or lack thereof) on schools across the country.
- Stories should be only 250 words. We have included a template online to assist in writing these stories. Go to the Web site for more information (<http://www.cec.sped.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home&CONTENTID=7416&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm>).

OTHER TOPICS FEATURED IN CEC:

- CEC IDEA Workshops Enlighten Attendees on New Regulations
- U.S. Department of Education Solicits Public Input For IDEA Part D

THE NATIONAL SECONDARY TRANSITION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

The National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC) continues to provide technical assistance in secondary transition to states and territories. New items on our Web site include:

- The Indicator 13 Frequently Asked Questions was recently approved by OSEP and is designed to answer questions a state or local education agency may have when completing the Indicator 13 Checklist.

- Audio podcasts of some of the presentations from the *Making the Connection Forum* hosted in Denver in September, 2006.
- A link to sign up for our newsletter, NSTTAC Notes.

Finally, if you are interested in helping code articles for our literature review in order to establish the evidence-base for secondary transition practices, please contact Ms. Catherine Fowler via our Web site (<http://www.nsttac.org>).

HISTORY OF DCDT

The Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT) was organized in 1976 as the 12th division of the Council for Exceptional Children. DCDT focuses on the career development of children, youth, and adults of all exceptionalities and recognizes transition from school to adult life as a major component of that process that focuses on the life roles of individuals as students, workers, consumers, family members, and citizens. DCDT has evolved into a powerful force in the youth development field through its high quality publications, its active participation in policy development and implementation, its provision of effec-

tive national and regional conferences, and its interdisciplinary approach to issues affecting children, youth, and adults of all exceptionalities.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of DCDT is to promote national and international efforts to improve the quality of and access to career/vocational and transition services, increase the participation of education in career development and transition goals, and to influence policies affecting career development and transition services for persons with disabilities.

NEWS FROM NORTHEAST DCDT

WISCONSIN-ILLINOIS

The newly formed collaborative chapter of the Wisconsin/Illinois DCDT is now nearly a year old. The leadership slate for the board includes two representatives from Illinois and one from Wisconsin. Ms. Liz Howes (Niles West-IL) is Secretary, Ms. Joann Hartman (Roosevelt University-IL) is Vice President, and Dr. Tom Holub (Madison, WI) is President. Five regional meetings have concluded and two major goals exist: 1) increase DCDT participation among Teacher Education candidates, and 2) investigate the possibility of a regional Transition Conference in Milwaukee or Chicago Metro for 1.5 years from now, to coordinate with the off-year of the DCDT Conference. Any and all interested individuals are encouraged to join. For more information contact Dr. Holub (tholub@edgewood.edu).

MICHIGAN

Oakland Schools hosted a transition workshop presented by Denise Bissonette for 300 participants. She was very well received. A roundtable of transition programs and strategies will be presented at Oakland Schools in the spring. For more information and to get involved in Michigan DCDT contact Catherine Schmidt (Catherine.Schmidt@oakland.k12.mi.us).

OHIO

The Ohio DCDT will be hosting their annual transition conference with other state agencies involved in transition in May 2007. They have been very busy gathering data on post school outcomes for national DCDT. For more information on the Transition outcomes of Ohio students and the Annual May Transition Conference contact Dr. Rober Baer (rbaer@kent.edu).

PENNSYLVANIA

With workshops and professional development ongoing throughout the second half of the school year, the following was accomplished in Pennsylvania's DCDT Subdivision during the first half of the 2006-07 school year:

Provide "Effective Practices" Workshops at the PACEC Convention in the Fall of 2006. Some of the Workshops included:

- Self Determination: Why? And How?
- Developing Skills for Post-Secondary Employment Success: Whose Job Is It?
- Community-Based Instruction: Design, Implementation, and Evaluation

Pennsylvania DCDT is busy planning for next year's activities. To get involved contact Kenneth Deitmen (717/541-4960 or kdeitman@pattan.k12.pa.us).

NEW YORK

A Transition Fair for MS and HS students in Western New York was sponsored by NY DCDT for more than 135 students with moderate to severe disabilities. They came to hear presentations from over 15 not-for-profit agencies who may provide services for them. A separate "Transition Fair" was held for parents the night before the students' fair. New York DCDT continues to have a regular column in the journal *The Exceptional Individual* on issues related to transition and DCDT in general. For more information on NY DCDT, contact Liz Hall (halle@geneseo.edu).

Contact Peg Lamb for information on Northeast DCDT (drpeglamb@yahoo.com).

NEWS FROM TEXAS DCDT

The Texas DCDT has joined hands with Texas A&M University, Texas Education Agency's Region VI Service Center, Texas Effectiveness Study, and Texas Statewide Transition Network and hosted a statewide transition conference in College Station, Texas from February 28th to March 2nd, 2007. Themed "National Perspectives," the conference featured national speakers including Dianne Bassett, Ed O'Leary, Jim Patton, and Michael Wehmeyer, as well as state transition experts. The conference was extremely successful and renewed interests in transition, which stimulated broader interests in hosting the 2009 DCDT International Conference in Texas. Conference attendees gave

excellent evaluations to the conference and promised to come back with more people for the next year's conference. With financial support from collaborating agencies, the TX DCDT was able to sponsor a dinner reception, where Board members were introduced to the audience by President Carol Huntley. The national DCDT display board and DCDT brochures were also displayed during the conference thanks to support from the national DCDT. Planning is already underway for next year's conference, which promises to be even more exciting and better attended. The planning committee includes such familiar names as Mike Benz, Dalun Zhang, and Jeanne Patrick, as well as a new name—Cheryl Grenwelge. For more information, please contact Cheryl (cgrenwelge@neo.tamu.edu).

NEWS FROM OKLAHOMA DCDT

The Oklahoma chapter of DCDT is in "revival" mode at this point. Lorrie Sylvester has agreed to begin re-vitalization efforts. These efforts include assessing the needs and concerns of professionals and students in the area of career development and transition and coordinating and establishing at least quarterly meetings of professionals and students involved in Career De-

velopment and transition issues for students with disabilities across the state. We have a vision for including students and professionals from across disciplines (teachers/related services providers) who have interests in improving transition and career outcomes for all students with disabilities. Efforts to coordinate activities with the student CEC group on the OU campus have begun.

Postsecondary transition was a major emphasis in our most recent Annual Conference of the Oklahoma Federa-

tion of the Council for Exceptional Children, February 4–6 in Norman, Oklahoma. Selected presentation topics included student-directed transition planning; self-determination and student-led IEPs; Oklahoma PASS; transition from high school to college; teaching self-determination for secondary students in English class; family perspectives in working with students and families from diverse cultures; Oklahoma Youth Leadership Forum; technology for universal educational design and applications to achieving transition outcomes; defining and applying self-determination in transition practices; and clarification of learning disabilities definitions and criteria. Presenters included professionals as well as graduate students from each of the major universities in Oklahoma.

The 2nd annual Oklahoma Transition Institute will take place on June 25, 26, and 27 in Norman, OK. Over thirty-five transition teams from across the state will meet to develop local plans to improve student involvement in transition education activities and student development skills. Representatives from the Oklahoma Transition Council and graduate students from the University of Oklahoma Dept. of Educational Psychology, will attend the National Secondary Transition State Planning Institute sponsored by the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center in Charlotte, NC. Facilitated planning at the State Planning Institute will enable the Oklahoma Transition Council to develop the next phase of the Oklahoma Transition Institute process.

JOIN DCDT

DCDT MEMBERSHIP IS MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH DCDT'S PARENT ORGANIZATION: THE COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CHILDREN

To join DCDT you must join The Council for Exceptional Children and indicate that you would like to join the DCDT division.

JOINING DCDT ENTITLES YOU TO AN ARRAY OF BENEFITS

- National, regional, state, provincial, and local conferences that offer the opportunity for continuing education units (CEU's).
- Opportunities to network with colleagues and leaders in the field of transition.

- Forums to contribute to the field through publications, conferences, and informal meetings.
- Acquisition of implementation tools and practical strategies that can be applied in individual settings.
- Receipt of research-based and current publications, including:
 - *Career Development for Exceptional Individuals* (CDEI) journal providing research-based and practical descriptions of models, programs, and strategies.
 - *DCDT Network* newsletter providing latest information on legislation, projects, resource materials, and model programs.

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A NOTE FROM YOUR EDITOR . . .

Greetings from the Wild, Wild West!

On behalf of DCDT, I would like to thank all newsletter contributors for your continued support. Please contact me (gwilliams@mail.wtamu.edu) with more submissions. Hope you are having a great summer!

Gwen Williams, Editor

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