



Temple Sholom

Selma Maisel Nursery School

300 East Putnam Avenue, Greenwich, Connecticut

...a place where learning & discovery begin!

Parent Handbook and Overview 2018-2019

www.templesholom.com/smns

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Dear Parents,

Greetings and welcome to a new school year at the Temple Sholom Selma Maisel Nursery School (SMNS).

This handbook is to familiarize you with the policies, educational philosophy and procedures of our school. It will be most useful to you if you take the time now to read through and become familiar with its contents, so that you can use it easily and quickly as a reference throughout the year. It is also available on our website at www.templesholom.com/smns.

All of our policies and procedures are carefully thought out and reviewed annually. The growth, development, and general well-being of children always come first in making policy. Our goal is to have our school reflect our commitment to the needs of children.

I look forward to the opening of school and a year of working, learning, and growing for all.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David Cohen', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David Cohen
Nursery School Director

MISSION STATEMENT

The Temple Sholom Selma Maisel Nursery School was established in 1992 under the auspices of Temple Sholom. Our mission is to support the social, emotional, cognitive, physical and spiritual development of each child. Through developmentally-appropriate and stimulating programs, we nurture a child's innate love of learning, encourage their curiosity, and inspire their creativity. We strive to deepen the child's understanding and commitment to spiritual values such as kindness, mutual respect and cooperation. In addition, we recognize the dignity and diversity of children and their families. Daily activities and interactions among children, parents and staff are guided by Jewish values and principles.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

SMNS admits students of any race, color, nationality and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, nationality or ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies.

TEMPLE SHOLOM SELMA MAISEL NURSERY SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

“Learning Through Experience and Self-Discovery”

SMNS provides a warm, nurturing, child-centered and respectful environment that accommodates each child's individual rate of development. Children are encouraged to develop socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically in a way that will build self-confidence, encourage creativity and foster a love for learning and ability to problem-solve independently.

Our goal is for children and teachers to approach each day as a passionate, exhilarating adventure.

Our teachers present a creative and challenging environment via an emergent curriculum that engages children through their interests. Children make choices and develop their own conclusions through active questioning and exploration, to ensure that each child meets their own potential.

We augment our children's experience by celebrating Jewish culture. Our clergy is involved with the children on a regular basis.

Specialists are incorporated into the classroom units to enhance the children's experiences. These specialists include STEAM, Music and Movement, Nature and Science, Art, and Physical Education.

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Early learning and development are multi-dimensional; developmental domains are highly interrelated. The domains of development are: personal and social, physical, cognitive and creative/aesthetic. Development in one domain influences development in other domains. For example, a child's language skills affect his/her ability to engage in social interactions. Therefore, developmental domains cannot be considered in isolation from one another.

Play performs several functions for children. Play can be considered as the way children acquire the physical, emotional, intellectual and social skills that they need to function in a more mature way. Play also provides a way of releasing tension or frustration children experience as they learn to behave acceptably in a grown-up world. And finally, play is the vehicle in which children learn to accept the cultural values of the society in which they are growing up. While children here at SMNS spend time playing, they are also learning so much.

Our classrooms are dynamic, changing to accommodate the topics that are being investigated. Children engage in a variety of learning experiences throughout the day. These may include art, blocks, manipulatives, dramatic play, STEAM Lab, gymnastics, sensory table, writing, group discussion and Library. The outdoor playground and garden provide additional spaces for learning and growing.

The goals of the program include, but are not limited to the following units:

LANGUAGE ARTS: Reading readiness, book and poetry reading, matching and differentiating, sequence of events, phonics, picture clues, letter, word and name recognition.

Writing: Recording individual story dictation, printing when a child expresses interest

Talking: Vocabulary building, gaining self-confidence

Listening: Comprehension, sound discrimination

MATHEMATICS: Using strategies to perceive, understand and act on mathematical problems, counting, recognizing numbers and value quantities, comparing, grouping, sorting, measuring, classifying and shapes

SCIENCE: Experimenting, observing, animal study, planting, weather, cooking, observing physical and chemical changes

SOCIAL STUDIES: Family, community service, holiday celebrations, geography, history, cultural diversity

CURRENT EVENTS: Calendar, milestones, news from the children

MUSIC/CREATIVE DANCE: Singing, creative movement, rhythm, instruments, listening

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY: Climbing, balancing, jumping, running, sliding, throwing, and catching

BLOCK BUILDING: Imagination, balance and size, organization of designs

ART: Exploring, discovering and learning to become familiarized with art materials, painting, brushes, clay, play dough, glue

DRAMATIC PLAY: Role-playing, puppetry, dramatization of stories, poetry and rhymes

HEALTH AND SAFETY: Discuss and experience healthy foods, good safety procedures and proper hygiene

HOUSEKEEPING: Table setting, clean-up, pride in classroom

PHOTOGRAPHY: Capturing precious moments

All children are capable of positive developmental outcomes. Through the skilled and nurturing guidance of our professional teaching staff, the children develop the ability to thrive in a preschool setting and beyond.

JUDAIC LEARNING

Knowing that religious identity develops within the early childhood years, we have made our Jewish heritage central to this program and its curriculum. Children learn about themselves and the wonderful richness of Jewish traditions. We draw from the resources of our very own synagogue, Temple Sholom, including Rabbi Mitch, Rabbi Chaya, Cantor Sandy and Barry Gruber (Mr. G). Together, the clergy, faculty and students celebrate Shabbat and Jewish holidays with fun-filled singing, engaging Bible stories and creative movement throughout the year. These services and programs enrich the spiritual and religious dimensions of the school.

We teach Jewish values through *tzedakah* (charity) and *mitzvot* (doing good deeds) in our classrooms. Every Friday, the children each bring in *tzedakah* in the form of non-perishable food items to be donated to the Neighbor to Neighbor Food Pantry. In each classroom, you will find a *mitzvah* board where the good deeds that children do are acknowledged.

In developing the Judaic component of the nursery school curriculum, we have approached this process with the same philosophy that underlies the cognitive, physical, social and emotional experiences integral in a young child's education. It is an approach that integrates Jewish traditions and values within the overall nursery experience to create a total environment for children. The goal of our program is to help children establish a Jewish memory that will provide the basis for continued growth and learning. The children are introduced to the sights and sounds of Shabbat and holidays, and they gain skills, information and beliefs related to Judaism.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The First Days of School

Adjusting to Separation—Separation is a major part of the curriculum during your child’s first year of school. Coming to school is one of the first steps in this life-long process of separation. Handling this with sensitivity can eliminate a lot of stress.

It can be difficult for a young child to be left in an unfamiliar setting. It is similar to being on your own in a foreign country or going to a party where you don’t know anyone. It takes time for young children to develop trust in new adults and feel comfortable in a new environment.

One of our primary goals is to help children make an easy transition from home to school. We want them to discover that school is a happy, safe, interesting place to be. Therefore, we offer a gradual phasing-in period during the first few weeks of school.

This will differ for children in different age groups and classrooms and will be part of the communication with your child’s teachers.

Classroom Visits—All children will have the opportunity to visit the teachers in the classrooms prior to the first day of school. Families will receive a Visiting Day schedule in their summer e-mail.

Toilet Learning—Children who are in diapers will be changed at least every two hours, or if a child has a bowel movement or a very wet diaper.

By age 3, many children are able to use the bathroom, while others are still learning. To help them, they need your encouragement and consistency as they are gaining mastery of this task. If a child is showing signs of readiness to start the toilet learning process, the parents and teachers will communicate to provide this consistency.

Classroom Groupings

Children are grouped in classrooms with several factors. We strive to have an even distribution of boys and girls and a wide range of ages. If you have a specific request on classroom placement, please contact David Cohen.

School Hours

Arrival—The beginning and ending of each school day are important times for young children. In part-day classrooms, promptness is important to your child’s feeling of security in school. Children who arrive late may have more difficulty entering into activities.

Classroom doors open at 9:00 am for the 3’s and 4’s classes and at 9:15 am for the 2’s classes. Because teachers use the time before school for meetings and to prepare curriculum materials, they cannot supervise children before this time. In full-day classrooms, arrival begins at 7:00 am and everyone should arrive by 9:15 am, so that they may participate in the morning meeting and routines.

Dismissal—Children who are not picked up on time may become anxious. If you know you are going to be late for dismissal, please let us know so that we can inform your child. If a child has not been picked up within 15 minutes of class ending and the school has not heard from a parent, a staff person will call the child’s parent’s phone number indicated on the emergency form. If they cannot be reached, the staff person will attempt to speak to the emergency and alternate people listed on the emergency form. If the child has not been picked up and a contact cannot be reached within two hours of school ending, the police will be called and the child may be released to the police. Two staff members will remain with the child at all times.

Attendance—Parents or caregivers are required to sign their children in and out of school on a daily basis.

Carpools and Playdates—We will not release a child to anyone other than a parent without a note or phone call from the parent. Caregivers also must have a parent’s written permission to pick up a child at an unusual time, such as mid-morning.

To avoid misunderstandings, regarding carpools, we require that **both** families involved, sign-in in the morning, or have confirmed with each other, in case one child is absent that day.

Emergency School Closing—To learn of school closings due to inclement weather conditions, you will receive an email alert. Closing information will also be posted on the Temple Sholom homepage (www.templeholom.com, in the green stripe below the pictures). The safety of the children and the staff are of paramount importance in deciding about closures and/or delays.

Emergency Procedures

The Emergency Form with both parents' home, cell, work and emergency phone numbers (relative or friend) are kept on file in the Nursery School office. We must have these prior to the first day of school. Be sure to notify us of any changes during the school year, as the Emergency Form must be current. In an emergency, we will attempt to contact you immediately. If we cannot reach you, we will then call the designated people listed on the Emergency Form. Both emergency contacts must be within a 20-minute ride to school.

Please let them know they are your designated emergency contacts for your child.

If the emergency involves an illness or injury that requires immediate care and we cannot reach you, we will contact your pediatrician. All necessary measures will be taken to protect your child's safety and well-being.

Health Procedures

Medical Forms—All forms are due by the first day of school. Your child will not be permitted to begin school unless a correctly completed Medical Form is on file in our office. The State of Connecticut Department of Health requires that each child have a recently (within one year) completed age-appropriate medical examination prior to the first day of school.

Absences from School—Call 203-622-8121 to let us know your child will be absent by 9:00 am, or email david.cohen@templesholom.com or tracey.goodman@templesholom.com. **Notify us immediately if your child has a communicable disease such as chicken pox, conjunctivitis, diarrhea, impetigo, strep throat, Fifth's Disease or any condition which may be contagious (for example, lice). We can try to stop something from spreading only when we know it exists.**

Illness—Your child must be kept home from school if he/she exhibits any of the following: fever during the previous 24 hours, heavy or green nasal discharge, constant cough, abdominal pains, vomiting, diarrhea, symptoms of possible communicable disease, red irritated eyes with discharge, change in behavior or irritability, or strep throat. Children can return to school when they are symptom-free of temperature, vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours (without medication) or in the case of conjunctivitis or strep throat when the child has been treated with prescription medication for 24 hours. Other signs of illness are persistent crying, or a headache. If any of these symptoms or problems occur during your child's day at school, we will isolate your child and you or your emergency contact will be notified to pick them up.

Medications—We must have a physician’s written instructions and the parent’s permission to administer medications. Parents must see David Cohen or our Nurse Consultant if you have a medication that must be administered to your child. There are specific forms and procedures to follow. SMNS will administer medications that are needed during the school day (e.g. emergency, diabetic, asthma, diaper rash).

Allergies and Medications—We must safeguard children with food and insect allergies. You must inform us of any and all substances that can have a potential allergic reaction in your child. Appropriate medications and documentation must be on file before any child with allergies may be admitted to our program.

Parents/teachers must approve all food before we serve it to the child with food allergies. Our intensive scrutiny is intended to avoid any allergic reactions.

Our school is peanut-aware and tree nut-aware. NO PEANUTS OR TREE NUTS MAY BE BROUGHT INTO THE SCHOOL. CHILDREN MUST WASH HANDS UPON ARRIVAL.

Lice—No children with nits or lice will be allowed in school. *Please let us know if your child has nits or lice.*

Clothing

What to Wear—Since “play is the work of childhood,” your child’s clothing should be comfortable, sturdy, washable and easy to get on or off, without help. Children should wear clothing that they do not feel anxious about getting dirty. As we encourage independence for the children, please select clothing that children can maneuver by themselves.

We hope the following guidelines will be helpful to parents regarding school clothing:

- Because children are very active, layered dressing is preferable.
- Sneakers or rubber-soled shoes are less slippery for running and climbing than smooth-soled shoes.
- During warm weather, we find sandals are inadequate for outdoor play. Please send sneakers on a day when your child wears sandals.
- We have found that children cannot play freely with clay, playdough, water and finger-paint if they are wearing bracelets, rings and watches. Additionally, small jewelry tends to get broken and lost, and it is a potential choking hazard.
- Long dresses can cause children to trip and fall.
- Drawstrings on any article of clothing can create a hazardous situation and therefore, should be removed.

The children play outside daily unless it is raining, very windy, or bitter cold. Be sure your child has adequate warm clothing (snow pants, mittens, hats) for outdoor play. Boots lined with plastic bags hasten our ability to dress the children. If your child wears boots to school, send an extra pair of shoes to be worn indoors. Please note we are not responsible for loss, theft or damage of property brought or left at school.

What to Keep at School—Your child will need one complete change of clothing as follows: underwear, socks, shirt, pants. All coats, sweaters, etc. worn to school should be clearly labeled with your child’s name. Should any of these be brought home during the course of the school year, please send replacements on the following school day. These replacements must be labeled, too. Please pack all items of clothing in a plastic Ziploc bag marked with your child’s name.

Items from Home

Policy regarding the kinds of items children may bring to school, and when they may bring them is difficult to set because of our respect for individual children’s needs. Generally speaking, an appropriate treasure from home can help ease the transition from home to school, but may also cause frustration, over-stimulation or distress. Therefore, after the first days of school, the teachers will direct the children to leave their items from home in their cubbies.

Please note that our staff cannot be responsible for these items.

We welcome appropriate books and nature collections that your child would like to share with us.

Food

Our school is peanut-aware and tree nut-aware.

Snacks and Nutrition—Water and a snack will be provided daily for your child. We will serve snacks that are nutritious such as apple wedges, orange sections, vegetable sticks, crackers and pretzels. Cooking on a regular basis and for the holidays is an integral part of our program. We invite parents to cook their favorite recipes with us.

Food Policy—Your child will need to bring a dairy or vegetarian bag lunch and beverage. No peanut or any nut butters or nut or peanut products are permitted. **Always include an ice pack in your child’s lunch bag.**

Jewish Dietary Laws are strictly observed in the Temple and in our school. Food brought into the building for personal consumption must be dairy or parve. For any gathering or event—including birthday parties—foods and beverages being served to a group must be in a closed hekshered package or from an approved kosher caterer. Please note that an item containing the notation “K” by itself for Temple purposes is not kosher.

Birthdays

In School—A birthday party at school is a very important occasion in the life of your child. Children look forward to this event with great anticipation. What makes it special is not so much the party or food but rather that it is his/her day, and attention is focused on him/her. We suggest that parents of the birthday child try to attend the celebration at school.

We ask that the celebration remain simple. We discourage families from supplying special cups, napkins, plates, etc. and do not permit candy, party favors or balloons. Please notify your child’s teachers a few days in advance. We cannot accept or share any foods made in your home or non-kosher bakery because we follow the rules for kosher observance, as well as nut-aware and tree nut-aware.

Due to potential life-threatening allergies, we must be able to examine the ingredients on the packages from all food sources.

At Home—In accordance with Jewish tradition of treating each other “fairly, compassionately and respectfully,” we request that consideration of children’s feelings be uppermost in formulating a guest list when planning your child’s party at home. We suggest that children invite either the entire class, a small number of children (i.e. less than one-third of the class) or a logical segment of the class that does not personalize a child’s omission (such as all the boys or all the girls). Also we ask that parents mail invitations rather than distribute them at school.

As a diverse Jewish school and congregational family, we try to honor the different religious practices of all of our community members. We ask that you please consider hosting your child’s birthday party on a date and time that is not during Shabbat or a Major Festival.

We ask that children’s birthday gifts, invitations or other packages not be left with the teacher. We suggest that you make these exchanges outside of school.

Summer Birthdays—We recommend that if your child has a summer birthday to celebrate her/his half birthday at school.

Facilities

Security—Our highest priority at Temple Sholom is the safety of the children. The front door is the only point of entrance and exit through the building. The building is protected through electronic security systems, as well as through a licensed security officer.

Do not park in the circle in front of the main entrance. This is a Fire Lane.

Do not park in the handicapped spaces unless you have a handicapped decal on your vehicle.

Safety—Your child's safety is of primary concern. When dropping off or picking up, please park in a designated area. Please note that the Fire Lane next to the building does not allow for parking. Turn off your car's ignition when children are entering or exiting your vehicle. Please drive very slowly and carefully.

It is illegal to leave children unattended in your car. Automatic door locks can leave a baby or very young child locked inside a car along with the car keys, creating an emergency and very frightening situation for your child.

Fire, Weather and Evacuation—Parents will be notified immediately in the case of a fire, weather or other need for evacuation. If children are taken to any alternate location, it will be communicated to parents. Parents will be notified about fire drills after they take place.

No Smoking—*The Temple is a smoke-free environment.*

Holidays

The Jewish Holidays we celebrate in school are Sukkot, Simchat Torah, Chanukah, Purim, Passover and Israeli Independence Day.

Depending on the school calendar, we may also celebrate Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Tu B'Shevat and Shavuot. *We do not celebrate Halloween, Christmas, Valentine's Day or Easter.*

Parent Involvement

Visits—Parents are always welcome in the classroom to observe or participate. Please let your classroom teacher know in advance when you would like to visit.

Classroom Involvement—If you have an area of expertise or interest (for example: music, cooking, art, gardening, sewing, storytelling, any profession or occupation), we would be delighted to have you share it with us.

Family-School Communication—A change in the family can be unsettling to a young child. Changes can be relatively small (relatives visiting, a new pet, a parent leaving on a business trip), or they may be more significant (a new child joins the family, a new home, a pet's death). Whatever the changes, please let us know so that we can help him/her feel more comfortable with the new situation.

Parent/Teacher Conferences—The Director and staff of SMNS are available to discuss ideas, questions and concerns. We believe education takes place in the context of the child's entire life, and especially in the context of family. We urge you to speak with teachers about anything that may help us work more effectively with your child, and to ask questions or raise concerns. You are free to make an appointment with a teacher at any time. Along with such informal conferences, there are parent/teacher conferences in fall and spring for all children. The goal of the conference is to give you an understanding of your child's social, emotional, physical and cognitive development.

School Events—There are several occasions during the school year when we ask for the participation of all parents. These include our Chanukah parties, our Passover celebrations and Mother's Day Tea. There is an end-of-the-year Moving Up ceremony and luncheon for children who are graduating from SMNS. We also celebrate Special Persons Day (Grandfriends Day). You will receive more information about these events during the school year.

Shabbat—is a very special time in our school. Please sign up as Shabbat Mom, Dad, or caregiver, and be part of that celebration. There will be a sign-up sheet outside your classroom. The children sing songs, light Shabbat candles and say the blessings in Hebrew over the candles, "wine" and challah, and enjoy the weekly Shabbat service at school. You will also be offered the opportunity to order weekly challah to enjoy at home.

Written Communication—Your child's teachers post a daily schedule outside the room each morning to inform you of noteworthy happenings. On Fridays, you will receive a class newsletter.

Naps and Food for Children in Full-Day Classrooms

Napping: Nap time is generally 1:00 pm–3:00 pm, except for young infants who are on individualized schedules. This is a restful time for all. If children do not sleep, they will have opportunities to participate in calm activities. Nap items to bring to school:

- Crib sheet—fits in a crib for infants and on a cot for older children
- Comfort item (e.g. a stuffed toy) and pillow—only for children over one-year-old who are no longer in a crib

Children are always supervised during nap time. Please note that infants must sleep in cribs and be placed on their backs for safety.

Infant Foods and Liquids:

- Parents must provide a written statement specifying the formula, breast milk or other liquids and the feeding schedule
- Unused portions of formula, breast milk or other liquids shall be discarded after each feeding
- Clean bottles shall be provided by the parent(s)—bottles are not washed at school
- Baby food shall be served from a dish unless the whole contents of the jar will be served
- Each child's bottle shall be individually identified with the child's name

Parental Code of Conduct—We reserve the right to dismiss a family at any time we deem necessary. Reasons for dismissal include, without limitation, the following: excessive disruptive behavior by the Student or Parent; excessive and continuing injuring of other children, adults or property; failure to pay tuition on time; excessive lateness in picking up the Student; any other inappropriate conduct, to be determined with our sole discretion.

Registration and Tuition

Registration/Tuition

Part-Day Registration: As of October 31, registration forms and the \$1000.00 **non-refundable** deposit may be submitted for processing by Nursery School families, alumni, siblings and Temple members. All children currently enrolled in the 2's and 3's classes are guaranteed a space in the school, provided their registration and deposits are on file prior to November 15. The balance is due by May 15. All must be current before your application is accepted.

After November 15, Temple families and non-Temple families have equal priority. There will be no refunds due to withdrawal from the program.

Full-Day Registration: Registration is accepted throughout the year and children may join the school at any time, based upon space available. Registration forms must be accompanied by a payment of the first month's tuition. On the first of each month, payment is due for the following month (e.g. on September 1, payment is due for the month of October). Monthly payments are set up with FACTS, a third-party school payment service. Once a child is enrolled, there is no need to enroll for subsequent years. A spot will be guaranteed until the child graduates to Kindergarten or the child is disenrolled. If a family leaves the program, they must give 45 days notice. In March, parents will be asked about their plans for summer and for fall.

All payments are non-refundable and there is no provisional enrollment period. Any alternative payment schedule must be discussed with and approved by the Temple's Executive Director Eileen Robin. Applications are processed on a first-come, first-served basis. Families will be notified immediately if the school is fully enrolled. All class placements are made at the sole discretion of the Nursery School Director.

Disenrollment—If it is felt by the SMNS staff, after due consideration, that your child is not benefiting from his/her nursery school experience, it shall be the right of SMNS to request that the child be withdrawn. At the discretion of SMNS, a refund of the tuition may be granted for the remainder of the year, on a pro-rated basis.

Education Committee

Nursery School Education Committee—is mandated by the by-laws of Temple Sholom. The Committee oversees the administration, management and operation of SMNS. The Chairperson (who is also on the Board of Trustees of the Temple) and the members of the Education Committee must be Temple members. However, non-temple members are welcome to fully participate in any of the sub-committees.

Room Parents—are volunteers from each class who are responsible for meeting with teachers at the beginning of the year to discuss any special needs of your class. They also:

- Are liaisons to the Education Committee for your class
- Help organize a “get to know each other” class coffee
- Organize class gifts for the teachers for Chanukah and end of the year

Sign-up for room parents will be available in your classroom the first week of school.

Parent Association—is made up of volunteer parents who help coordinate Parents’ Night Out, Book Fair, Spring Fundraiser, Public Relations and other special events.

Guiding Children’s Behavior

Our policy is to ensure a safe and secure environment for each child. Positive, age-appropriate behavior guidance methods are incorporated into our program. Our goal is to help each child achieve self-discipline. Children are encouraged to use language to resolve conflicts whenever possible or they are redirected to alternate activities. Cooperation between parents and our staff is vital in guiding the social and emotional development of our children. If an undesirable behavior continues, the teacher will contact the parents to discuss joint methods of addressing the problem. If a behavior problem becomes severe or potentially dangerous, parents may be required to remove the child from school until a plan of action can be decided. Staff shall not be abusive, neglectful, or use physical, corporal, humiliating or frightening punishment under any circumstances.

Phone Numbers

The main Nursery School phone number is 203-622-8121, or Tracey Goodman (Office Manager) at 203-869-7191, ext. 113.

If that line is busy, please use the main Temple Sholom phone number to get through to the school, 203-869-7191.

We hope these policies offer helpful guidelines regarding our day-to-day operations. Your child's well-being and interests are our primary concern. The staff and I look forward to sharing a wonderful year with you and your child.

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