



Women's  
Power Gap  
Eos Foundation  
**GENDER PARITY NOW**

# BARRIERS TO THE SUPERINTENDENCY

Exposing Racial & Gender Gaps  
in K-12 Education Leadership





Women's  
Power Gap  
Eos Foundation  
**GENDER PARITY NOW**

  
**RENNIE CENTER**  
EDUCATION RESEARCH & POLICY



**M.A.S.S.**  
MASSACHUSETTS ASSOCIATION  
OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS

  
**MSAA**

**masc**



# Today's Conversation

1. Welcome & Introductions
2. The Power Gaps by the Numbers, *Presentation of the Findings*
3. Panel Discussion
4. Panel Q & A
5. Closing

# About the Rennie Center

Research and public reporting, such as the *Barriers to the Superintendency*, are among the many ways that the Rennie Center delivers on its mission to build a more coherent vision of a public education that can guide shared efforts and put every child in Massachusetts on a path to college, career, and life success.



# About the Women's Power Gap Initiative



**Goal:** To dramatically increase the number of women from diverse backgrounds in top leadership positions across all sectors of our economy

## Approach:



C-suite or equivalent  
glass ceiling



Path to the President's  
(higher ed), CEO's  
office (corporations)



Disaggregated analysis  
(gender/race/ethnicity)  
at the organization level



Use comparative  
analysis and rankings  
wherever possible



## **Andrea Silbert**

President, Eos Foundation

Opening & Closing  
Remarks



## **Elle Jansen**

Senior Associate, The Rennie Center  
for Education Research & Policy

Presentation of the Findings



## **Marta Rosa**

Consultant, Eos Foundation

Panel Moderator

# Today's Speakers



# The Power Gaps by the Numbers

Presentation of the Findings

**The power gaps** refers to the inequitable representation of women and people of color within the superintendency and along the path to it.

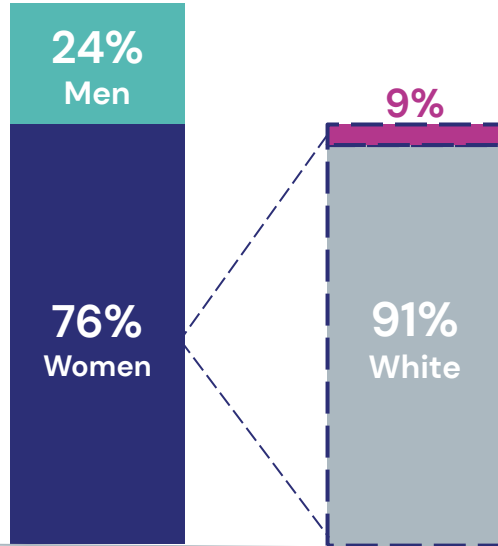
# In Massachusetts, women are





# Women of color are underrepresented in the K-12 education workforce.

**Percent of Teachers**  
By Gender & Race - 2020



In MA, 76% of the teacher workforce are **women**. Of that 76%, only 9% are **women of color**.



Only eight  
superintendents are  
**women of color**.\*

\*data reflects 2020 numbers; four  
2021 hires are women of color

**Percent of Superintendent  
Licenses**

By Gender & Race - 2020



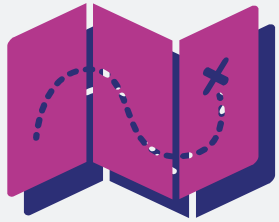
In MA, 59% of the superintendent licenses are held by **women**. Of that 59%, only 11% are **women of color**.

# In Massachusetts there exists both a **gender power gap** and a **racial power gap** within educational leadership.

Out of 180 districts with 1,500+ students

**17%** of districts reported never having had a permanent woman superintendent

**80%** of districts reported never having had a permanent superintendent of color



# Barriers to the Superintendency

What factors influence the attainment of the superintendent position?

# Women and people of color face numerous barriers to the superintendency.

- 1 Inequitable Pathways to the Superintendency
- 2 Persistent Glass Ceiling for Women and People of Color
- 3 Gender and Racial Bias in Superintendent Selections
- 4 Consequences of External Bias
- 5 Underdeveloped Pipeline for People of Color

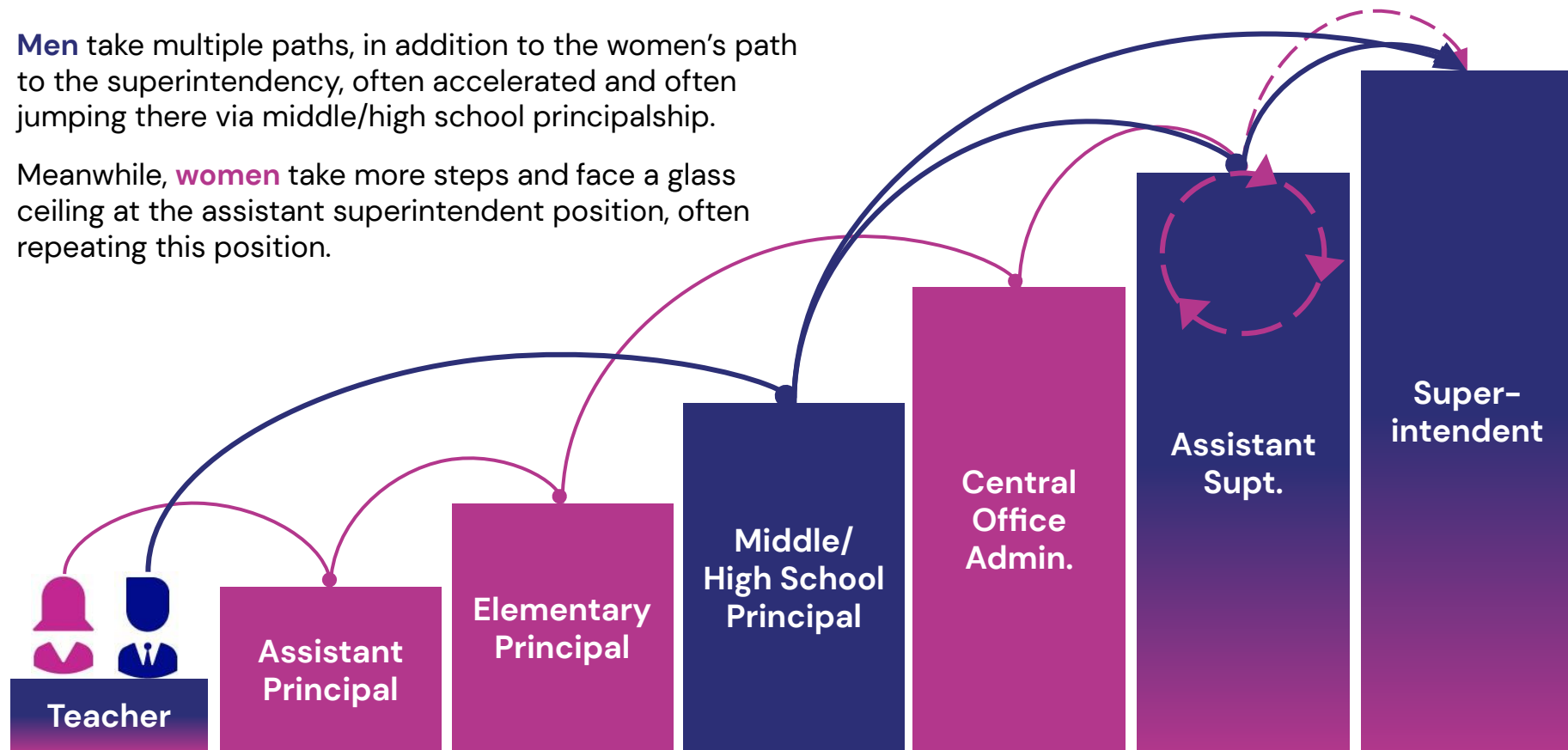
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*“I have never in my life felt like my job was secure”*

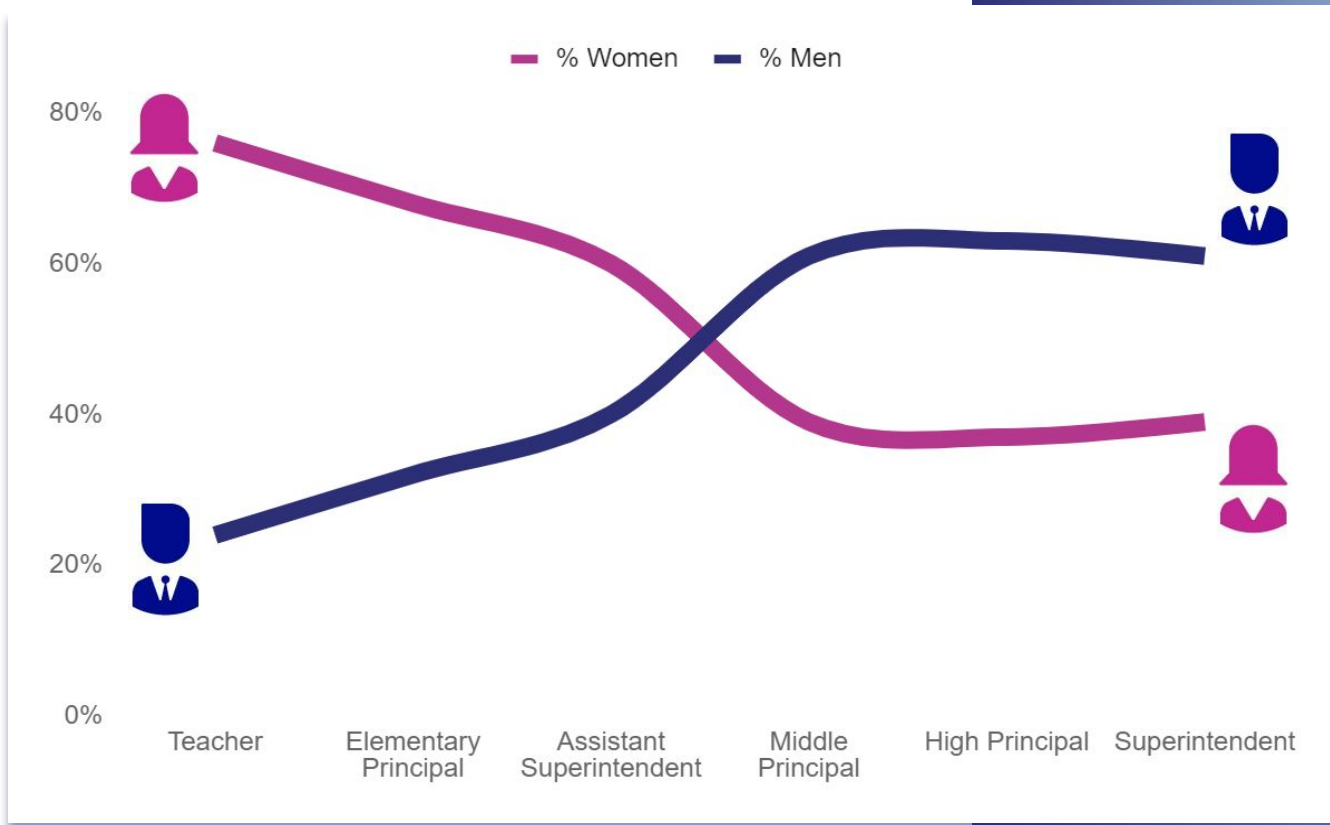
# The pathway to the superintendency differs by gender.

**Men** take multiple paths, in addition to the women's path to the superintendency, often accelerated and often jumping there via middle/high school principalship.

Meanwhile, **women** take more steps and face a glass ceiling at the assistant superintendent position, often repeating this position.



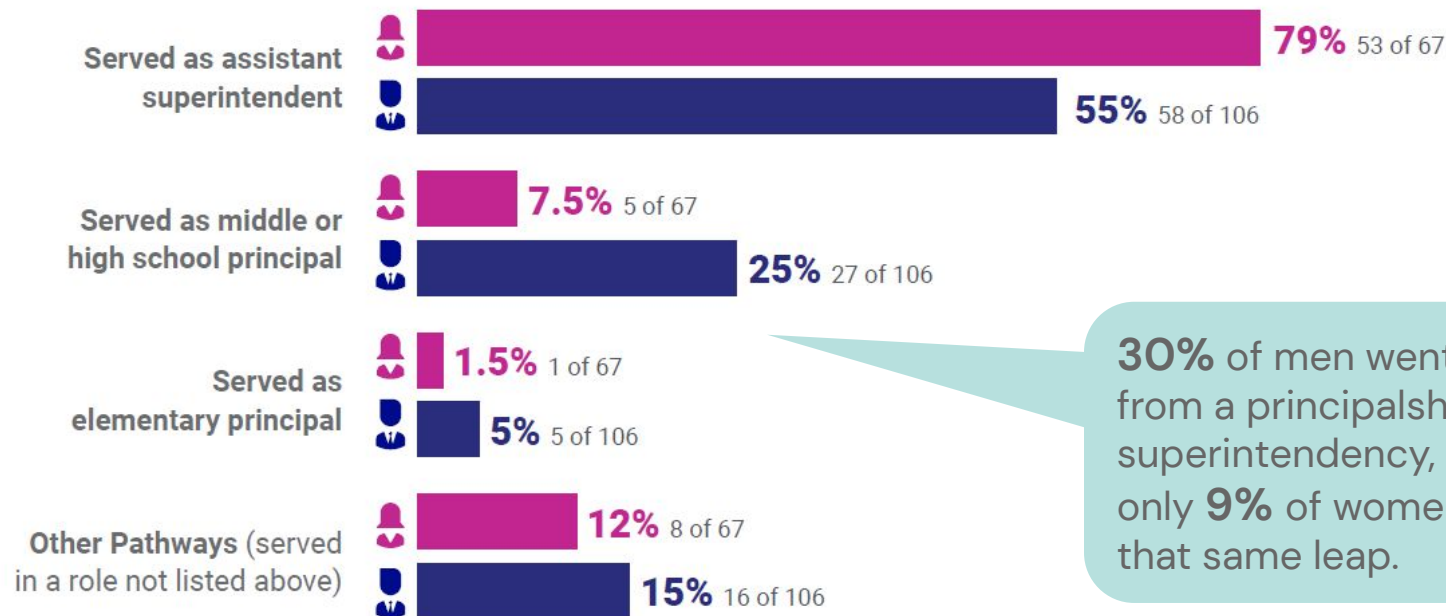
# Women are a majority of the state's teaching staff yet a minority of superintendent positions.



# Elementary school principals are an undervalued pool of talent.

FIGURE 3

## ROLE SUPERINTENDENT SERVED IN DIRECTLY BEFORE BECOMING SUPERINTENDENT



30% of men went straight from a principalship to a superintendency, whereas only 9% of women made that same leap.

Women  
**outqualify** men in  
terms of  
education,  
credentialing,  
and experience,  
but they are **less  
likely** to become  
superintendents.

## In Massachusetts, women hold...

**62%** of principal  
licenses

BUT  
ONLY

**38%** of middle & high  
school principalships

**59%** of  
superintendent licenses

BUT  
ONLY

**39%** of  
superintendencies



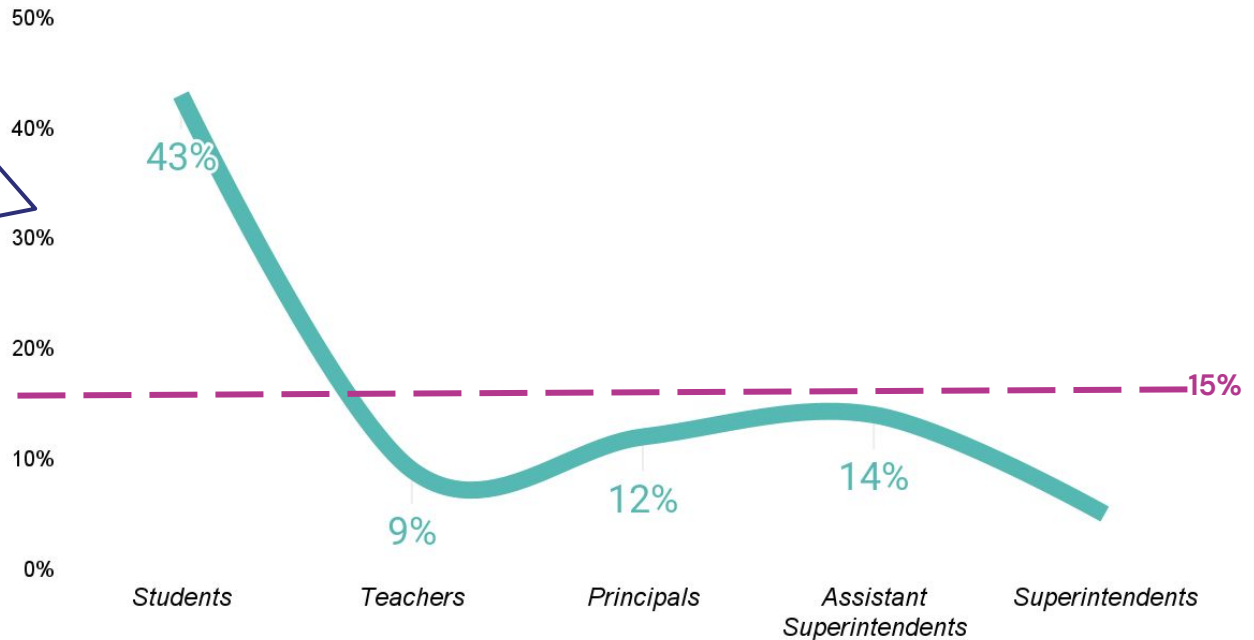
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It just didn't happen for me. It was a boys club. Male PE teachers became assistant principals and principals. Not women.

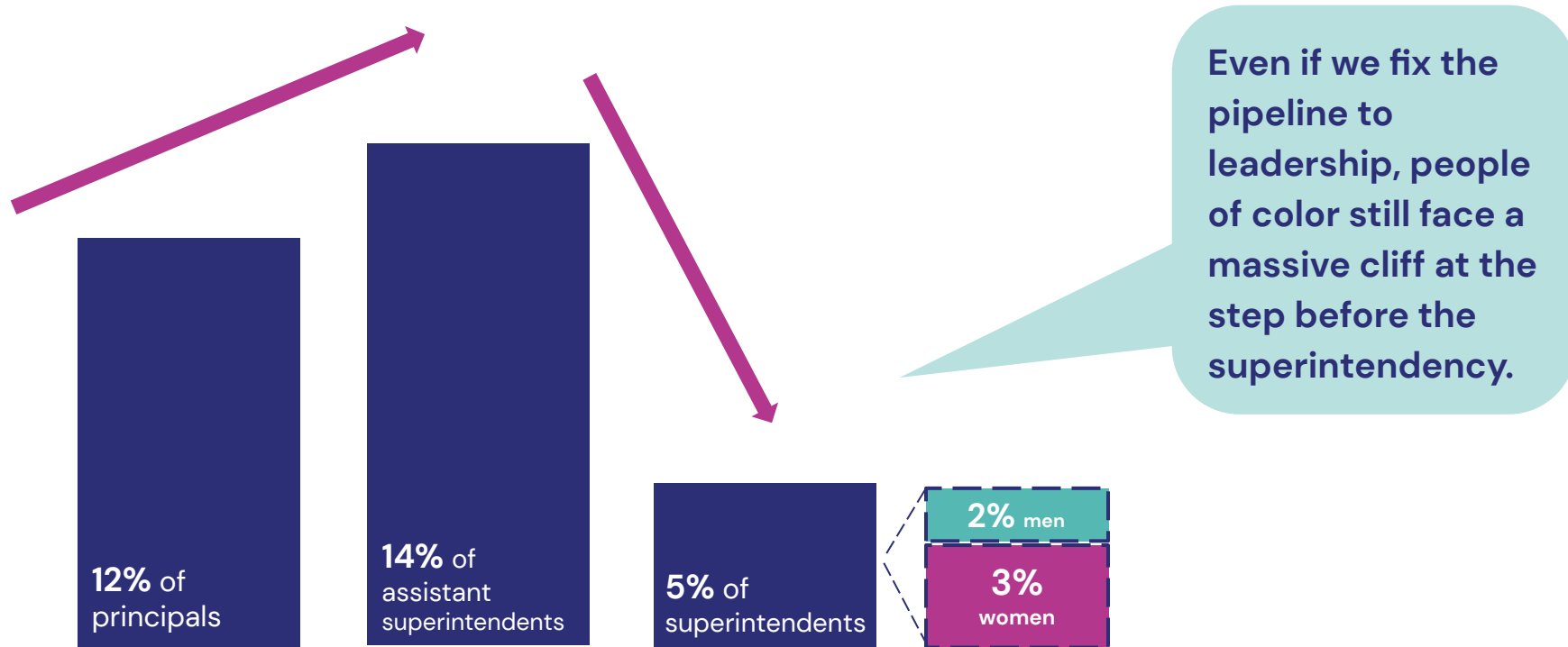
# People of color face compounded barriers to leadership positions across the state.

People of color represent less than **15% of staff** in every K-12 position in a state where **43%** of students are students of color.

BIPOC Representation Across K-12 Education in MA



# People of color face both a pipeline barrier and a glass ceiling to the superintendency.



“

[Many] people of color would rather have a safe job as a union teacher in a district rather than take on a [superintendent] job where if you make one public mistake you will be fired



# Recommendations

How can we address the Power Gap?

# 3 Key Recommendations

- 1 Invest in diversity, equity and inclusion training for school committees, focusing on equitable hiring practices
- 2 Tie superintendent performance evaluation and pay to setting and meeting diversity goals
- 3 Elevate the elementary school principal role as a viable path to the superintendency

More specific recommendations for the field can be found in the report, *The Power Gap in Massachusetts K-12 Education*

# What Can **YOU** do?

- ❏ Share this report with the school committee and district leaders in your community
- ❏ Ask your school committee representatives how they plan to facilitate equitable superintendent searches and hiring processes

*Find and follow the report at:*

@womenspowergap  
WomensPowerGap.org  
info@WomensPowerGap.org

@therenniececenter  
renniecenter.org  
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# Panel Discussion

With Q & A





**Karla Baehr**

Co-facilitator,  
New Superintendent  
Induction Program



**Cheryl  
Watson-Harris**

Superintendent,  
DeKalb County Georgia



**Cynthia Paris**

Superintendent,  
Lawrence Public Schools

# Today's Panelists

# Thank you!



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