



2019-2020 Yearbook

FIRST RING LEADERSHIP ACADEMY & FIRST RING STUDENT LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

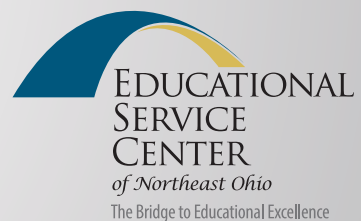


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SECTION I: Introduction



“Advancing Public Education Together”

The First Ring Schools Collaborative (FRSC) is an association of 16 school districts that surround the city of Cleveland, Ohio.

The FRSC was established in 2000 to help districts address the interrelated challenges they face related to poverty, mobility, diversity, and the achievement gap. Since then, the FRSC has sponsored the First Ring Leadership Academy and the First Ring Student Leadership Institute; facilitated partnerships with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD), Cleveland Clinic, and The Literacy Cooperative; and implemented student wellness initiatives, student transition projects, academic achievement programs, and school-based health care.

The collaborative serves more than 100,000 students in the following member districts:

- Bedford
- Berea
- Brooklyn
- Cleveland Heights-University Heights
- Cleveland Metropolitan School District
- Cuyahoga Heights
- Euclid
- Fairview Park
- Garfield Heights
- Lakewood
- Maple Heights
- Parma
- Richmond Heights
- Shaker Heights
- South Euclid-Lyndhurst
- Warrensville Heights

The FRSC began as a collaborative among First Ring superintendents but now reaches more than 100 administrators working collectively to address challenges faced by First Ring schools. In addition to a superintendents’ network, six other networks meet each month to further the work of the collaborative: Curriculum Directors; High School Principals; Public Relations/Communications Directors; Pupil Services Directors; Safety/Security Directors; and Treasurers. FRSC also includes task forces on Early Childhood Education and Career Readiness.

First Ring Leadership Academy

The First Ring Leadership Academy (FRLA) is a year-long professional development and leadership training program focused on building capacity to address the unique challenges of First Ring Districts: poverty, student mobility, diversity and the achievement gap. Participants are Teacher Leaders or Administrators nominated by their Superintendents each spring to become part of the cohort the following school year.

Meeting for nine full days throughout the academic year, participants have the opportunity to collaborate, network, share and learn from others in the cohort; develop knowledge of best practices and targeted strategies for promoting students' academic and non-academic success; and visit various sites among the First Ring Districts. Topical coverage varies with the needs of the cohort. This year, subjects included poverty, school climate, cultural understanding, trauma-informed classrooms and self-care.

In addition to collaborating with other members of their cohort, Teacher Leaders also work closely over the course of the year with a team of high school Student Leaders from FRLA's sister program, the First Ring Student Leadership Institute (FRSLI). With a focus on youth empowerment through community awareness and youth-adult collaboration, the Institute nurtures high school students to become change leaders in their schools. Teacher Leaders listen, model, nurture and guide their team of students as they conduct original research on an issue at their school and present their results and recommendations to the First Ring Superintendents at the end of the year.

"Being part of the Academy this year has increased my curiosity and enthusiasm for how we can do better for our students."

~ **Jessica Banks, Parma City Schools District, 2019-2020 cohort**



"Working with the juniors and seniors was a gift! Being an elementary teacher, I don't often get the chance to work with our older student population. Being able to facilitate this experience was very meaningful. These students are driven, smart, caring, compassionate, and will do great things along their journey."

~ **Sarah Eppler, Fairview Park City School District, 2019-2020 cohort**

First Ring Student Leadership Institute

The First Ring Student Leadership Institute (FRSLI) was founded in 2018 to provide high school students in First Ring districts with the training, experiences and opportunities to become change leaders in their schools and communities. Nominated to participate in the program by their principals, Student Leaders work in teams alongside adult mentors from the First Ring Leadership Academy (FRLA) to identify and solve issues of importance to them.

On entering the program as high school juniors, Student Leaders learn about Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), a research methodology designed to empower young people. Working in teams, “Year 1” Student Leaders learn to recognize and analyze the issues and resources in their communities, in the process coming to understand the forces affecting their lives. Through research and study, they uncover the root causes of a critical issue in their school and, at the end of the year, present their findings and recommendations to the First Ring Superintendents, Principals and other school and community leaders.

This year, Student Leaders from the 2018-2019 cohort were given the option to return to the Institute for a “Year 2” program. Year 2 Teams learn strategies for putting their recommendations into action and advocating for change in their schools and communities. They evaluate the outcomes of their projects, submit proposals to present at a youth research symposium, and act as peer mentors to the incoming cohort of Student Leaders.

The Institute meets five times a year, with four “work sessions” hosted by area colleges and universities. Student Leaders engage in large and small group dialogue, panel discussions, role plays, simulations and peer mentoring. Activities are led by a team of facilitators including college professors and experts from Cleveland State University, Ohio State University, the Educational Service Center (ESC) of Northeast Ohio and dynamic guest speakers. The final session of the year is set aside for team presentations, recognition, reflection and celebration.

Unfortunately, this year’s final session was cancelled due to conditions surrounding the global pandemic. Nevertheless, several teams developed presentations summarizing their findings and recommendations. These can be viewed at <http://www.escneo.org/StudentLeadershipInstitute.aspx>

“A group of students banning together can make a difference.”

“My plans for the future have changed...I now want to help my school and community in every way possible.”

“Adults care more than we think!”

“If you try hard enough and are passionate someone will listen. Never give up!”

Our Partners & Funders

The First Ring Schools Collaborative (FRSC), its networks and programs would like to thank the following partners and funders:

- Center for Educational Leadership, Cleveland State University
- Center for Urban Education at Cleveland State University
- Cleveland Foundation
- Cleveland State University's College of Education and Human Services
- Educational Service Center of Northeast Ohio
- Martha Holden Jennings Foundation
- University of Colorado Denver's School of Education and Human Development/Counseling



SECTION II: District Research Projects, 2019-2020 Year One Students

Bedford City Schools

“Changing School Culture through Student Faculty Relationships”



From left: Jermaine Huff, Jenifer Contreas-Valde, Laiya Maloney, Nya Poindexter, Tyrone Menefee



Analyzing data at Baldwin Wallace

Bedford High School Student Leaders:

Jennifer Conteras Valdez, Laiya Maloney, Tyrone Menefee, Nya Poindexter, Mackayla Pylick

Teacher Leader:

Jermaine Huff

SECTION II

Berea City Schools

“How Can Coaches and Athletes Communicate Better?”



From left: Brady Compton, Dominic Senyoit, Athena Sevastos, Lexi Siggers, A J Comer, Matt McGregor



Formulating a research question at Ursuline

Berea-Midpark High School Student Leaders:

Anthony Comer, Brady Compton, Dominic Senoyuit, Athena Sevastos, Tori Siggers

Teacher Leader:

Matt McGregor

Brooklyn City Schools

“Stress Management”

The First Ring Student Leaders at Brooklyn High School identified stress as an issue amongst the student body. The students first conducted a pilot survey to assess student concerns and stressors in their lives. 35 students took this initial survey. Our student leaders used the results to develop the second survey which examined stress management in closer detail. Over 60% of the student body responded to the survey, “What is Stressing You Out?” Student leaders were able to use survey results and data to identify that academics were by far the number one stressor in the lives of Brooklyn teens. Students also gained teacher input through staff interviews. The students planned a day to de-stress with activities including movies, open gym, game rooms, arts & crafts, and music in the lunchroom. Due to the school closure this spring, we plan to host the event in the fall of 2020.



From left: Julie McGarey, Andrew Coyne, Jessica Strimpel, Jacob Peña, Kelsey Bruzek, Andrew Badza

Brooklyn High School Student Leaders:

Andrew Badza, Kelsey Bruzek, Andrew Coyne, Jacob Peña, Jessica Strimpel

Teacher Leader:

Julie McGarey



SECTION II

Cleveland Heights-University Heights Schools

“Why Are Students Not in Class on Time?”

Our research question is, “Why are students not in class?” The research explored issues and causes round tardiness arriving to school and individual classes. During this process we analyzed two sources of data: district attendance reports and respondent data stemming from our created student survey. The data that we received from the student survey conflicted with what the school gave us. We found that many students are late or tardy either because they’re stuck in the halls, held back from a teacher, or problems from home. We also found that most students didn’t consider themselves to be tardy, while district dates showed most students to be tardy. For our school we suggest that there should be at least two or three minutes more for students to get to class, and additional clarification to students as to what constitutes tardies.



From left: Kennie Green, Sakura Johnson, Nasir Allen, Mekenna Binder

Cleveland Heights High School Student Leaders:

Nasir Allen, MaKenna Binder, Sakura Johnson, Brajawn Upshaw

Teacher Leader:

Kennie Green



District Research Projects, 2019-2020

Cuyahoga Heights Local Schools

“Career Information”

The First Ring Students Leaders from Cuyahoga Heights High School chose to address this issue due to the lack of knowledge about post-secondary careers amongst our educational peers. Our research was completed by conducting a high school-wide survey about career interests and preparedness. One major finding that we discovered was that 85% of students that took the survey wanted to learn more about post-secondary opportunities. Another finding was that 65% of the careers that students are interested in are service-based. Our recommendation is that we utilize our high school’s lunch period to bring in career professionals to inform students about their specific careers through a quick presentation and a question and answer session. We will work to bring in professionals pulled from the local community as well as Cuyahoga Heights alumni whenever possible and who work in careers that are popular among the student’s interests according to our collected data. The goal is to provide students with greater knowledge about a variety of careers as students prepare to move onto college, vocational schools, or directly into the workforce after graduation.



From left: Johnny Roy, Jonathon Nejman, Mira Sekerak, Emma Patterson, Matt Connors, Mike Hopkins

Cuyahoga Heights High School Student Leaders:

Matt Connors, Michael Hopkins, Jonathon Nejman, Emma Patterson, Mira Sekerak

Teacher Leader:

Johnny Roy



SECTION II

Euclid City Schools

“What Does the Community Think of Our Schools?”

The team’s research questions were “What does the community think about high school students?” and “What will it take to pass the school levy?” Students did quantitative and qualitative research with high school juniors and seniors to determine if students had knowledge and understanding regarding the levy. Students had excellent comprehension regarding the issues involved. Some members of the team began to attend meetings with the Euclid Youth Council led by Councilwoman Christine McIntosh to work on common issues. As our team set out to continue their quantitative and qualitative research in the community, COVID 19 prevented further progress.



From left: Queen Baker, Daade Pack, Kyrin Morris, Joshua Cerjan, Olivia Augustine, Isabel Baca, Anthony Rozman

Euclid High School Student Leaders:

Olivia Augustine, Isabel Baca, Queen Baker, Joshua Cerjan, Ashley Garrett, Kyrin Morris, Daade Pack, Terry Tetter

Teacher Leader:

Anthony Rozman



District Research Projects, 2019-2020

Fairview Park City Schools

“Making Mentoring More Meaningful”

Fairview High School’s Student Leaders collected data on Mentoring Time. Students collected both quantitative data and qualitative data by conducting a survey and interviews with students grades 6-12, and staff from 6-12. Our First Ring students will continue to analyze their data to find ways to improve the effectiveness and engagement of Mentoring Time.



From left: Rachel Feher, Alyssa Klauminzer, Fiona Greenland, Sarah Eppler



Analyzing data at Baldwin Wallace

Fairview High School Student Leaders:
Rachel Feher, Fiona Greenland, Alyssa Klauminzer

Teacher Leader:
Sarah Eppler



SECTION II

Garfield Heights City Schools

“Making Advisory More Meaningful”

The Student Leadership Institute team at Garfield Heights felt it was necessary to address the issue of Making Advisory More Meaningful. We felt this was important because as students, it is important to develop academically and social-emotionally. Advisory is a great place to get this extra social-emotional education that students at Garfield Heights do not get in other classes, or in some cases even at home. This is important to us because in many cases the students do not feel as though they are prepared emotionally and mentally to graduate, go to college, or enter the workforce. We also felt that Advisory could be utilized more effectively to address these issues of readiness, and mental health. Our research was conducted through a series of surveys and interviews of students, faculty members, and administrators. The research question we were seeking to answer was “Is Advisory being utilized as it should, to prepare students for the next step in life?” We found, through our research that most students and faculty see the short comings of the current Advisory plan, and that something should be done. We found that most students want Advisory to continue. We found that most teachers feel unprepared to fill the role of mentor to the students in their advisory period. After discussion, the team will present changes to the system that will make Advisory more beneficial to the students at Garfield Heights. We hope to present these findings and recommendations to the district administration and that long-term changes will be made to the current system.



From left: Jaelyn Milton, Shekinah Harmon, James Newton, Jayna Svoboda, Michael Harvey, Darrin Roscoe, Joshua Chenoweth

Garfield Heights High School Student Leaders:

Shekina Harmon, Michael Harvey, Jaelyn Milton, James Newton, Darrin Roscoe, Jayna Svoboda

Teacher Leader:

Joshua Chenoweth



Lakewood City Schools

“Tackling Substance Abuse through Community Connections”

The First Ring Student Leaders at Lakewood High School were concerned about substance abuse among their peers. They created online surveys that the student body completed in Homeroom, to find out the most commonly abused substances and why students use drugs, alcohol, and narcotics. In addition, First Ring students conducted face to face interviews with students, teachers, and principals for more in depth perspectives on this critical issue. The Student Leaders strongly believe that one way to curtail substance abuse is to help others feel connected to and supported by a community. Therefore, they created an interactive awareness week that will include motivational speakers, activities with community support networks, and highlighting Lakewood High School’s extracurriculars. The students would like to highlight the opportunities our school offers by teaming up with clubs, sports, and music programs to find creative ways to attract more students. After the initial awareness week, Student Leaders feel all of the messages and resources they shared need to be continually discussed and brought to light for students. The message cannot be a one-time initiative, but a continuous effort to help the student body feel connected to each other and their school and wider community.



From left: Megan Eadeh, Emma Mansell, Madison Lacquement, Simon Sanders, Muzafar Ali, Sawsar Abdi

Lakewood High School Student Leaders:

Sawsar Abdi, Muzafar Ali, Madison Lacquement, Emma Mansell, Simon Sanders

Teacher Leader:

Megan Eadeh



SECTION II

Maple Heights City Schools

“Knowing Your Who”

The Maple Heights High School juniors in the First Ring Student Leadership Institute continually wonder why classroom grades and standardized test scores do not truly reflect student knowledge. There is a disconnect from what they should know and what the reports states that they know. In classes true learning is not happening because the relationship bond is never formed. From deep discussions and research our research question was formed: “Do teacher/student relationships affect learning?” The leadership team constructed Likert Scale questions for the entire student body and open-ended questions for staff members in the building. The findings are that the relationships are not formed by teachers before teaching, which affect the students ability to fully grasp the concept and it disturbs the environment inside the classroom. Teachers with good relationships with students have a better learning experience than teachers with no relationship with students. The recommendations are to make teachers participate in noncurricular activity in the community to allow teachers to understand the community in which they serve. Another recommendation is to have activities prior to the academic year starting that allow students and staff to communicate and bond outside of the classroom.



From left: Regina Bryant, Christopher Kane, Rianna Carr, Paulena Young

Maple Heights High School Student Leaders:

Keith Allen, Rianna Carr, Christopher Kane, Lalene Young, Paulena Young

Teacher Leader:

Regina Bryant



District Research Projects, 2019-2020

Parma City Schools - Normandy High School

“Building Environment Improves Student Involvement”

The First Ring Student Leaders from Normandy High School chose to research the overall spirit of their building, past and present. They feel the climate of a school can lead to improved student involvement. Our leaders focused on asking students and staff questions about the overall environment at Normandy High School. Students held face to face interviews and conducted a survey for all students to take. The findings of our research indicated that students feel welcome at Normandy but they need other ways to be involved. Our First Ring Student Leaders are determined to help students feel more involved and look forward to continuing their research and focus in year two.



From left: Jessica Banks, Clayton Fields, Jonathan Menne, Michael Lannoch, Agata Fedorowicz, Hanan Abas



Selecting a research question at Ursuline

Normandy High School Student Leaders:

Hanan Abas, Agata Fedorowicz, Clayton Fields, Michael Lannoch, Jonathan Menne

Teacher Leader:

Jessica Banks

SECTION II

Parma City Schools - Valley Forge High School

“Mental Health: The Impact of School Connectedness”

Research shows that there is a positive correlation between a student’s connectedness to their school and their mental health. As a result of some tragic events, these Juniors wanted to focus on improving the mental health of Valley Forge students by making them feel connected to events and activities within the school. A google survey was sent to the entire VF student body and over 972 students completed the survey! The data showed that there was a significant disconnect between students and school activities, especially in the lower grade levels. These Juniors went to work and created innovative recommendations on how to engage the entire student body. Some of these recommendations included an all access athletic pass, individualized parking spaces, additional dances/pep rallies, revamping the student section of athletic competitions, and more. The change that is being made will help make a significant impact on the current and future stakeholders within the school and community.



From left: John Wessel, Zach Ansbro, Emily Beckner, Bryan Bobrowski, Vito Frate, Adrian Mendez, Solomiya Dmytriv (in front)

Valley Forge High School Student Leaders:

Zach Ansbro, Emily Beckner, Bryan Bobrowski, Solomiya Dmytriv,
Vito Frate, Adrian Mendez

Teacher Leader:

John Wessel



District Research Projects, 2019-2020

Richmond Heights Local Schools

“College Readiness”

Are students prepared for college when graduating from Richmond Heights Secondary School? Richmond Heights Student Leaders collected data on this research question by surveying students and interviewing teachers and students. The students’ main finding was that Richmond Heights students did not feel prepared for college.



From left: Alyssa Thorpe, Aniyah Smith, Tamia Wright, Steven Cook, Dominick McClendon

Richmond Heights Secondary School Student Leaders:

Steven Cook, Dominick McClendon, Aniyah Smith, Malikee Sonie, Tamia Wright

Teacher Leader:

Alyssa Thorpe

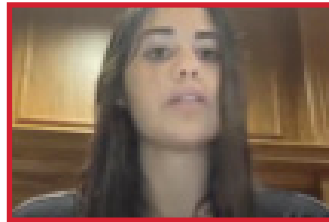
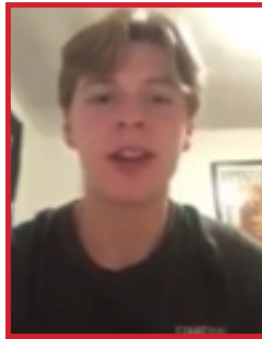


SECTION II

Shaker Heights City Schools

“Integration in a Diverse School”

Shaker Heights, Ohio is considered a very diverse community. However, that diversity is not represented in certain classrooms, events, or even the cafeteria within the high school. Our research question was: Will extra-curricular events and diversifying higher level classes promote more student integration and interaction? In order to get a better idea of whether or not more integration would occur, we created a Google form. This survey asked questions such as students’ willingness to attend extracurricular activities, whether or not they were enrolled in higher level courses, and the diversity of higher level courses. We garnered responses from over 200 students. Based on their responses, it is our recommendation that administration creates a system in which higher level courses are more diverse. We also recommend that the district provides more opportunities for students to attend events like pep rallies and football games in the evening, which require installing lights at the stadium. It is our belief that if the Shaker Heights City School District could make these changes, our diverse schools would become more integrated.



Stills from the team’s YPAR presentation video.
From left: Ben Cox, Sara Dina, Sammy Franke (middle) and Mariah Costa

Shaker Heights High School Student Leaders:

Mariah Costa, Benjamin Cox, Sara Dina, Samantha Franke, DeAndre Hall

Teacher Leader:

Nathaniel Reese, Jr.



District Research Projects, 2019-2020

South Euclid Lyndhurst Schools

“Stress Management”

The Brush High School First Ring Student Leaders opted to research stress management and the high school student. As we began to brainstorm issues that were affecting high school students we came up with issues such as depression, Honors and AP classes, family finances and time management to name a few. At the root of each of the issues was the stress the situation placed on the individual and how said individual chose to handle it. We surveyed fellow students and interviewed teachers, administrative staff and other adults in the school. After reviewing the results, we are hopeful that our research will shed some light on the stress teenagers feel, how they learn to cope with stress and we believe the results will lead to increased communication within our school community.



From left: Satonya Newton, Gianni Fitch, Manny Torres, Faith Shook, Clara Discenzo and Evan Glessner

Charles F. Brush High School Student Leaders:

Clara Discenzo, Gianni Fitch, Evan Glessner, Faith Shook, Manny Torres

Teacher Leader:

Satonya Newton



SECTION II

Warrensville Heights City Schools

“It’s a Project-Based World: Incorporating Project-Based Learning to Increase Student Engagement and Improve Student Outcomes”

This research project is based on the Warrensville Heights Student Leaders’ perception on taking tests to demonstrate their learning. In particular, students felt that they have far too many tests to take including traditional unit based tests, benchmark assessments, and end-of-course exams. Moreover, students felt that what they learned for tests was not necessarily applicable in the real world. By incorporating project-based learning (PBL) into the curriculum, students seek to demonstrate alternate ways of demonstrating their acquired knowledge. The research team administered student surveys using Google Forms as well as conducted one-on-one interviews with staff members to gauge community perceptions. Results showed that students would like more opportunities to complete PBLs in lieu of traditional assessments if they are not all given at the same time. This pairs with staff opinions that they too would like more opportunities to incorporate PBLs if given proper time and instruction on how to implement them effectively.



From left: Nicole Edmiston, Alear Tutt, Aaron Eatman

Warrensville Heights High School Student Leaders:

Nicole Edmiston, Cayla Johnson, Alear Tutt

Teacher Leader:

Aaron Eatman



SECTION III: Senior Research Projects, 2019-2020 Year Two Students

Berea City Schools

“Making Progress - Berea-Midpark Mental Health”

The Berea Midpark Senior Student Leaders continued their research in the area of mental health, focusing their research question on “What is your degree of understanding of Mental Health services at Berea- Midpark High School?” The team expanded their research in an effort to gauge the gap between what students felt was being offered and what programs staff knew were available through the school. The survey was able to capture 266 student responses and 85 staff responses. The team worked closely with administration on the rollout of the survey and is working toward presenting their findings to the new administrative team. Some recommendations were implemented as an additional mental health professional has been hired at both the Middle and High school.



From left: Alejandro Stafford, Summer Husein, Serena Ramsammy, Addyson Griffin, Megan Robertson, Nick Hall



Poster presentation at CSU

Berea-Midpark High School Senior Student Leaders:

Addyson Griffin, Summer Husein, Serena Ramsammy,
Megan Robertson, Alejandro Stafford

Teacher Mentor:

Nick Hall

SECTION III

Brooklyn City Schools

“Mental Health Understanding at Berea-Midpark High School”

Our research question was, “How prepared are Brooklyn High School students for life outside of high school and college?” We interviewed faculty, administration, students, and alumni to confirm or deny our question on college preparedness, asking them, “How well has high school prepared you so far for college and life after high school?”

We interviewed teachers, students, administration, and alumni, as well as a survey on google forms shared to students. We asked them questions based on how they felt on if Brooklyn prepared them for college or anything on life outside of high school. We asked what classes they had taken and if it helped any. We found that freshmen in our AVID program were the only ones that had the feeling of being prepared for college, while the other grades didn’t really feel that prepared for after high school. Students in other AVID classes were not receiving the level of preparedness everyone wanted. Our final outcome was that we found out that all students in our school feel the same way we do. Our research indicates that students feel they don’t get enough information about schooling and other options after high school.



From left: Fahima Taher, Allyanna Perez, Aaron Wrost, Katelyn Schwin, Sarah Young, Lisa Kubinski



Participating in a “Meeting with the Superintendent” simulation at Tri-C Metro

Brooklyn High School Senior Student Leaders:

Allyanna Perez, Katelyn Schwin, Fahima Taher, Aaron Wrost, Sarah Young

Teacher Mentor:

Lisa Kubinski



Senior Research Projects, 2019-2020

Cleveland Heights-University Heights Schools

“Mentors for Mental Health”



From left: Kandice White, Issa Augustin-Glave, Caroline Imka, Madisyn Moore, Damari Loretz



Sharing out on the team’s advocacy efforts at Ursuline

Cleveland Heights High School Senior Student Leaders:

Issa Augustin-Glave, Caroline Imka, Damari Loretz,
Madisyn Moore, Kandice White



SECTION III

Cuyahoga Heights Local Schools

“Stress Management”

The Student Leaders from Cuyahoga Heights High School wanted to look at stress on the student populations. They conducted teacher interviews and student surveys to collect data. They found that stress is affecting the students from overwhelmed freshmen entering high school to seniors about to enter college or the workforce. For the 2019-2020 school year, the student leaders implemented groups to provide support for each other across the grade levels. These groups had planned activities to provide a fun bonding experience and to develop a peer support group. Students were able to participate in icebreaker activities, Spirit Day challenges, and a Name That Tune assembly with a karaoke contest. Overall, the Student Leaders created a better school community to help students deal and manage stress in a more positive way.



From left: Anthony Zahtilla, Kyle Calvey, Sarah Nolan, Purva Chauhan, Victoria Kattler, Gary Miller



“Name that Tune” assembly

Cuyahoga Heights High School Senior Student Leaders:
Kyle Calvey, Purva Chauhan, Victoria Kattler, Sarah Nolan, Anthony Zahtilla

Teacher Mentor:
Gary Miller



Senior Research Projects, 2019-2020

Euclid City Schools

“Communication is Key”

When we began this project, it was our belief that communication between students, staff, and parents is an ongoing issue in our school and community. The objective of this project was to identify better methods for communication, including having our student Google accounts activated as email accounts. Through the research process, surveying our fellow students and staff, we discovered that a majority of the student body agrees that communication is a problem and that they would like school email accounts. We hoped that our project facilitated change and we originally wanted a solution to the problem by the start of the 2019-2020 school year.

Although we did not have a solution by the start of the 2019-2020 school year, the pandemic and the subsequent closure of schools pushed the district towards solutions for communication issues. As of April 6, 2020, students at Euclid High School have active district email accounts. We hope that the district continues to facilitate better communication.



From left: Cathy Gibbons, Artrez Alexander, Maggie Elkins

Euclid High School Senior Student Leaders:

Artrez Alexander, Maggie Elkins, Isabella Johnson

Teacher Mentor:

Cathy Gibbons



SECTION III

Fairview Park City Schools

“Fighting the Stigma Against Mental Health”

Last year we had had two main research questions: how big a problem is mental health in our school, and what are the biggest factors of mental health issues? This topic was important to us because we did not see an awareness of mental health being spread. As students who are affected by it every day, we knew how important it is to talk about mental health and get people the help they need. We sent a survey to students in grades 6-12 and had 518 responses.

Based on our results, we decided to focus on educating our students, staff and parents about mental health issues and developing a support system for all to feel safe and supported. Last March we taught a lesson in mentoring groups about identifying an adult you can talk with when you need someone and knowing some things to do when you are feeling stressed. Our middle and high school staff was trained in First Aid Mental Health so they could learn signs to look for. We also helped our Family Engagement Coordinator hold a “Parent University” where speakers shared information about mental health and how to help your child if you see signs. Our final project was a “Find Your Balance” day for students on April 1st, 2019 with a motivational speaker and short sessions on ways to reduce stress. This school year there has been much more emphasis on mental health and social emotional learning: the Red Flags curriculum is now being completed in the 5th and 6th grades and the staff is working with students to come up with other ways to help them feel safe and empowered to speak out.



From left: Carrie Sullivan, Courtney Schmitz, Lucy Mihailovic

We're proudest of:
Our “Find Your Balance Day”

We want to thank:
Our staff for helping us and continuing to promote Mental Health

The most important thing we learned:
It is important to speak up when you need help

Fairview High School Senior Student Leaders:

Eva Malasi, Lucy Mihailovic, Courtney Schmitz

Teacher Mentor:

Carrie Sullivan



Senior Research Projects, 2019-2020

Garfield Heights City Schools

“Building Relationships for Student Success”



From left: Amir Dixon, Melody Warren, Mariah Mitchell, Jowell Gray



Participating in a “Meeting with the Superintendent” simulation at Tri-C Metro

Garfield Heights High School

Senior Student Leaders:

Bezawit Athafseged, Amir Dixon,
Mariah Mitchell, Melody Warren

Teacher Mentor:

Jowell Gray



SECTION III

Maple Heights City Schools

“Mental Health Issues in Relation to the School Environment”



Chrisean Merritt (far left) & Malek Beecher (second from right) in a role play



Presenting their research at the May 2019 meeting: (from left) Raven Golliday, Malek Beecher & Chrisean Merritt



Raven sharing out on “Creating a Hook” at CSU



Raven & Malek prepare for a “Meeting with the Superintendent” simulation

Maple Heights High School Senior Student Leaders:

Malek Beecher, Raven Golliday, Chrisean Merritt

Teacher Mentor:

Courtney Starr



Senior Research Projects, 2019-2020

Richmond Heights Local Schools

“Dropout Prevention at Richmond Heights”

Are students prepared for college when graduating from Richmond Heights Secondary School? Richmond Heights Student Leaders collected data on this research question by surveying students and interviewing teachers and students. The students’ main finding was that Richmond Heights students did not feel prepared for college.



From left: Jevontae Jones, Gbolahan Adio



Gbolahan explaining the team’s research poster at CSU



Presenting their project with the rest of their Year 1 team in May 2019

Richmond Heights Secondary School

Senior Student Leaders:

Gbolahan Adio, Jevontae Jones



SECTION III

South Euclid Lyndhurst Schools

“The Effects of Cyberbullying”



From left: Teacher Mentor, Nina Greene, Iyana Austin-Howell, Noah Turoff



Presenting their findings in May 2019



Preparing for a “Meeting with the Superintendent” simulation at Tri-C Metro

Charles F. Brush High School Senior Student Leaders:

Iyana Austin-Howell, Nina Greene, Noah Turoff



SECTION IV: STUDENT LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE / LEADERSHIP ACADEMY JOINT SESSIONS

Session 1

On October 4, 2019, Student and Teacher Leaders from across the First Ring districts met at Ursuline College's Fritzsche Center to kick off the 2019-2020 Student Leadership Institute. Following introductions and a warm-up activity on defining leadership, guest speaker Dr. Dakota King-White led a discussion and activities on mental health in schools.

Year 1 teams spent the remainder of the day learning about Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) and beginning the first steps in their year-long research projects; identifying an issue and formulating a research question. Year 2 teams gathered in the College's Wasmer Gallery to share updates on the status of their projects, discuss directions for the coming year and learn "The Secrets Behind How Schools Work." The day ended with a chance for Student Leaders to mingle and ask questions during a gallery walk of Year 1 research topics.



Session 2

On November 13, 2019, Year 1 and Year 2 teams gathered in the Campus Center Building on Tri-C's Metro Campus. Guest speaker Russell Ham began the day with a lively discussion on leadership and conflict resolution. After a short break, teams reconvened for a student panel discussion. Six Year 2 student panelists shared their experiences completing YPAR projects last year and answered questions about data collection.

During morning and afternoon breakout sessions, Year 1 teams looked more closely at research methods and began to create the tools they would use for data collection. Year 2 teams attended a session on "The Secrets Behind the College Admissions Process" and ended the day with a discussion and role play on responding to "no," considering other viewpoints and managing their team's message.



Session 3

Student and Teacher Leaders gathered in Baldwin-Wallace University's Strosacker Hall for the third session on January 15, 2020. BW President Robert Helmer spoke to the assembled teams on the topic of Leadership followed by Scott Schulz, VP of Enrollment, who shared insights on the college application process.

Year 1 teams spent the rest of the morning and early afternoon analyzing their YPAR data and identifying causes, effects and possible solutions to the issues they researched. Meanwhile, Year 2 students participated in a team-building warm up activity, learned and practiced a process for peer mentoring, and discussed how to create and present research posters at a youth research symposium. The session ended with pairs of Year 2 students from different districts mentoring Year 1 teams on their YPAR projects.



Session 4

The final “working” session of the 2019-2020 year took place on February 7, 2020 at Cleveland State University’s Wolstein Center. Guest speaker William Davis moved the audience with his reflections on leadership, after which guest speaker Chanelle McCloud guided Student Leaders through a hands-on activity on how to create a hook for their presentations. Students enjoyed the opportunity to provide critical feedback when facilitators gave mock presentations to demonstrate best (and worst) practices for giving compelling research presentations.

After a block of dedicated team work time, Year 2 students provided peer mentoring to their Year 1 teams, answering questions and giving suggestions on their presentation plans. While Year 1 teams spent the remaining time refining their presentation ideas, Year 2 teams gathered for a short Gallery Walk to give each other feedback on the posters they created to present at an upcoming youth research symposium.



SECTION V: FIRST RING LEADERSHIP ACADEMY ACTIVITIES

ORIENTATION SESSION September 3, 2019

Topics: Introductions; Overview of FRLA and SLI; Teacher Leader Expectations

Location: Educational Service Center (ESC) of Northeast Ohio

SESSION ONE September 25, 2019

Topics: Teacher Leadership Standards; Challenges; What is Teacher Leadership?

Location: Lakewood High School

SESSION TWO October 4, 2019 *Joint Session First Ring Student Leadership Institute

Topics: School Climate and Culture

Guest Speaker: Dr. Dakota King-White

Location: Ursuline College

SESSION THREE November 13, 2019 *Joint Session First Ring Student Leadership Institute

Topics: Understanding and Engaging the Impoverished

Guest Speaker: Russell Ham

Location: Cuyahoga Community College - Metro Campus

SESSION FOUR December 6, 2019

Topics: Transience; Achievement Gap; Demographics of First Ring Districts

Guest Speaker: Dr. Jim Connell

Location: Fairview Park

SESSION FIVE January 15, 2020 *Joint Session First Ring Student Leadership Institute

Topics: Resilience; Safe and Supportive Learning Environment

Guest Speakers: Dr. Paul Helmer; Dr. Scott Schulz

Location: Baldwin Wallace University

SESSION SIX February 7, 2020 *Joint Session First Ring Student Leadership Institute

Topics: Professional Learning; Student Leadership Project Reviews

Guest Speakers: Chanelle McCloud; William Davis

Location: Cleveland State University

SESSION SEVEN March 4, 2020

Topics: Leadership for Culturally Competent Schools; Conversations About Race Communications

Guest Speaker: Dr. Veronica Motley

Location: South Euclid Lyndhurst

SESSION EIGHT March 18, 2020

Topics: Responding to and Influencing Change; Crucial Conversations

Location: Zoom Conference

SESSION NINE April 15, 2020

Topics: Virtual Learning Updates; Trauma Sensitive Classroom; Taking Care of Yourself

Location: Zoom Conference

SECTION VI: FIRST RING LEADERSHIP READING LIST

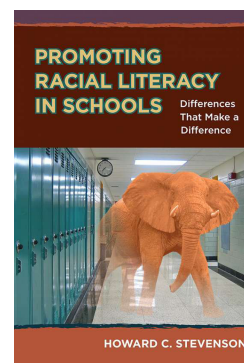
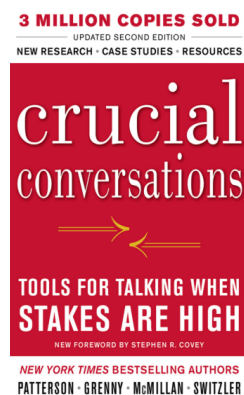
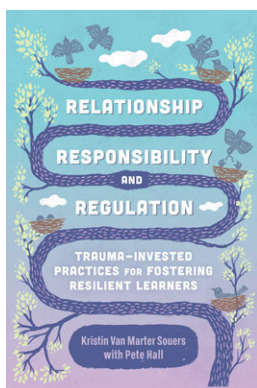
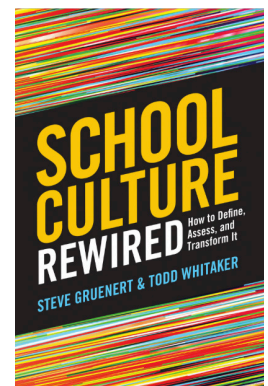
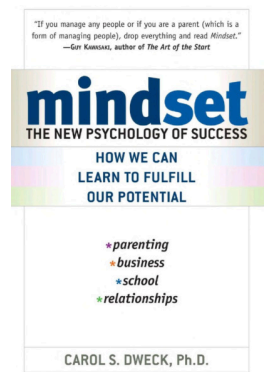
Mindset: The New Psychology of Success
Carol S. Dweck

School Culture Rewired: How to Define, Assess, and Transform It
Steve Gruenert & Todd Whitaker

Promoting Racial Literacy in Schools: Differences That Make a Difference
Howard C. Stevenson

Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes Are High
Al Switzler, Joseph Grenny, & Ron McMillan

Relationship, Responsibility, and Regulation: Trauma-Invested Practices
for Fostering Resilient Learners
Kristin Van Marter Souers & Pete Hall



SECTION VII: 2019-2020 COHORT BIOGRAPHIES

Jessica Banks

Parma City School District

Normandy High School - Science Teacher

Supplemental Duties: National Honor Society Adviser, Sophomore Class Adviser, New Teacher Mentor

Bachelor's: Cleveland State University

Master's: Cleveland State University

Years in the District: 15 Years in Education: 15

"Being part of the Academy this year has increased my curiosity and enthusiasm for how we can do better for our students."

Regina Bryant

Maple Heights City School District

Maple Heights High School - Secondary Math Teacher & Data Manager

Supplemental Duties: Senior Class Advisor

Bachelor's: Wilberforce University in conjunction with The Ohio State University

Master's: Ohio State University & Wright State University

Years in the District: 17 Years in Education: 17

"Being in the Academy this year allowed me to learn from other educators and students with similar dynamics as the district I service. It allowed me to share my experiences and grow from the experiences of others."

Joshua L. Chenoweth

Garfield Heights City School District

Maple Leaf Elementary School - Music Teacher

Bachelor's: Kent State University

Master's: Concordia University Wisconsin

Other: Additional Coursework at Indiana Wesleyan University

Years in the District: 2 Years in Education: 15

"Working with the students from Garfield Heights High School has been a highlight of my year. These students were incredibly fun and very intelligent. I am happy I was able to work with them over the year."

Megan Eadeh

Lakewood City School District

Lakewood High School - World & U.S. History, Street Law

Supplemental Duties: Leads the Facing History and Ourselves Girls Leadership Group at LHS

Bachelor's: John Carroll University

Master's: John Carroll University

Years in the District: 14 Years in Education: 14

"It has been re-energizing to work with the student leaders of FRLA as well as collaborate with educators at the conferences."

Aaron Eatman

Warrensville Heights City School District

Warrensville Heights High School – Intervention Specialist

Supplemental Duties: Class of 2021 Moderator, PBIS Committee Member

Bachelor’s: Georgetown University

Master’s: Notre Dame College

Years in the District: 1

Years in Education: 14

“When you are new to a building or district, you have to be willing to take some chances in order to experience new things. I am glad that the girls on the First Ring team took a chance on me and allowed me to experience the strength of the Warrensville community.”

Sarah Eppler

Fairview Park City School District

Gilles-Sweet Elementary School – First Grade Teacher

Supplemental Duties: Grade Level Leader, Member of Building & District Level Teams, Tier II PBIS Committee, Derby Dash Committee & Social Committee

Bachelor’s: Cleveland State University

Master’s: Baldwin Wallace University

Years in the District: 6

Years in Education: 13

“Working with the juniors and seniors was a gift! Being an elementary teacher, I don’t often get the chance to work with our older student population. Being able to facilitate this experience was very meaningful. These students are driven, smart, caring, compassionate, and will do great things along their journey.”

Catherine Gibbons

Euclid City School District

Euclid High School – Intervention Specialist

Supplemental Duties: Department Chair - Special Education, Testing Committee Member

Bachelor’s: Denison University

Master’s: Notre Dame College of Ohio

Inspired Leaders Principal Licensure Program: Cleveland State University

Years in the District: 19

Years in Education: 19

“I was honored to be able to work with highly motivated and passionate students to make a positive change to their school environment.”

Kennie Green

Cleveland Heights-University Heights City School District

Cleveland Heights High School - English Teacher

Bachelor’s: Cleveland State University

Master’s: Cleveland State University

Years in the District: 7

Years in Education: 11

“Working with such awesome and capable scholars, seeing what they can do with information, has been a blessing to me.”

Jermaine Huff

Bedford City School District

Columbus Intermediate School – Dean of Students

Julie McGarey

Brooklyn City School District

Brooklyn High School – Intervention Specialist

Supplemental Duties: District Special Olympics Coach & Coordinator

Bachelor's: Xavier University

Master's: Xavier University

Other: Educational Leadership Internship (in process), Baldwin Wallace University

Years in the District: 2

Years in Education: 18

Matt McGregor

Berea City School District

Berea-Midpark High School – Government & Advanced Placement Government Teacher

Supplemental Duties: Social Studies Department Chairperson, AP Government Question Leader & Boys Assistant Soccer Coach

Bachelor's: Muskingum College

Master's: St. Cloud State University

Other: Ohio State University (Political Science Certification) & Cleveland State University (Principal Licensure)

Years in the District: 22

Years in Education: 28

Satonya Newton

South Euclid Lyndhurst School District

Memorial Junior High School – 7th Grade English Language Arts Teacher

Bachelor's: Ohio University

Master's: Indiana Wesleyan University

Years in the District: 15

Total Years in Education: 20

Nathaniel Reese, Jr.

Shaker Heights City School District

Shaker Heights High School – MAC Scholar Advisor & Academic Advisor

Supplemental Duties: Weekly conferences with students about their wellbeing and academics

Bachelor's: Kent State University

Master's: Kent State University

Other: Cleveland State University (Principal License)

Years in the District: 22

Total Years in Education: 22

“My experience with the First Ring Leadership Academy has been excellent because of what I've learned from Dr. Kowalski.”

Dr. Johnny Roy

Cuyahoga Heights School District

Cuyahoga Heights High School - Social Studies Teacher

Supplemental Duties: Head Boy's Golf Coach, Assistant Swim Coach, District Mentor, Social Studies Department Coordinator

Bachelor's: University of California at San Diego

Master's: National University

Ph.D.: University of the Cumberlands

Years in the District: 11

Years in Education: 15

"The First Ring Leadership Academy has been extremely rewarding because it has allowed me the opportunity to work with some extremely caring and passionate educators and provided me the opportunity to improve myself through their experiences and knowledge for which I am extremely grateful."

Anthony Rozman

Euclid City School District

Euclid High School - Automotive Service Technology Teacher

Supplemental Duties: Industrial Department Chairperson, Teacher Leader, Teacher Mentor, Teacher Technology Instructor, SKILLS chapter advisor

Bachelor's: Myers University

Master's: Kent State University

Years in the District: 22

"I found this experience to be exciting and very promising in shaping future leaders."

Alyssa Thorpe

Richmond Heights Local School District

Richmond Heights Secondary School - Middle School Social Studies Teacher

Supplemental Duties: Middle School Student Council Advisor

Education: University of Akron

Years in the District: 5

"Working with the student was great! The most important thing I learned in the Leadership Academy was to listen to students. Being in this Academy this year taught me to listen to my students' opinions."

John Wessel

Parma City School District

Valley Forge High School - Strength & Conditioning Coach

Supplemental Duties: Health & Physical Education Department Chair, District Physical Education Facilitator

Bachelor's: Ohio Wesleyan University

Master's: Emporia State University, Concordia University of Chicago

Years in the District: 10

Years in Education: 10

"Being part of the First Ring Leadership Academy has been an enriching experience for myself and the student leaders. We have gained valuable insights on leadership and how to make meaningful change within a school building. The leadership skills developed will help enhance student and school interactions to help the organization run at an optimal level."

SECTION VIII:

First Ring Leadership Academy & Student Leadership Institute Staff Bios



Jennifer Dodd is the Director of Operations and Development at the Educational Service Center (ESC) of Northeast Ohio and Director of the First Ring Schools Collaborative (FRSC). Jennifer coordinates the FRSC's activities across its many networks and programs, including the development and operations of the First Ring Leadership Academy and First Ring Student Leadership Institute. Prior to working at the ESC, Jennifer worked as a special education teacher in Independence Local Schools. She currently holds an Early Intervention license, a K-9 Principal's license and a Superintendent's license. Jennifer completed her Ph.D. in Urban Education at Cleveland State University.



Keith Bell, Sr. is a Director of Leadership Services at the Educational Service Center (ESC) of Northeast Ohio. Prior to joining the ESC, Dr. Bell served as Superintendent of the Euclid City School District. Currently, he is assisting with initiatives for the college and transition for underrepresented students to graduate school at Ohio State University. Keith earned his Ed.D. in Educational Administration from Ohio State University.



Alexandrea Golden is a postdoctoral research fellow at the Center for Urban Education at Cleveland State University. She completed her doctorate in Clinical-Community Psychology at the University of South Carolina. Alex's research focuses on factors that directly and indirectly contribute to the positive adjustment of youth experience contexts of risk. Additionally, Alex has a strong interest in prevention science and identifying ways to bridge the gap between research and practice for under-resourced populations.



Wendy Jovan is a Project Manager at the Educational Service Center (ESC) of Northeast Ohio where she manages the operations of the First Ring Student Leadership Institute and event planning for the joint work sessions with the Leadership Academy. Wendy previously worked as a School Psychologist and Market Research Analyst. She completed her Psy.S. in School Psychology at Cleveland State University.



Dennis Kowalski is currently an adjunct professor at Cleveland State and Concordia Universities and the facilitator of the First Ring Leadership Academy. In addition to teaching courses in learning and leadership, Dennis facilitates workshops and retreats on topics such as team building, the change process, understanding poverty, enriching practice, and transformational leadership. Before his retirement in 2014, Dennis was the Director of the Greater Cleveland Educational Development Center at Cleveland State University. Prior to that, he worked in the public schools as a teacher, principal and a superintendent. Dennis has an Ed.D. with a Cognate area in Psychology.



Steven Sanders is a research assistant and fourth-year student in the Urban Education doctoral program at Cleveland State University where he teaches psychology courses at the undergraduate level and clinical mental health counseling courses at the graduate level. He received his Master's of Science in Counseling Psychology from Alabama A&M University. Steven completed clinical work at both the John Carroll and Cleveland State University counseling centers, and he practiced clinically with children suffering from sexual trauma and drug addiction at the Nova Center in Huntsville, Alabama and conducted disability evaluations and intelligence testing at Longwood Psychological Center, also in Huntsville. Steven's research interests include personality theory, internalized racism, perceived social support, impostor phenomenon, and racial dimensions of depression, anxiety, and academic achievement.



Adam Voight is Director of the Center for Urban Education at Cleveland State University where he partners with urban schools, communities, and youth to create environments conducive to the learning and well-being of young people, particularly those affected by poverty and racism. Adam's community-engaged research and action has been supported by organizations such as the U.S. Department of Education and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Adam has a Ph.D. in Community Psychology from Peabody College of Education and Human Development at Vanderbilt University.

special thanks

to guest speakers Dr. Dakota King-White, Mr. Russell Ham, Dr. James Connell, Ms. Chanelle McCloud, Mr. William Davis, Dr. Paul Helmer, Dr. Scott Schulz and Dr. Veronica Motley; to our Year 2 Teacher Mentors Ms. Jowell Gray, Mr. Nick Hall, Mrs. Lisa Kubinski, Mr. Gary Miller, Ms. Courtney Starr and Ms. Carrie Sullivan; to Dr. Deborah Morin and Staff, Center for Educational Leadership, Cleveland State University; to Mr. Paul Pendleton, founder of Finding Leaders; and to Ms. Tracy Spies and Ms. Kristine Kozlowski, Administrative Assistants, the Educational Service Center of Northeast Ohio.

WORDS FROM OUR 2019-20 COHORTS . . .

“

Dr. Kowalski does a great job at connecting the readings to real life experiences. In addition, he offers experience and input on every question the teacher leaders throw at him. The speakers that come in are engaging and provide valuable insights on potential issues in our schools.

“

It was great to see the other schools and hear about the partnerships that they have formed with the communities they are in.

“

I enjoy taking the building tours with the administration of each building and hearing their vision and visually seeing it in the school. Every district operates differently and leadership styles vary but, you can take valuable lessons from each school and use it within your own practices.

“

It is a very valuable and meaningful program that teaches students leadership qualities that they can use in their schools and with their future tasks in life.

“

It's been great to see the culture at different schools!

“

The visits provide us with the ability to make comparisons with our school districts and others. We see what works and what could potentially benefit us as we progress through our careers.

“

Meeting and connecting with other school leaders has been very beneficial. Dr. Kowalski and all of the other speakers/presenters have provided a wealth of knowledge and experience and it's been so great to be part of the FRLA.

FRLA BY THE **NUMBERS** ...



26

Number of teams attending the 2019-2020 Student Leadership Institute

49

Percent of last year's cohort returning to attend the "Year 2" program as seniors

77

Percent of Student Leaders who can express their views in front of others as a result of attending the Institute*

93

Percent of Student Leaders who feel they can make a difference in their school or community after attending the Institute*

96

Percent of Student Leaders who believe they can help make the world a better place to live in as a result of attending the Institute*

119

Number of students attending the 2019-2020 Institute

160

Total number of First Ring Students attending the Institute since its inception

**Based on survey of 2018-2019 cohort*



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