

# Leveraging Writing to Improve Students' Reading Scores

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# Agenda



- Introductions & Overview
- The Research
- Bringing It to Life
- Q&A

# ThinkCERCA Speakers

Amy Jackson  
Regional Director of  
Success



Katherine Young  
Director of Curriculum and  
Instruction



# The Perceived Reading & Writing Gap

## **READ**

Consume Information

## **WRITE**

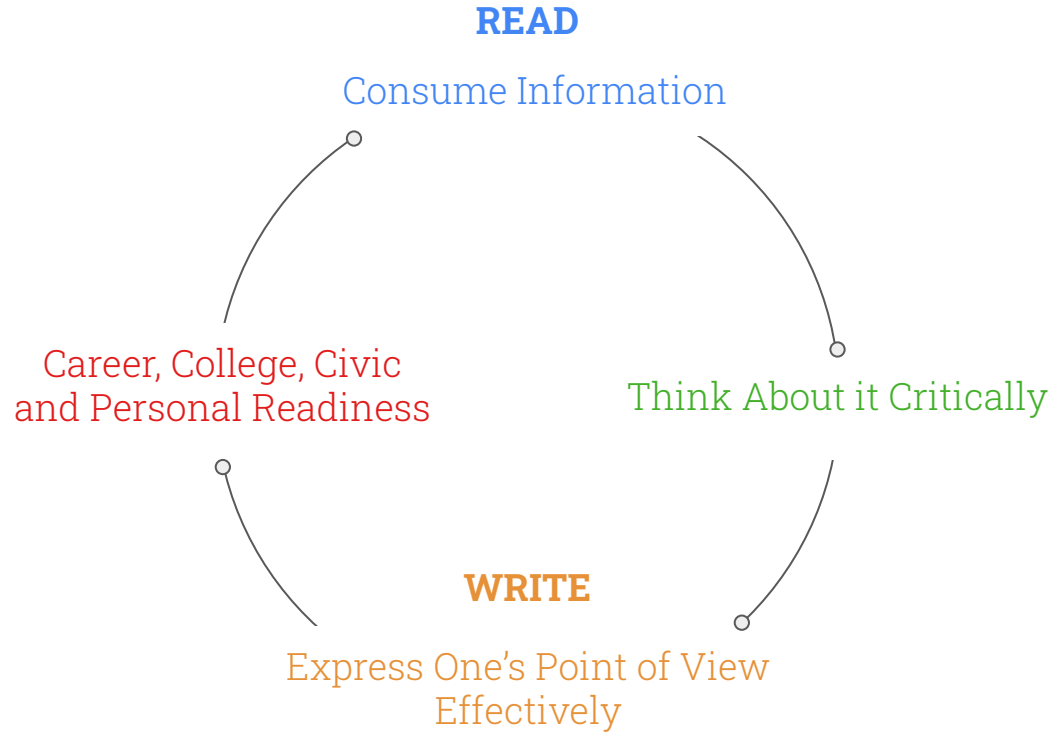
Express One's Point of View  
Effectively

Reading

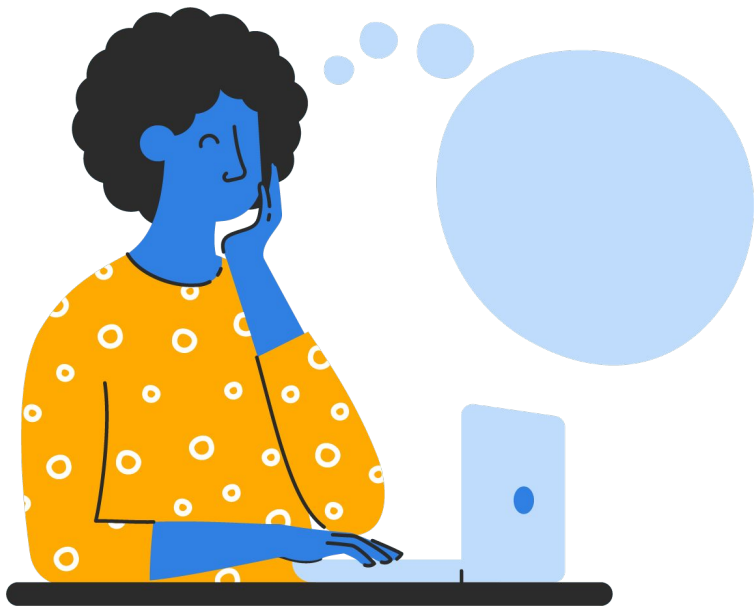


Writing

# Bridging This Gap



Reading and Writing Skills  
Build Off Each Other



“Writing is how we think our way into a subject and make it our own.”

— William Zinsser, *Writing to Learn*, 1993





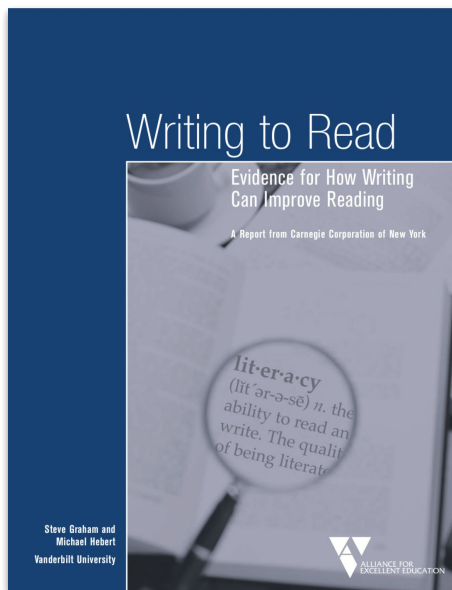
The act of writing helps individuals work through complex texts and concepts, and offers students the opportunity to **“truly explore their own grasp of content materials at a deeper level of thinking, communicate that to the teacher, and offer a genuine sample for ascertaining student knowledge.”**

— Diana Sisson and Betsy Sisson, *Re-envisioning the Literacy Block*, 2015

# Instructional Writing Practices that Impact Reading

## “Writing to Read”

by Steve Graham  
and Michael Hebert



# Have students write about the texts they read.

*"Writing to Read," Graham and Hebert*

## ThinkCERCA Writing Lesson

The screenshot displays the ThinkCERCA Writing Lesson interface. At the top, a blue header bar contains the title "Uniform or Dress Code: There's a Difference" and a "Close Preview" button. Below the header, a navigation bar shows six steps: 1. Connect, 2. Read, 3. Engage with the Text, 4. Summarize (highlighted), 5. Build an Argument, and 6. Create your CERCA. A yellow banner below the navigation bar states: "You are in preview mode. Your work will not be saved if you leave or refresh this page." The main content area is divided into two sections. On the left, a sidebar lists "Overview", "Vocabulary", "Text" (highlighted), "Rubric", and "Highlights". The "Text" section displays the title "Uniform or Dress Code: There's a Difference" and two paragraphs of text. The first paragraph describes a school's strict uniform policy. The second paragraph discusses a 2016 international study on student discipline. On the right, a box titled "Step 4: Summarize" contains instructions: "Summarize the selection in a few sentences. The sentence stems can help you use academic vocabulary from the text in your own writing." Below the instructions, a text box contains the following sentence stems: "According to the article 'Uniform or Dress Code: There's a Difference,' the difference between a uniform policy and a dress code is \_\_\_\_." and "Three examples of dress code guidelines are \_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_." Below the text box is a large empty area for writing the summary.

- Respond to a text in writing (writing personal reactions, analyzing and interpreting the text)
- Write summaries or notes about a text
- Answer questions about a text in writing, or create and answer written questions about a text

# Teach students the skills that go into creating a text.

*"Writing to Read," Graham and Hebert*

## ThinkCERCA Skills Lesson

A well-organized argument.

Introduction states claim

Evidence supports reason

More people should have turtles as pets.

Turtles are easy to take care of. For example, turtles don't need to be walked every day to stay healthy. Turtles can also be a person's companion for a long time. Some turtles can live for thirty years. Turtles are ideal pets in many ways.

Logically ordered reasons

Conclusion offers summary

< Back

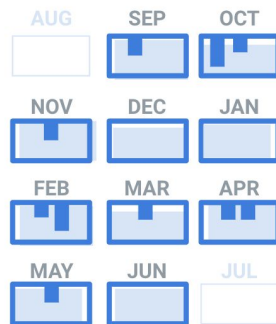
Next >

- Teach the process of writing, text structures for writing, and sentence/paragraph construction (improves comprehension)
- Teach spelling and sentence construction (improves fluency)
- Teach spelling skills (improves word reading skills)

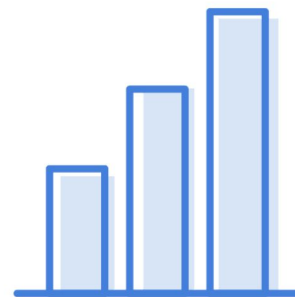
# Increase how much students write.

*"Writing to Read," Graham  
and Hebert*

ThinkCERCA Fidelity Metrics



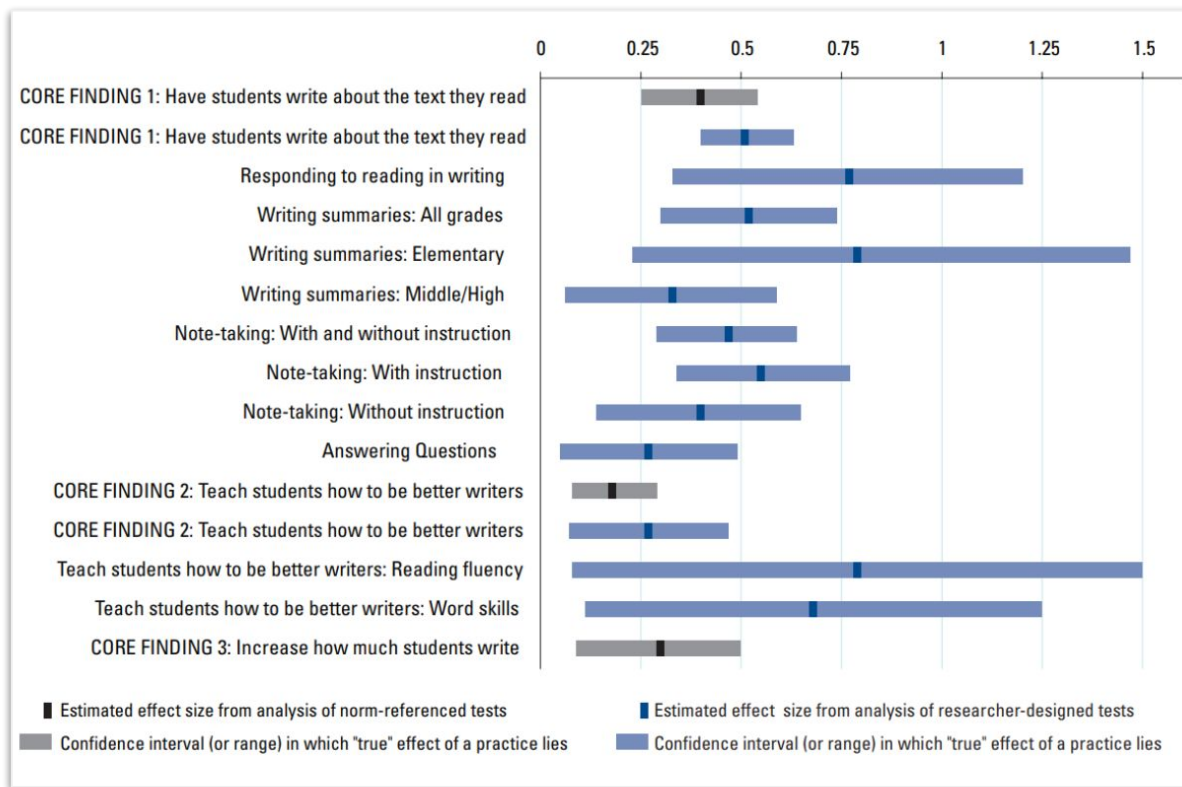
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7+ Writing Lessons  
per student alongside **skills practice**,  
**collaboration**, and **feedback**

Significant Growth  
(1.5 - 2.5 years in **reading gains**,  
according to recent studies)

# Writing to Read Effect Sizes with Confidence Intervals



# Argumentation and Writing Drive Growth

English Class Practice	Rise in English Subtest Score	Applied Using ThinkCERCA
<b>Rewrote</b> a paper or essay in response to comments	0.19	✓
<b>Discussed</b> how culture, time, or place affects an author's writing	0.27	✓
<b>Explained</b> how writers use tools like symbolism	0.35	✓
Improved a piece of <b>writing</b> through <b>collaboration</b> with a class or with partners	<b>0.38</b>	✓
<b>Debated</b> the meaning of reading	0.22	✓
Across all classes, the students <b>wrote</b> papers defending their point of view of ideas 5 or more times (compared to less than 5)	<b>0.39</b>	✓
<b>Discussed</b> how culture, time, or place affects an author's writing	0.19	✓
Math Class Practice	Rise in Math Subtest Score	Applied Using ThinkCERCA
<b>Discussed</b> possible solutions to problems with other students	0.29	✓
Used a graphing calculator to complete an assignment	0.31	
Science Class Practice	Rise in Science Subtest Score	Applied Using ThinkCERCA
Used laboratory equipment or specimens	0.16	
<b>Wrote</b> lab reports	0.12	✓
Generated their own hypothesis/ <b>claim</b>	0.18	✓
<b>Used evidence</b> /data to support an argument or hypothesis	0.21	✓
Found information from graphs and tables	0.19	✓

# Over 2x Reading Growth

beyond expected grade-level growth on the NWEA MAP test

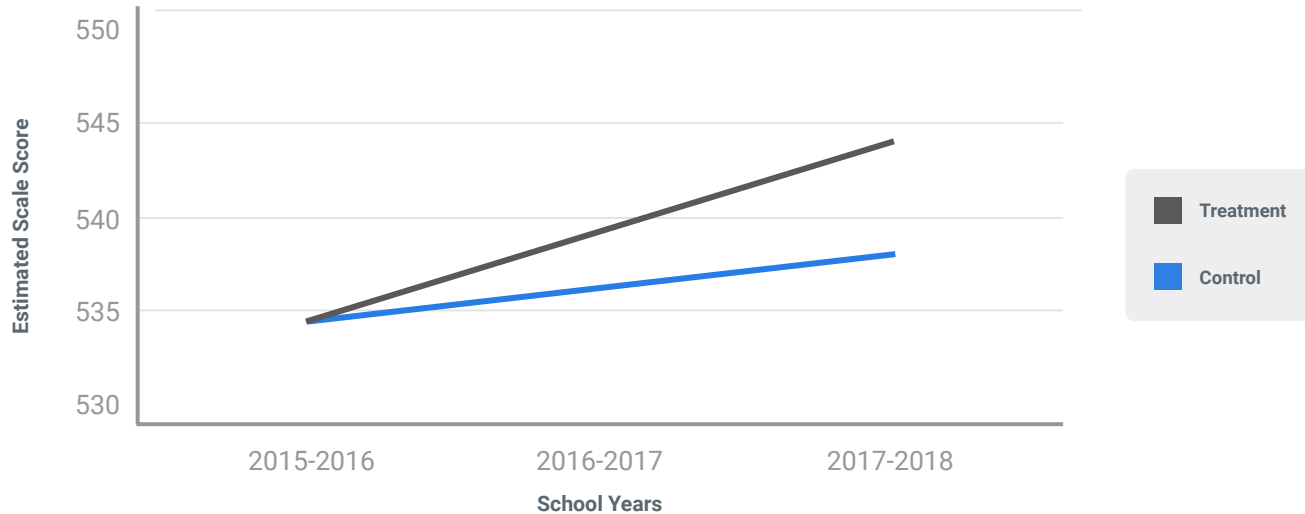


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## 2.6x More Growth Than Control Group

ThinkCERCA students achieved more than double the ELA growth compared to non-ThinkCERCA students in a three-year period



17



Fayette  
County Schools

A three-year longitudinal study of Fayette County Schools' Georgia Milestones data revealed students who used ThinkCERCA demonstrated 2.6 times the growth of their peers who did not use ThinkCERCA. Source: Fayette County Schools, 2015-2018 Georgia Milestones Data, Grades 6-8

Bringing These  
Practices to Life  
(even in a remote setting!)

# Free ThinkCERCA Licenses Thru June 30th



## Delivering Rigorous Literacy Instruction Throughout the Coronavirus Outbreak

ThinkCERCA is here to help schools and districts transition to e-learning throughout the coronavirus outbreak.

- Shared framework for teaching foundational skills
- Built-in tools to support close reading
- Scaffolded writing process
- Opportunities for virtual collaboration
- Paperless grading and feedback

Sign up for complimentary licenses  
at [www.thinkcerca.com/covid](http://www.thinkcerca.com/covid).



**“As teachers we can choose between (a) sentencing students to thoughtless mechanical operations and (b) facilitating their ability to think.** If students' readiness for more involved thought processes is bypassed in favor of jamming more facts and figures into their heads, they will stagnate at the lower levels of thinking. But if students are encouraged to try a variety of thought processes in classes, they can, regardless of their ages, develop considerable mental power. **Writing is one of the most effective ways to develop thinking.”**


— Syrene Forsman, High School Teacher  
*Writing to Learn Means Learning to Think*, 1985

# A Shared Literacy Framework



**CERCA:** A lens for reading, writing, and thinking

# 1. Highlighting and Annotating a Text

Uniform or Dress Code: There's a DifferenceUniform or Dress Code: There's a DifferenceClose Preview

1 Connect2 Read3 Engage with the Text4 Summarize5 Build an Argument6 Create your CERCA< BACKNEXT >

You are in preview mode. Your work will not be saved if you leave or refresh this page.

Which school dress policy creates a more positive school environment: uniforms or dress codes?

OverviewVocabularyTextRubricHighlights

0:00 / 5:32

The "uniform" portion of the study didn't address the relationship between uniforms and student violence. Instead, the focus was to discover whether wearing uniforms had any effect on school discipline. The researchers found that it did. According to published results of the study, "...for countries where students wear school uniforms, our study found that students listen significantly better, there are lower noise levels, and lower teaching waiting times with classes starting on time." So uniforms helped students stay disciplined, which in turn resulted in higher academic performance.

That's a pretty good argument still not the best option. During of kids all dressed exactly alike uniforms, I would surely have hated them. To be honest, des uniforms. But my new school h that.

Now maybe you're thinking "Why? What's the difference?" First, the typical uniform policy is more **restrictive** than a dress code. But that said, uniform policies are easier to enforce. That's because it is obvious right away if someone is out of uniform. With a dress code, it can be a little more complicated. It's often

Add Note

Evidence for why school dress codes are better for students.

CANCELSAVE

Step 3: Engage with the Text

As you analyze the text, you will be gathering evidence that will help you develop a response to the CERCA question:

Which school dress policy creates a more positive school environment: uniforms or dress codes?

Reread the article.

Use aqua to highlight evidence and reasoning that dress codes are good for schools. Add notes about why this policy is better or worse than school uniforms or no dress policy.

Use pink to highlight evidence and reasoning to support the argument that school uniforms are good for schools. Add notes about why this policy is better or worse than dress codes or no dress policy.


Select a color to begin highlighting

AQUA

PINK

23

## 2. Summarizing Practice

Uniform or Dress Code: There's a DifferenceUniform or Dress Code: There's a DifferenceClose Preview

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OverviewVocabularyTextRubricHighlights0

0:00 / 5:32

Uniform or Dress Code: There's a Difference


I attended sixth grade at a school that had a very strict uniform policy. The boys had to wear button-down white shirts, ties, and navy blue pants. The girls wore white blouses, blue tights or knee socks, and pleated navy blue skirts. Both boys and girls could add a navy blue blazer if they desired. But that was the only **wardrobe** choice they got to make on their own.

I do understand the attitude that uniforms can be a good thing. A 2016 international study on student discipline had some interesting results. The researchers' aim was to show the relationship between discipline and learning. They compared the levels of school discipline in five different geographic clusters throughout the world. These included Europe, the Americas, Far East Asia, the rest of Asia, and what they called the Anglo-Saxon cluster. In this study, titled "School Discipline, Uniforms, and Academic Performance," the researchers defined "discipline" as the kinds of actions and policies schools used to reduce unwanted types of behavior. The study looked closely at how actual school policies in different parts of the world affected academic performance. The peak performing cluster, they found, was Far East Asia, a region that generally

Step 4: Summarize


📌 Summarize the selection in a few sentences. The sentence stems can help you use academic vocabulary from the text in your own writing.

According to the article "Uniform or Dress Code: There's a Difference," the difference between a uniform policy and a dress code is \_\_\_\_\_.  
Three examples of dress code guidelines are \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.





## 2. Scaffolded Writing Support in Response to a Text-Dependent Prompt

Uniform or Dress Code: There's a DifferenceUniform or Dress Code: There's a DifferenceClose Preview

1 Connect2 Read3 Engage with the Text4 Summarize5 Build an Argument6 Create your CERCA

< BACKNEXT >

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Which school dress policy creates a more positive school environment: uniforms or dress codes?

OverviewVocabularyTextRubricHighlights0Your Work

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Step 5: Build an Argument

Claim

Schools should required uniforms.

REASON

Provide reasons why you believe your claim.

EVIDENCE

Provide evidence from the text to support your claim.

REASONING

Explain how your evidence connects back to your claim.

COUNTERARGUMENT

Include at least one good reason why others might disagree with your claim or provide a different point of view.

## Direct Instruction



Expert introductions to standards-aligned skills and concepts in a flipbook-style format that can be taught whole group (teacher-led) or assigned to individual students.

## Embedded Skills Instruction

A well-organized argument.

Introduction states claim

Evidence supports reason

More people should have turtles as pets. Turtles are easy to take care of. For example, turtles don't need to be walked every day to stay healthy. Turtles can also be a person's companion for a long time. Some turtles can live for thirty years. Turtles are ideal pets in many ways.

Logically ordered reasons

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Next >

Interactive lessons that provide grade-level instruction and practice in critical literacy skills. Include scaffolded checks and assessments for measuring understanding.


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**Any** writing helps.

# Online or Offline Critical Thinking Resources

## CERCA Direct Instruction Lesson

Arguments



An **argument** is a piece of writing, a speech, or a communication in another medium that helps others appreciate your ideas, agree with your point of view, or take a particular action.

A whole-group lesson for introducing your students to CERCA, a research-based approach for reading, writing, and thinking.

[Assign in ThinkCERCA >](#)

## Analyze an Article Graphic Organizer

Analyze an Argument

CERCA Graphic Organizer

1. Read the article once. Mark any interesting information with an exclamation point (!). Mark any places you have questions with a question mark (?). Mark important information with an arrow (→). Turn to a partner or a member of your group and discuss the article. Share your thinking and summarize the article.
2. Then, work together to complete the CERCA graphic organizer. Use the definitions of the CERCA elements to help you.

**CLAIM:** What is the author's claim or position in the article?

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**REASON:** Provide reasons why you believe your claim.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

A scaffolded, graphic organizer for helping your students break down an informational article. [Download >](#)

## 1-Paragraph Setup Graphic Organizer

**ThinkCERCA<sup>™</sup>**  
**1 Paragraph Setup**

Prompt: \_\_\_\_\_

Hook	
Background	
Claim	
Reason 1	
Evidence	
Reasoning	
Reason 2	
Evidence	
Reasoning	
Closing Sentence	

A scaffolded, graphic organizer for guiding your students through the process of responding to an argumentative writing prompt.

[Download >](#)

A photograph of a woman and a young man sitting at a desk in a classroom, looking at a laptop. The woman is pointing at the screen. The background shows other students in a classroom setting.

Q&A

What tips do you have for  
giving **feedback** on student  
writing and **monitoring**  
**progress**?

What role do **speaking and listening activities** play in supporting reading and writing growth?

Additional Questions?



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Thank You