

# SAM Leaders Professional Learning Program 2020-21 Year End Executive Summary

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This Executive Summary Report contains an overview and history of the program to give the reader context for the progress described in the SAM LPLP 2020-21 Executive Summary section below. Please contact Kirk Miller, SAM Executive Director ([samkm@sammt.org](mailto:samkm@sammt.org)), if you have questions about this report or the SAM LPLP.

Collaboration, relationship building, and networking have created an outstanding opportunity for Montana education administrators to support their professional learning. School Administrators of Montana, the Montana Office of Public Instruction, Governor Bullock, Montana University System Ed Leadership Programs, Department of Administration, and individual Montana business partners, working together, launched the SAM Leaders Professional Learning Program (LPLP) in 2013-14! Now in its seventh year, the program for 2020-21 combined the research on successes of the SAM 21<sup>st</sup> Century Leadership Institute and the SAM Mentor Program to provide a unique opportunity for Montana administrators to receive one-on-one coaching/mentoring; innovative, focused, personalized, blended professional learning including a rich online resource center; and collaboration through collegial learning networks focused on specific topics of study. Since its inception, the SAM LPLP has served to improve professional learning for nearly 500 district and school administrators in our state!

## Overview and History

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### What is the SAM LPLP?

- An innovative approach to professional learning for new, experienced, and aspiring Montana education administrators.
- A combination of personalized learning networks through coaching/mentoring, rich online resource center, and collaboration through collegial learning networks; the SAM Leaders Professional Learning Program is unlike any program available today.
- SAM, the Montana Office of Public Instruction, Montana University System Ed Leadership Programs, the Department of Administration and individual Montana business partners have worked together to support a cost effective model for Montana's school administrators to participate in this innovative professional learning opportunity.
- You can review the program details at <http://www.sammt.org/leaders-professional-learning-program>

### Why do we need the SAM LPLP?

- Montana has had over 100 administrative positions open each spring of 2014 - 2020, so there are nearly 700 administrators new to their positions in our schools over the past 7 years.
- Research and common sense reveal that mentoring is a major key to building leadership capacity and those who are mentored exhibit greater success and retention than those who are not.
- Montana administrators are committed to their school and community and there are ever increasing demands on their time to meet the needs. Professional learning is an area that gets placed on the back burner when it should be upfront for effective problem solving.
- Research and common sense show that the most powerful professional learning is inquiry-based, aligned to real-world applications, and embedded in the work environment.

## So how did the SAM LPLP happen?

- SAM's strategic plan goals for professional development led to seeking innovative ways to meet the professional learning needs of Montana administrators.
- Seeking innovation led to great people working in this environment –
  - Godfrey Saunders for mentoring
  - Tom Unwin for innovative, project-based learning
- A year of research and project development led to launching a pilot Mentor Program and 21<sup>st</sup> Century Leadership Institute (21 CLI) in 2013-14.
- Those administrators participating in the pilot programs provided great insight for creating the LPLP.
- Lessons learned from the LPLP 2013-14 were incorporated into the SAM LPLP 2014-15, and this improvement process has continued each subsequent year. During these program years, Providers successfully worked with 47 school administrators (14 Mentees and 33 21 CLI Members), 72 school administrators (34 Mentees and 38 21 CLI Members) in 2014-15, 54 school administrators (37 Mentees and 18 21 CLI Members) in 2015-16, 34 school administrators (26 Mentees and 8 21 CLI Members) in 2016-17, 69 school administrators in 2017-18, 54 school administrators in 2018-19, 90 school administrators in 2019-20, and 70 school administrators in the current 2020-21 year. Review the success of these program years in the following summaries: [SAM LPLP 2014-15 Executive Summary](#), [SAM LPLP 2015-16 Executive Summary](#), [SAM LPLP 2016-17 Executive Summary](#), [SAM LPLP 2017-18 Executive Summary](#), [SAM LPLP 2018-19 Executive Summary](#), and [SAM LPLP 2019-20 Executive Summary](#).

## Putting Lessons Learned into Action

- Seek highly qualified Montana administrators who can serve a region of the state as an LPLP Provider. All Providers from 2019-20 continued their service to the program in 2020-21 with the exception of Jon Konen who began a new superintendent position and participated in the program as a member. Tammy Lacey joined the program as a Provider for the 2020-21 program year.
- Partner with resource providers to gain access to the best resources. All previous partners continued with the program.
- Train the LPLP Providers so they are able to connect LPLP Members to necessary resources in the most effective, efficient ways. Provider trainings took place in July 2020 at the LPLP Provider Symposium and continue on a regular basis with LPLP Provider web meetings and trainings.
- Build relationships for effective communication so that all involved can learn from each other. A key to the success of the LPLP is the relationship built between the Members and their Provider.
- Create an opportunity for LPLP Members to collaborate with like-minded Montana administrators around specific education topics through the development of Collegial Learning Networks.
- Promote the ideas so that Montana administrators will seek to enhance their professional learning.
- Create opportunities for LPLP Members to participate in thought-leader webinar sessions focused on a timely topic and connect with Providers and LPLP Members through the development of monthly SAM LPLP Huddles.

## LPLP Directors and Providers

- Tom Unwin – Program Director/Resource Center Development. President/CEO of JK Thomas & Associates international professional learning provider for educators.
- Jeff Blessum - retired Superintendent at Manhattan Public Schools.
- Mark Brajcich - retired Superintendent at Red Lodge Public Schools.
- Jason Butcher – Reach Higher Montana Outreach Director and retired Superintendent at Lewistown Public Schools.
- Rick Duncan – Superintendent at Powell County High School District.

- Dr. Daniel Farr – Adjunct professor at Montana State University and retired Superintendent at Sidney Public Schools
- Tammy Lacey – Vice-Chair of the Board of Public Education and retired Superintendent at Great Falls Public Schools.
- Brad Moore – Superintendent at Stanford School District.
- Dr. Gerry Nolan – retired Superintendent at Anaconda Public Schools.
- Dr. Darlene Schottle – Chairperson of the Montana Board of Public Education and retired Superintendent at Kalispell Public Schools.
- Sue Sweeney – retired Principal at Broadwater Elementary School in Helena.

Great educators, experienced administrators, trained with the best research by our program directors, OPI partners, and the MUS Education Leadership program partners.

### **Investments made by Partners Who Believe in the SAM LPLP!**

- Leaders in Governor Bullock’s office, OPI, and the department of administration have supported education leaders and the critical role they play in Montana communities; saw the vision of the SAM LPLP, and committed to investing in the professional learning of Montana’s administrators.
- Montana University System. Educational Leadership Programs and Departments of Education support the SAM LPLP by lending their expertise and resources. Montana GEAR UP partnership connects Administrators in GEAR UP schools with leadership training through the SAM LPLP.
- Montana businesses and private donors support the program because of the impacts the LPLP has on their community. NorthWestern Energy Community Works are business sponsors of the SAM LPLP.
- In 2017-18, Blue Cross Blue Shield was added as SAM LPLP business sponsor.
- In 2017-18, a US Department of Education Title II Grant through the Montana Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) was awarded to support the SAM LPLP. The Principle Partner in the grant is the Montana State University College of Education and Department of Educational Leadership.
- In 2018-19, the Dennis & Phyllis Washington Foundation and MREA/MCS were added as a SAM LPLP business sponsors.

### **LPLP by the Numbers**

- 14 is the number of partners who have assisted SAM in funding the program to make it possible for school districts to support the program and allow their administrators to participate in the program. The SAM LPLP Partners are – OPI and Governor Bullock’s office assisted in receiving a Department of Administration grant that allowed the SAM LPLP to launch in 2014-15 and continue in 2015-16. Support from OPI Special Education Department, Montana GEAR UP, Educational Leadership Programs at MSU, UM, and Rocky Mountain College, NorthWestern Energy Community Works, and an anonymous donor have continued. 2017-18 brought additional contributions from a US Department of Education Title II Grant, Blue Cross Blue Shield, and OPI Accreditation Department (Educator Performance Appraisal System - EPAS) and 2018-19 brought additional contributions from the Dennis & Phyllis Washington Foundation and MREA/MCS.
- \$500 is the investment for a participant to be in the LPLP Program.
- 180+ administrators and education leaders across Montana participated in the [SAM Virtual Administrators Institute 2020](#). A focus on the LPLP program included the LPLP Virtual Summit (July 29) where more than 30 new and experienced leaders from across the state participated in the launch of SAM LPLP 2020-21 and induction to resources available for education leaders.
- 1 Program Director coordinated the work with Providers and program participants (members) – Tom Unwin – Program Director/Resource Center Development/Provider.
- 10 LPLP Providers provided services to program members throughout the state.

- 70 Administrators in the LPLP Program. Click [HERE](#) to view a roster of 2020-21 LPLP Members.
- 7 Collegial Learning Networks (CLNs) were established for the 2020-21 program year. Each CLN has a Manager and a Lead Provider who coordinate efforts to maintain momentum for each CLN. Click [HERE](#) to view the roster of CLN Members. The following CLNs are currently operating within the SAM LPLP:
  - Social Emotional Learning (SEL) – a group of district and school leaders dedicated to implementing effective social and emotional learning practices in their schools. The common purpose they all share is to improve student learning through the application of social & emotional learning strategies in their classrooms. The Tier II/Tier III Behavior Project CLN that was formed in 2019 was combined with the SEL CLN. 21 Members participated in the LPLP SEL CLN.
  - Transformational Learning (TL) – a group of district and school leaders dedicated to implementing transformational learning practices and the leadership of these practices in their schools. The common purpose they all share is to improve student learning through the application of personalized learning strategies in classrooms and schools. During the fall of 2020, TL CLN Members worked on preparing applications to receive grant monies made possible through the passage of [House Bill 351](#): a bill providing incentives for school districts to implement transformational learning. 23 Members participated in the LPLP TL CLN.
  - Special Education (SPED) – a group of Montana Special Education Directors new to their position interested in networking with other new and experienced directors and dedicated to advancing the success of all children. The common purpose they all share is to improve student learning through the application of policies, procedures, and strategies learned through their networking. 9 Members participated in the LPLP SPED CLN.
  - New Superintendents (NS) – a group of district leaders new to their positions. The NS CLN was created due to the fact that the members of the Montana Association of School Superintendents (MASS) believe strongly in the effectiveness of SAM LPLP and want to invest financially in the success of their members. They have elected to pay the 2020-21 program fee for all superintendents new to their positions. The common purpose they all share is to improve student learning through effective leadership practices provided through the implementation of an induction model along with mentor support services. 28 Members participated in the NS CLN.
  - New Principals (NP) – a group of school leaders new to their positions. The common purpose they all share is to improve student learning through effective leadership practices provided through the implementation of an induction model along with mentor support services. 19 Members participated in the NL CLN
  - AASA Aspiring Superintendents (AS) – a group of administrators aspiring to become superintendents or superintendents in their first year of practice for the purpose of implementing an induction model, along with mentor support services, to develop a deep understanding of the leadership role of a successful superintendent. This CLN was developed in partnership with the American Association of School Administrators – The School Superintendents Association (AASA) and includes a curriculum that aimed to develop the administrator’s knowledge and strengths and prepare them to lead teams of people effectively. 11 Members participated in the LPLP AS CLN.
  - ESSA Comprehensive Schools (CS) CLN – a group of administrators leading schools that have been designated as needing additional support. This CLN was developed in partnership with the Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) with the goal of providing the administrator with the support and resources necessary to complete and implement their district’s comprehensive continuous education improvement plan. 9 Members participated in the LPLP CS CLN.
- 59 Administrators participated in at least one CLN.

- 70 Administrators in the LPLP 2020-21 brings the cumulative participation to 490 Montana school and district leaders who have enhanced their professional learning through the SAM LPLP since its inception in 2013-14.

## SAM LPLP 2020-21 Year End Executive Summary

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### Services and Participation Summary

This summary is prepared to indicate the participation of Administrators in the SAM Leaders Professional Learning Program (LPLP) 2020-21. The Report includes:

- Administrators who participated in the LPLP program
- Dates of services i.e. webinars, meetings, etc.... between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2021
- Hours (to the nearest .25 hour) of service per session
- A brief description of each service

The SAM LPLP Program 2020-21 has 70 Montana Administrators participating in the program. Ten experienced Montana administrators are serving as Providers (mentor/coaches) working with Members in the MASS regions of the state. A breakdown of the participants looks like this ...

SAM LPLP Participants by Position and Region 2020-21							
Region	Supt	Prin	AP	SPED Dir	IT Dir	Other	Total
4R	5	3	0	0	0	0	8
C	2	0	0	0	0	0	2
HL	1	2	0	0	0	0	3
NC	4	2	0	1	0	1	8
NE	4	1	0	0	0	0	5
NW	6	5	2	0	0	0	13
SC	5	4	3	0	0	0	12
SE	5	1	0	0	0	0	6
W	6	3	2	2	0	0	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>70</b>

The services provided with date and description, include:

- [SAM Virtual Administrators Institute 2020, LPLP Summit](#), July 29, 2020, 3 hours. All Montana school administrators were invited to this morning orientation, introduced to the resources and program benefits available to them, introduced to the SAM LPLP program and CLN overview, and met with the SAM LPLP Providers and experienced administrators.
- [SAM Virtual Administrators Institute 2020, Instructional Leadership Summit](#), July 27-28, 2020, 9 hours. The Summit (*School Re-entry and Recovery after a Pandemic Event*) featured Hal Bowman (*Shout it from the Rooftops*), Paul Andersen (*How to Teach Remotely*), Jamie Vollmer (*Closing the Community Engagement Gap - Reconnecting the Public to Public Schools*), and 12 breakout sessions on a variety of topics of interest to school and district administrators. Because the conference was held virtually, attendees were able to access all materials and attend each session on-demand following the conference.
- [MCEL](#) (Montana Conference on Educational Leadership) 2020, October 15-16, 2020, 12 hours. MCEL includes opportunities for professional learning for Montana administrators, school board

members, and business managers. One session was dedicated to the SAM LPLP and was intended for all SAM members to engage in dialogue through a panel discussion with SAM LPLP Lead Providers of the Collegial Learning Networks focused on COVID Implementation, Social-Emotional Learning, Transformational Learning, and the many topics Providers encounter while working closely with administrators across the state. Because SAM LPLP Providers work with administrators from all class sizes and areas of Montana made this session beneficial to all SAM members.

- [SAM Affiliate Conferences](#), various dates in 2020-21, generally 9-12 hours. Conferences are an opportunity for SAM LPLP Members to meet with their Provider, CLN Members to meet as a group, and for all Members to continue progress on their work and network with others while having access to conference presentations and breakout sessions. All 2020-21 conferences were held virtually.
- [Member Application of Elements](#), discussed with Provider, happens throughout the year, can be as little as 15 minutes up to as much time both Member and Provider find necessary. Providers use multiple means of communication to meet the needs of their Members. Each situation and communication is unique. Providers log this data to determine common opportunities and challenges.
- [LPLP Collegial Learning Network \(CLN\) Work](#) happens throughout the year, face to face and virtually. Meetings range from as little as 15 minutes up to as much time Members and Lead Provider find necessary. CLN Members work productively with the CLN Lead Provider and their own Provider on specific topics to improve student learning.
- [SAM LPLP Huddle](#), monthly one-hour virtual discussions between SAM LPLP Members, Providers, and the SAM Office. Each Huddle features monthly calendar items and resource update, a thought-leader session around a timely topic, and discussion/Q & A. Topics included School Reopening/COVID Update, Successes and Challenges of School Reopening and Communication Plans, Navigating Title IX Changes, Personnel Issues in the Time of COVID, Celebrating Successes, Mental Health/SEL, and Assessment.

## Progress Summary

The [SAM LPLP 2020-21 Year End Data Collection Report](#) consists of 1855 entries and over 22,260 data elements. The report indicates the number of hours (to the nearest quarter-hour) the Providers have spent in contact with their Members as of June 30, 2021 – 1470.00 hours. The report also shows the estimated application time recorded by the 70 Members as of June 30, 2021– 1417.75 hours, resulting in a total of 2887.75 hours. Provider’s assessment of those contacts indicated a 4.82 on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest. Note that the commitment of the 70 SAM LPLP Members is an average of more than 41 hours for each LPLP Member during the 2020-21 program year to improve student learning through participation in the SAM LPLP.

Review of the [SAM LPLP 2020-21 Year End Provider Reflection Report](#) provides a description of the progress the Providers made with their LPLP Members during the program year. The Providers assessed their progress throughout the year at 4.5 on a scale of 1-5 with 5 being the highest.

With the assistance of the HELPS (Human Ecology Learning and Problem Solving) Lab at Montana State University, new SAM LPLP Member and Provider surveys were implemented for the 2017-18 program year. The surveys were adapted to serve the current needs and implemented for the 2020-21 program year.

## Provider Survey

Based on the [Provider Survey results](#) (9 of 10 or 90% response rate) all Providers understood their responsibilities, found their Member/Provider relationship to be positive, felt their time spent with Members to be beneficial, saw improvement in their Members, and rated their Members to be engaged in the program. The [Provider Survey Written Feedback](#) provides additional survey data.

## Member Survey

Members (29 of 70 Members; a 41% response rate) rated their satisfaction with the program overall, their work with a Provider, the use of the Resource Center, and their work with Collegial Learning Networks.

Based on the [Member Survey results](#), a significant majority of respondents found that due to their participation in SAM LPLP their professional network expanded (93%), communication with staff improved (69%), understanding of Montana school policies and procedures increased (90%), their ability to implement collaborative strategies improved (83%), their ability to complete projects has improved (79%), and progress was made on their personalized professional learning plan (76%). The following are samples of the responses provided by Members ([Member Survey Written Feedback](#)) when asked about their experience participating in SAM LPLP from:

- *Thanks for the opportunity. Great program.*
- *I honestly have to say that I barely scratched the surface on the resources LPLP offers. I truly enjoyed all of the resources/connections made through the program. I think this is an amazing program for new administrators.*
- *I truly believe that this is a great program with great people... I appreciated working with my "provider" and it was a welcomed opportunity to talk about the struggles and successes and get critical feedback on what I was doing from someone who I had complete trust.*
- *I will get more principals in my own district to participate.*

## Work with a Provider

68 of the 70 (97%) LPLP Members chose to work with a Provider during the 2020-21 program year. 87% of Members who completed the survey worked with a Provider and 93% enjoyed the experience. The vast majority felt that working with a Provider was beneficial (96%), they learned from their Provider (93%), developed a sense of trust with their Provider (96%), grew as a professional because of their Provider (96%), and received meaningful feedback from their Provider (96%).

By choosing to participate in SAM LPLP and to work with a Provider, Members have the opportunity to confide in, ask questions of, and collaborate with an experienced administrator when faced with issues that affect the Member's school, district, and/or community. Compelling evidence of the positive outcome possible through the Mentor/Provider relationship is apparent in the Member testimonials ([Member Survey Written Feedback](#)). Members described their Provider as invaluable, knowledgeable, accessible, professional, calming, encouraging, a relationship builder, personable, and an excellent listener. The following responses provided by Members when asked what they like best about working with a SAM LPLP Provider present additional confirmation of the importance of such a relationship:

- *(My Provider) was always willing to get or give me the information I requested which made my job easier.*
- *I appreciate having someone I can discuss school issues/concerns with, since I am the only administrator in the building.*
- *I could call when I was drowning when I needed a life preserver!*
- *(My Provider) was an absolute fantastic asset to me starting off in the superintendent role in a tumultuous year. His advice was sound and he was a great resource and sounding board.*
- *She took the time to get to know me and our school so she could best change her advice and guidance to meet our specific needs.*

## Resource Center and Personal Mastery Toolkit

Approximately half of the LPLP Members who completed the survey accessed the Resource Center and Personal Mastery Toolkit regularly. The Standards Members cited to be most helpful to their current position include School Improvement and Professional Community of Teachers/Staff and the Skills found to be most beneficial include Building Relationships and Building Collaborative Capacity of the Organization. A significant majority of Members found the Resource Center and Personal Mastery

Toolkit to be accessible (86%), comprehensive (86%), easy to navigate (86%), and useful to their position (86%).

### **SAM LPLP Huddle**

New to SAM LPLP for 2020-21 is the SAM LPLP Huddle, a monthly one-hour virtual discussion between SAM LPLP Members, Providers, and the SAM Office. Each Huddle features monthly calendar items and resource updates, a thought-leader session around a timely topic, and discussion/Q & A. The goal of the SAM LPLP Huddle is for SAM LPLP members to engage in professional dialogue around a topic and have the opportunity to connect with colleagues, SAM LPLP Providers, and the SAM office team. Huddles are recorded and accessible to all Members following the event. The majority (83%) of the LPLP Members who completed the survey attended the Huddle, found the Huddle helpful to their current position (83%), and gave the Huddle a positive rating (72%).

### **Collegial Learning Network**

59 of 70 (84%) LPLP Members participated in at least one Collegial Learning Network. Of the members who completed the survey, the majority agreed that because of their work with a CLN they met personal objectives, shared and received resources, learned and applied new strategies to their current position, found the network helpful to their current position, and improved student learning.

### **Research Questions**

Considering the goal of SAM LPLP - to provide intentional, personalized professional learning to Montana educators through research-based strategies resulting in improvements in job satisfaction, administrator longevity, and ultimately to increased student achievement and quality of instruction - data was gathered around the following research questions:

Due to my participation in SAM LPLP...

- my satisfaction with my current position has increased. (34% of respondents agree)
- I am likely to continue serving in my current position. (52% of respondents agree)
- student learning has been positively impacted. (55% of respondents agree)
- the collaborative capacity of my school or district has been positively impacted. (59% of respondents agree)

## **Where Do We Go from Here?**

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The SAM Board of Directors committed support to continue the [SAM LPLP in 2021-22](#) and to assess providing the program in the future. The goal of providing high quality, embedded, professional learning meeting the needs of Montana's district and school leaders is the focus of this effort. Expanding the dialogue to enhance the SAM Leaders Professional Learning Program to serve the needs of new, experienced, and aspiring Montana administrators with educational partners in our state and across the nation, SAM LPLP 2021-22 will incorporate all that has been learned about effective professional learning and personalizing learning to impact the administrator's ability to improve student learning.

Changes (enhancements) incorporated into the SAM LPLP 2021-22 include:

- Continue to seek highly qualified Montana administrators who can serve a region of the state as an LPLP Provider. Continue to provide additional training to equip LPLP Providers with the necessary tools for coaching/mentoring and continue to strengthen the Provider's knowledge of contemporary issues in education so they can connect LPLP Members to necessary resources in the most effective, efficient ways.
- Continue to enhance the SAM LPLP Resource Center that is based on the Professional Standards for Educational Leadership (PSEL) with thousands of readily accessible modules (10 standards of PSEL), recommended books, articles, videos, activities, website references, SAM resource



people, collegial networks, and learning teams and to continue to enhance the SAM LPLP Personal Mastery Toolkit.

- Continue to provide meaningful Collegial Learning Networks to meet the needs and interests of SAM LPLP Members.
- Continue to implement strategies for SAM affiliates to provide professional learning for their members. The New Superintendent (NS) CLN will continue based on the fact that the members of the Montana Association of School Superintendents (MASS) believe strongly in the effectiveness of SAM LPLP and want to invest financially in the success of their members by electing to continue to pay the 2021-22 program fee for all superintendents new to their positions.
- Continue to support Montana school administrators in their chosen areas of focus that may result in affecting state legislation and ultimately in positively impacting student learning for all Montana children.
- Continue to be cognizant of and research methods to assist SAM LPLP Members with the challenge of dedicating time to focus on their professional learning. Use the goals set by each Member in their Personalized Professional Learning Plan as a guide to provide structure to the Member's learning process.
- Continue to schedule times for Members to connect both face to face and virtually with their Providers and colleagues to continue to strengthen the learning relationships and to develop regularly scheduled virtual thought leader sessions in which members may join in real time and also have access to after each session. The SAM LPLP Huddle will continue to be scheduled monthly.
- Continue to investigate the compelling evidence around educator retention discovered through the research questions.

This Executive Summary provides important professional learning information and insight for Montana education. Support of high quality professional learning for educational leaders in Montana is critical to the success of our schools and the students served. Thank you for the support and commitment to the SAM Leaders Professional Learning Program!

Respectfully Submitted,



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