

# Supporting Transition Aged Youth

RCPA

JULY 6, 2023



# What do Students do After High School?

- ▶ Post – Secondary
- ▶ Work
- ▶ Travel



# What Happens if You Have a Disability?

## Job Readiness

Assessments

If lucky, work -  
based learning

Time filling and  
wasting

## Minimal Exploration

Focus on jobs not  
careers

Identified interests  
based on what  
activity someone  
enjoyed best

Future thinking is  
limited

## Low Expectations

Not considered  
employable

Discussion of day  
programs

9-3 mindset

Job Placement vs  
Job Development

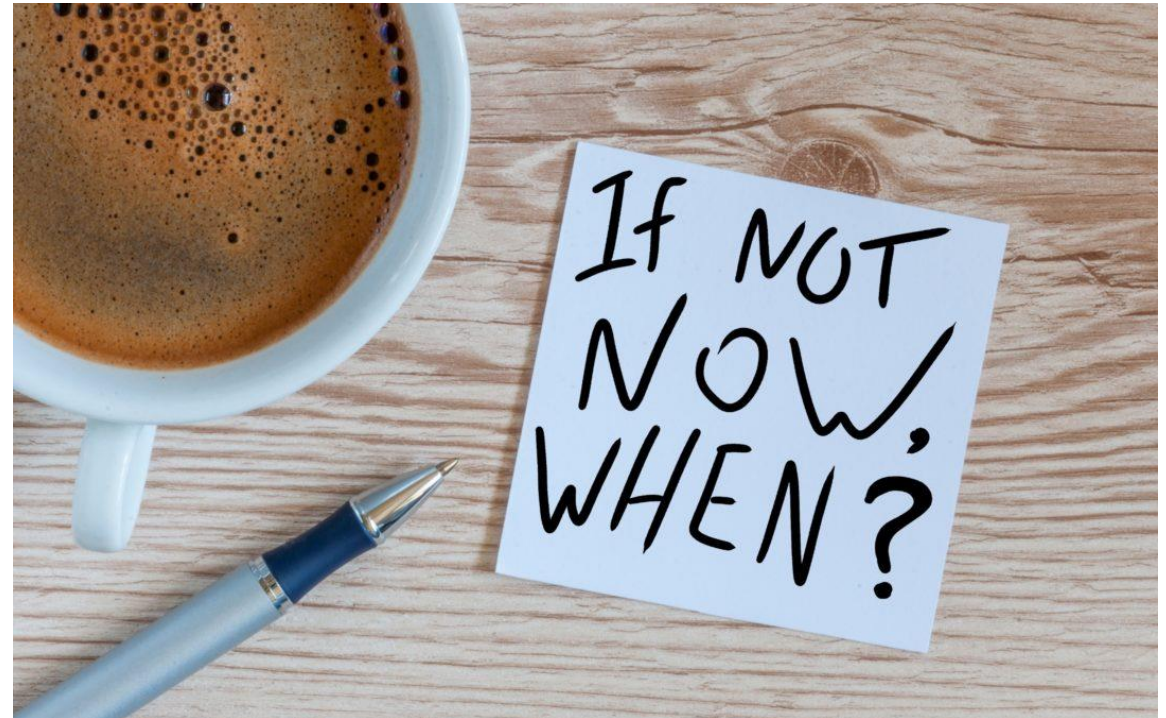
# Low Expectations Means Little Hope

- ▶ When people have valued social roles they have more opportunities to live “the good life.”
- ▶ Normalization = authentic, typical life experiences in ordinary, typical places...not practice, simulations, or separate places.
- ▶ Disability Systems have *wounded* people:
  - ▶ Loss of individualism dealing with bureaucratic systems
  - ▶ Inauthentic experiences and relationships
  - ▶ Always helped, never a helper
  - ▶ Loss of control over life’s choices
  - ▶ Marginalization, separation and segregation
- ▶ Takes a major systems change to support “the good life.”



# Times are Changing

- ▶ WIOA Funding Mandates – 15% of VR Title I dollars for youth with disabilities; Restrictions on youth entry into non-integrated work settings; Definition of competitive integrated employment
- ▶ CMS Final Rule- HCBS settings must be integrated in and support full access to greater community including opportunities to seek employment and work in competitive integrated settings.
- ▶ Phase out of 14c
- ▶ Employment First



Employment should be the EXPECTATION, not the Exception

▶ If people are treated as capable, they often surprise everyone and live up to expectations.

▶ - Ken Steele





THEY ARE VERY LONELY

Research is  
Telling us:

Employment of young people with disabilities has increasingly become the gold standard of education outcomes.

(Carter, Austin, & Trainor, 2011; Certo, Luecking, et al., 2008; Cobb & Alwell, 2009; Landmark, Ju, & Zhang, 2010; Wehman, 2013)

Children and youth with disabilities spend between 15 to 18 years in special education programs and there is a rising expectation that these students should leave with employment.

(Certo et al., 2008; Rusch & Braddock, 2004; Wehman, 2002)

# Literature Review

- ▶ Doren and Benz (1998) and Benz, Yovanoff, and Doren (1997) found that two factors predicted better outcomes for young women and men with disabilities.
  - ▶ Having two or more job experiences while in high school
  - ▶ Having used the self-family-friend network to find their post-school job

# Work Experience and Employment Preparation

- ▶ **Paid or unpaid work experience and employment preparation program participation were by far the most frequently substantiated practices, as indicated by the number of studies that supported these practices.**

# Literature Review

- ▶ Expectation comes on a backdrop of National Organization on Disability (2010) data that continue to reflect a high level of unemployment of over 60% among persons with disabilities in this country.
- ▶ Continued frustration about the efficacy of transition from school to work programs, many which lack coordination and specified outcomes.

(U.S. General Accounting Office, July 12, 2012)



Family Engagement is Linked to  
Effective Transition

# Recent Study Highlights Aspects of Transition Process

Importance of employment training and work experiences in HS

The role of parents' expectations for their children's future

Career awareness, HS work experience, and attending a vocational school were all associated with post-HS employment, with the latter being a strong predictor variable

Wehman, P., Sima, A., Ketchum, J., West, M., Chan, F. & Luecking, R. (2014). Predictors of successful transition from school to employment for youth with disabilities. *Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation*, 25, 223-234.

# School Funding: School to Work Transition

- Special Education Indicator 13- requires that all special education students have an “effective” transition plan
- Special Education Indicator 14- Requires the tracking of students served one year after leaving school and report on the percentage of students in high education, COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT, OR BOTH!!
- Increasing numbers of families are taking legal action to attain compensatory education \$\$\$ to help students improve their chance of being successfully employed after high school

The intent of recent legislation and policy in the U.S.

Better postsecondary education outcomes for youth

Improved employment outcomes

Increased access to and participation in community life

Less reliance on federal entitlements

# Employment First

**Employment in the general workforce is the first and preferred outcome in the provision of publicly funded services for all working age citizens with disabilities, regardless of level of disability.**

## **APSE Statement on Employment First**

**Individual** – Not in a group or enclave

**Integrated** – Alongside those without disabilities, with opportunities to interact

**Employment** – In the general workforce, on the payroll of a business or self-employed

**Minimum Wage** – At or above minimum wage or at industry standard wage

# What it Takes to Make this Happen

## Try, try and try again

Work experiences early and often

(Work is both an intervention and the desired outcome)

## Earn while you learn

Paid work before school exit

## Not what you know but who

Connections to ongoing supports before school exit

Relationship Mapping

Community Mapping

# What it Takes to Make this Happen

Employers as transition  
partners

Youth and family  
empowerment

Heightened expectations!  
(presumed employability for  
all)



# The Most Important Factors to Employers:

Meeting a perceived need:

- Making money
- Saving money
- Operating more efficiently



# What We Have Learned

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## **Optimum Transition Service includes:**

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Youth empowerment

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Family involvement and supports

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Academic preparation paired with work experience

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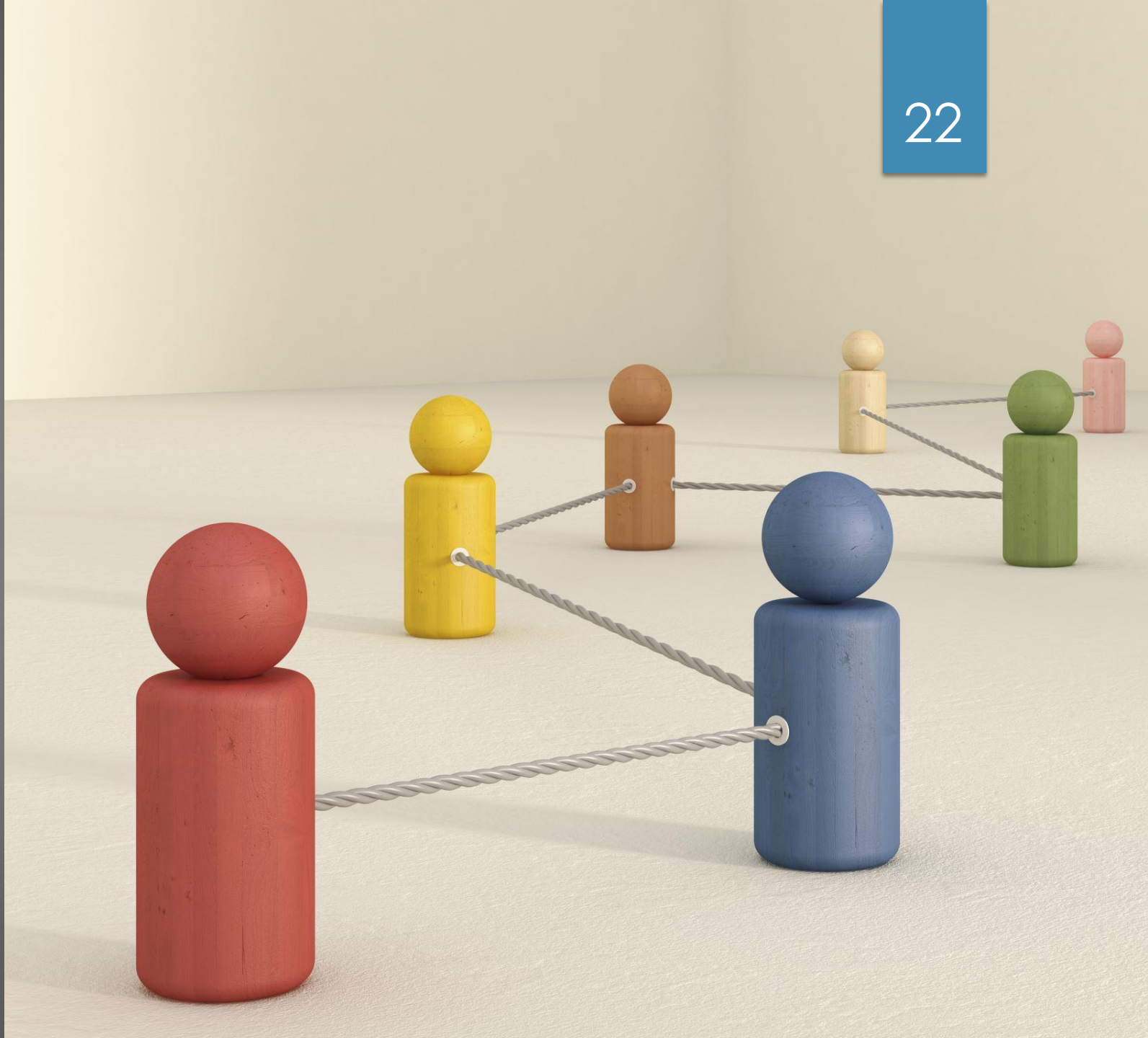
Early connections to post-secondary services

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**!WORK! (Early and often)**

# Future Directions

- Improved models of linking work-based learning with academic instruction
- Collaborative transition models
- Employer-led initiatives
- Advancing training of transition professionals



# Creating Family Partnerships

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Raise  
Expectations  
(Messaging)

Involve in a  
Common  
Goal

Utilize their  
Knowledge

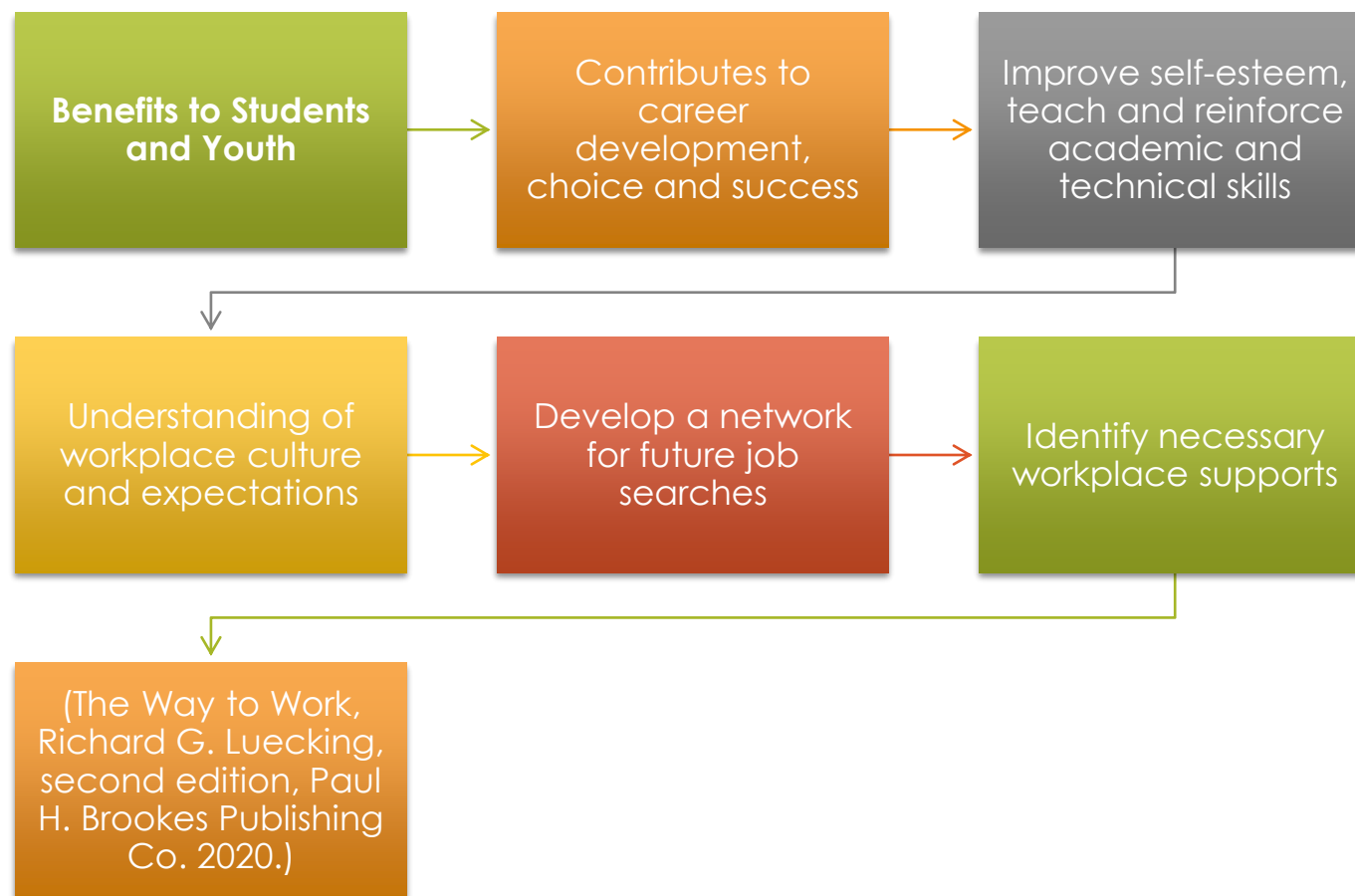
Connect to  
Supports

Train Staff

# What is Work-Based Learning?

Work-based learning (WBL) experiences occur in an authentic work environment to assist students with disabilities in obtaining knowledge and skills for future job opportunities through real-world observation and work experiences.

# Why Work Experience is Important



# Why Work Experience is Important

## **Legal Special Education Requirements**

- ▶ More meaningful IEP's and transition plans required by special education law
- ▶ Additional positive outcomes for Indicators 2, 13 and 14 of IDEIA
- ▶ WIOA also now requires VR agencies and schools to increase collaboration on behalf of students with disabilities.

(The Way to Work, Richard G. Luecking, second edition, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co. 2020.)

# Types of Work Experiences

## Career Exploration

- Visits to workplaces
- Meetings with employers

## Job Shadowing

- Extended time accompanying an employee in the performance of daily duties

## Work Sampling

- Learn aspects of potential job tasks required in the workplace
- Learn soft skills required in the workplace

# Types of Work Experiences

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## Service Learning

Hands on volunteer service to the community that is integrated with course objectives

When a condition of graduation, can be structured as meaningful work experiences



## Internships

Assigned specific tasks over a predetermined period of time

Paid or unpaid depending on the agreement with the company and nature of the tasks

Postsecondary institutions organize cooperative education experience, cooperative work or simply co-ops

# Self Employment

A young man in a bright yellow hoodie is focused on his laptop in a modern office. In the background, two other people are working at desks, creating a collaborative work environment. The scene is lit with soft, natural light from a window.

Pursue their passion

Make own decisions

Gain economic independence

Utilize flexible time management

Experience personal  
development

Contribute to their community

Create economic growth within  
their community

Become self-sustaining

# Types of Work Experiences

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## Apprenticeships

- Formal sanctioned work experiences of extended duration
- Learns specific occupational skills related to a standardized trade
- Many include paid work components

## Stipend Jobs

- Wages paid through an external source such as a youth employment program and not by the employer
- Customized to match student and employer circumstances

## Paid Employment

- Standard or customized work assignments
- Wages paid directly to the youth by the employer

# Quality Work Experience Characteristics

- ▶ Clear program goals
- ▶ Clear expectations and feedback to assess progress toward career related goals
- ▶ Clear roles and responsibilities for worksite supervisors, mentors, teachers and support personnel
- ▶ On-the-job learning
- ▶ Range of opportunities, especially those outside traditional youth-employing industries
- ▶ Mentor(s) at the worksite
- ▶ Good documentation and feedback from youth and employers

(The Way to Work, Richard G. Luecking, second edition, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co. 2020.)

# Transition Models that Work

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## Bridges From School to Work (The Marriott Foundation)

- Operates in 11 cities including Dallas
- Partners with school systems, VR agencies and workforce agencies
- Employment rates exceeds typical rates for transitioning youth

## Project SEARCH

- 1 year employment preparation program takes entirely at the workplace of employer partners
- Multiple integrated job task learning opportunities
- Businesses play a leadership role
- Regularly achieves a 75% post project placement rate

(The Way to Work, Richard G. Luecking, second edition, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co. 2020.)

# Transition Models that Work

## Seamless Transition Models

- ▶ First day after school exit looks the same to the youth as the day before – that is same job and same supports
- ▶ During last year of school, there is a formal service contract with local community rehabilitation program to support the youth before and after school exit
- ▶ Uses an asset-based and person-centered discovery process
- ▶ Develops individualized work experiences
- ▶ At least one individualized paid, integrated employment experience
- ▶ Early VR case initiation and interagency collaboration

(The Way to Work, Richard G. Luecking, second edition, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co. 2020.)

# Interagency Roles and Responsibilities

**Do you have the right policies, staffing, partnerships, and resources to support community-based work experiences?**

Capacity to utilize new strategies

Capacity to fund work experiences

Capacity to transport students

Capacity to support students on the worksite

# Achieving Outcomes: Flow of Services

	Age 13	Age 14-16	Age 17-18	Age 19-24
Student Outcomes				
Connection with Agencies (referral / eligibility)				
<b>Roles &amp; Responsibilities of:</b>				
Vocational Rehabilitation				
Education				
Career Technical Education				
Families				

# Ethan's School to Work Transition

- Pre-Employment services while in High School (VR)
- Participated in Project SEARCH at Springfield College (Waiver)
- Made strong connection with Athletics Department
- Hired by college after completing his internships. (Waiver)
- Remains Successfully Employed



# Adam A...

His love of technology, coupled with his need for a flexible work schedule, inspired Adam to open up Wilbraham Web Design.

Adam has business accounts nation wide and is off of social security.

Adam just launched his second business.





Thank You

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