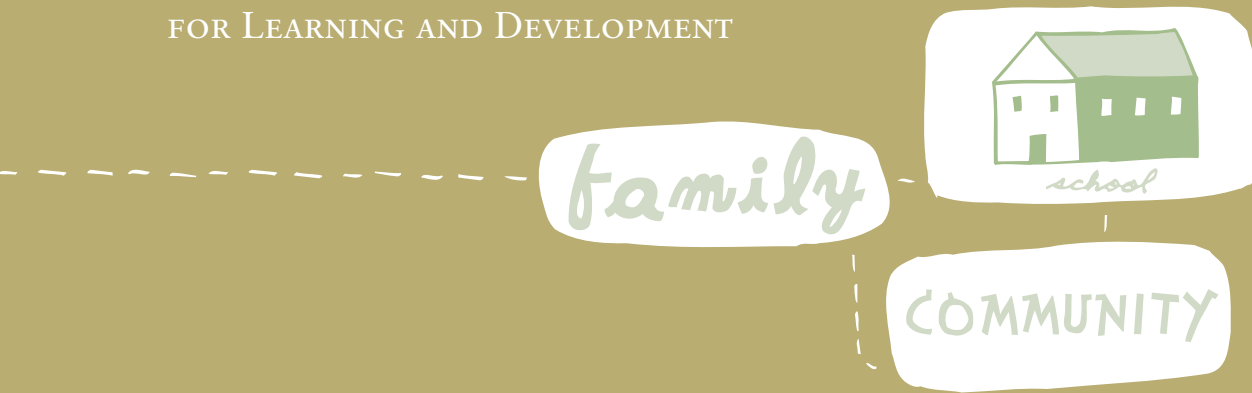


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Journeys into Community

TRANSFORMING YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES
FOR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT



MAY 2005

Dear Fellow Minnesotans

We are excited to present, on behalf of the University of Minnesota, this final report from the Minnesota Commission on Out-of-School Time. It offers a blueprint for ensuring Minnesota's young people have engaging opportunities to learn and develop during the non-school hours. It summarizes the year-long work of the Commission and includes specific recommendations and actions for revitalizing Minnesota's communities as great places to raise families.

We are grateful to our fellow commissioners, to the young people who participated in the Youth Caucus as well as through focus groups and surveys, and to the professionals, parents, and other adults who shared with the Commission their experiences, ideas, concerns, and suggestions. Only by pulling together can Minnesota become a state where all children and youth have access to high-quality out-of-school time opportunities – opportunities that engage them, help them contribute, and help them become productive, responsible, invested community members.

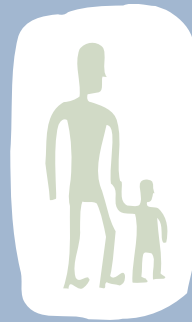
Uniting together we can ensure that:

- ✦ Out-of-school time opportunities across the state are known and accessible as young people and their families make choices.
- ✦ Communities have the information and resources to address “opportunity gaps” and sustain out-of-school time opportunities.
- ✦ Youth workers, educators, parents, peers, and others find ways to engage all young people – particularly those who are not already participating – in high-quality, developmentally appropriate out-of-school time programs and activities.

Increasingly, Minnesotans are recognizing the stake we have in ensuring that our children and youth journey into our communities in ways that are appealing, engaging, and affordable, and that enhance their learning and development. When we invest in and support their journeys, we invest in and support the future of our communities and our state. We hope this report and the dialogue it stimulates will help us make those investments more wisely and soon.

ROBERT BRUININKS
PRESIDENT, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

CAROL TRUESDELL AND DON SHELBY
CO-CHAIRS, MINNESOTA COMMISSION ON OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME



Journeys into Community

TRANSFORMING YOUTH OPPORTUNITIES
FOR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Minnesota has a long tradition as a great place to raise a family.

In addition to supporting academic achievement through strong schools, many communities also provide developmental opportunities for children and youth during the hours when they would otherwise be without structure or supervision. During this out-of-school time, as it is often called, programs and activities are available to young people in family homes, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA/YWCAs, sports clubs, schools, and other community settings.

While the specific activities and physical environments vary, developmentally focused experiences share a common goal. They create a variety of enriching experiences through which emerging interests and relationships can be nurtured, skills tested and perfected, teamwork and leadership learned, and decision making experienced. These competencies are critical investments for young people and their communities.

Recently, new research findings about how human minds develop have made it clear that these types of activities are even more important than originally thought. What has become clear is that at the same time young people are engaged in activities and programs outside of school or home, important, life-long changes are also taking place in the brain.

Creating a Vision

Through the establishment of the President's Initiative on Children, Youth, and Families, President Robert Bruininks committed the University of Minnesota to convening experts across disciplines for the purpose of identifying how Minnesota could best support the healthy growth and development of its young people in their journey from early childhood through middle childhood and adolescence.

As an action step in this initiative, President Bruininks appointed the Minnesota Commission on Out-of-School Time, inviting the participation of experts in the fields of child and adolescent development, as well as representatives of business, philanthropy, youth development programs, and county, state, and tribal government. Led by recognized Minnesota leaders in communications and philanthropy, the Commission's charge was to create a vision and strategies to ensure every Minnesota youth access during non-school hours to opportunities supportive of their optimal development. The Commission's charge was reinforced by research findings confirming the critical role of high-quality out-of-school time opportunities in assuring that children and youth reach adulthood ready to assume their roles as responsible community members and leaders.¹

Through a series of work groups, meetings, and dialogues, this intergenerational group identified a vision for out-of-school time in Minnesota; key issues facing families, young people, program providers, and policy makers; and a series of recommendations – all of which are described in the full report. This Executive Summary provides an overview of the findings.

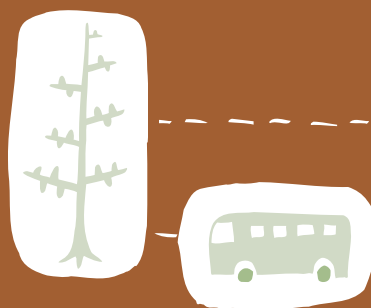
WHAT IS AN OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME OPPORTUNITY?

It's helpful to think of development as two intertwined processes. One process is internal: the continuing development of the brain architecture. The other is external, as connections to others are evolving and expanding. Challenging, high-quality opportunities, both formal and informal, that happen outside of school and home help merge the two tracts, and young people discover, explore, learn, practice, and make choices about what it means to be productive, contributing members of the community.

Such opportunities occur after school, on weekends, and during the summer. Examples range from music lessons to youth theater; from visits with grandparents or other elders to a part-time job; from fun at a skate park to participation in summer camp; from Youth-in-Government activities to reading at a library; from hanging out with a friend and her mom to participating in sports.

¹ For more information on Commission proceedings, see www.mncost.org.

The Vision



Commissioners began their work by creating a Minnesota vision for out-of-school time. By 2020, Minnesota will be recognized as a state where:

Every young person chooses to become engaged.

Every family has access to quality opportunities.

Every community has a clear plan and adequate support.

Every program has supports to ensure quality.

An effective and efficient public/private partnership stimulates, supports, and sustains opportunities in all communities.

Our citizens understand and support the value of these opportunities for learning and development.

Across Minnesota, there are examples of excellent community-based youth programs staffed by skilled, highly-qualified, adult leaders. At the same time, it's far too common to find opportunity gaps, uneven quality and struggles for sustainability. If Minnesota is to make the most of these valuable hours when young people are active, we must become systematic and deliberate in working toward this vision.

Core Commitments

To transform this vision into reality, Minnesota must value and commit to:

Meet the developmental needs of children and youth for the first two decades of their lives.

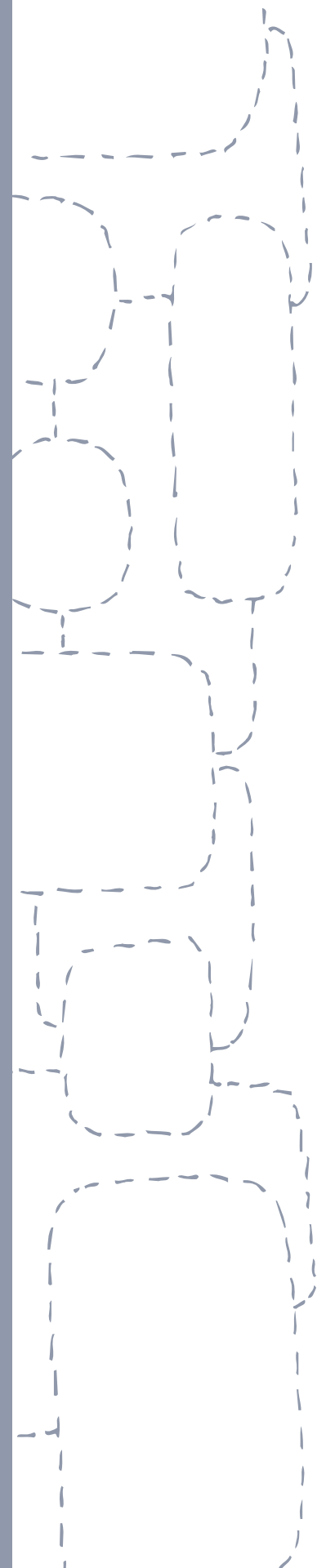
Take a positive, asset-based approach to child and youth development.

Ensure access for all to high-quality, developmental opportunities.

Create and support youth/adult partnerships in non-school opportunities.

Require accountability at program, community, and state levels.

Support out-of-school time opportunities through a combination of family, provider, and public contributions.



COMMUNITY

Recommendations and Action Strategies

The Commission recommendations seek to help Minnesota build a more intentional approach to engaging young people from ages 5 to 18 in developmental opportunities today so that they can become reliable, responsible, and productive community members of tomorrow. Taken together, these recommendations and action strategies provide a road map for ensuring every young person who lives in Minnesota has access to high-quality opportunities for learning and development as they become increasingly active in their communities.

family



1

RECOMMENDATION I ENCOURAGE POSITIVE CHOICES

CREATE STRONG INCENTIVES AND SUPPORTS TO HELP YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES CHOOSE APPROPRIATE DEVELOPMENTAL OPPORTUNITIES.

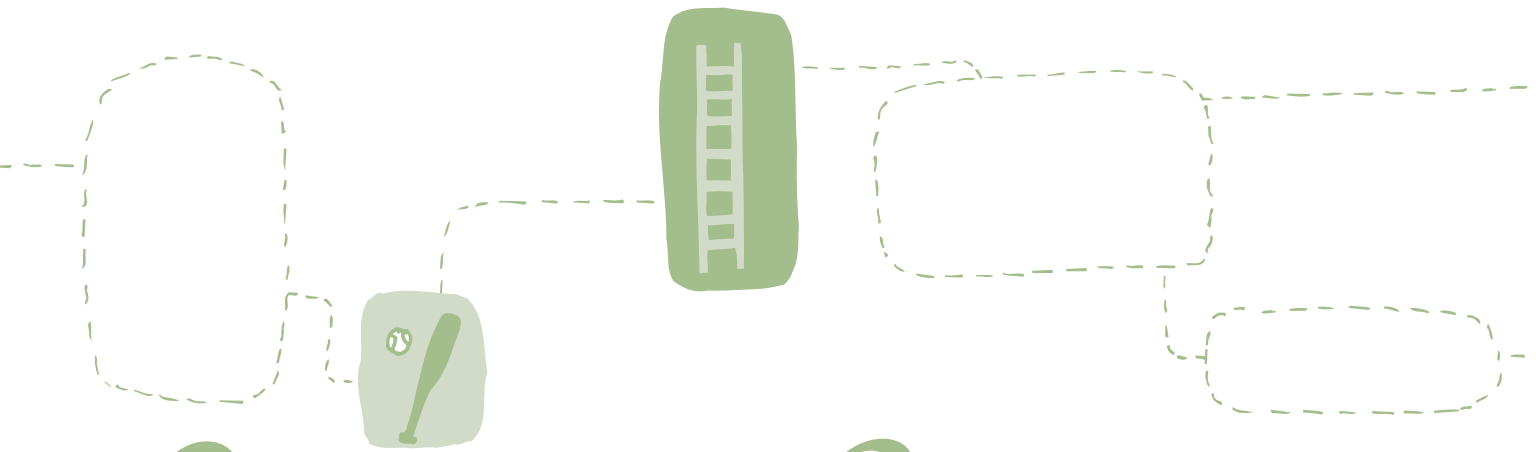
INVEST Create and support a comprehensive technology-enhanced system to help young people and families know what opportunities are available.

STUDY Study the choices young people and families make in relation to the types and levels of opportunities available in different communities.

EMPOWER Establish a periodic statewide community survey process to systematically canvas youth and families about their interests in different types of opportunities.

UNITE Unite around and invest in family-friendly, technology-enhanced, incentive-driven, and policy-supported mechanisms that help young people and families make, record, and benefit from their positive choices.

MOBILIZE Encourage teachers and other adults who work with young people and families to ask about, suggest, and support positive out-of-school time choices.



2

RECOMMENDATION II INCREASE THE PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH TO 100 PERCENT

ENSURE HIGH-QUALITY COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES AND PROGRAMS ARE AVAILABLE TO ALL YOUNG PEOPLE.

UNITE Unite and mobilize Minnesota communities around a clear and common goal of increasing the number of engaged youth to 80 percent by 2010 and 100 percent by 2020.

MOBILIZE Mobilize parents, youth workers, family members, community organizations, and volunteers to come together and create informal activities and connections in communities.

INVEST Invest in scholarships and systems to ensure that youth with limited financial resources have access to the full range of community-based opportunities.

POLICY Establish new state policies that support the creation of “youth opportunity zones” where organizations and families can receive special grants or fee waivers for creating sustainable, positive, learning opportunities.

INVEST Invest in growing the number and variety of youth workers who can work effectively with diverse, isolated, and hard-to-reach communities and with disengaged young people.

STUDY Explore options and provide incentives for enhancing youth participation using technology to connect isolated or homebound young people.

3

RECOMMENDATION III ASSURE QUALITY, ENHANCE IMPACT

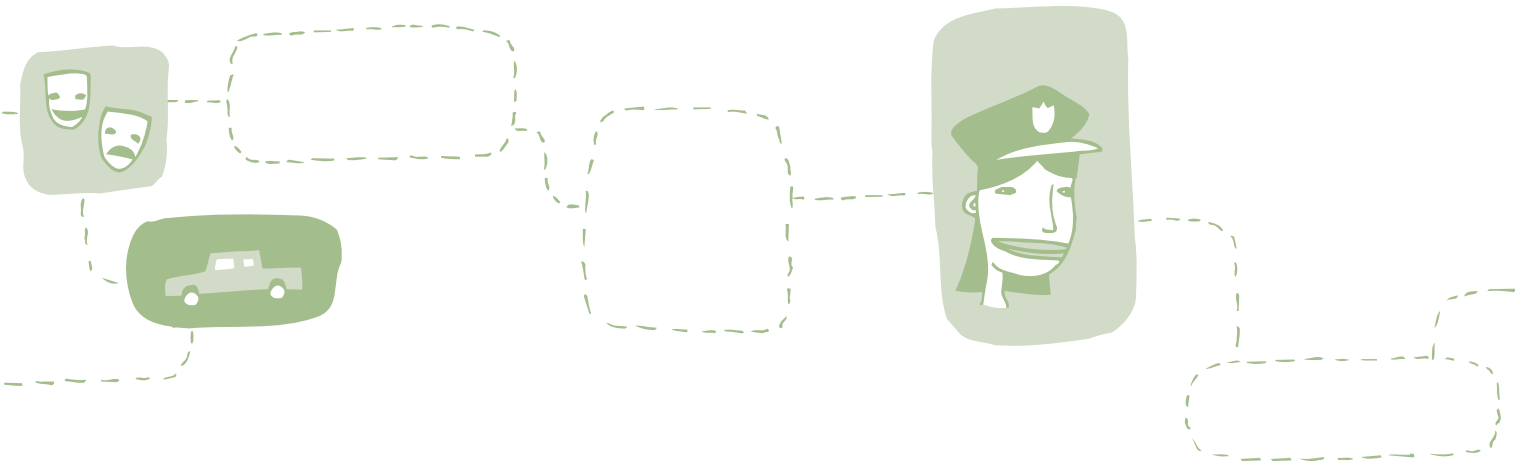
ASSURE THAT ALL COMMUNITIES HAVE WAYS TO UNDERSTAND, ASSESS, AND INCREASE THE QUALITY OF AGE-APPROPRIATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

MOBILIZE Mobilize communication efforts to help the public understand and value quality in youth development programs, organizations, and practitioners.

EMPOWER Create, resource, empower, and connect “Quality Improvement Teams” of young people and adults designed to assess the quality of community programs and to encourage use of best practices, technical assistance, and other continuous improvement strategies.

UNITE Unite behind a comprehensive “Education and Training Alliance” designed to strengthen quality by assuring the coordination and availability of education, training, technical assistance, and professional development for adult volunteers and the professional staff who work with young people.

STUDY Establish a new University – community initiative dedicated to generating useful research to understand and assess quality programs, practices, and professionals providing opportunities in the community during non-school time.



4

RECOMMENDATION IV INCREASE COMMUNITY CAPACITY

BUILD MECHANISMS TO STIMULATE LOCAL PLANNING, DEVELOPMENT, IMPLEMENTATION, SUSTAINABILITY, AND ACCOUNTABILITY.

STUDY Invest in incentives for community collaborations to assess, map, plan, and support sustainable opportunities for their young people.

POLICY Develop out-of-school time policies and funding streams that provide communities and programs with a predictable and sustainable level of public funding that is designed to stimulate access for all as well as effectively target families and communities most in need.

EMPOWER Design and implement a youth engagement process that will bring youth, citizens, and program providers together to help individual communities assess the degree to which communities are youth-development and family friendly.

5

RECOMMENDATION V WEAVE A STATEWIDE FABRIC OF SUPPORT

ESTABLISH A STATEWIDE NETWORK AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL OPERATING SYSTEM OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT THAT INCLUDES PEOPLE, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS, PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS, EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, PHILANTHROPIC FOUNDATIONS, AND OTHERS COMMITTED TO ADVANCING MINNESOTA'S OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME CAPACITY.

POLICY Create a unified legislative strategy designed to stimulate, support, and help fund both public and private efforts that ensure high-quality community opportunities are available to all youth during non-school hours.

UNITE Unite behind the efforts of the Minnesota Out-of-School Time Partnership to establish a funded, staffed, and focused hub to support and stimulate a statewide, independent operating system for out-of-school time in Minnesota.

EMPOWER Establish a biennial Youth Caucus on Out-of-School Time to advise the Minnesota Out-of-School Time Partnership.

INVEST Invest in the development of a system of accountability and continuous improvement that supports the growth and effectiveness of community youth development experiences, strengthens professionals and volunteers, and measures program impact.

MOBILIZE Develop linkages and expand connections among existing organizations, community collaborations, statewide groups, and formal associations.



6

RECOMMENDATION VI BUILD PUBLIC WILL

STRENGTHEN PUBLIC AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING, AND DEMAND FOR HIGH-QUALITY YOUTH DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN COMMUNITIES.

UNITE Conduct a four-year social marketing campaign to increase public understanding and enhance effective advocacy for high-quality, accessible, and powerful community opportunities.

EMPOWER Involve young people in a marketing campaign to promote youth development programs and experiences, and to engage young people's energy and contributions in communities.

MOBILIZE Create ways to sustain and expand efforts that enhance awareness, increase action, and strengthen advocacy efforts on behalf of nonformal learning opportunities for children and youth.

7

RECOMMENDATION VII ESTABLISH INVESTMENT FUND AND FINANCIAL PLAN

ESTABLISH A BALANCED PERSONAL – PRIVATE – PUBLIC INVESTMENT FUND AND OVERALL FINANCIAL PLAN TO IMPLEMENT THE VISION FOR ENGAGING MINNESOTA'S YOUNG PEOPLE.

INVEST Design and establish a \$12-million annual investment fund and the mechanisms needed to secure, allocate, and account for use of these funds.

UNITE Until a better sense of the overall need and cost is determined, unite to maintain current levels of public funding.

STUDY Design and execute a study of the supply and demand of out-of-school opportunities and the factors that affect their costs as well as benefits.

FUND Support the bundling and focusing of existing state and federal funding for youth development, child care, school-age care, prevention programs, and extended-day/21st Century Learning Centers to ensure its effective and efficient use.

FUND Encourage the emergence of a Youth Development Funders Group to help bring focus and consistency to private foundation support.

List of Commissioners²

Co-Chairs:

Don Shelby
WCCO-TV

Carol Truesdell
Youth Trust (Retired)

Commissioners:

Maya Babu
University of Minnesota Student

Joanne Benson
Minnesota Business Academy (Retired)

Peter Benson
Search Institute

McKinley Boston, Jr.
Minneapolis Youth Coordinating Board

Delroy Calhoun
Loring-Nicollet Bethlehem Community Centers, Inc.

Emmett Carson
The Minneapolis Foundation

Andrea Platt Dwyer
Camp Fire USA Minnesota Council

Blair Gagne
Duluth Area Family YMCA, True North Americorps

Anne Ganey
YWCA of Mankato

Jennifer Godinez
Hope Community, Inc.

Bridget Gothberg
City of St. Louis Park

Julie Green
Ginew/Golden Eagles Program

Les Heitke
City of Willmar

Susan Hoff
Best Buy Co., Inc.

Daniel Knutson
Land O' Lakes

Joe LaGarde
White Earth Indian Reservation, Circle of Life School

Scott Lyons
Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College

Harold Mezile
YMCA of Metropolitan Minneapolis

Sandy'Ci Moua
University of Minnesota Student, City Songs Alumnus

Mary Ann Nelson
Minnesota Department of Education, Office of Academic Excellence

Greg Owen
Wilder Research

Valerie Halverson Pace
IBM Corporation

Michael Rodriguez
University of Minnesota, Department of Educational Psychology

Kathleen Vellenga
Minnesota State Higher Education Services Council

David Walsh
National Institute on Media and the Family

Christopher Wilson
University of Minnesota Student

² The content of this report represents the views of the Commission as a whole. Particular sections may not reflect individual Commissioner's or their organization's perspective.

About the Commission

The Minnesota Commission on Out-of School Time convened in January 2004, charged by University of Minnesota President Robert Bruininks with crafting the vision and strategies needed to ensure Minnesota's young people – ages 5 to 18 – have engaging opportunities to learn and develop essential skills during their non-school hours.

As the culmination of its work, the Commission created a final report, and this executive summary, with recommendations to guide the leaders and citizens of Minnesota in addressing the developmental needs of young people during childhood and adolescence.

The Commission is part of the University of Minnesota President's Initiative on Children, Youth, and Families, and is supported by funding from the University and the statewide Minnesota Out-of-School Time Partnership. The Partnership is a network of public and private organizations dedicated to the belief that all Minnesota communities must ensure options for children and youth to learn, develop, and contribute during non-school hours. Detailed information about the Commission, including briefing papers and research summaries, is available online at www.mncost.org. Information about the Partnership is available at www.youthworkinstitute.org/mnpost.html.

The Minnesota Commission on Out-of-School Time

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