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PRIVILEGED AND CONFIDENTIAL

To: Wyoming State Board of Education

From: Randall Lockyear, Assistant Attorney General 

Mackenzie Williams, Senior Assistant Attorney General 

Re: Computer Science Performance Standards

The State Board of Education recently adopted computer science content standards but removed the accompanying performance standards. While it is appropriate to move forward with the content standards, the Board should promulgate rules containing computer science performance standards so that districts can complete the alignment process. During the Board's last meeting there was some discussion regarding whether including the standards labels ("priority" and "supporting") meant that the Board did not need to have performance standards for the K-5 grade band. This short memo addresses two potential misconceptions regarding the interactions between the standards categories and the standards labels. It also indicates the future steps we advise the Board to undertake.

First, the standards labels should not simply replace the standards categories. Instead, the labels should be used to assist the standards categories in performing their functions. Specifically, the labels of priority and supporting may permissibly function in tandem with the performance standards, but may not simply supplant the performance standards. If the Board desires to follow the advice of the Attorney General's opinion to establish "narrower performance standards that will direct what is required for students to master at the middle/junior high and elementary levels" then the standards labels become

largely superfluous. *The Role of the Standards in Wyoming's Education System*, Op. Wyo. Att'y Gen. p. 10 (Nov. 12, 2019). The Board should establish performance standards for the K-5 grade band as necessary to prepare students for future challenges. The only reason not to have performance standards at the K-5 levels is if the Board genuinely determines that students at these levels do not need to master any of the computer science standards to prepare them for a computer science elective in either middle or high school.

The second important point is that the definition of the label “priority” makes it clear that the label is working in conjunction with, rather than in place of, the performance level descriptors. The definition of “priority” states that, “[a]ll students are expected to be instructed on and demonstrate mastery of the content and performance expectations included in these benchmarks.” *Proposed Rules Wyo. Dep't of Education*, ch. 10, § 4 (May 2019) (emphasis added). The student’s performance expectations are defined by the performance level descriptors. This is clear not only from the role of the performance standards generally, but also from the definition of “Performance Level Descriptors” that is included in the “Computer Science Standards” document. *Id.* That document states that the “Performance Level Descriptors (PLDs) describe the performance expectations of students.” *Id.*

As was mentioned above, the fact that the adopted computer science standards do not include performance standards is not fatal to the rules. Nevertheless, the Board should determine the benchmarks in the K-5 grade band that students need to master to prepare them for life and to take upper-level electives in computer science. At an appropriate future time, the Board should adopt corresponding performance standards (that is, performance level descriptors) for these identified benchmarks. At the very least, this subset of performance standards should be coextensive with the “priority” standards since that label was meant to work in conjunction with the performance level descriptors.