MEMORANDUM

To: Select Committee on School Finance Recalibration

From: Allan Odden and Larry Picus

Re: **Model Element 15: Gifted and Talented**

Date: July 27, 2015

A detailed explanation of Gifted and Talented can be found on pages 61-63 of the January 2015 Desk Audit. The current Legislative Funding Model provides each district with $30.27 per student for Gifted and Talented Programs for school year 2015-16. This figure has been sufficient to enable any student in the district to access the Renzulli Learning program, an online program designed to have students engage in activities outside the regular classroom that are related to the individual gifts and talents or deep interests students might have. The Renzulli Learning program was designed by Joseph Renzulli and colleagues at the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented (NRC/GT) at the University of Connecticut.

Renzulli Learning was originally run by NRC/GT. When contacted in 2005, Joseph Renzulli stated that it would cost $25 a student to access the system, which is the source of the $25 per pupil figure used in 2005 and increased by the ECA to $30.27 for school year 2015-16.

Since that time, Renzulli Learning was sold to Compass Learning, an educational organization headquartered in Austin, Texas with technology-based applications used around the country, including some schools and districts in Wyoming. Compass Learning has renamed the Renzulli Learning program GoQuest. According to the company's website,[1] a student's first experience with Renzulli Learning is with the Renzulli Profiler, a detailed online questionnaire that allows the Renzulli software to generate a personal profile of each student's top interests, learning styles, and expression styles, making it easier for teachers to get to know their students and effectively differentiate instruction. Once a profile is generated, students and teachers may use it to guide their exploration of the 40,000 online educational resources in the Renzulli database. Students can engage in self-directed learning by exploring safe, fully-vetted resources that have been specifically matched to their individual profiles. Further, teachers can browse the database of resources to find activities that also align to specific objectives, skills, as well as State and Common Core Curriculum Standards.

[1] http://www.renzullilearning.com/whatisrenzullilearning.aspx

On July 20, 2015, we spoke with Troy Duffield, who is the Compass Learning's lead consultant for the region that includes Wyoming. He described the attributes of Renzulli Learning and other products provided by Compass Learning. In that conversation, we confirmed a new pricing structure for Renzulli Learning. The cost today is $40 per student for up to 125 students in a school, at which point the cost is $5,000 for a school and all students have full access to the program. If a figure of $40 per pupil were placed in the Legislative Funding Model, all districts would be able to afford this gifted program.

Compass Learning also offers products that can be used for both teaching the regular curriculum and providing extra help to struggling students, and these additional products have been adopted by some Wyoming school districts. These products integrate the instructional strategies with results of testing data from three of the most popular testing systems many districts use: the MAP results from Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA), which most Wyoming districts use, the STAR Enterprise assessments from Renaissance Learning, and Scantron. The costs of these additional Compass Learning programs range from $70 to $115 per student per program, and could be funded from a district's regular instructional and professional development budgets or the resources provided by the At-Risk or ELL programs.

Based upon our review of current costs for the Renzulli (GoQuest) program, we recommend a rate of $40 per student for school year 2016-17, which equates to an increase of $9.73 per student or 24.3% for this specific element. This would allow all school districts – small or large – to provide a high quality gifted and talented program option for every child. If this recommended amount is implemented across the estimated 93,089 Model ADM for school year 2015-16, it would increase funding by an estimated $905,702 and provide an estimated $3.7 million for Gifted and Talented programs.

Decision Item:

1. **Adopt the Evidence-Based recommendation:** Increase and precise the amount for Gifted and Talented programs to $40 per student for school year 2016-17.

2. **Continue with the current legislative policy:** Continue to fund Gifted and Talented programs at $30.27 per student.