Commercial Software Alliance

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April 1, 2013

To: Parents

Subject: Answers To Questions About File Formats Permitted In Our Schools

The following will clarify the answers to questions that have been posed with increasing frequency.

Q: My child wants to use word processing, spreadsheet, presentation and other software that saves files in a format that is not proprietary to a particular company. Is that permitted?

A: No. Your child must purchase software that is made by a specific member company of the Commercial Software Alliance. All files submitted in school must be in the proprietary format specified and owned by that company.

Q: Open source software tends to save files in formats that, like the alphabet, are not owned by anyone. Given that fact, is it appropriate for a public school system to require the purchase of a specific company's software when there are high-quality alternative software products that cost nothing?

A: Yes.

Q: It is my impression that open source programs are less likely to include hidden agendas, as they are open for examination by anyone. By contrast, there is no way of knowing exactly what a proprietary program is doing inside the computer that is owned by me and used by my child. Is that true?

A: Yes.

Q: I wouldn't let visitors sneak into my file cabinets at home and rearrange things without my consent. Is it appropriate that commercial software is doing things like that inside my information home, that is, my computer?

A: Yes.

Q: Is it true that the files created by free software in the public file formats tend to be smaller, giving computers with smaller information storage capacity a longer effective life?

A: Yes. However, experts in our member companies advise that it is important to replace computers frequently, even if they do not seem old. This serves to stimulate our economy. Do your part for America's prosperity.

Q: Is it true that free software can usually open files that are in a proprietary formats?

A: Yes, but our economy benefits when you buy proprietary software. Do your part for America's prosperity.

Q: Is there any connection between open source software and illegal file sharing?

A: While there is no connection, it is beneficial that a certain lack of clarity persists on this issue. It is the position of the Commercial Software Alliance that proprietary, commercial software helps our economy.

Rules are important. Your school system believes that your children – and you – should follow them. Please ensure that your children purchase the required software and that they use the mandated file formats. With the cooperation of all concerned, we can assure a mutually beneficial computer environment in our schools.

This parodic message is brought to you by the Commercial Software Alliance. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Commercial Software Alliance

Norman E. de Plume, President