**3.7 Communication & Collaboration**

Candidates utilize digital communication and collaboration tools to communicate locally and globally with students, parents, peers, and the larger community.

Reflection

The Required Instructional Technology (ITEC) program Blogs were completed to provide me with a platform to communicate my progression through the ITEC program including my temporary frustrations and minor setbacks. I selected my Blogs because they effectively illustrate how I felt about learning about and learning how to use digital tools in real time. This artifact is probably the most authentic of all because several of the entries communicate my core beliefs about technology specifically, and about my outlook on life, learning, teaching, and leading in general. The program Blogs artifact demonstrates the International Society for Technology in Education’s (ISTE) Essential Condition of Assessment and Evaluation- “Continuous assessment, both of learning and for learning, and evaluation of use of technology and digital resources” (Williamson an d Redish, 2009, p.13). Additionally, ISTE’s On-going Professional Learning- “Technology-related professional learning plans and opportunities with dedicated time to practice and share ideas” (Williamson an d Redish, 2009, p.13). was also address throughout the development of this artifact. As a result of the first two ISTE conditions, I can make a strong argument for ISTE’s condition of Skilled Personnel- “Educators and support staff skilled in the use of technology appropriate for their job responsibilities” (Williamson and Redish, 2009, p.13).

Standard 3.7 Communication and Collaboration outlines the criteria required of candidates to utilize digital communication and collaboration tools to communicate locally and globally with students, parents, peers, and the larger community. As the blogger, I communicated in my role as an ITEC student sharing my learning experiences. Some of the entries demonstrated how I evaluated, developed, modified, taught, or implemented digital tools in my role as a teacher or teacher-leader like acting as a technology coach for example. I read, researched, wrote, interacted, advocated, implemented, and a few times, I flat out denied the existence of some technology and technology-related practices especially when I did not like them or did not want to use them in my instructional practices. Twitter, for example, is one tool where I used it the required minimum number of times and followed the minimum number of people/ organizations I always blogged in a safe or protected format- one where my identity (and my student’s) was limited to outsiders. I have always believed that students needed protection from online social sites and I still believe this more than ever today. Each ITEC course required a final reflection for candidates to record our personal growth and at times, our struggles.

Complying the entries for this blog was sometimes enjoyable. When the course and activities aligned to my professional practices or related to my personal goals, it was less challenging to complete those tasks even when I did not already possess the skills to do so. ITEC 7445 was the single most challenging course but I was determined to muster up the skills to learn and produce (or implement) the required tasks. EDRS 8000 was by far the most mentally exhausting. Had I already possessed the technology skills, I would not have exhausted my mental capacity trying to figure out what I was doing wrong when I did not produce the expected results based on the task descriptions or rubrics. If I had it to do all over again, I would blog more, even when not required. Also, I would seek out online videos for assistance or for more clarity.

I cannot say with certainty how the creation of my blog entries impacted school improvement, but I honestly believe that each time I learned something as an ITEC candidate and introduced it into my professional work as a teacher, it made me a more effective teacher. Many of my lessons were more engaging after having taken the classes. I speculate that maybe I planted some seeds related to a love of learning or a love of technology, or maybe even a love of teaching (or for teachers) that will impact some of the students that I have come into contact with over the course of my participating in the ITEC program. I do know that I have shared and taught a few teachers about using technology to improve their instruction and to increase their student engagement. I believe that these seeds will one day sprout into something great and produce future leaders or innovators in the field of teaching and or technology. Will Richardson, (2010) believes that “Whether it’s blogs or wikis or RSS, all roads now point to a Web where little is done in isolation and all things are collaborative and social in nature” (p.85). Blogging as a form of communication is definitely collaborative as well.