**4.1 Digital Equity**

Candidates model and promote strategies for achieving equitable access to digital tools and resources and technology-related best practices for all students and teachers.

Reflection

The Safety and Equitable Access Blog was completed to highlight my ability to promote strategies for achieving equitable access to technology-related tools for both teachers and for students. I completed an internet search for digital resources to help me construct my blog post regarding strategies that I could incorporate within my classroom. The Equitable Access Blog meets the International Society for Technology in Education’s (ISTE) Essential Condition of Equitable Access- “Robust and reliable access to current and emerging technologies, digital resources, and connectivity for all students, teachers, staff, and school leaders” (Williamson and Redish, 2009, p.12).

4.1 Digital Equity outlines the criteria candidates need to model and promote strategies for achieving equitable access to digital tools and resources and technology-related best practices for all students and teachers. The artifact I chose, demonstrates my ability to promote a few best practice strategies for teachers to achieve equitable access to digital tools and resources for all students in their classroom. I was surprised that my Google search results included such sites as WebMD, and KidsHealth, in addition to BrainPop Jr. Who knew that medical sites would highlight information regarding internet safety? I was impressed that non-educational sites had taken these topics serious enough to include articles and information on their respective sites for parents and educators like myself.

Completing this blog was interesting because I found myself on two medical sites that I did not expect. Both sites offered sound strategies like setting up computer stations in high traffic areas. Doing so, allows adults to easily monitor which digital tools children (students) are visiting. Bookmarking approved sites takes this strategy one step further because doing so gives access to students who may not remember how to spell well enough to enter the information in the search field or address bar independently. Bookmarks, are an easy way to give students independence without the added step of requiring adult approval. When students must constantly ask for help, it can under mind their equitable access to safe and reliable digital resources. Additionally, some students may feel too embarrassed to ask for help and may inadvertently access an unsafe website. After completing this assignment, I shared the Internet Safety video from BrainPOP Jr. with my students the following Fall. The video was kid-friendly, and full of helpful information. Although I shared the video with other teachers on my team, I should have shared it building-wide with teachers across grade levels. I would include the link to this video on the school-wide list of approved websites for all K-5 teachers- including teachers of students with disabilities (SWD), and teachers of English Language Learner (ELL) were I given an opportunity to repeat this experience.

The work that went into creating this artifact was useful when I shared information regarding digital safety and equitable access. Many teachers over estimate the number to students who have access to the internet. I recall having a conversation with members of my team the semester following the completion of this artifact. One big change that teachers agreed to do was to provide extended access to technology to students either before class starts each morning and after school, while students prepared for dismissal and waited for their mode of transportation to arrive. The impact on student achievement was measured with increased completion of assignments that required access to the internet outside of school hours. Students had access to computers to conduct research before and after school. Their engagement increased because they were able to participate in the assignments/ projects that required the internet for completion. Teachers attitudes changed when they experienced students using the internet for research and homework rather than for playing games. Students with disabilities (SWD), English Language Learners (ELL), and Talented and Gifted (TAG) students were given opportunities for additional access to digital tools in their small group classes outside of the general education setting. Students in the after-school program had access to the computer lab after hours. Student, parent, and teacher surveys indicated more student engagement for students whose teachers gave them access to computers before and after school in addition to their regularly scheduled computer time during class and during their computer lab time.

I would like to note that experience and the artifact were created a few years ago before it was common practice for a large majority of students to bring cell phones to school. Although this is true, some families are still without reliable internet service at home. Now days, many cable companies provide reduced fees for families who meet certain criteria (<https://www.highspeedinternet.com/resources/are-there-government-programs-to-help-me-get-internet-service/> ). Below are two additional websites that offer reduced internet fees for services:

<https://www.att.com/shop/internet/access/#!/>

<https://lowincomerelief.com/how-to-get-free-internet-almost/>