Equity & Citizenship Analysis

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Equity & Citizenship Introduction

The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) has created several standards for students, educators, and educational leaders concerning the development, implementation, and communication of technology programs in schools. The subject of this paper is the first ISTE standard for educational leaders: Equity and Citizenship Advocate. According to ISTE, equity and citizenship means that "leaders use technology to increase equity, inclusion, and digital citizenship practices" (ISTE, 2020). ISTE provides four indicators for this standard including: ensuring access to technologically skilled teachers; ensuring all students have access to adequate technology resources to participate in authentic learning; modeling digital citizenship and critical thinking while promoting positive social change; and promoting safe, legal and ethical utilization of technology (2020).

Collecting Information

This paper is analyzing the standard of equity and citizenship advocate as it pertains to Rock Hill High School in Rock Hill, South Carolina. Rock Hill High School is a school in the Rock Hill Schools (York 3) School District. I decided on various methods for collecting information for this paper. First, I used my own anecdotal evidence as a classroom teacher employed by Rock Hill Schools for the past 7 years. Secondly, I used various information publicly available on the Rock Hill Schools district website, including the use of internet/student assurances form. Finally, I conducted an email interview with one of the school district's Instructional Specialists in the area of technology, Joanne Clark. By using these various methods, I was able to collect adequate information to address all four indicators of the equity and citizenship standard as applicable to Rock Hill High School, and identify any areas of concern.

Evidence Found of Indicators

According to ISTE the first indicator for equity and citizenship is to "ensure all students have skilled teachers who actively use technology to meet student learning needs" (2020). As background, Rock Hill Schools implemented a one-to-one technology plan for their high schools four years ago, meaning each student receives a school-issued laptop for use in their classes. The district also purchased a learning management system, Canvas, and provided extensive training for teachers through both summer sessions and fall sessions (all mandatory) before students initially received their laptops in the Spring. Anecdotally, every year since I have noticed the district technology team makes sure to offer beginner and advanced professional development (PD) sessions concerning implementing Canvas in the classroom. Joanne Clark, a district specialist in technology, shared that this is to make sure new teachers to the district are able to be "onboarded" with Canvas. (Clark, personal communication, 2020). Additionally, she directed my attention to the school district's 2020 Instructional Technology summer learning plan, which consists of several optional PD sessions limited to not only Canvas but also Office 365, Google, personalized learning, blended learning, and how to onboard students and parents. Overall, there are seventeen total PD sessions with the primary goal of increasing educator competency in regards to technology.

The second ISTE indicator states educational leaders should "ensure all students have access to the technology and connectivity necessary to participate in authentic and engaging learning opportunities" (2020). This indicator is two-fold, concerning both access to technology in general, and also how learning is improved by the use of technology. When Rock Hill High first became one-to-one, I can anecdotally recall that students and parents were provided with a list of public spaces providing free wifi access (including our public park system and businesses

such as McDonalds, etc.). Schools were also upgraded to be able to handle the load of 2000

students being online at the school. Still, last semester that was abbreviated by Covid-19 has

shown that some students still do not have reliable access to internet at their homes. Of my 49

Algebra 2 students, 7 required paper packets as they could not reliably connect to the internet –

even though the district did send out some wireless "hub" buses to neighborhoods they knew

would need assistance. Concerning the second aspect of the indicator, as a classroom teacher

there have been some opportunities provided by the district to help improve learning through

technology and digital tools – I personally participated in a book study and also took a graduate

level class in Blended Learning techniques for district teachers through Winthrop University.

All of these are optional sessions and are general in nature (not content specific). Joanne Clark

mentions being "proud of our response to remote learning [from Coronavirus] by creating

several synchronous and asynchronous sessions to help teachers learn how to leverage our

resources to create remote learning opportunities" (2020).

The third indicator is to 'model digital citizenship by critically evaluating online

resources, engaging in civil discourse online and using digital tools to contribute to positive

social change" (2020). As a classroom teacher, I cannot specifically point to any event I

participated in (as a teacher) that would apply to this indicator. According to Joanne Clark, at

the high school level this is addressed more in the English and Social Studies classrooms (as

opposed to my subject area of math). She says there is a more "deliberate instruction towards

evaluating online resources" starting in late elementary school and continuing through middle

school. In high school, she says that falls more to the subject area teacher themselves (2020).

The fourth and final indicator for equity and citizenship advocate is to "cultivate

responsible online behavior, including the safe, ethical and legal use of technology" (2020).

Initially, as a classroom teacher I was required to have students complete a short course,

watching videos concerning online interactions including how to maintain privacy by not sharing

any personally identifying information and avoiding behaviors such as cyber-bullying or sharing

any sexually explicit communications. We have not been required to show those videos the past

few years and instead students are required to complete a technology protection plan that

includes acknowledgment of a Use of Internet/Student Assurances list in the following figure

(2020):

Use of Internet/Student Assurances

When using Rock Hill School District network or Internet resources, I will:

1. Use the Internet for legitimate educational purposes.
2. Not register the name, home address, or telephone number of myself or anyone else in any location on the Internet.
3. Use messaging only at the direction of my teacher or as it relates to my coursework.
4. Not search for, download or print any material that violates school handbook codes regarding possession or display of inappropriate, offensive or vulgar material, or assist any other student in such activities;
5. Not harass, insult, attack, or bully others via electronic communications;
6. Not damage or alter digital devices, computer systems, or computer networks;
7. Not violate copyright laws;
8. Not trespass in another's folders, work, or files.
9. I will keep my usernames and passwords protected.

Again, Joanne Clark said targeted lessons on digital citizenship for students have been promoted

more in lower grades, while high schoolers are just required to agree to the use of internet list.

She said parents are also provided with information about digital citizenship, including the

district's "legal right to investigate …information stored and/or transmitted on Rock Hill Schools

owned devices" (2020).

Areas of Concern

        While ultimately I feel Rock Hill High School addresses the equity and citizenship

standard fairly well, some of the indicators do leave room for concern. I feel the district does a

particularly good job addressing indicator one, as PD sessions regarding technology are provided

year-round to teachers so they can improve their technology skills. In addition, schools have an

assigned educational specialist in technology who can do school visits and personal instruction with teachers who require it. This seems a model implementation of the first indicator.

I would assign a low level of concern around indicator two, in particular the access portion.

Through my personal experiences with Covid-19 school closures, it is clear that not all students have access to wifi at their homes. I do believe the district attempts to mitigate this by giving a list of places students can find free wifi access in the community, but issues such as transportation still impede this process. This is however a state-wide concern with many rural areas in South Carolina still lacking broadband access and infrastructure. The district has made sure all schools are able to provide the access needed while in the building. With regards to the second part of the indicator, authentic and engaging learning opportunities, I still believe there is a low-to-moderate level of concern for Rock Hill High School. As a teacher, we feel there is most definitely not a lack of resources and tools provided – if anything we do not need more resources, rather we need more data and instruction in content specific ways to use technology to improve our teaching. Most PD sessions are general, and while that may be adequate for lower levels, once in high schools teachers focus on a sole instructional content area. For instance, I am interested in the best ways to incorporate technology in a math classroom, not a social studies classroom. This would require different tools, resources, and methods of personalization and implementation. More content-specific instruction and training would be a welcome change.

The third and fourth indicators should be assigned a moderate level of concern as evidenced by the technology implementation at Rock Hill High School. I have personally undergone no district training or PD as a classroom teacher concerning modeling digital citizenship, although apparently other content area teachers do. I think this should be provided to all teachers regardless of content area, as critically evaluating resources and engaging in civil

discourse should not be limited. Indicator four which concerns safe, ethical, and legal issues

with technology use is certainly addressed by the district, but I still think there should be more

deliberate education provided at the high school level. For instance, the video courses about

internet safety and behavior could still be required viewing for students (they were phased out in

favor of the Use of Internet agreement). Since Rock Hill High serves teenagers, watching

mandatory videos would be more engaging than just signing a form. While it appears more

extensive education appears to take place at the elementary and middle school levels, that is no

reason to not continue more detailed training at the high school level. Overall, I do feel that

Rock Hill High School and the school district as a whole address the first ISTE standard well,

but more attention to sustained high school implementation and incorporation of content-specific

needs can help propel them forward.

References

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