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Blog Post:

   The definition of equitable access according to <u>ISTE</u> is, "Robust and reliable access to current and emerging technologies and digital resources, with connectivity for all students, including those with special needs, teachers, staff and school leaders." This statement says so much about what is expected to ensure equitable access for all. When I think of equitable access, I always think of student access. It had never occurred to me that it could be applicable to teachers, staff and school leaders as well. Equitable access goes beyond just making sure that students have access to technology tools and resources. It also means giving students the opportunity to learn from teachers who understand technology and how to use it to reach all learners.

   Technology offers something that has never been available before. It offers the potential to improve education no matter what the students at home availability of technology may be like. With that being said, there is still one thing that research suggests is the single most important factor affecting school achievement, simply put teachers according to <u>Promoting More Equitable Access to Effective Teachers</u> (2015). The article also suggests that in many places the students who need the most help do not have the teachers that are deemed the most effective. Data shows that disadvantaged and low-income students tend to be located in the lowest performing schools, which have had as many highly effective teachers and 1.5 times as many ineffective teachers as high performing schools as stated in Promoting More Equitable Access to Effective Teachers (2015). This information tells me that both students and teachers can be denied equitable access to technology. By ensuring teachers have the access to both digital tools and resources they need, that will in turn help students get the access they will need. We cannot expect teachers to teach something that they themselves know nothing about.

   Another point I would like to make is the difference between equality and equity. Before reading any further, take a look at the infographic to the left. Equality is everyone getting the same thing, while equity is everyone getting what they need to be successful. This includes all types of learners and whatever deficit they may have. The school district I work for does this extremely well. The administration has taken extraordinary measures to ensure that teachers and students alike have the tools and resources they need to be successful. The district has written many grants for our 1:1 iPad initiative. Our 1:1 initiative paired with our <u>Mobile Minds</u> iPad Program have made us an <u>Apple Distinguished Program</u>. There is much emphasis on professional development to help all teachers be effective teachers and to have the skills to use technology effectively. My school technology coach, <u>Laurah Fannin</u> has an online classroom that she puts resources in for teachers to discover and use. We also have weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) Meetings in which we learn about many different topics related to technology and how to use it for and with our students.

   There are many instances that fall under equitable access. In the classrooms I co-teach in, I work with my co-teachers to ensure that all learners have what they need to be successful. Being a special education teacher, I already have background knowledge in being able to level the playing field for learners. Through accommodations and modifications, students with social needs can achieve the same success as students who can do so without these changes. Students who do not have the technological skill set are also at a disadvantage. This is another situation where equitable access comes into play. While one student may not need assistance in that area, others may. Just like students with special needs and student who lack technological skills may need different things to achieve the same goal, students who are economically disadvantaged are likely to struggle to have the same access to technology as someone who is not. This is the piece of the puzzle that I do not, nor do most, have an answer

for. How do you give students internet access at home for free? My district has solved the problem of not having a device, however the device does not do that much with our the internet. When around 40% of the students in my school do not have internet access at home, it makes it hard to provide equitable access in that aspect. Do you have an answer or suggestion for that? I have some ideas we use for alternate assignments, however students have many reasons for not completing the alternates because much of the time the alternate is a low-tech or no-tech option.

This is one of the questions in education where there is not always one right or one wrong answer. There may not even be an answer yet. I feel like it is part of our duty as educators to help solve these problems so that students and colleagues can have the access to technology tools and resources they need to be successful. As I move forward into the future I will look for new ways to make sure all learners have equitable access.

Resources
Essential Conditions. (n.d.). Retrieved March 29, 2015, from http://www.iste.org/standards/essential-conditions/equitable-access

Promoting More Equitable Access to Effective Teachers. (2015, March 1). Retrieved March 29, 2015, from http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/implementation-support-unit/tech-assist/equitableaccessproblemsandrootcause.pdf

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Blog Comment URL: http://mdcompton.weebly.com/blog/equitable-access#comments
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I completely agree that not choosing technology-based instruction could prove fatal. I feel that is a great assessment of the current instructional practices.

I am also fortunate enough to work in a school district where students have access to iPads for the entire day. My school has enough for students in grades 3-5 to have their own to carry with them and use throughout the day. Students in lower levels will be getting iPad minis very soon that they will be able to have the same access to technology thought the day. I really like the idea of a weekly parent help night.

One thing I found that equitable access also covers that I did not notice you mention is that equitable access also covers teachers as well as students. Did you find this in any of your research? Many articles I read talks about how there are many teachers who do not have equitable access due to under-training, transferring from other professions, or other various reasons that were listed. Can you see how equitable access could effect some teachers?