OLTD 509
Reflection on Evidence 1

Program Learning Outcomes:

- Scaffold digital citizenship from K-12 to professional level of educators
    - Consider responsibility, accountability and civility in online environments

Evidence: Fake News: Misinformation and Disinformation Quest

Reflection:

This activity was completed in the first half of OLTD 509 as one of the core quests focusing on an emerging challenge in education - the abundance of misinformation and disinformation that students and teachers are faced with. Completing this quest involved accessing various sources to determine the definitions of misinformation and disinformation, experiencing the sense of cognitive dissonance created by sources containing inconsistent information, creating a counter-argument to a stated opinion, and exploring and gathering resources that could be used to support further learning in this area for both students and teachers.

In working through this quest, the first key learning for me was the importance of going beyond the phrase "fake news" and instead distinguishing exactly what we are talking about by using the more specific terminology of misinformation and disinformation. Using these more precise terms supports enhanced digital literacy and the development and application of critical thinking skills as it requires consideration of the intentions behind the news piece. A second concept that stood out for me in the quest was prevalence of misinformation and disinformation in common educational blogs and research sources. While I had consciously considered "fake news" headlines and sensational stories in social media posts, television news and newspapers (both print and online), I had not really thought so explicitly about this in relation to educational sources. Yes, I knew that some sources were more reliable, relevant and valid than others, but I had not been applying as much of a critical lens to many of these sources as I could be. By better analyzing information from educational research sites in particular, applying strategies such as looking more closely at the source and applying lateral reading, I can be more sure that I am building up evidence-based knowledge, not simply opinion based. This brings me to my third key learning from this quest, investigative thinking strategies and a collection of resources that I can use to support student learning in this area, as well as extend upon my own knowledge and

skills. I have already begun to use some of these resources and strategies in class with my students and have been impressed by the enhanced level of critical questioning that the students are applying when faced with a new source of information.

I believe Common Sense Education summarizes the importance of digital citizenship well when stating that, "All students need digital citizenship skills to participate fully in their communities and make smart choices online and in life" (2020). Our communities today include both our physical and online worlds; the digital world is an integral part of life for most of us. We use technology daily to support and enhance learning as well as our lives outside of and beyond school. Developing digital citizenship skills will support both teachers and students in ensuring that we use technology responsibly, safely, and effectively. Learning skills to search online and filter the results, analyzing the findings to ensure accuracy and validity, is a component of digital literacy. Digital literacy skills are a key component of digital citizenship. I now believe I am more knowledgeable of this piece of digital citizenship and better able to support my students to develop stronger skills in this area.

Reference:

Common Sense Education. (2020). Everything you need to teach digital citizenship. Retrieved from https://www.commonsense.org/education/digital-citizenship