Supporting the Catholic Identity of Catholic Elementary Schools in Virginia: A study of Teachers’ Perceptions of Professional Formation Experiences in Catholic Schools

By

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ABSTRACT

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This study seeks to describe teachers’ perceptions of professional formation experiences that help teachers sustain the Catholic identity of Catholic elementary schools. This descriptive study utilized a survey design with follow-up personal interviews. Eight critical components of Catholic identity were identified from the literature that included Catholic Church documents and relevant literature. Teacher surveys and a principals’ checklist were developed from the eight aspects of Catholic identity. A total of 436 surveys were distributed to teachers in Catholic schools in the Diocese of Richmond, Virginia, with 235 surveys returned. Fourteen teachers participated in an interview that added to the survey data. The demographic information of the teachers gathered from the survey included teacher age range, religious denomination, role in the school, years of experience in a Catholic school, type of teacher preparation, and Diocesan religion certification held. Multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) tests were conducted to determine if the population means of the demographic characteristics varied across the variables of the eight aspects of Catholic identity. The results of this study may have great application for planning and evaluating professional formation experiences for the teachers that will help to sustain the Catholic identity of the Catholic schools.