AN INVESTIGATION OF CATHOLIC SCHOOL EDUCATORS’ PERCEPTIONS OF THE INFLUENCE OF THE CATHOLIC IDENTITY ON PROMOTING AND MODELING DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP

ABSTRACT

The Catholic Identity is what differentiates Catholic schools from all other faith-based and private schools, yet, many Catholic school educators are not required to earn catechesis certification or required to continue their understanding of, the defining of, and the influence of the Catholic Identity, unless the Catholic educator teaches theology (Convey, 2012). In addition, the percent of laity teaching in Catholic schools far outnumbers members of clergy, which may also affect Catholic educators’ perceptions of the influence of the Catholic Identity. At the same time, technology inundates all aspects of our lives—especially the field of education. With the influx of technology came an influx of concerns regarding use and, more importantly, misuse of the technology in the school setting coupled with the concern for the lack of educator training for proper device integration. Digital citizenship is defined by the manner in which all community members interact with technology on a regular basis. Digital citizenship carries the theme of character education for the digital generation (Ohler, 2011). Digital citizenship provides a platform for Catholic educators to infuse the digital generation with the morals and values outlined by the Catholic Identity domains that will extend from their physical life into their digital life. This study investigated the relationship between Catholic educators’ self-reported perceptions of the influence of the Catholic Identity and their ability to promote and model digital citizenship. Using a self-constructed survey to assess Catholic educators’ self-reported
familiarity, the study utilized a census of the full-time and part-time educators in schools
governed by the Diocese of Richmond, which consisted of a 76% return rate. A bivariate
regression analysis determined that there is a statistically significant extent to which Catholic
educators’ perceptions of the influence of the Catholic Identity guide their ability to promote and
model digital citizenship. This study adds to the growing body of research on the influence of
the Catholic Identity in Catholic schools as well as the importance of educators’ ability to
promote and model digital citizenship as a component of 21st-century learning skills. It is of
paramount importance that all constituents and supporters of Catholic education continue to
assess the influence of the Catholic Identity and its impact on the development of the next
generation of Catholic youth through developing and sustaining schools rooted in the Catholic
faith, yet forward thinking towards the technological needs of its students.