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Chris A. Suppo

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP INSTRUCTION IN PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS:
SCHOOL LEADERS EXPRESSED BELIEFS AND CURRENT PRACTICES

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Chris A. Suppo

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

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Indiana University of Pennsylvania
School of Graduate Studies and Research
Department of Professional Studies in Education

We hereby approve the dissertation of

Chris A. Suppo

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education

Cathy C. Kaufman, Ph.D.
Professor of Professional Studies in Education,
Advisor

George Bieger, Ph.D.
Professor of Professional Studies in Education

Crystal H. Machado, Ed.D.
Assistant Professor of Professional Studies in
Education

ACCEPTED

Timothy P. Mack, Ph.D.
Dean
School of Graduate Studies and Research

Title: Digital Citizenship Instruction in Pennsylvania Public Schools: School Leaders Expressed Beliefs and Current Practices

Author: Chris A. Suppo

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Cathy C. Kaufman

Dissertation Committee Members: Dr. George Bieger
Dr. Crystal H. Machado

The purpose of this study was to investigate digital citizenship in Pennsylvania public schools based on the responses of school leaders including superintendents, curriculum coordinators, and technology coordinators. This study examined the relationship between Pennsylvania school leader's beliefs and the implementation of digital citizenship curriculum within their districts and the degree to which digital citizenship is addressed at various school levels. Furthermore, this study investigated if age, gender, administrative classification, and school geographical location are factors that influence digital citizenship curriculum implementation.

Quantitative methodology was utilized to examine response data collected through an online survey instrument. The online survey tool link was emailed to 1,386 superintendents, curriculum coordinators, and technology coordinators currently practicing in Pennsylvania public schools. This methodology was employed for its ability to collect a wealth of information from a diverse group of subjects over a large geographical area. Additionally, this methodology provided the means to obtain response data anonymously ensuring confidentiality and openness for subjects to respond accurately.

This study utilized a framework of digital citizenship developed by Dr. Mike Ribble comprised of nine elements: digital access, digital commerce, digital

communications, digital literacy, digital etiquette, digital law, digital rights and responsibilities, digital health and wellness, and digital security. Administrators collectively indicated that the area of digital rights and responsibilities was most important to teach students. While the majority of study participants indicated digital citizenship is addressed within their school districts, only one-third seemed to do so with organized effort. This study found that administrators unanimously agreed digital citizenship need to be addressed for all students however they perceived that behavioral issues related to a lack of digital citizenship skills was not quite as important as traditional school behavioral issues.

Findings suggest that there was not the strong relationship one would assume between leadership beliefs and digital citizenship curriculum practices. Analysis also showed a greater emphasis of digital citizenship skills at the high school and middle school levels as compared to elementary school curriculum. Age, gender, administrative classification, and district geographical location were not found to be factors that influenced digital citizenship beliefs.