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## ALTERNATIVELY CERTIFIED EDUCATORS' IMPACT ON THE NATION'S CURRENT TEACHER SHORTAGE

Allison Heald

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ALTERNATIVELY CERTIFIED EDUCATORS' IMPACT ON THE NATION'S CURRENT  
TEACHER SHORTAGE

by

Allison Biddle Heald

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of

The College of Education and Human Services

Department of Educational Studies, Leadership, and Counseling

at Murray State University

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P-20 & Community Leadership

Specialization: AGRICULTURE EDUCATION

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## **Abstract**

The teacher shortage experienced across the United States within the K-12 system has garnered the attention of policymakers nationwide. While the alternative certification route made a way for potential new educators to enter the field through abbreviated certification program requirements, the school systems that offered positions to this group of educators had to be willing to take extra steps to ensure their success. Alternatively certified educators within all subject areas specified the need for additional support within the following areas: catered professional development opportunities, reduced extracurricular expectations, mentor/mentee programs, and extended planning time. Based on data collected through previous research, this particular group of educators faced additional challenges and obstacles which needed to be overcome for them to opt to make education a long-term career plan. Choosing to forego addressing these obstacles hindered the overall success of the P-20 system's model, which allowed educators to follow the progress of students throughout the entirety of their educational experience. In addition to the basic supports identified by alternatively certified educators to be the most useful, research suggested that positive behavior interventions and supports, or other similar behavior management systems, being put into place by both local and state department administrators was equally important to ensuring that these educators remained in the classroom for longer than the initial three years of their teaching career.

*Keywords:* alternative certification, P-20 system, Career and Technical Education, Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports, Supervised Agricultural Experience, FFA, Career and Technical Student Organization, professional development

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## **Chapter I: Introduction**

### **Context**

The national teacher shortage in the United States has been a critical issue within the P-20 system. The system's mission to follow the overall development of the student from preschool to graduate school and into the workforce has been continually hindered by teachers choosing to exit the field shortly into their teaching career. Students who are unable to form bonds with educators, due to frequent turnover within the schools, have run the risk of missing out on experiences and opportunities vital to their success (Zinger, 2018). Educators' decisions to leave the classroom have been the result of a combination of factors. Various perceived obstacles and the lack of valuable support from both school and district leaders have often altered the trajectory of a novice teacher's career within the field of education (Bowling & Ball, 2018). Additionally, a lack of preparation has also contributed to a novice educator's desire to remain in the classroom.

While the reasons for departure were not always disclosed, educators have identified some common issues. Examples included, but were not limited to, a lack of pay, high demands, dwindling respect, student behavior, and a lack of resources. Educators also felt that an absence of administrative support and mentor/mentee relationships significantly impacted their decision to leave the classroom (Keese et al., 2022). One group of educators in particular was especially prone to identifying common causes: nontraditional or alternatively certified educators. Nontraditional or alternatively certified educators typically entered the field as transplants from the industry. The area of career and technical education commonly experienced this phenomenon, as there was no greater benefit to the student than to offer direct instruction from an individual who has been employed within the industry of a specific pathway (Bowling & Ball,

2018). In addition to career and technical education, the STEM field has also been privy to alternatively certified educators and has frequently relied upon them to fill gaps in vacant classrooms.

While the addition of alternatively certified educators to understaffed schools has certainly been beneficial, this route to certification also presented obstacles within the field of education. Increased pressures that stemmed from attempting to acclimate to an environment lacking necessary supports often led these educators to second-guess their decision to pursue a career in education (Harfitt, 2015). As such, preparedness programs should have sought to adequately equip this unique group of educators to enter the classroom, providing candidates with the skills necessary to remain in the classroom. Without proper preparation, educators lost confidence in their ability to be successful within the field.

### **Purpose of Study**

The turnover rates experienced in education have been cause for alarm within the general public. Moreover, policymakers continued to feel pressured to combat the issues within the P-20 system. The issue was that while specific needs were identified, a lack of change hindered the progress of retention efforts within groups of novice educators. Adding alternatively certified educators into classrooms was meant to aid understaffed schools. The attempt to remedy the problems was experienced at an increased rate within urban areas where turnover was higher than that of rural areas (Brooks, 2015). Neglecting to instill positive change that motivated alternatively certified educators to remain within the classroom for longer than their first few years of employment potentially harmed the schools and the students that these teachers sought to serve.

This study sought to identify the types of supports that alternatively certified educators found to be the most useful to their transition from the industry into the classroom; which types of supports provided them with the most significant benefit; which types of supports motivated them to make a career out of education rather than exiting within the first few years only to return to the industry? This study was also meant to assist in identifying which challenges most influenced novice alternatively certified educators to depart from the field; was there a way to combat these challenges so future cohorts could avoid them; finally, this study was meant to analyze how the local administration's adoption of behavior management systems contributed to improving teacher retention rates of alternatively certified educators within classrooms.

The results collected through this study could be utilized by alternative certification programs and state departments of education, to better cater to the needs of future and novice alternatively certified educators as they seek employment in the field. This study's goal was to establish norms that could then be transformed into potential improvements to the retention rate of alternatively certified educators during their initial three years of employment. A better understanding of what could be done to negate the attrition experienced within education will be critical to the overall success of this group of educators in the future. Assuming that norms could be established through this study, it is possible that those certification programs could be updated to reflect and address basic needs. The programs could then be mandated throughout all 50 states to establish uniformity and positive change.

### **Theoretical Framework Guiding Research**

This study's theoretical framework utilized the Human Capital Theory, which suggested that people could better themselves and their overall value through increased education and skills training. Human Capital Theory, developed by Gary Becker and Theodore Shultz during the

1960s (Shelton, 2023), suggested that investing in others would increase their value to the workplace and the American economy. While the theory was first developed for economists, it has since been applied to education. Shelton (2023) identified Becker and Shultz's desire to invest in American education to increase economic security. The greater earnings associated with higher education suggested that individual productivity would ultimately yield economic growth for the United States (Holden & Biddle, 2017).

The need to utilize the Human Capital Theory stemmed from the United States' need to fill classroom vacancies to provide P-20 students with the highest quality education. Alternative certification has been necessary to assist schools in filling vacancies with highly qualified (Zinger, 2018), capable, and knowledgeable individuals who were able to expose students to hands-on learning experiences relevant to industry standards. To properly assess multiple viewpoints, interviews were conducted with alternatively certified educators from various subject areas. This selection took place to provide a larger pool of data to assist policymakers and preparedness programs in structuring future decisions.

This study assessed the overall success of alternatively certified educators. Specifically, their experiences during their first few years of tenure were analyzed to better prepare future cohorts to enter classrooms. In an attempt to improve certification programs, nine alternatively certified teachers were interviewed. These educators consisted of employed alternatively certified teachers who had been teaching for longer than three years, alternatively certified teachers who decided to depart from the field before their fourth year of teaching, and alternatively certified teachers that were currently working through the certification process and would be faced with making a long-term decision at some point within the following three years.

These educators experiences were analyzed for both commonalities and discrepancies within their first few years of teaching. To better understand what alternative certification programs nationwide could do to assist these educators in their transition into the classroom, this group served as a basis for future program recommendations. While these individuals represented only a portion of the alternatively certified population, they were asked to participate due to their affiliations to a variety of subject areas, ages, genders, backgrounds, and future aspirations. Their ability to identify specific needs that alternatively certified educators possessed guided the study to produce data that would assist these programs in better preparing future alternatively certified educators to commit to the field on a long-term basis.

### **Research Problem**

The United States has continued to experience turnover within its schools' faculty and staff. As a result, students have been unable to reap the full benefits that a functioning P-20 system could provide its students. To remedy the situation, policymakers and teacher preparation programs must identify the driving force(s) behind the attrition rates experienced within the nation's schools. Working with novice educators presented an opportunity to identify challenges most experienced in the first few years of teaching. However, identifying the most valuable supports was equally important to reaching a solution.

Understanding that novice educators typically reported increased stress levels during the first years on the job helped to provide some direction when establishing new norms. As schools continued to bring alternatively certified educators onto the job to improve current retention rates, their unique set of challenges also needed to be identified. Their desire to feel an increased amount of administrative support during those early years indicated that school leadership held a great deal of power when it came to novice educators' decisions to remain within the classroom.



Establishing new procedures to better prepare novice teachers to enter the classroom and encouraging them to sign additional contracts was critical to the nation's success in shifting the trajectory of attrition rates within U.S. schools. The need for this shift was identified by Chapman (1984) who stated that "the strongest predictor of teacher retention was initial commitment to teaching" (p. 655). As a result, teacher preparation programs were expected to work harder to encourage budding teachers to remain committed to the profession rather than to seek career alternatives (Chapman, 1984).

### **Research Questions**

The following questions were developed to guide this study:

1. Which types of supports are most effective in retaining nontraditional or alternatively certified teachers for longer than three years in the profession?
2. Which challenges influence the departure of nontraditional or alternatively certified teachers from the teaching field?
3. In what ways could the local administration's adoption of behavior management systems contribute to improving teacher retention rates?

### **Significance of Study**

As the effects of COVID-19 continued to be assessed within the P-20 system, policymakers were forced to work hastily to establish a solution that led to retention rather than attrition within the field. To successfully establish this solution, it was imperative that trends be identified. Any negative trends that presented themselves throughout most of the population would need to be remedied to increase retention rates in education. Negative trends were likely to vary by region, but it was hopeful that similarities would emerge to produce a long-term solution.

Alternatively certified educators represented a more specific group of educators facing challenges in schools across the United States. Their lack of traditional preparation and training often presented a unique set of challenges separate from those that the bulk of the population experienced during the first few years of teaching. The entry of this particular group of educators into schools nationwide was originally meant to serve as a means to combat attrition rates while also presenting students with meaningful exposure to industry-specific knowledge and skills. However, challenges, lack of traditional supports, and everyday stressors continued to impact the tenure-related decisions of alternatively certified educators.

Behavior management systems such as positive behavior interventions and supports or behavior-specific praise, consistency, scaffolding, reward systems, or flexibility presented administrators with a way to utilize positive reinforcement rather than relying solely upon potentially negative feedback post-observation. Allowing institutional leadership an avenue for motivating novice alternatively certified educators gave rise to an increase in morale and the development of a strengthened culture within the workplace. Instead of hyperfocusing on areas for improvement, behavior interventions and supports gave administrators an opportunity to shed light on the things that novice educators were doing well and that continued to positively impact both students and the workplace (Vandermolen & Meyer-Looze, 2021).

### **Definitions of Key Terms**

- Alternative Certification: a process by which a person is awarded a teaching license even though that person has not completed a traditional teacher certification program
- P-20 system: the P-20 initiative creates an opportunity for students to experience a seamless education system beginning in pre-school and spanning primary, secondary, and post-secondary education, along with a successful transition into the workforce

- Career and Technical Education (CTE): career and technical education (CTE) is the practice of teaching specific career skills to students in middle school, high school, and post-secondary institutions
- Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS): an evidence-based, tiered framework for supporting behavioral, academic, social, emotional, and mental health
- Supervised Agricultural Experience: a program that allows students to apply classroom learning in a real-world setting
- FFA: the National FFA Organization is an intracurricular student organization for those interested in agriculture and leadership
- Career and Technical Student Organization (CTSO): co-curricular organizations that help students develop leadership, teamwork, and technical skills in a specific career field
- Professional Development (PD): continuing education that allows for teachers to experience technical training while developing new skills and gaining a deeper understanding of content and application

## Summary

Identifying ways that teacher preparation programs could better assist alternatively certified educators with their transition into the classroom was imperative to the overall success rate of the P-20 system. Without this group of educators, especially within career and technical education programs, students risked missing out on future career-related experiences and differentiation based on student learning needs. Additionally, alternatively certified educators have proven to be “more likely than traditionally prepared teachers to emphasize critical and creative thinking” (Rayfield et al., 2011, p. 171), increasing the overall value of a student’s educational experience.

Better preparing alternatively certified educators to feel confident in their ability to educate today's youth, while balancing the basic demands of novice educators, was critical to their decision to remain in the classroom (Claflin et al., 2022). Their ability to bring knowledge into the classroom that stemmed directly from the industry provided many opportunities to students that they may not receive from traditionally certified educators. Identifying which supports were most needed, which challenges most presented themselves, and the impact of behavior management systems influenced novice alternatively certified educators' decisions to remain in the classroom. Additionally, the increased rigor of traditional certification programs made alternative certification programs more attractive to potential candidates (Bowling & Ball, 2018) which has encouraged policymakers and teacher preparation programs to strengthen the P-20 system for teachers and students nationwide by seeking to make teacher attrition rates a thing of the past.

## **Chapter II: Literature Review**

### **Alternative vs. Traditional Certification**

The teacher shortage in the United States has inspired policymakers to create more than one avenue into the classroom. Bowen et al. (2019) defined traditional certification as one that was obtained through a four-year bachelor's program that specialized in providing students with both content and pedagogical knowledge. In contrast, alternative certification allowed teachers to enter the classroom with a wealth of industry-specific knowledge, which could be bestowed upon students enrolled in those industry-specific programs. By 2012, almost 15% of all teachers had completed an alternative certification program, while almost 25% of new teachers preparing to enter the field gained certification through this route (Zinger, 2018). Providing educators with multiple pathways into classrooms allowed for the P-20 system to better combat the national teacher shortage.

The alternative certification program has been open to teachers of all subject areas. This has been a common practice for educators who wished to exit the industry and enter the classroom to share knowledge and skills with career and technical education students nationwide. Alternatively certified teacher programs provided entrance into the field to participants holding a non-education-related bachelor's degree through an expedited process, which boasted decreased coursework and preparation (Rose & Sughrue, 2021). The expedited emergence into the field was due to the assumption that these individuals were entering the field with extensive industry-related knowledge and experience. The benefit of bringing alternatively certified teachers into career and technical education classrooms theoretically solved more than one issue in that it: (1) filled vacancies within the K-12 education system; (2) provided students with real-life solutions to problems that they encountered within the workforce; (3) allowed for

more specialized content to be presented in ways that students could understand; and (4) worked to strengthen the workforce as a result.

Alternative certification programs allowed for nontraditional teaching candidates to enter the field even though they would not have done so if they had been required to enroll in traditional education programs (Zinger, 2018). The alternative certification program aimed to provide future educators with a more cost-effective method of sharing knowledge with the workforce. Bringing valuable life experiences and trade skills into the students' learning environment helped to provide them with more fine-tuned training and preparation for future success. Alternatively certified educators were more likely than traditionally certified educators to teach based on student needs rather than focusing solely on curriculum content (Rayfield et al., 2011). The ability of this group of educators to cater instruction to the individual needs of the students was certainly an asset to classrooms, especially if members chose to remain within the field.

While these programs saved money for those seeking certification, additional costs had to be absorbed by the hiring school systems. School systems that absorbed these additional costs through added professional development, beginning/mentor teacher programs, and district specialists became increasingly interested in the retention statistics of their alternatively certified population. Alternative pathways to licensure were based upon content knowledge and ongoing professional development which took place while teachers were already employed and teaching within the classroom. In contrast, the traditional pathway provided an internship before entering the classroom, while also focusing heavily on the overall development of the child and pedagogy (Swanson & Ritter, 2018). The professional development opportunities being allotted to these novice alternatively certified teachers should have been focused on the teachers' strengths and

personalized needs, which could be developed while also targeting their unique needs within the classroom (Rose & Sughrue, 2021; Tonnessen, 2021).

As a result, alternative certification programs became increasingly more attractive to future educators. Assessing the efficacy of those who entered classrooms as a result of alternative certification required that they be directly compared to those who obtained licensure through a traditional certification program. The research of Duncan et al. (2013) worked to compare and contrast traditionally and alternatively certified educators. The findings revealed that traditionally certified educators typically presented higher levels of self-efficacy within almost any category assessed. Traditionally certified educators were said to gain more pedagogical experiences through their licensure programs, which resulted in higher levels of preparation and confidence in their ability to teach. As a result, products of alternative certification programs experienced turnover rates that more than doubled the turnover rates of their traditionally certified counterparts (Zinger, 2018).

Systems across the nation found these alternatively certified candidates to be attractive due to the industry-specific knowledge that they could bring into the classroom. Alternatively certified educators were masters of their content and could shed a new light on their curriculum's standards. Unfortunately, educators with an alternative certification did not possess classroom-specific training such as classroom management, classroom-specific content delivery, and lesson planning. According to Bowling and Ball (2018), systems that hired partially prepared individuals working through the requirement of alternative certification helped to combat the reduction of enrollment within traditional certification programs due to their more rigorous requirements. The implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act stressed the importance of classroom teachers being masters of their content and competent enough to effectively teach the

nation's youth. This policy encouraged alternative certification programs to avoid awarding certification to simply fill vacancies but instead to provide training that ensured that participants were equipped to reach the high academic standards that the new policy sought to enforce (Pazyura, 2015).

One of the most widely recognized alternative certification programs within the United States was Teach for America. Teach for America worked to identify potential candidates who were recent college graduates or who were in the process of transitioning between careers and possessed a bachelor's degree, which may not have been specific to the field of education. The Teach for America program had an interview process for those candidates and worked to place them within schools located in areas of low socioeconomic status. The participants attended a brief crash course during the summer before entering the classroom and learned about classroom management, equity, diversity, inclusion, and pedagogy (Swanson & Ritter, 2018). The summer course lasted for only six weeks and included an orientation, lectures, and a mentor assignment at the hiring institution (Pazyura, 2015). The program required a two-year commitment from its participants, which did not guarantee that they would choose to remain in the field. However, once the minimum two years were completed and all professional development requirements were met, participants were awarded full licensure within the state in which they completed the program (Swanson & Ritter, 2018).

Within K-12 education, supporters have been divided between their preferences for traditional versus alternative certification within education programs. Individuals who supported the traditional programs believed that the programs' ability to provide participants with the necessary pedagogical knowledge better prepared candidates to enter the classroom upon program completion. However, those who supported alternative certification as a means to fill



gaps during the nation's teacher shortage believed that there were many benefits to bringing industry professionals into classrooms to provide students with industry-specific knowledge and experiences. "Thus, it is essential to give access to greater number of candidates to the alternative programs of high quality" (Pazyura, 2015).

Alternative certification could be acquired at different stages of life. Young students who completed a non-education-related bachelor's degree program but held an interest in entering the classroom often did so through alternative certification. Additionally, industry transplants who experienced a career shift or a need for change could bring a wealth of industry-specific content knowledge into the classroom through this certification route. One of the greatest challenges of bringing alternatively certified educators into the classroom was their initial lack of pedagogical knowledge (Bowen et al., 2019). Other challenges included occupational commitment, work engagement, and work-life balance. Novice teachers oftentimes struggled to establish a manageable routine during the early years of their careers and chose to leave the field before doing so as a result (Crutchfield, 2010).

Improving upon previously established alternative certification programs aided the P-20 system in continuing to contribute to the overall development of the student throughout the entirety of their educational experience. A 1990s study found that many alternatively certified teachers were recent college graduates seeking to avoid the rigor of traditional education programs and lacked a lifelong commitment to the profession that most traditionally certified educators possessed (Ruhland & Bremer, 2003). Alternatively certified educators that entered the classroom in an attempt to build their resume while they worked towards their next professional goal possessed the ability to skew retention rate data (Grant & Brantlinger, 2022). Transitioning into the 2000s yielded data which suggested that new teachers were leaving at a rate of 50% by

their fifth year in the classroom (Brooks, 2015). As a result, alternative certification programs must implement additional opportunities for educators to pledge long-term commitment to the field in an attempt to remedy the attrition rates of novice alternatively certified educators (Claflin et al., 2022).

## **Educator Responsibilities**

### ***General Education Teachers***

General education includes core subject areas such as math, science, history, English, fine arts, and physical education. Within those sectors, teachers have been expected to be highly qualified and masters of their content area. These expectations have existed for all educators, regardless of their certification route. The overarching goal of the P-20 system has been to ensure that all students receive a quality education. As such, states have maintained the responsibility of holding educators accountable for meeting individual licensure requirements (Bowen et al., 2019).

Math, English, history, art and physical education teachers have been expected to conduct activities on a daily basis which assisted students in obtaining a firm grasp of the material being presented. While these positions were sometimes posted to the district's job postings with additional coaching responsibilities included, there were no mandatory extracurricular obligations that these educators were required to fulfill based on their general education position. Math, English, and even history teachers were expected to assist students in adequately preparing for annual state testing such as the PreACT, ACT, or ACT WorkKeys. However, it was acceptable for this preparation to take place within the classroom and not outside of contract hours. Additionally, each of these educators was given the option to sponsor subject area-

affiliated or non-subject area-affiliated student organizations (Mackey, 2019; Mackey, 2019; Mackey, 2021; Morton, 2010; Sentance, 2017).

### ***Career and Technical Education Teachers***

Beginning in the 1980s, career and technical education (CTE) programs across the country began to see shortages of future educators enrolled in teacher preparation courses. CTE teacher shortages came as a result of decreased funding and increased secondary CTE enrollment (Bowling & Ball, 2018). Before this time, students seeking a degree in vocational education were prominent. With the start of the 1990s and continuing into the 2000s, these programs began to close their doors due to a lack of enrollment. CTE teacher preparation programs decreased by more than 10% during this time (Tonnessen, 2021).

Within career and technical education, there were multiple avenues of alternative certification. Agriculture, marketing and technology teachers most commonly acquired alternative certification through programs catered to those with completed bachelor's degrees while business, computer science, health careers and marketing teachers most commonly acquired alternative certification after a review of educational and professional backgrounds along with transcripts (Ruhland & Bremer, 2003). The alternative certification route was unique in that it considered prior professional experience. Industry professionals being permitted to enter classrooms and share valuable work experience with students assisted students in making more informed decisions about their futures.

Agricultural educators made up just one sector of courses that fell under the CTE umbrella. Those educators were expected by the National Association of Agricultural Educators and The National FFA Organization to employ the three-circle model within their programs. This model suggested that for students to receive the greatest benefit of being enrolled in an

agricultural education program, they should have been exposed to FFA, classroom instruction, and their Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) at equal rates (Claflin et al., 2022). A novice educator working to master classroom management, content presentation, and relationship building was already working to manage a great deal of responsibility. The addition of these content-specific expectations greatly increased the workload of agricultural educators within their first three years of teaching (Crutchfield, 2010).

Service projects, online record-keeping for individualized agriculture-based projects, and hands-on labs could make or break a young, inexperienced educator (Claflin et al., 2022). In addition to the more common day-to-day stressors experienced by educators, alternatively certified educators within the realm of career and technical education have experienced additional responsibilities. Career and technical student organizations (CTSOs), management of facilities, and extensive annual paperwork for Business/Industry Certification or Tool for Assessing Program Effectiveness audits required additional time to meet the demands of the position. The ongoing need to strengthen the workforce resulted in several states implementing initiatives that were meant to better prepare secondary students for workforce entry post-graduation. In Alabama, AlabamaWorks! implemented programs for youth between the ages of 14-24, as well as youth with disabilities, through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA youth programs, n.d.). As a result, policymakers continued to strive to fill open positions within career and technical classrooms, which increased the need for alternatively certified educators to fill those gaps (Zinger, 2018). Both the selection of qualified individuals and the ability to provide them with adequate support during the early years of their careers were critical to combat the national teacher shortage that the United States education system has faced.

The alternatively certified agricultural educators who came into their new role ready to fully implement the three-circle model were forced to make difficult decisions on how they would manage their time throughout the day to provide students with equal access to classroom instruction, FFA involvement, and SAE growth. The SAE required that project-based experiences take place outside of the traditional constraints of the classroom. Students who grew these projects outside of the classroom worked part-time at agricultural businesses, helped to run the family farm, or established and maintained agricultural operations of their own. As a result, advisors committed to making frequent visits to observe and assist with these operations to help the student receive the greatest benefit from their project. Between 2014-2016 it is estimated that the field of agricultural education lost almost 2,500 teachers, with 14% of those vacancies resulting from educators exiting the field to seek industry-related job opportunities (Tonnessen, 2021).

The SAE also required that ample time be devoted to uploading accurate and detailed records to an online record-keeping system. Systems like The Agricultural Experience Tracker provided students with opportunities to record hours, paychecks, expenses and cash sales, current and non-current assets, and valuable work experience. These systems also provided opportunities to log FFA chapter leadership positions, volunteer hours, and activities above the chapter level. Ultimately, this allowed members to utilize the information logged to apply for various FFA degrees and awards. The duties required of SAE management presented yet another influential challenge to educators in regard to their intentions to remain in the classroom (Doss et al., 2023). Alternatively certified educators have been reported to have experienced a greater need for professional development in the areas of technical content, FFA advisement, and the supervision

of student projects such as the supervised agricultural experience (Robinson & Edwards, 2012) than their traditionally certified counterparts.

Business teachers, including those teaching within the business management and administration cluster, the finance cluster, and the marketing cluster, have been required to sponsor their area's corresponding CTSO, the Future Business Leaders of America, or FBLA. Educators within this area of career and technical education did not possess any other additional responsibilities outside of class or CTSO time. Likewise, educators that fell under the umbrella of family and consumer science were responsible for sponsoring their area's corresponding CTSO, Family, Career, and Community Leaders of America, or FCCLA. Educators in this area specialized in curriculum related to childhood development, clothing and fashion, and food and nutrition. Health Science educators were responsible for sponsoring their subject area's corresponding CTSO, Health Occupations Students of America, or HOSA (Mackey, 2021).

### **Most Effective Teacher Supports**

A key component to solving the nation's current teacher shortage was identifying ways to help novice teachers feel more confident in their ability to be successful in the classroom. Alternatively certified educators certainly helped systems to bring capable employees into vacant classrooms without having to rely on long-term substitutes, but it was imperative that systems chose to cater to the unique needs that this group possessed. Intensive teacher supports that some systems chose included pre-service experiences or mentor programs (Bowling & Ball, 2018). When it came to job satisfaction for novice alternatively certified educators, the need to implement initiatives that promoted work-life balance was just as important as promoting basic organizational support (Chambers Mack et al., 2019). Systems that were proactive in providing

the supports that this group of educators identified as being the most impactful helped to increase productivity and longevity amongst its employees.

Educators within their first three years of teaching were typically considered beginning teachers by the general public. The need to provide additional supports to novice alternatively certified teachers during the first three years was recognized by policymakers, but research revealed that the need for those supports extended beyond the first three years spent in the classroom (Grant and Brantlinger, 2022). As a result, individual states began to implement beginning teacher requirements for novice educators regardless of their certification type. Beginning teacher programs and professional development opportunities often promoted networking between administrators and peers, which increased job satisfaction (Chambers Mack et al., 2019). Working with novice educators to determine which types of supports would provide the greatest benefit to their retention helped systems design and implement new programs to keep teachers content within the classrooms that they served.

### ***Networking and Establishing a Routine***

Claflin et al. (2023) were successful in identifying key resources that motivated new educators to seek long-lasting success within their new roles. Key resources included working with state staff, frequently interacting with others in the field, and working closely with a mentor teacher. Those new teachers were also encouraged to network with their local, regional, and state levels of the education community so that they would have additional opportunities to experience and learn from the directives of their peers. Regardless of the obstacles experienced, participants in this particular study indicated that by the third year of teaching, they had established a rhythm and daily routine, had a greater understanding of day-to-day responsibilities, and felt more confident in their ability to teach. In comparison to traditionally certified educators, alternatively

certified educators also indicated a much higher usage of mentoring programs and curriculum and instructional resources (Bowling & Ball, 2018).

Alternatively certified educator programs worked to accelerate individuals with previously acquired bachelor's degrees into vacant classroom positions. While these programs differed across states regarding what was offered to participants, the goal was to provide alternatively certified educators with the ability to meet program requirements after entry into the classroom. For the alternative certification route to have provided the greatest benefit to its participants, it was believed that programs should have, at a minimum, offered collaboration within hiring institutions, their districts, their state departments, and the institutions where participants were enrolled. Additionally, participants benefited from program designs that implemented cohorts to increase comradery and collaboration amongst participants. Participants also needed to be privy to useful coursework that exposed them to pedagogy and classroom management techniques. Finally, mentorship programs should have been mandated for those seeking alternative certification in an effort to provide program participants with the ability to work with veteran teachers who could assist them with their transition into the classroom (O'Connor et al., 2011).

The exact supports needed varied by individual. Educators who left the field identified the supports that would have been most beneficial to sway their decision prior to their exit. The participants interviewed by Solomonson et al. (2019) referenced a need for increased prep time to be able to develop and implement lesson plans. Another participant referenced a need for curriculum improvements that would have assisted in creating engaging and innovative content. One other participant indicated that they would have stayed in the field had they received greater



support from the school administration (Solomonson et al., 2019). State programs that mandated these components in beginning teacher programs contributed to solving this issue.

### ***State Mandated Supports***

Different state associations have worked to combat the common stressors that novice teachers faced throughout their first few years. Mentoring systems implemented at different rates across the nation have provided new teachers with countless resources including lesson plans, troubleshooting, and confidence. As far as agricultural educators were concerned, the state of Kansas worked to establish a mentorship program with funds provided through the state FFA Foundation (Crutchfield, 2010). This funding supported practicing teachers with a stipend given to them to plan meetings, experience observation opportunities, and take part in a mentee program for new teachers. Georgia worked to provide a resource to new teachers by paying a retired teacher a part-time salary to travel the state and visit with new teachers in person, while also fielding phone calls throughout the week as questions or issues arose (Crutchfield, 2010). Mentorship programs like these provided participants with the ability to observe veteran teachers in their element, develop new strategies for content delivery and classroom management, discuss student progress or potential difficulties, and receive access to lessons or materials that would best assist with content delivery (O'Connor et al., 2011).

Mississippi's state director served as the main mentor for new teachers and planned quarterly meetings to provide new teachers with four opportunities to meet and grow throughout their first few years of teaching. Florida provided new educators with an opportunity to attend an annual leadership seminar where tours were given and content knowledge was strengthened (Crutchfield, 2010). Alabama's Foundation worked to pay part-time salaries to seven retired agricultural educators who traveled the state to visit teachers and provide ongoing support by

phone and email. The state of North Carolina implemented a mandated three-year beginning teacher program that provided mentorship, monthly meetings, and observation opportunities (Crutchfield, 2010). Regardless of program arrangement, these supports continued to serve as positive resources for the new teachers that assumed those roles during the first three years of their careers.

### ***Extended Timeline***

Based on the findings of Grant and Brantlinger (2022), supports were needed beyond the first three years of the teaching profession. Their research suggested that the target years for support to be implemented should be between years three and five. The utilization of positive behavior interventions and supports was especially helpful in schools that served low-income populations, as teacher turnover was typically heightened within these institutions. Assessing whether or not those teachers who were in their first three years of the profession were receiving the necessary supports from those at the administrative level was critical to their overall success. Harfitt (2015) identified specific types of supports that those within the administrative level should provide to new teachers which included supportive “induction programs, school mentorship programs, remuneration issues, and issues surrounding student behavior in the classroom” (p. 25).

One of Harfitt’s study’s participants discussed the feelings of loneliness and helplessness at an initial hiring institution that did not provide the supports necessary for her to extend her contract. Instead, this participant took a two-year hiatus and then began to search for openings at schools that supported new teachers through mentorship programs and decreased expectations as new teachers acclimated to their position (Harfitt, 2015). Schools that offered content-specific or new teacher professional development programs, along with mentoring programs meant to pair

new teachers, with veteran teachers selected these options because they were shown to both improve teacher instruction and raise student performance on assessments. Some schools supplemented these offerings by reducing beginning teacher duties and expectations, allowing paid time off to attend trainings, and providing the assistance of classroom aides. Those efforts, along with more frequent opportunities for observation and feedback, were intended to combat the turnover rates experienced by institutions that were unable to provide the supports necessary to ensure the retention of novice teachers (Keese et al., 2022).

The satisfaction that novice teachers felt within their employing schools and districts had a lasting impact on their decision to stay in the field. DeAngelis et al. (2013) found that when surveying teachers within their first couple of years of teaching, teachers were determining whether or not to stay within their current position, move to a similar position within a different school or district, or exit the profession. Researchers discovered that a vast majority of teachers who considered walking away from the profession chose to stay or move schools rather than exit the profession altogether. Teachers that indicated increased satisfaction with the quality of their preparation program were less likely to leave the profession after only one year than their counterparts who were less satisfied with their own preparation programs (DeAngelis et al., 2013).

### **Most Influential Challenges of Alternatively Certified Teachers**

Identifying which challenges were the most influential for novice alternatively certified educators was critical to their overall success. Factors such as age, subject matter, and an increase in the student population were suggested to be prominent causes of teacher attrition (Crutchfield, 2010). However, research suggested that one of the most influential challenges that novice teachers faced was the environment in which they taught and the school climate that had

been established (Grant & Brantlinger, 2022). Environmental factors potentially played a role in the increased levels of stress and decreased job satisfaction that novice educators experienced (Hughes, 2012). Working to identify exact challenges and forming strategies to eliminate them was crucial to combating teacher attrition within the United States.

### ***Demographics and Environmental Factors***

Classroom teacher retention was impacted by various pieces of demographic information and personal characteristics. For instance, age, gender, and ethnicity served as predictors to determine which teachers would stay and which would leave the classroom within the early stages of their teaching career. Previous research concluded that teachers under the age of 30 were more likely to leave the classroom than those over the age of 31 (Brooks, 2015). However, teachers who gained an increased understanding of pedagogy developed through their certification program and years in the profession were less likely to exit the field (Brooks, 2015).

Typically, teachers within their first three years disclosed a more positive outlook on the profession during the spring semester. Agricultural educators, however, expressed an increase in stress levels and dissatisfaction during this period as a result of the additional responsibilities associated with their position (Disberger et al., 2023). As for math teachers in hard-to-staff schools, one of the greatest obstacles identified as a reason to leave the profession was the teachers' perceptions of their employing school and its environment (Grant & Brantlinger, 2022). Improvements to school climate contributed to new teachers' decisions to remain in the profession beyond the initial three years. Additionally, it was helpful to address economic and social forces such as "structural racism and inequality" (Grant & Brantlinger, 2022, p. 36) when assessing the common obstacles presented to beginning teachers.

Statistically, alternatively certified teachers were more prevalent within urban schools. This was due to a higher turnover rate within these areas. These schools typically experienced high poverty levels among the student body, a decrease in the resources available to students and teachers alike, and a greater occurrence of student disciplinary issues amongst students of all ages (Brooks, 2015). Traditionally certified educators who completed an internship within a rural school typically did not fare well in urban conditions due to the extreme difference between their internship experience and the realities of those classrooms. Alternatively certified educators also lacked the preparation needed to be successful in urban schools because those certification programs lacked a traditional internship experience.

Young and old teachers were guilty of leaving the profession, however, this was oftentimes experienced at a higher rate among those of a younger age. The shift could often be attributed to family planning, decreased content knowledge, and a shortage of monetary supports. Hughes (2012) alluded to a heightened level of stress among new teachers, which potentially served as a cause for their departure from the field. However, it was possible that these teachers were not leaving the field permanently but simply taking a brief hiatus and returning to the field at a later date (Hughes, 2012; Harfitt, 2015). Working to meet the needs of these teachers in overcoming the most commonly experienced obstacles assisted school systems in reducing the need for emergency credentialing (Ruhland & Bremer, 2003).

The research of Redding and Smith (2016) compared the differences in attrition between alternatively certified teachers who took part in the Teach for America initiative and those who completed non-Teach for America-affiliated programs. They found that Teach for America participants typically did not remain within the classroom for more than five years. However, the program was arranged in such a way that participants could make substantial impacts on students

in a brief period of time. Those placements typically occurred in areas that served student populations with a unique set of needs. As a result, attrition was not as great of a concern for Teach for America participants. In contrast, attrition rates of alternatively certified educators who were not affiliated with programs like Teach for America resulted in negative impacts on both students and institutions as a whole.

The understanding that alternatively certified educators received the bulk of their training during the first two years teaching (Redding & Smith, 2016) should have prompted a significant influence on the way that beginning teacher supports were administered to this particular group of educators. Alternatively certified educators were more localized in school systems located in areas of lower socioeconomic status. This often led to larger class sizes, a greater occurrence of student disciplinary issues, heavier workloads, and weaker school culture, which resulted in those institutions experiencing difficulty staffing positions when vacancies were present. These classrooms were often associated with Title I funding and free and reduced lunch, which presented a direct correlation to the likelihood of teachers choosing to transfer to a new school or leave the profession altogether (Brooks, 2015). Those institutions that were in greater demand of filling vacancies with alternatively certified teachers would have benefited greatly from implementing additional supports to acclimate new teachers into their organizations and working to ensure retention past the initial three years of employment.

### ***Work-Life Balance***

The overall happiness and fulfillment of educators had a tremendous impact on their decision to stay in the classroom. Depression was more prominently reported in teaching than in any other commonly recognized vocation (Chambers Mack et al., 2019). As a result, educators tended to identify a correlation between their depressive state and their place of work.

Ultimately, this influenced their decision to exit the classroom. Additional research was conducted to identify whether or not the onset of mental disorders directly correlated to attrition within the classroom. To combat depression, collaboration could have been implemented as an effective tool. New teachers looked forward to collaborating with peers, working with mentors, and receiving constructive criticism and feedback on their performance as they progressed through the early stages of their careers (Harfitt, 2015).

Teachers new to the field ran the risk of being pressured into spending additional hours past the end of their daily contracted hours. The increase in time spent at work created the potential for increased conflict between work and life at home (Crutchfield, 2010). According to a recent study whose instrumentation resulted from an amalgamation of four prior instruments, teachers felt capable of establishing a work-life balance and in doing so found that conflict between work and family declined the longer that they remained in the profession (Blau et al., 1993; Chaney, 2007; Gutek et al., 1991; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003; as cited in Crutchfield, 2010). Those that opted to exit the field prior to establishing this balance contributed to turnover rates and the nation's teacher shortage. "These turnover rates create high annual costs of approximately \$7 billion for the school community in terms of recruiting, replacing, and training new faculty" (Chambers Mack et al., 2019, p. 2).

While alternatively certified educators lacked the formal training provided by traditional certification programs, there was no distinguishable difference between the teaching and learning efficacy perceptions of the two groups. However, traditionally certified educators were "significantly more efficacious than alternatively certified educators in the following constructs: technical content knowledge, leadership development activities and program management" (Duncan et al., 2013, p. 59). Regardless of the certification route, it was imperative to understand

the driving force behind what motivated educators to stay for the duration of their careers.

Regarding agricultural educators, Claflin et al. (2023) worked to identify what best helped new teachers to acquire the practices necessary to be successful in their new role. The individuals who were interviewed were clear in their decision to take on this role was heavily influenced by the desire to make a difference in the lives of the students they were tasked to teach. However, the many obstacles associated with a career in education negatively impacted their desire to stay the course.

### ***Alternative Certification Program Requirements***

As alternatively certified educators worked to complete alternative certification programs, it was expected that they enroll in and complete college coursework that would ultimately assist them in the process of obtaining licensure within their employing state. The education level of educators presented an increased level of job satisfaction. While job satisfaction was often increased with each degree earned, the acquisition of each degree decreased the odds that an educator would remain in the classroom for the duration of their career (Crutchfield, 2010), due to the probability of promotions in the field. Added responsibility presented the potential for additional stress during the first few years on the job.

The alternative certification requirements within the United States were everchanging and often varied from year to year as states worked to establish an avenue that best prepared new educators to enter into their classrooms and provide the greatest possible benefit to the students they served. Inconsistencies within alternative certification programs lead to various levels of preparation experienced by new educators. These programs often worked to educate participants on lesson planning and classroom management but varied in the exposure given to content knowledge and pedagogy (Claflin et al., 2022). A common complaint about these programs was



that there was a lack of interaction with actual students. Alternatively certified educators who were working through a program after being hired to teach were gaining exposure to students for the first time in real time and were forced to make classroom management decisions with little to no background or experience. The lack of a traditional student teaching internship prevented new educators from drawing on past experiences within their classrooms and contributed to the attrition of alternatively certified educators (Redding & Smith, 2016).

Bowling and Ball (2018) discovered that alternatively certified teachers demonstrated a lack of mastery of basic literacy skills regarding working through lesson plans at higher levels. These teachers also possessed a greater need for professional development in literacy and numeracy skills to assist with these issues. Further research determined that alternatively certified teachers needed to be educated on “the use of rubrics, formative and summative assessment, aligning instruction with standards and 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills, forming relationships with students, engaging students in developing classroom rules and procedures, and developing classroom management” (Bowling & Ball, 2018, p. 115).

### ***Frequently Identified Obstacles***

The obstacles faced by alternatively certified educators that resulted in the greatest amount of influence as to whether or not they chose to stay in the classroom typically included the following: lack of preparedness, the absence of a true internship experience, lack of pedagogical knowledge, lack of classroom management skills, and the added stress of completing alternative certification program requirements while simultaneously attempting to transition into a new role. Redding and Smith (2016) found that there was a significant shift in the turnover rates of alternatively certified teachers between the 1990s and the 2000s. The 1999-2000 school year revealed no “discernable differences between the turnover rates of alternatively

and traditionally certified teachers”; however, “by the 2007-2008 school year, the turnover rates of alternatively certified teachers were predicted to be 10 percentage points higher” than those of traditionally certified teachers (Redding & Smith, 2016, p. 1113).

Mentorship opportunities served as a resource for teachers working through alternative certification programs. However, these opportunities also caused dismay due to certification programs not monitoring mentorship pairings closely. While some mentors possessed extra time to devote responsibility to these initiatives, some mentors did not feel as though they could find the time necessary to adequately provide support to new teachers through mentorship. As a result, mentees felt alone and unsupported during their transition into the classroom. In addition to a lack of time, some mentors were unable to fulfill the requirements of their position because they were not adequately trained to take on a mentee during the early stages of their career (O’Connor et al., 2011).

The attrition of educators could not be addressed without first putting forth the effort to understand the cause. “The cost of remediating students who lacked expert teachers was estimated to be more than double for school districts” (Crutchfield, 2010, p. 4). Some believed that the main cause for attrition in education stemmed from a lack of sufficient pay. However, others have reported that attrition stemmed from non-salary-related issues such as unmanageable workloads, pressures related to state assessments, student behavior, lack of administrative support, and the public view of the profession. Additionally, teachers that chose to exit the profession reported experiencing many negative effects including a decrease in self-efficacy, burnout, and unhappiness (Crutchfield, 2010).

The most prevalent obstacles, as expressed by novice alternatively certified teachers, included “meeting the needs of diverse student populations, classroom management and

instructional strategies, lesson planning, assessment, student motivation, parent interaction, time management, and management of job-related stress” (Rose & Sughrue, 2021, p. 451). Based upon these identifiable obstacles, school systems that employed these teachers greatly benefited from implementing professional development programs that specifically catered to those needs. Novice alternatively certified teachers also reported resenting being employed by organizations with weak cultures. Specifically, teachers reported having the greatest amount of resentment towards school cultures that discouraged employees from working together to establish common goals, while refusing to take the time to shift these norms and implement positive supports that would combat these issues (Harfitt, 2015).

Student performance has been identified as a potential obstacle that novice alternatively certified teachers faced within their first few years in the field. The stress of state testing that determined whether or not students met benchmarks was difficult for even veteran teachers to manage. The participants of a study conducted by Harfitt (2015) indicated difficulty in transitioning between testing norms from one place of employment to the next. Systems that wished to retain novice teachers well into their tenure might have considered the reduction of testing expectations and additional responsibilities throughout the first few years of their careers. Being made to serve on additional committees took valuable time away from teachers’ academic focus (Harfitt, 2015).

### **Contribution of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports on Retention**

Positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS) have been associated with students and how to best influence positive future interactions. Likewise, these types of interventions and supports could be utilized by administrators working with members of the faculty and staff. Novice alternatively certified educators benefited heavily from PBIS in that they received

affirmation, direction, and encouragement from those in supervisory roles. Administrators that worked to implement PBIS provided feedback that was “specific and goal-oriented, supported with tangible and objective evidence, and framed in a manner so as not to imply judgment or evoke a defensive response” (Carrington, 2021, p. 48). Administrators who took the steps necessary to assist novice teachers in enhancing self-efficacy through this type of feedback helped to promote long-term commitment and growth among members of this group.

Positive behavior interventions and supports have been seemingly ineffective without first establishing clear expectations, maintaining clear communication, and challenging teachers to step outside of their comfort zones (Mireles-Rios & Becchio, 2018). The evaluation process mandated that both pre-observation and post-observation conferences take place between teachers and evaluators. Researchers found that the use of PBIS within evaluation systems encouraged evaluators to forego the checklist and focus instead on a combination of positive feedback and strategies for improvement (Mireles-Rios & Becchio, 2018). The ultimate goal of the utilization of PBIS was to encourage novice teachers to focus on effective strategies to promote student learning rather than summative observation evaluation scores (Vandermolen & Meyer-Looze, 2021). Implementing PBIS into the teacher evaluation system presented the potential to increase teacher self-efficacy while also increasing student learning and retention.

### ***Observations and Cyclical Feedback***

Keese et al. (2022) identified the benefits of positive administrator-teacher relationships to teacher retention. Their research “found that of all the contextual factors affecting teachers’ decisions to remain in the classroom, their perceptions of their administrator(s) were the most predictive” (Keese et al., 2022, p. 283). Relationships between teachers and their administrators were strengthened through increased cycles of observation and feedback where positive feedback

served as the driving force behind each post-observation meeting. Professional development needs for each novice alternatively certified educator were more easily identified through these strengthened relationships and continual feedback. Research suggested that the professional development programs created specifically for alternatively certified teachers should have been tailored to basic classroom management practices, effective lesson planning, and mastering the best practices to encourage student involvement and commitment (LaRose et al., 2023; Rose & Sughrue, 2021).

The key to utilizing observations to retain alternatively certified educators was to implement the observations as a positive behavior intervention. Rather than choosing to focus on negative aspects of performance or conducting these observations erratically, it was best to establish a consistent routine and highlight positive aspects of overall performance. Swanson and Ritter (2018) acknowledged that observations often made differentiating teachers difficult because they tended to be based on students' performance and behavior. Depending on the instrumentation used, observations were not found to adequately assess the teacher's overall and consistent performance within the classroom.

As a result of potentially skewed data that resulted from the inconsistencies that some observations created, Swanson and Ritter (2018) worked to develop an observation program that allowed professors from a local college of education to conduct observations at random. The individuals who conducted the observations had no direct affiliation with the alternatively certified educators whom they were to observe. Utilizing the observation instrument created by Swanson and Ritter (2018) allowed teachers to be observed based on classroom environment and instruction. This instrument also eliminated any potential bias that school or district administrators possessed towards certain employees.

### ***Positive Feedback's Impact on Teacher Self-Efficacy***

The benefit of having implemented additional avenues for positive feedback to be given to novice alternatively certified educators was that the affirmations given by administrators presented opportunities to negate the potential damage that was done as a result of previously acquired negative feedback. Mireles-Rios and Becchio (2018) acknowledged that the teacher evaluation process, which resulted from the standard observation systems that were in place, was unique in that it provided administrators with opportunities for positive impact on teachers. Specific and goal-aligned feedback benefited teachers by the evaluator providing feedback to improve student collaboration, dialogue, and discussion, which helped teachers to implement strategies (Vandermolen & Meyer-Looze, 2021).

The feedback administered from the evaluation process had a direct correlation to the self-efficacy that novice teachers experienced during their first few years in the field. Administrators were not the only group capable of increasing teacher self-efficacy through routine cycles of observation and feedback. The instructional and content coaches employed by systems improved teachers' practice through this same process as they provided useful feedback and tips on incorporating new strategies (Mireles-Rios & Becchio, 2018). For feedback to have been effective, multiple observations should have taken place. It has been recommended that feedback "should not be a summative judgment based on only one observation" (Yee et al., 2022, p. 222). The implementation of regular observations generated useful feedback that novice alternatively certified teachers could use to improve their overall success in the field.

The state of North Carolina opted to evaluate teachers with less than three consecutive years of employment on a comprehensive cycle, which was the most demanding of the state's three evaluation plans (Carrington, 2021). This plan allowed for novice teachers to be formally

observed three times throughout the year, with the addition of peer observation to provide participants with useful direction as they aimed to improve technique and increase self-efficacy. Rather than summarizing the observation results with a numeric score, it was suggested that meaningful and constructive conversations took place to help novice teachers to improve upon their practice (Vandermolen & Meyer-Looze, 2021). Providing novice alternatively certified educators with context, directions, and insight into how they could be successful has served as an invaluable support during their time of need.

### ***Collaboration and Relationship Building***

Providing positive supports through collaborative opportunities with colleagues also encouraged novice teachers to remain within the profession. Researchers found that when novice teachers experienced a lack of support from veteran teachers in the building, administrators often possessed the ability to overcome this issue through tailored expectations, increased funding, time allotted specifically for professional development, and recognition of new teachers' ability amongst the faculty and staff (Malow-Iroff et al., 2007). The positive supports provided to new teachers by those in administrative roles helped to increase teacher self-efficacy and promoted retention amongst new hires.

According to Murphrey et al. (2016), there were specific strategies that could be used to facilitate success if positive interventions and supports were in place. Those strategies included "becoming a content expert, engaging with colleagues in the professional community, creating a good reputation, and forming work relationships" (Murphrey et al., 2016, p. 62). Positive supports granted to alternatively certified educators have been reported to increase first-year levels of self-efficacy growth in the areas of student engagement, instructional practices, and

classroom management (Robinson & Edwards, 2012). These higher levels of self-efficacy were likely to influence educators to remain in the classroom.

The existence of administrators who both recognized and supported the unique challenges faced by alternatively certified teachers was pivotal to their trajectory. According to Rose and Sughrue (2021), the novice alternatively certified teachers that experienced that interaction felt as though their schools' administrators had a working knowledge of their specified challenges. As a result, these alternatively certified teachers felt as though they received positive support from their administration and that these challenges were turned into opportunities for growth through the continued support of their school administrators. School administrators who continually worked to better understand the unique challenges presented to novice alternatively certified teachers stood a greater chance of experiencing retention amongst this group of educators. As administrators continued to take the time to better understand this group of teachers, they were better able to tailor professional development opportunities as positive support for the alternatively certified teachers employed within their buildings.

### ***Need-Based Positive Interventions and Supports***

One of the greatest positive interventions or supports to be implemented for novice alternatively certified teachers has been the availability of tailored professional development opportunities. School and district administrators taking the time to form positive relationships with novice alternatively certified teachers understood their unique challenges and worked to address them. These administrators made a significant impact on their ability to sway the decision of the alternatively certified teacher to remain in or exit the classroom. In addition to gaining a greater understanding of the individualized challenges faced by novice alternatively certified teachers, school administrators took time to advocate for them at the district level. "The



promotion of student learning with alternatively certified teachers was made possible when school or district leadership ‘filled the gaps’ in their preparation through the employment of appropriate supports” (Rose & Sughrue, 2021, p. 458).

The lack of classroom management skills was a barrier faced by alternatively certified teachers upon entering the classroom. This was a challenge that needed to be addressed by both alternative certification programs and hiring institutions. Assessing the differences between traditionally and alternatively certified educators yielded findings that indicated less preparation to address student disciplinary and classroom management issues among alternatively certified teachers (Bowen et al., 2019). Actively working to highlight and praise the accomplishments that novice teachers experienced as they worked to identify the classroom management strategies that best worked with their individualized teaching style was imperative. Those positive interventions made a significant impact upon whether or not alternatively certified teachers opted to remain within the classroom for longer than the initial three years in the field.

Identifying areas of need, as well as implementing a reward system for mastery, assisted novice teachers in associating positive emotions with their time spent within the classroom. The lack of intrinsic rewards was listed as one of the top four factors that influenced alternatively certified educators to leave the field, along with a lack of administrative support (Brooks, 2015). Administrators who were willing to spend additional time working with novice alternatively certified teachers to provide the supports needed to ensure a successful transition into the classroom stood a much higher chance at combating attrition rates. Additionally, when intrinsic rewards were implemented through cycles of observations and positive feedback, the PBIS system stood a greater chance of providing novice alternatively certified teachers with the supports needed to influence their decision to forego transferring to a new school.

## Conclusion

The alternatively certified community of educators served as a critical component to the success of the P-20 system in schools. Allowing students the opportunity to receive instruction from industry professionals increased their overall content knowledge and provided industry-specific experiences to better prepare them for entry into the workforce. The key to ensuring the success of these certification programs and reducing teacher attrition that resulted from lack of preparation was to mandate additional supports upon entry into the classroom. Researchers have suggested that whether teachers chose to stay in the classroom and experience heightened career satisfaction was heavily influenced by personal matters such as commitment, efficacy, professionalism, preparedness, and influences outside of the classroom (Solomonson et al., 2019). School climate, administrative support, workload, and working conditions were determined to influence the final decision made by educators as to whether or not they chose to remain within the classroom.

According to the literature reviewed, alternatively certified educators reported feeling decreased levels of self-efficacy in almost every area of teaching. One issue with analyzing this data was that it was acquired through interviews and surveys completed by those educators rather than taking the time to review their actual teaching practice (Zinger, 2018). Additionally, the evaluations conducted to analyze the performance of alternatively certified educators were conducted within elementary and middle schools. Those studies were not as prominent in high schools where the greatest demand for alternatively certified educators existed due to the increased turnover rates experienced (Swanson & Ritter, 2018).

As the demand for teachers has continued to rise in past years, the annual projected supply has been unable to fill the gaps (Tonnessen, 2021). This highlighted the need to continue

the utilization of alternative certification programs as a means to produce more teachers.

Utilizing alternatively certified educators to fill these gaps allowed school systems to avoid reliance upon long-term substitutes to fill vacancies in classrooms, as they lacked the content knowledge necessary to do so. Research has shown that teachers chose to remain within the classroom if they experienced the following: administrative support, opportunities to collaborate with other members of the faculty, meaningful opportunities to work with students and their families, and the ability to take part in committees and organizations that allowed for decisions to be made to move the school forward (O'Connor et al., 2011).

Working to identify which general supports provided the greatest level of influence on a novice alternatively certified teacher's decision to remain within the classroom for longer than three years was imperative to combatting the teacher shortage. Additionally, identifying which obstacles presented the greatest amount of decision-defining influence on novice educators helped to eradicate those obstacles. The ability of administrative teams to implement behavior management systems such as positive behavior interventions and supports or behavior-specific praise, consistency, scaffolding, reward systems, or flexibility provided alternatively certified educators in their first three years of teaching with the confidence necessary to remain within the field (Vandermolen & Meyer-Looze, 2021). Ignoring those issues and refusing to make the corrections needed has hindered the country's ability to provide students with teachers who were committed to the profession on a long-term basis.

Research identified six factors that were considered to be most important for both traditionally and alternatively certified educators to continue within the profession: "positive teaching experience, sense of accomplishment, positive interaction with students, pleasant working conditions, perception of job security, and potential for salary increases" (Ruhland &

Bremer, 2003, p. 294). Working to allow these factors to be experienced to at least some degree throughout a novice alternatively certified teacher's first few years in the classroom was essential to ensuring that they chose to remain. Choosing to overlook these needs and focus attention on less pressing matters only worsened the problem. Assuming that schools across the nation would find a way for these conditions to be met, alternatively certified teachers could contribute to retention rather than the attrition that the United States' schools continued to face.

Data revealed evidence that the ultimate decision of the alternatively certified educator to remain within the classroom for longer than three years was heavily based upon the environment in which they worked (Grant & Brantlinger, 2022). Those who worked within an organization with a strong culture that provided consistent and meaningful supports possessed a greater likelihood of striving to reach and maintain tenure status within their initial hiring institution. As a result, the P-20 system was strengthened by housing educators who could form strong bonds with students and were present for a significant portion of their educational experience. Educators hired by organizations with weak cultures that chose to ignore the benefits of offering additional supports such as tailored professional development opportunities, reduced extracurricular expectations, collaborative opportunities amongst both veteran and novice teachers, and increased administrative support ran the risk of experiencing greater turnover within their building (Harfitt, 2015).

Based on these findings, it was apparent that the education system would benefit from establishing a uniform system of supports to be implemented nationwide. Whether traditionally or alternatively certified, the national teacher shortage increased the need to provide educators with the supports necessary to assist them in feeling confident in and committed to their positions within the classroom. The provision of additional supports assisted novice educators in

overcoming the common obstacles which were most often presented during the initial stages of their teaching career. The implementation of positive interventions and behavior supports by local and state department administrators provided novice educators with a steady flow of helpful feedback, which assisted in their overall development. Assuming that these supports and interventions could have been implemented on a long-term basis by state departments of education nationwide, it is likely that the teacher shortage the United States has faced would have decreased.

### **Chapter III: Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

While research has been conducted to assess preferential supports for novice educators, little research has specified which supports were most needed for alternatively certified educators within their first three years of teaching. In addition, overarching challenges have been identified in regard to novice teachers as a whole, but more targeted research concerning the obstacles of alternatively certified educators has been sparse. Research has proven that the implementation of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), or other management systems like it, increased self-efficacy amongst faculty and staff (Mireles-Rios & Becchio, 2018) but has not been conducted to determine the impact on novice alternatively certified teachers' overall success transitioning to the classroom. One of the main goals of this study was to target ways that state departments of education, along with teacher preparation programs, could better prepare alternatively certified educators to enter into and remain within the classroom for an extended period of time.

The utilization of a qualitative method of study allowed for study participants to share their unique experiences with transitioning into the classroom. In doing so, commonalities were identified among the group. Individual interviews were conducted with each participant to collect information about both positive and negative experiences associated with being alternatively certified. The perspective that each participant contributed to the study assisted in drawing conclusions that would assist individual state departments of education and teacher preparation programs in a more beneficial implementation of supports necessary to overcome challenges in the classroom.

Prior to one-on-one interviews, participants were asked to sign a consent form that stated that they understood the tasks associated with the study and were willing to participate on a completely voluntary basis. In addition to the participation agreement, participants were also asked to review their interview transcript through a process known as member checking. Once consent forms were returned, participants were asked to complete an onboarding survey. The survey utilized a Likert scale to gauge overall satisfaction with their teaching experience and their intent to remain within the classroom for longer than three years. The survey also collected data on participants' levels of concern regarding challenges faced and the frequency that they utilized the resources and supports made available to them during their initial transition into the classroom

In order to best obtain the information needed from each of the participants, Zoom's closed captioning function was utilized throughout the duration of the recorded interview. Participants' names and any other identifiable data were not included as a portion of the study. Any identifiable data was disposed of prior to the compilation of data that was published within the study's findings. Participants were referred to only by the number in which they returned their signed consents forms and completed their onboarding survey.

Participants were asked open-ended questions that supported the main goals of the study: to establish which supports are best-suited for retention purposes, to identify which challenges have the most significant impact on attrition, and to determine whether or not the implementation of behavior management systems by local school administrators makes a significant impact on an alternatively certified educator's decision to remain in the classroom. Follow-up questions were asked as needed in an attempt to provide clarity. The overall goal of the interviews was to

establish commonalities in each participant's alternative certification experience regardless of their age, gender, or location.

Upon completing the interviews, the transcriptions were analyzed for any inaccuracies. Corrections were made on an as-needed basis. Key themes were identified as they related to the three main research questions that guided the study. Participant responses were valuable in that each participant was interviewed one-on-one. This encouraged participants to disclose information without the potential concern of judgment from other participants. Each participant's story helped to formulate evidence as to how alternatively certified educators impacted the nation's teacher shortage.

### **Qualitative Research**

The study's design utilized qualitative research in an effort to allow participants to tell their individual stories, share unique and personalized experiences, and encourage participants to request clarification as needed throughout the duration of the interview. A well-known professor, John Maxwell, was previously tasked to take part in a quantitative study of committees for doctors serving on the committees. Instead of collecting purely quantifiable data through an experimental study, Maxwell suggested that he instead observe the meetings and interview the physicians to obtain firsthand knowledge of the individual experiences (Maxwell & Kiegelmann, 2023). As a result, Maxwell discovered that he was implementing what later became known as qualitative research.

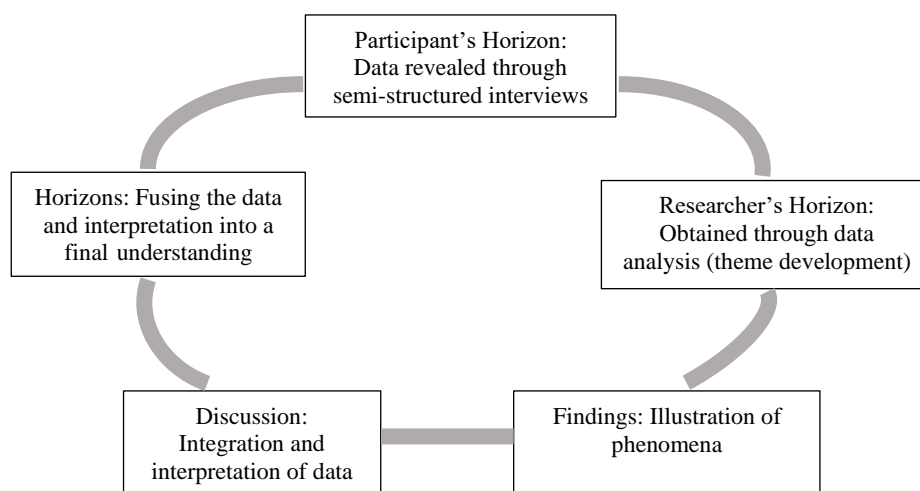
According to Maxwell (2004), qualitative research is able to serve as "scientific research providing explicitly developed, testable explanations for the phenomena studied" (p. 9). A benefit of utilizing qualitative methods within a study is that the researcher is able to obtain participants' opinions and perceptions on particular scenarios. In comparison, quantitative data



yields statistical information with numerical values. Qualitative data instead reveals the how and the why that a particular phenomenon exists. The utilization of qualitative research within this study's design was preferred to quantitative methods due to the fact that the study was better able to make use of the hermeneutical phenomenological research methodology in order to establish themes and subthemes (Pinnick, 2023) from the study participants' responses.

**Figure 1**

*Hermeneutic Circle*



*Note:* Adapted from Alsaigh and Coyne (2021, p.7) as cited by Pinnick (2023, p. 58).

**Purpose of Study**

The turnover rates experienced in education have been cause for alarm among the general public. Moreover, policymakers continued to feel pressured to combat the issues within the P-20 system. The issue was that while specific needs were identified, a lack of change hindered the progress of retention efforts within groups of novice educators. Adding alternatively certified educators into classrooms was meant to aid understaffed schools. The attempt to remedy the problems was experienced at an increased rate within urban areas where turnover was higher than that of rural areas (Brooks, 2015). Neglecting to instill positive change that motivated alternatively certified educators to remain within the classroom for longer than their first few

years of employment, prevented the potential for a positive impact on the nation's teacher shortage.

This study sought to identify the types of supports that alternatively certified educators found to be the most useful to their transition from the industry into the classroom. Which types of supports did these educators feel provided them with the most significant benefit? The presence of which types of supports motivated these educators to make a career out of education rather than exiting within the first few years only to return to the industry? This study was also meant to assist in identifying which challenges most influenced novice alternatively certified to depart from the field. Was there a way to combat these challenges so future cohorts could avoid them? Finally, this study was meant to analyze the implementation of behavior management systems and how their presence positively impacted the overall retention rate of alternatively certified educators within classrooms.

The results collected through this study could be utilized by alternative certification programs and state departments of education to better cater to the needs of future and novice alternatively certified educators as they sought employment in the field. This study's goal was to establish norms to improve the retention rate of alternatively certified educators during their initial three years of employment. A better understanding of what could be done to negate the attrition experienced within education was critical to the overall success of future educators. Assuming that norms could be established through this study, certification programs could be revamped to reflect and address basic needs. The programs could then be mandated throughout all 50 states to establish uniformity and positive change.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

The following questions were developed to guide this study:

1. Which types of supports are most effective in retaining nontraditional or alternatively certified teachers for longer than three years in the profession?
2. Which challenges influence the departure of nontraditional or alternatively certified teachers from the teaching field?
3. In what ways could the local administration's adoption of behavior management systems contribute to improving teacher retention rates?

The hypotheses associated with the aforementioned research questions include the following:

1. Supports, such as community engagement, reduced workloads, increased planning time, administrative support, and tailored professional development opportunities, would be considered valuable resources to novice alternatively certified educators.
2. Challenges, such as lack of support, increased stressors, the inability to establish a functional work-life balance, and the opportunity to earn increased pay and respect within the industry, are challenges associated with the decision of alternatively certified educators to exit the field.
3. Behavior management systems that are implemented by local administrators possess the ability to positively impact an alternatively certified educator's perception of the culture, values, and long-term impact of their individual workplace assignment.

### **Description of Population**

The population established for this study encompassed both current and former alternatively certified educators from the states of Alabama and North Carolina. These states were purposely selected, as the state of North Carolina was known for its implementation of a required three-year Beginning Teacher Support Program (BT support programs, n.d.), while the state of Alabama was not. The structured population was meant to compare and contrast the

longevity of alternatively certified educators within both states to establish whether or not the existence of statewide mandated teacher supports helped to produce an increased retention rate amongst those that were alternatively certified.

Rather than focusing solely on one subject area, the participants were purposely selected from the following subject areas: physical education, art, career and technical education (health science, business, family and consumer science, and agriscience), math, English, and history. The wide range of participants was meant to prevent bias and produce a broader range of data for state departments and teacher preparation programs to utilize for future cohorts. The participants were identified as being, or having been, alternatively certified and were approached with the intent of transcribing their personal experiences in an attempt to assist future educators. These participants were purposely contacted after they were recruited through a social media post requesting that any current or previously alternatively certified educators from the states of Alabama and North Carolina alert the researcher to their status. The goal of involving these educators in the study was to identify whether or not a phenomenon existed within the field. Each participant willingly participated in the study and was eager to share the successes and failures experienced throughout their stint in the field.

Participants' certification statuses varied in an attempt to capture experiences at various stages of the process. One portion of the population would describe themselves as veteran educators. A second portion of the population would describe themselves as novice educators seeking alternative certification. A third portion of the population would consider themselves to be former alternative certification-seeking educators that made the decision to exit the classroom prior to fulfilling all requirements of the alternative certification program.

### **Voluntary Participation and Description of Risk**

Participants who were identified as holding or having held alternative certification were told about the research being done to better assist state departments and teacher preparation programs in facilitating a more seamless transition from the industry into the classroom. As a result, participants were eager to assist. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants were allowed to cease involvement at any point throughout the study. The study was in no way affiliated with or mandated by any employing school systems within the states of Alabama or North Carolina. Participation took place outside of contract hours to prevent participants from being held liable of the misuse of contract hours.

Due to all identifiable data being excluded from the findings and recommendations, there was no risk associated with participation in the study. Given the participants' ability to decline participation at any point throughout the process, participants understood that any added responsibilities associated with the study were at no point mandated by the researcher. Participants remained in the study throughout its entire duration due to the fact that they wanted to assist future alternatively certified educators in their transition into and longevity within the classroom.

### **Confidentiality and Anonymity**

Participants' opinions and experiences were kept confidential throughout the study. All survey responses were stored on a password-protected device. Additionally, transcribed interviews featured audio only and were also stored on a password-protected device. The absence of video recording was intentional to further protect the identity of the study's participants. To protect the integrity of the study, it was important that participants felt as though their input was safe in the hands of the researcher. This process prevented any concern that current or future

employers would gain access to any identifiable data or personal viewpoints of the alternative certification system.

The identity of participants remained anonymous throughout the duration of the study. Participants were labeled by the order in which they were interviewed. For example, participant one's responses were specified by the label P1 throughout the results of the study. Emails and names were not collected or stored throughout the duration of the study. When completing the onboarding survey online, each participant was asked to answer only 15 study-related questions. Any identifiable data that was inadvertently disclosed during the recorded one-on-one interview was deleted upon transcription analysis in an effort to further protect the identity of the participants. No identifying information was asked of participants throughout the recording process associated with the study.

### **Validity and Trustworthiness**

In an attempt to establish validity and trustworthiness among the 10 study participants, member checking was utilized by both the researcher and the study participants. The platform, which was utilized for the recording process, allowed for the researcher to employ closed captions throughout the duration of the interview. Upon completion of the interview, a transcript was generated by the platform, along with an audio recording. The researcher checked the transcript for accuracy against the audio recording and made the necessary corrections to words that the platform misunderstood during the live interview.

Once any necessary transcript edits were completed, the transcript was then sent to the participants for their review. This process helped to increase the credibility of the study, since no interviews were quoted in the findings section without first being approved by the participants through the respondent validation process. The researcher worked diligently to eliminate any

potential for bias throughout the duration of the study. Additionally, rich, thick descriptions were quoted within the study's results once the individual participant interviews were conducted.

### **Description of Instruments**

Participants' initial involvement in the study included the completion of a Likert scale survey, which was emailed individually to each participant. The survey gauged each participants' overall satisfaction with their experiences in the field and their intent to remain within the classroom for longer than three years. The survey also collected data on participants' levels of concern in regard to challenges faced and the frequency with which they utilized the resources and supports made available to them during their initial transition into the classroom. Six of the 15 questions asked within the study's onboarding survey were extracted from previous instrumentation (Blau et al., 1993; Chaney, 2007; Gutek et al., 1991; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003; as cited in Crutchfield, 2010) used in Dr. Nina Crutchfield's 2010 study of work-life balance.

Once the onboarding survey was completed and responses were assessed, the researcher began setting up one-on-one Zoom interviews with each of the participants. Participation in the post-onboarding survey interview was completely voluntary and allowed for participants to share their experiences without being tied to any identifying information. The interview questions were provided to participants ahead of their one-on-one interview in an attempt to promote extended reflection prior to providing detailed answers. Interview questions included six general questions:

1. What, if any, provided supports did you feel made an impact on your decision to stay within the classroom?
2. What additional supports would you have utilized if they had been made available during your initial three years of teaching?

3. What, if any, challenges did you face that prompted you to consider exiting the field?
4. What, if any, challenges do you feel had an impact on yours or others' decision to remain in the classroom for longer than three years?
5. How did your institution's administration contribute to the longevity of your time in the classroom through the implementation of behavior management systems?
6. What, if anything, could your school's administration have done differently through the implementation of behavior management systems to make a positive impact on your (or others') decision to remain in the classroom for longer than three years?

Some anticipated follow-up questions included, but were not limited to:

1. Were there any supports being offered that you did not choose to utilize during your initial stint in the classroom?
2. What challenges did you face that you felt were easier to overcome than others that you have chosen to disclose?
3. Did you experience any turnover within your institution's administrative staff during your first few years in the classroom that prevented the implementation of behavior management systems?

Follow-up questions were asked as needed to provide clarity or establish common themes. Participants were encouraged to discuss their responses at length. Participants were also encouraged to provide any necessary explanations or elaborate as needed in regard to each of the study's research questions.

### **Data Security**

Prior to the start of the interview process, Murray State University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the study. Once IRB approval was secured, participants were formally



approached. The IRB approved all consent forms utilized throughout the duration of the study. All participants were identified due to their affiliation with the alternatively certified pathway. This was the only qualifying factor that was considered in regard to participation in the study. The participants selected were certified to teach grades 6-12; however, the subject that each participant was certified to teach varied significantly in an attempt to eliminate any potential for bias and to strengthen the data that was collected throughout the study.

### **Variables in the Study**

The most notable variable within this study was that each member of the sampled population taught through the COVID-19 pandemic. The effects of the pandemic on each teacher's decision to remain within the classroom varied slightly, but each participant reflected on negative impacts that the pandemic had on their decision to remain within the classroom. While the COVID-19 pandemic did impact a portion of the surveyed population's decision to exit the classroom, participants felt confident that their decision would have remained the same regardless of the pandemic's impact on the P-20 system.

Other variables included subject matter and location. Rather than forming a focus group from only one subject area, participants represented a variety of subject matter. The demographic makeup of the group was intentional, as it was meant to address common needs, challenges, and experiences across a wide range of subject areas. The idea was that if commonalities were identified across a broad spectrum of subject areas, data would be more applicable to a greater number of alternatively certified educators, regardless of their selected pathway.

### **Statement of Researcher Positionality**

As an alternatively certified secondary educator, the positionality of the researcher was informed by several years of both professional and personal experience. The researcher's ties to

the study's topic stemmed from the realization that beginning teacher support programs were not mandatory in all 50 states. The researcher recognized the potential for bias that could have stemmed from years of personal experience within the field, therefore a wide range of study participants was selected in an attempt to maintain objectivity and increase the data that was collected from the conducted research. The desire to establish improvements within the field was the driving force behind the research and invoked commitment from the researcher to prevent the emergence of any biases to appear throughout the duration of the study.

## **Chapter IV: Findings and Analysis**

### **Research Components**

Two research components were employed to effectively summarize the individual opinions and perceptions of 10 alternatively certified educators in Alabama and North Carolina, focusing on their experiences during their first few years in the classroom. The first component allowed participants to complete an onboarding survey consisting of 20 total questions. The first five questions focused on demographics, while the other 15 questions focused on individual beliefs about the beginning stages of a career in education. The second component utilized within the study was a recorded and transcribed Zoom interview where six main questions and up to three follow-up questions were asked of the participants. These questions were designed to better understand the participants' perceptions of supports offered, challenges faced, and administrative support and influence throughout the initial phase of their time spent in the classroom.

### **Onboarding Survey**

An onboarding survey was distributed to each participant after obtaining a signed study consent form and prior to conducting the recorded Zoom audio interview in an effort to obtain personal perceptions of the individual novice teaching experiences of the 10 study participants. The purpose of the onboarding survey was to analyze basic demographics as well as to obtain personal opinions of both early and recent years spent in the classroom as an alternatively certified educator. Participants responded to a Likert survey indicating their level of agreement with several statements that were directly related to the initial and current perceptions of alternative certification throughout the duration of their teaching experience.

*Participant 1*

Demographically, Participant 1 identified herself as a 25–30-year-old white female. This participant indicated having zero to three years of teaching experience with zero to three years spent in the industry prior to entering the classroom. This participant strongly agreed that her education was not originally for the occupation of teaching. Participant 1 indicated that she strongly disagreed with the statement that she could see herself in the occupation of teaching for many years. Additionally, she indicated that she strongly agreed that she had considered going into a different occupation. She strongly agreed that she was sometimes dissatisfied with the occupation of teaching.

Participant 1 strongly agreed that a good work-life balance for alternatively certified educators helps provide a more effective and successful education profession. She also indicated that she strongly agreed that her work took up time that she would like to spend with family and friends. Participant 1 felt as though she agreed with the statement that she often felt as though she received adequate supports at work, and she agreed that her local school administration was very supportive of her at work.

She disagreed that she was confident in her ability to do her job, and she disagreed that the teacher preparation program that provided her with alternative certification did a good job of preparing her for success. Participant 1 disagreed with the statement that the challenges faced at work were minor and could be easily overcome. She strongly agreed that she felt confident that she had a mentor teacher that she could approach with any questions or concerns at work.

Participant 1 strongly disagreed that as a novice educator, she felt as though the daily workload was manageable. She neither agreed nor disagreed that if given access to additional supports and resources, she would have been quick to utilize them in her classroom. Finally,

Participant 1 indicated that she agreed that she performed best when she felt as though her administration was taking time to recognize the positive things that she was doing in her classroom.

### ***Participant 2***

Participant 2 identified herself as a 41-50-year-old white female. This participant indicated having 21+ years of teaching experience with seven to 10 years spent in the industry prior to entering the classroom. This participant agreed that her education was not originally for the occupation of teaching. Participant 2 indicated that she neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement that she could see herself in the occupation of teaching for many years. Additionally, she indicated that she agreed that she had considered going into a different occupation. She neither agreed nor disagreed that she was sometimes dissatisfied with the occupation of teaching.

Participant 2 agreed that a good work-life balance for alternatively certified educators helps provide a more effective and successful education profession. She also indicated that she agreed that her work took up time that she would like to spend with family and friends.

Participant 2 felt as though she disagreed with the statement that she often felt as though she received adequate supports at work, and she neither agreed nor disagreed that her local school administration was very supportive of her at work.

She strongly agreed that she was confident in her ability to do her job and neither agreed nor disagreed that the teacher preparation program that provided her with alternative certification did a good job of preparing her for success. Participant 2 disagreed with the statement that the challenges faced at work were minor and could be easily overcome. She agreed that she felt confident that she had a mentor teacher that she could approach with any questions or concerns at work.

Participant 2 disagreed that as a novice educator, she felt as though the daily workload was manageable. She agreed that if given access to additional supports and resources, she would have been quick to utilize them in her classroom. Finally, Participant 2 indicated that she agreed that she performed best when she felt as though her administration was taking time to recognize the positive things that she was doing in her classroom.

### ***Participant 3***

Participant 3 identified herself as a 51+ year old white female. This participant indicated having zero to three years of teaching experience with 21+ years spent in the industry prior to entering the classroom. This participant agreed that her education was not originally for the occupation of teaching. Participant 3 indicated that she agreed with the statement that she could see herself in the occupation of teaching for many years. Additionally, she indicated that she agreed that she had considered going into a different occupation. She disagreed that she was sometimes dissatisfied with the occupation of teaching.

Participant 3 agreed that a good work-life balance for alternatively certified educators helps provide a more effective and successful education profession. She also indicated that she disagreed that her work took up time that she would like to spend with family and friends. Participant 3 felt as though she agreed with the statement that she often felt as though she received adequate supports at work, and she neither agreed nor disagreed that her local school administration was very supportive of her at work.

She agreed that she was confident in her ability to do her job and neither agreed nor disagreed that the teacher preparation program that provided her with alternative certification did a good job of preparing her for success. Participant 3 agreed with the statement that the challenges faced at work were minor and could be easily overcome. She strongly agreed that she

felt confident that she had a mentor teacher that she could approach with any questions or concerns at work.

Participant 3 agreed that as a novice educator, she felt as though the daily workload was manageable. She strongly agreed that if given access to additional supports and resources, she would have been quick to utilize them in her classroom. Finally, Participant 3 indicated that she strongly agreed that she performed best when she felt as though her administration was taking time to recognize the positive things that she was doing in her classroom.

#### ***Participant 4***

Participant 4 identified herself as a 51+ year old white female. This participant indicated having 21+ years of teaching experience with four to six years spent in the industry prior to entering the classroom. This participant neither agreed nor disagreed that her education was not originally for the occupation of teaching. Participant 4 indicated that she agreed with the statement that she could see herself in the occupation of teaching for many years. Additionally, she indicated that she strongly agreed that she had considered going into a different occupation. She agreed that she was sometimes dissatisfied with the occupation of teaching.

Participant 4 strongly agreed that a good work-life balance for alternatively certified educators helps provide a more effective and successful education profession. She also indicated that she strongly agreed that her work took up time that she would like to spend with family and friends. Participant 4 felt as though she disagreed with the statement that she often felt as though she received adequate supports at work, and she disagreed that her local school administration was very supportive of her at work.

She strongly agreed that she was confident in her ability to do her job and disagreed that the teacher preparation program that provided her with alternative certification did a good job of

preparing her for success. Participant 4 neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement that the challenges faced at work were minor and could be easily overcome. She disagreed that she felt confident that she had a mentor teacher that she could approach with any questions or concerns at work.

Participant 4 disagreed that as a novice educator, she felt as though the daily workload was manageable. She strongly agreed that if given access to additional supports and resources, she would have been quick to utilize them in her classroom. Finally, Participant 4 indicated that she agreed that she performed best when she felt as though her administration was taking time to recognize the positive things that she was doing in her classroom.

#### ***Participant 5***

Participant 5 identified herself as a 31–40-year-old white female. This participant indicated having seven to 10 years of teaching experience with four to six years spent in the industry prior to entering the classroom. This participant strongly agreed that her education was not originally for the occupation of teaching. Participant 5 indicated that she strongly agreed with the statement that she could see herself in the occupation of teaching for many years.

Additionally, she indicated that she neither agreed nor disagreed that she had considered going into a different occupation. She neither agreed nor disagreed that she was sometimes dissatisfied with the occupation of teaching.

Participant 5 strongly agreed that a good work-life balance for alternatively certified educators helps provide a more effective and successful education profession. She also indicated that she agreed that her work took up time that she would like to spend with family and friends. Participant 5 strongly agreed with the statement that she often felt as though she received



adequate supports at work, and she strongly agreed that her local school administration was very supportive of her at work.

She strongly agreed that she was confident in her ability to do her job and agreed that the teacher preparation program that provided her with alternative certification did a good job of preparing her for success. Participant 5 agreed with the statement that the challenges faced at work were minor and could be easily overcome. She strongly agreed that she felt confident that she had a mentor teacher that she could approach with any questions or concerns at work.

Participant 5 disagreed that as a novice educator, she felt as though the daily workload was manageable. She strongly agreed that if given access to additional supports and resources, she would have been quick to utilize them in her classroom. Finally, Participant 5 indicated that she strongly agreed that she performed best when she felt as though her administration was taking time to recognize the positive things that she was doing in her classroom.

### ***Participant 6***

Participant 6 identified herself as a 25–30-year-old white female. This participant indicated having zero to three years of teaching experience with zero to three years spent in the industry prior to entering the classroom. This participant agreed that her education was not originally for the occupation of teaching. Participant 6 indicated that she strongly agreed with the statement that she could see herself in the occupation of teaching for many years. Additionally, she indicated that she agreed that she had considered going into a different occupation. She disagreed that she was sometimes dissatisfied with the occupation of teaching.

Participant 6 neither agreed nor disagreed that a good work-life balance for alternatively certified educators helps provide a more effective and successful education profession. She also indicated that she agreed that her work took up time that she would like to spend with family and

friends. Participant 6 felt as though she strongly agreed with the statement that she often felt as though she received adequate supports at work, and she strongly agreed that her local school administration was very supportive of her at work.

She strongly agreed that she was confident in her ability to do her job and neither agreed nor disagreed that the teacher preparation program that provided her with alternative certification did a good job of preparing her for success. Participant 6 strongly agreed with the statement that the challenges faced at work were minor and could be easily overcome. She agreed that she felt confident that she had a mentor teacher that she could approach with any questions or concerns at work.

Participant 6 strongly agreed that as a novice educator, she felt as though the daily workload was manageable. She neither agreed nor disagreed that if given access to additional supports and resources, she would have been quick to utilize them in her classroom. Finally, Participant 6 indicated that she agreed that she performed best when she felt as though her administration was taking time to recognize the positive things that she was doing in her classroom.

### ***Participant 7***

Participant 7 identified himself as a 31–40-year-old white male. This participant indicated having 11-15 years of teaching experience with four to six years spent in the industry prior to entering the classroom. This participant strongly agreed that his education was not originally for the occupation of teaching. Participant 7 indicated that he strongly agreed with the statement that he could see himself in the occupation of teaching for many years. Additionally, he indicated that he agreed that he had considered going into a different occupation. He neither agreed nor disagreed that he was sometimes dissatisfied with the occupation of teaching.

Participant 7 strongly agreed that a good work-life balance for alternatively certified educators helps provide a more effective and successful education profession. He also indicated that he strongly agreed that his work took up time that he would like to spend with family and friends. Participant 7 felt as though he disagreed with the statement that he often felt as though he received adequate supports at work; however, he agreed that his local school administration was very supportive of him at work.

He neither agreed nor disagreed that he was confident in his ability to do his job and strongly disagreed that the teacher preparation program that provided him with alternative certification did a good job of preparing him for success. Participant 7 neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement that the challenges faced at work were minor and could be easily overcome. He strongly agreed that he felt confident that he had a mentor teacher that he could approach with any questions or concerns at work.

Participant 7 agreed that as a novice educator, he felt as though the daily workload was manageable. He agreed that if given access to additional supports and resources, he would have been quick to utilize them in his classroom. Finally, Participant 7 indicated that he strongly disagreed that he performed best when he felt as though his administration was taking time to recognize the positive things that he was doing in his classroom.

### ***Participant 8***

Participant 8 identified himself as a 25–30-year-old white male. This participant indicated having zero to three years of teaching experience with zero to three years spent in the industry prior to entering the classroom. This participant strongly agreed that his education was not originally for the occupation of teaching. Participant 8 indicated that he agreed with the statement that he could see himself in the occupation of teaching for many years. Additionally,

he indicated that he neither agreed nor disagreed that he had considered going into a different occupation. He neither agreed nor disagreed that he was sometimes dissatisfied with the occupation of teaching.

Participant 8 neither agreed nor disagreed that a good work-life balance for alternatively certified educators helps provide a more effective and successful education profession. He also indicated that he agreed that his work took up time that he would like to spend with family and friends. Participant 8 felt as though he strongly agreed with the statement that he often felt as though he received adequate supports at work, and he strongly agreed that his local school administration was very supportive of him at work.

He agreed that he was confident in his ability to do his job, and he agreed that the teacher preparation program that provided him with alternative certification did a good job of preparing him for success. Participant 8 strongly agreed with the statement that the challenges faced at work were minor and could be easily overcome. He strongly agreed that he felt confident that he had a mentor teacher that he could approach with any questions or concerns at work.

Participant 8 strongly agreed that as a novice educator, he felt as though the daily workload was manageable. He agreed that if given access to additional supports and resources, he would have been quick to utilize them in his classroom. Finally, Participant 8 indicated that he agreed that he performed best when he felt as though his administration was taking time to recognize the positive things that he was doing in his classroom.

### ***Participant 9***

Participant 9 identified herself as a 31–40-year-old white female. This participant indicated having zero to three years of teaching experience with seven to 10 years spent in the industry prior to entering the classroom. This participant strongly agreed that her education was

not originally for the occupation of teaching. Participant 9 indicated that she strongly disagreed with the statement that she could see herself in the occupation of teaching for many years. Additionally, she indicated that she strongly agreed that she had considered going into a different occupation. She neither agreed nor disagreed that she was sometimes dissatisfied with the occupation of teaching.

Participant 9 agreed that a good work-life balance for alternatively certified educators helps provide a more effective and successful education profession. She also indicated that she agreed that her work took up time that she would like to spend with family and friends. Participant 9 felt as though she agreed with the statement that she often felt as though she received adequate supports at work, and she neither agreed nor disagreed that her local school administration was very supportive of her at work.

She agreed that she was confident in her ability to do her job and disagreed that the teacher preparation program that provided her with alternative certification did a good job of preparing her for success. Participant 9 agreed with the statement that the challenges faced at work were minor and could be easily overcome. She strongly disagreed that she felt confident that she had a mentor teacher that she could approach with any questions or concerns at work.

Participant 9 neither agreed nor disagreed that as a novice educator, she felt as though the daily workload was manageable. She agreed that if given access to additional supports and resources, she would have been quick to utilize them in her classroom. Finally, Participant 9 indicated that she agreed that she performed best when she felt as though her administration was taking time to recognize the positive things that she was doing in her classroom.

***Participant 10***

Participant 10 identified herself as a 31–40-year-old white female. This participant indicated having seven to 10 years of teaching experience with zero to three years spent in the industry prior to entering the classroom. This participant neither agreed nor disagreed that her education was not originally for the occupation of teaching. Participant 10 indicated that she agreed with the statement that she could see herself in the occupation of teaching for many years. Additionally, she indicated that she strongly agreed that she had considered going into a different occupation. She agreed that she was sometimes dissatisfied with the occupation of teaching.

Participant 10 agreed that a good work-life balance for alternatively certified educators helps provide a more effective and successful education profession. She also indicated that she agreed that her work took up time that she would like to spend with family and friends. Participant 10 felt as though she neither agreed nor disagreed with the statement that she often felt as though she received adequate supports at work, and she agreed that her local school administration was very supportive of her at work.

She agreed that she was confident in her ability to do her job and neither agreed nor disagreed that the teacher preparation program that provided her with alternative certification did a good job of preparing her for success. Participant 10 agreed with the statement that the challenges faced at work were minor and could be easily overcome. She disagreed that she felt confident that she had a mentor teacher that she could approach with any questions or concerns at work.

Participant 10 disagreed that as a novice educator, she felt as though the daily workload was manageable. She strongly agreed that if given access to additional supports and resources, she would have been quick to utilize them in her classroom. Finally, Participant 10 indicated that

she strongly agreed that she performed best when she felt as though her administration was taking time to recognize the positive things that she was doing in her classroom.

### ***Onboarding Survey Majority Responses***

As illustrated in Table 1, the following options received the greatest percentage of responses by survey participants:

1. When asked if the participants' education was not originally for the occupation of teaching, 80% of participants either strongly agreed or agreed.
2. When asked if participants can see themselves in the occupation of teaching for many years, 70% of participants either strongly agreed or agreed.
3. When asked if participants would consider going into a different occupation, 80% of participants strongly agreed or agreed.
4. When asked if participants were sometimes dissatisfied with the occupation of teaching, 50% of participants neither agreed nor disagreed.
5. When asked if a good work-life balance for alternatively certified educators helped to provide a more effective and successful education profession, 80% of participants either strongly agreed or agreed.
6. When asked if participants' work took up time that they would have liked to have spent with family/friends, 90% of participants either strongly agreed or agreed.
7. When asked if participants often felt as though they received adequate supports at work, 60% of participants either strongly agreed or agreed.
8. When asked if participants felt that their administration was very supportive of them at work, 60% of participants either strongly agreed or agreed.

9. When asked if participants were confident in their ability to do their job, 80% of participants either strongly agreed or agreed.
10. When asked if participants felt that the teacher preparation program that provided them with alternative certification did a good job of preparing them for success, 40% of participants neither agreed nor disagreed, and 40% of participants either disagreed or strongly disagreed.
11. When asked if participants' challenges faced at work were minor and could be easily overcome, 60% of participants strongly agreed or agreed.
12. When asked if participants felt confident that they had a mentor teacher that they could approach with any questions or concerns at work, 70% of participants either strongly agreed or agreed.
13. When asked if as a novice educator, participants felt as though the daily workload was manageable, 50% of participants indicated that they strongly disagreed or disagreed.
14. When asked if participants would be quick to utilize additional supports within their classroom if they were given access to them, 80% of participants strongly agreed or agreed.
15. When asked if participants felt as though they performed best when they felt as though their administration was taking time to recognize the positive things that they were doing in their classroom, 90% of participants strongly agreed or agreed.

These responses allowed for the primary researcher to better understand the unique experience of each of the 10 study participants.



**Table 1***Onboarding Survey Response Rates*

	% Strongly Disagree	% Disagree	% Neither Agree Nor Disagree	% Agree	% Strongly Agree
1. My education was not originally for this occupation.	0	0	20	30	50
2. I can/could see myself in this occupation for many years.	20	0	10	40	30
3. I would/did consider going into a different occupation.	0	0	20	40	40
4. Sometimes I am/was dissatisfied with this occupation.	0	20	50	20	10
5. A good work-life balance for alternatively certified educators helps provide a more effective and successful education profession.	0	0	20	40	40
6. My work takes/took up time that I'd like to spend with family/friends.	0	10	0	60	30
7. I often feel/felt as though I receive adequate supports at work.	0	30	10	30	30
8. I feel/felt that my administration is very supportive of me at work.	0	10	30	30	30
9. I am/was confident in my ability to do my job.	0	10	10	40	40
10. I feel that the teacher preparation program that provided/was providing me with alternative certification did a good job of preparing me for success.	10	30	40	20	0

	% Strongly Disagree	% Disagree	% Neither Agree Nor Disagree	% Agree	% Strongly Agree
11. The challenges faced at work are/were minor and could be easily overcome.	0	20	20	40	20
12. I feel/felt confident that I had a mentor teacher that I can/could approach with any questions or concerns at work.	10	20	0	20	50
13. As a novice educator, I feel/felt as though the daily workload is/was manageable.	10	40	10	20	20
14. If given access to additional supports and resources, I would be/have been quick to utilize them in my classroom.	0	0	20	40	40
15. I perform best when I feel as though my administration is taking time to recognize the positive things that I am doing in my classroom.	10	0	0	60	30

In order to calculate the mean and standard deviations for each of the 15 Likert scale questions referenced in Table 2, a Google Sheet was used to input the following formulas: =AVERAGE( ) and =STDEV.S( ). The purpose of identifying the mean for each question was to determine what the average response rate was for the 10 study participants. Questions with a mean of 4 or higher indicate that the average response was an agreement with the questions. Questions with a mean less than 3 indicate that on average, there was no agreement. The questions that received the most agreement were as follows:

- My education was not originally for this occupation.

- I would/did consider going into a different occupation.
- A good work-life balance for alternatively certified educators helps provide a more effective and successful education profession.
- My work takes/took up time that I'd like to spend with family/friends.
- I am/was confident in my ability to do my job.
- If given access to additional supports and resources, I would be/have been quick to utilize them in my classroom.
- I perform best when I feel as though my administration is taking time to recognize the positive things that I am doing in my classroom.

On average, there was no agreement with the following two statements:

- I feel that the teacher preparation program that provided/was providing me with alternative certification did a good job of preparing me for success.
- As a novice educator, I feel/felt as though the daily workload is/was manageable.

**Table 2***Onboarding Survey Statistics*

<b>Question</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
1. My education was not originally for this occupation.	4.3	0.82
2. I can/could see myself in this occupation for many years.	3.6	1.51
3. I would/did consider going into a different occupation.	4.2	0.79
4. Sometimes I am/was dissatisfied with this occupation.	3.2	0.92
5. A good work-life balance for alternatively certified educators helps provide a more effective and successful education profession.	4.2	0.79
6. My work takes/took up time that I'd like to spend with family/friends.	4.1	0.88
7. I often feel/felt as though I receive adequate supports at work.	3.6	1.26
8. I feel/felt that my administration is very supportive of me at work.	3.8	1.03
9. I am/was confident in my ability to do my job.	4.1	0.99
10. I feel that the teacher preparation program that provided/was providing me with alternative certification did a good job of preparing me for success.	2.7	0.95
11. The challenges faced at work are/were minor and could be easily overcome.	3.6	1.07
12. I feel/felt confident that I had a mentor teacher that I can/could approach with any questions or concerns at work.	3.8	1.55
13. As a novice educator, I feel/felt as though the daily workload is/was manageable.	2.6	1.65
14. If given access to additional supports and resources, I would be/have been quick to utilize them in my classroom.	4.2	0.79
15. I perform best when I feel as though my administration is taking time to recognize the positive things that I am doing in my classroom.	4	1.15

## **Interview Question Responses**

To obtain additional feedback on participants' experiences as novice alternatively certified educators, interviews were conducted, recorded, and transcribed through Zoom. Upon completion of each interview, transcriptions were checked against the audio recordings for inaccuracies, corrected, and sent to the participants to review and approve for use in the study through the process of member checking. Each of the 10 participants were asked six main interview questions along with three follow-up questions as needed. These questions were asked in an effort to establish which types of supports were most effective in retaining nontraditional or alternatively certified teachers for longer than three years in the profession, which challenges influenced the departure of nontraditional or alternatively certified teachers from the teaching field, and in what ways could the local administration's adoption of behavior management systems contribute to the improvement of teacher retention rates. Each of the participants' unique stories and experiences influenced their answers to each question, but they ultimately helped to shed light upon some of the challenges that alternatively certified educators have faced within the P-20 system that have been implemented throughout the United States.

### ***Question 1***

The first question asked of participants was, "What, if any, provided supports did you feel made an impact on your decision to stay within the classroom?" Participant 3 stated that the support that made the greatest impact on her decision to stay within the classroom was the assignment of a mentor teacher. She said:

I was provided a mentor, and the mentor process was very good. It just gave a level of comfort to have some specific person to go to. If I had any questions on anything or

concerns, just having that initial support off the bat relieved stress. It gave really good support to make you want to stay just from the beginning.

Participant 4 also felt that the most impactful support provided to her within her first few years in the classroom was the assignment of a mentor teacher. She stated:

The most important [support] for me was that I was paired with a mentor my very first day in education. We had a mentor system at that school that was fairly strong, and mine was a person that I could go to with any question. She never made me feel like any question was too small, or that I was any trouble. I went to her with a lot because I was alternatively certified. She helped me out with so many things that I think that mentoring program made the biggest difference for me.

Participant 6 also indicated that having an active mentor teacher made a significant difference in her ability to feel successful. She stated:

My school system also provides new incoming teachers to the school system, regardless of certification, a new teacher academy where we meet once a semester for two years. They give us helpful hints and tips on how to navigate through the school year. That's somewhat helpful. They did ask for feedback this year, and I gave them some feedback on what I thought would be more helpful next year because I felt like a lot of it was a bit of a waste of time.

Access to a mentor teacher, or even teachers that were willing to provide friendship and support, seemed to be a key support to multiple study participants. Participant 8 was fortunate enough to be employed by his alma mater. As a result, he indicated that being surrounded by familiarity with both objects and people made a significant difference for him in the support that

he felt during his first few years in the classroom. He said, “I didn’t feel any fear of going to ask questions if I didn’t have the answers.”

Participant 10 found a great deal of support through her professional teacher association. She stated, “I had really good support from our CTSO program and CTE content-specific program statewide. The other teachers in my discipline really stepped up to help and support one another. I think that was a blessing.”

### ***Question 2***

The second question asked of participants was, “What additional supports would you have utilized if they had been made available during your initial three years of teaching?”

Participant 1 felt as though it made it difficult to feel prepared to enter into the classroom due to the fact that initial mandatory supports were not catered specifically to alternative certified educators. She stated:

They put us in the same professional development at the beginning of the year with veteran teachers. I don’t feel like we just ever had a basic ‘crash course’ of how you structure a lesson plan. We were not taught how you build assignments. I found myself utilizing past teachers’ assignments, which sometimes I felt were a little ineffective. So, I think maybe a longer orientation just to teach the basics of teaching is something that I would have probably enjoyed.

In relation to content-specific development with a basic “crash course” for teaching, Participant 2 wished she had been given access to a true mentor program. She stated, “We really didn’t have a mentor program where I was. If I had had supports like a teacher mentor program or someone who would check in on me every week” she felt that it would have made a difference. Participant 2 also added to her response saying, “I had zero teaching experience, so I

didn't understand impacts. If I had had a mentorship where I could actually go observe in the classroom and see what other teachers did and how they implemented things, I think that would have made an impact.”

Participant 3 responded to this question by saying that her most desired additional support would have been the selection of lesson plans to use as a guideline. She said:

Coming in, there were no lesson plans at all, so I had to come up with those and figure those out. Being a non-traditional or alternatively certified teacher and not ever having taught, I knew that there were guidelines that you needed to follow, but not having that provided initially was a little bit of a struggle.

Participant 4 said:

There were not a lot of workshops available in those first three years where I was an educator because I had not really connected with a state organization. Most of our workshop stuff was geared toward the four core curriculums, so that made it a little harder.

The need for additional supports certainly served as an overarching response theme. As a result, Participant 5 answered by saying that:

Content-specific professional development wasn't even offered to us. A teacher's not just going to go searching for professional development. It needs to be offered or advertised to us. They need to show us, 'Oh, this is what you could be doing. This is the type of professional development that you could be doing to further your career and to make you a better teacher.' I don't feel like in my first three years of teaching that [content-specific professional development] was even a thing that was offered to me.



Participant 7 also expressed a desire for more catered professional development for alternatively certified teachers. He said:

I would love to have taken more informal courses on classroom assessment. That's creating assessment, understanding what you're assessing for, and how to use assessment data to help plan going forward. I would have also liked to have had some professional development that talked about pacing.

Participant 8 referenced a need for additional conversation and alignment between his department members. He said, "I think having a little more conversation and structured alignment with other teachers to double check that I was keeping up with the correct pace and aligning with them structurally would have been more beneficial to me." Participant 9 felt as though "more continuing education programs, more support from [her] co-teacher, and more check-ins from administration" would have been supports that she would have utilized had they been offered to her during her first three years of teaching.

Participant 10 referenced having to split her first three years between two schools. While both schools were located in systems with a mandatory beginning teacher program, the quality of the two programs was vastly different. She said:

My initial full three years of teaching were split between two schools. The first two years of teaching, I was fortunate enough to be in a school district that had a fabulous beginning teacher program. The school that I moved to later did not have a great beginning teacher program, but this particular one was awesome. They were very supportive in checking in with me and making sure I understood teacher basics as a lateral entry or alternatively certified teacher.

Again, my third year of teaching I was at a new school. The beginning teacher program there was not helpful and most of the time it was non-existent. I would have appreciated more support from the school when it came to learning or branching out on my teaching strategies. For someone like me who didn't have formal teaching experience or training, I do wish that there was more of that support.

### ***Follow-Up Question 1***

The first follow-up question asked of participants was, “Were there any supports being offered that you did not choose to utilize during your initial stint in the classroom?” Participants 2 and 4 mentioned having spent time outside of the classroom searching for other supports and resources online in order to better their teaching abilities during the first few years spent in the classroom. Participant 2 said:

I feel like I did utilize what was available to me because I had to take anything I could get. I spent a lot of time searching the internet and looking at things, and I didn't even understand what some of the terminology was.

Participant 4 stated that they “incorporated things from just about any curriculum and looked for things online and through organizations.”

All but three of the 10 participants indicated that they felt as though they had utilized all of the supports that were offered to them throughout their first few years in the classroom. According to Participant 3, the textbook that was provided to her to utilize as a resource was very outdated and difficult to follow. In response to this question, she said:

The reason I didn't use the textbook was that it was extremely complicated and overdone. It was difficult to follow. I don't think it was a great textbook, and in talking with the other teachers none of them used the textbook for that very reason. If I'd had a

better textbook I would have used it, but I just I did not use the textbook that was provided.

In regard to this question, some responses stood out more than others. Participant 7 stated that:

Every now and then I had an administrator that would try to talk candidly to me. Some wanted me to speak openly, but coming from the industry, you did not speak openly. They were really trying to get me to open up and realize that what we do has a lot of art to it, not just science, but I didn't. Looking back, I didn't take advantage of that as much as I should have.

While multiple study participants indicated that the assignment of a mentor teacher was their most impactful support, Participant 8 felt differently. He felt that “it was hard to line our schedules up a lot of time to sit down and talk. That was something that was offered that I probably could have used more than I did.” Participants 3, 7, and 8 felt as though they had taken advantage of every other support that was offered to them during their initial three-year stint within the classroom in order to make the alternative certification transition as simple as possible.

### ***Question 3***

The third question asked of participants was, “What, if any, challenges did you face that prompted you to consider exiting the field?” Participant 1 responded by stating, “I did not feel that the teachers had a lot of backing where the behavior management of students was concerned.” Another issue that study participants highlighted was feeling as though they were unsure of what they were doing in their new role. Participant 2 said, “I really did consider

leaving teaching just because I didn't really know what I was doing, and I felt like I wasn't making an impact."

The challenges referenced by the study participants were not limited only to those that pertained to students. Participant 6 answered by stating:

My biggest challenge was probably teachers that took a traditional route that were older and thought that I might not be as qualified to do my job. Not everybody, but I think some of them looked down on people who came in alternatively or came in later in the game, and they felt like they could tell me what to do when they couldn't or they shouldn't.

Issues with classroom management and the basic understanding of policy and procedure implementation are oftentimes a direct result of the absence of a traditional internship experience. Participant 7 stated:

When I started out, I was very poor with classroom management because I was assuming everyone had the same maturity level as I did. I had poor classroom management style. I didn't have procedures in place. Really, it was managing a classroom of 30 kids that not all of them signed up to take my course. I taught an elective course, so it made it tough.

Coming from the industry, Participant 8 struggled with acclimating to the potentially unrealistic procedures and lack of accountability given to students. He said:

I think what one of the biggest challenges I had was lack of accountability when it came to the students and deadlines and making sure they're doing their work and getting it in on time. I felt like there was a lot of leniency. When you get into the real world and the real workforce, you don't get that. I felt like it almost does a disservice with the sum of the laxity just because it's kind of setting them up for a rude awakening when they're

really held to hard deadlines and getting their work in on time.

Participant 8 also struggled with learning to form professional relationships with students due to a smaller age gap. He said:

Being a young teacher, I feel like I'm a lot closer in age than I am. At the end of the day, if they don't trust you and you don't have those relationships, a teenage kid's not going to listen to you or value anything you have to say. As you build those relationships, the stuff that you're telling them in seriousness holds more weight. They listen to you a lot more than they do if they feel like you're just an adult trying to boss them around telling them what to do."

Participant 9 dealt with some personal challenges that prompted her to consider exiting the field. She said, "I didn't love what I was doing." She wished that she "would have only been doing the higher-level courses with the seniors" and stated that her "last year before [she] went out for Covid [she] had to step back and say, 'Is this something that I really want to put the time and effort into, or do I want to go do something that I really do love?'"

Participant 10 dealt with issues that related to paid time off and retirement. In regard to this, she said:

PTO was really hard to take throughout the year. I was on a 12-month contract, and I got 12 days for the whole year to use for anything. I couldn't roll it over. It was really hard to justify using PTO for anything that could help me feel rejuvenated for the school year because I wanted to save the little bit that I had in case my daughter had an emergency. That was really uncomfortable to deal with.

#### *Question 4*

The fourth question asked of participants was, “What, if any, challenges do you feel had an impact on yours or others’ decision to remain in the classroom for longer than three years?”

Participant 2 stated:

For my master's program I had to be my supervising teacher, as well as be the teacher in the classroom. That was very redundant and ill-equipped, and I didn't feel like my college institution gave me much help in that regard.

In relation to feeling unprepared, participants also indicated that they felt crunched for time. When asked about an impactful challenge, Participant 3 stated:

My greatest challenge was the time commitment that you have to make as a teacher outside of the classroom just to keep up with what you need to be doing from a teaching perspective. There’s so many different things that you have to do outside of the classroom from a time commitment perspective. [There] are things that you could theoretically say you are being paid for, but really in reality, you’re not. You’re doing it because you don’t have time when you should be taking care of those things.

Additionally, a feeling of being unprepared to enter the classroom after working with a teacher preparation program served as a challenge for some. Participant 4 indicated that an initial challenge that she and her coworkers faced that they overcame together was finding a group within the building that they could safely confide in. She said:

I think sometimes it was a matter of banding together and finding someone that you could talk with and kind of bounce ideas off of and understood what you were going through. For many of us, our spouse, our siblings, or even our parents were not...in

education. They didn't understand what we did on a daily basis. It was important to find other people that were facing similar things and kind of bolstering each other up and supporting each other."

Unfortunately, those that are unfamiliar with alternative certification may not understand their unique set of struggles. Participant 6 responded by saying:

Sometimes I think people think [alternatively certified teachers] are more adequately prepared than we are. It really just depends on your mentor teacher and your support system. I think if you don't have a good mentor teacher or somebody that you can ask questions to, you might not want to continue if you don't have the support and the help that you need in the beginning.

Participant 7 felt as though connections formed with students, who initially presented behavioral issues, was a challenge that ultimately had a positive impact on his decision to stay in the classroom for longer than three years. He said:

When I really didn't think I was connecting to kids because it was a struggle or it was because they weren't taking well to me or not listening to me, or whatever those frustrations were - once I kind of got that ironed out - I found that kids will always come back and brag on you or talk to other teachers about how much they like you or something you said to them. I think it's those stories, even though it's kind of cliché. Those stories are what make people stay in the business. It feels good to be able to connect to some people and for you to know that you made an impact on what they are doing now.

The COVID-19 pandemic certainly had an impact on Participant 9's decision to remain in the classroom. She felt that up until the pandemic, she was comfortable where she was and did

not want to make a change but said, “When Covid happened, it forced me to ask, ‘Is this going to be long term? What do I really want to do?’”

Participant 10 felt that a lack of resources was a challenge that had an impact on both hers and others’ decisions to stay in the classroom. She stated:

The lack of resources probably would have made somebody leave. I overcame the challenge of not having resources specific to what I was teaching at that school by reaching out to others and trying to understand it by getting more involved.

### ***Follow-Up Question 2***

The second follow-up question asked of participants was, “What challenges did you face that you felt were easier to overcome than others that you have chosen to disclose?” Participant 2 said:

I was kind of worried because I’d never been in the classroom. I never did student teaching. I didn’t understand how to manage behaviors and those kinds of things, and I had quite a few challenges in those first three years. Even so, I thought, “If I can do this without having any kind of teacher training then I’m in the right spot to at least make a difference for somebody.”

Participant 3 shared that the challenge that was easiest to overcome was the mastery of her subject matter. She said, “My biggest concern was the subject matter because it’d been forever since I had a class, but it came back a whole lot quicker than I thought that it would.”

Additionally, classroom management was easier to overcome for some than for others.

Participant 4 indicated that “things like writing lesson plans and learning about time management were things that I found easier to overcome because with a lot of that it is trial and error and finding your style of teaching.”



Participant 7 felt that flexibility was a challenge that was easier for him to overcome. He said, “We’re in an industry of a lot of Type A people. I’m not really Type A, so the challenges that some people I’ve worked with have...of just being flexible with things...weren’t a challenge for me.”

### *Question 5*

The fifth question asked of participants was, “How did your institution’s administration contribute to the longevity of your time in the classroom through the implementation of behavior management systems?” Participant 1 felt as though her observing administrator was often “providing encouragement and providing constructive feedback to make [her] a better teacher.” The encouragement certainly “had a positive impact on if [she] would have wanted to stay.”

Participant 4 also had positive things to say about an administrator that was present throughout her first few years in the classroom. She said:

One of the things that I really admired about one particular administrator was the way that he kind of created this sandwich of compliments and the thing you needed to work on. He was always striving to make sure that you understood that you were valued. He also was one that helped me understand that when we were going through reviews it was never for them to have an opportunity to come in and bash you. It was always that we should be striving to improve because that’s what we are expecting out of our students. Even if you found something you needed to work on when you were having an observation, he found a way to frame it that made you willing and eager to work on it for him.

While some participants indicated a positive relationship with their administration that was maintained for several years, Participant 5 stated:

I was seriously thinking about going back into the industry. I was thinking about leaving when I was at my previous school just because of the negative environment and negative administration. It just didn't feel like I was supported at all from that standpoint. Ultimately, I decided not to leave the classroom. I decided to just switch environments, and ever since moving to my new school I have been supported by not only my administration but my coworkers and the community. That's what you need as a teacher to be able to be here and to do what you want to do and to do things that you love."

While Participant 8 struggled to think of a specific behavior management system in place for faculty and staff, he did mention appreciating the availability of certain administrators, as well as their willingness to provide routine feedback. He felt that it was very helpful to his overall development to "have an administrator as a quick reference when challenges or issues arose. Getting really quick feedback was very helpful for me to be a lot more independent as far as managing my classroom and the kids there."

Participant 9 felt as though she did not experience issues with her administration and stated that she "felt like they were supportive in most ways" and as a result, Participant 9 was "happy being there." Participant 10 stated that:

The first school that I taught at for two years had a great beginning teacher program where the assistant principal was in charge of the beginning teachers in the school. She would meet with us periodically throughout the year, and I do believe that she gave really good positive feedback. I like to hear that I'm doing the right thing, or know that I'm doing the right thing, so that was nice.

*Question 6*

The sixth question asked of participants was, “What, if anything, could your school’s administration have done differently through the implementation of behavior management systems to make a positive impact on your (or others’) decision to remain in the classroom for longer than three years?” While some participants felt as though they were very supported by and had open communication with their administration, others did not.

Participants also made it apparent that they wished behavior management systems like PBIS could be implemented for the faculty in the same way that they have been implemented with students. Participant 2 responded by saying:

I’m a big proponent of PBIS. I’ve implemented it with my students. I feel like our current faculty needs that in a bad way. I feel like we are overlooked and underappreciated in many aspects of what we do. We need to be informed of things that we are doing right and things that need work. Even something as simple as administrators choosing to stop using the word ‘don’t.’ It’s a positive way of redirection and correcting behavior.

The inconsistency in the observation schedules experienced by each of the study participants seemed to have a negative impact on the opinions of their local administration. With additional consistency in observations, administrators could have utilized behavior management systems with their faculty members. In response to this question, Participant 3 said:

I had one observation from somebody in administration, and the only feedback I got from that was a thumbs up as they were leaving the room. Better feedback would have been really good, because I, multiple times, went and asked for feedback from administration. All I got was, “I’m not hearing anything, so hearing nothing is positive.

You're doing good." That was a little bit surface.

While some participants admitted to struggling with the schedule that their local administration used to conduct observations, others commented on the way their observations were graded. Participant 4 said:

Something that I faced was that they used very traditional measures when they were doing observations. For me, in a non-traditional elective class, they wanted to look at my class and gauge it on what they were seeing in an English course or in a mathematics course. Because they expected [my classroom] to be that way, that's how they marked it during my observation. My professional record was marred because of those expectations they had, and I never could get them to understand.

One suggestion was that administrators would benefit from implementing behavior management systems in such a way that all faculty members feel supported. In regard to this, Participant 6 said:

Personally, I feel like I've been very supported by my administration, but I have seen other teachers who were not as supported by our administration and could see where people would want to leave the classroom. Sometimes the administration has chosen to side with parents or the students before consulting the teacher, and I felt like if the administration would have backed the teacher then I could see where people would stay in the teaching field longer. The teacher and the administrative staff need to be on the same page.

Local school administrators that made it a priority to make their presence known amongst their faculty and staff through consistent availability made a significant impact on alternatively educators. Participant 7 said:

Being around is huge. I never saw [the administration]. That would be a behavior management system that they probably could have done better at. Because I was so green, [and I] never saw them. To better implement [behavior management systems], I would've loved more frequent, informal check-ins. I really needed my principals to tell me that "we don't want to get rid of you. We want to grow you. We want to mold you into a better version of you. You already know the content; we need to teach you how to be a teacher."

While Participant 8 had a wonderful relationship with at least one of his school's administrators as a result of the implementation of behavior management systems, he did voice that he would have felt more supported and better tasked to make improvements in the classroom if others had been more prone to stick to a routine observation schedule. He said:

I felt like observations would be scheduled, but then they never really came to fruition to the extent that they were planned for. If it was supposed to be a once-a-month drop-in, it might have been twice a semester. I'm the kind of person that, good or bad, I want to hear what I'm doing well and what I could do better...

Participant 9 felt that her administration could have improved upon the routine schedule that it used to conduct formal observations and informal check-ins as a means to provide positive feedback to new teachers. She said she wished the administrators had made themselves "more available". Participant 10 said:

I think if they can create a better beginning teacher program that fosters the need to know that [teachers] are doing a good job or tell [teachers] what [they] need to do to do a better job, that would be really crucial. I'm a firm believer that a solid beginning teacher program can really make or break a teacher in their first three years, and so I'm very

thankful that the first school I started at had a good one because it really encouraged me to stay in the classroom.

### ***Follow-Up Question 3***

The third follow-up question asked of participants was, “Did you experience any turnover within your institution’s administrative staff during your first few years in the classroom that prevented the implementation of behavior management systems?” Participant 5 indicated that her first school hired a new principal after her first year of teaching. In reference to the first principal, she said:

The feedback from her was always positive. She was wonderful, very uplifting, and kind of like a mother figure to me. She was a great mentor and always really positive. When I was struggling in that first-year thinking, “maybe I’ve made a mistake, and maybe I’m not supposed to be doing this,” she kept me on track.

Unfortunately, the new principal that took her place did not develop the same positive relationship with Participant 5, which ultimately drove her to seek employment within another school system.

Participant 7 experienced administrative turnover within his first few years in the classroom. As a result, he said, “there was really no consistency in the mentoring. Whereas one administrator would start something, you’d have turnover and then the new regime really wouldn’t know where to pick up or where other people left off.”

Participant 9 indicated that there was turnover present within her school’s administrative staff during her first few years spent in the classroom. She said:

It was a lot of turnover, and I feel that during that time there were a lot of things that

took priority. I feel like that may have played a part in not feeling like I had that extra support that was maybe needed.

### **Interview Question Response Themes**

Based on the responses given by each of the 10 participants, there were significant themes that stood out amongst their responses. Participants favored the assignment of a mentor teacher, as well as being offered professional development that was specifically catered towards being alternatively certified. Additionally, they struggled with feeling unprepared due to the absence of a traditional internship. Finally, the implementation of behavior management systems by local school administrators was helpful to the participants that experienced them, but several indicated an administrative absence and feeling as though feedback and support were minimal during their initial stint in the classroom.

Throughout the duration of the interviews, three themes emerged from the 10 participants' responses. The three themes centered around which supports were considered to be most effective, which challenges were considered to be the most influential, and how administrators' implementation of behavior management systems impacted novice alternatively certified educators. The identification of these three major themes assisted in the identification of 15 subthemes, as well.

#### ***Theme 1***

The first theme identified through one-on-one interviews was related to which types of supports were considered to be the most effective in retaining alternatively certified educators for longer than three years. As referenced in Table 3, some notable responses collected from study participants included:

- “I think that mentoring program made the biggest difference for me.”

- “The other teachers in my discipline really stepped up to help and support one another.”
- “Content-specific professional development wasn’t even offered to us.”
- “A longer orientation to teach the basics of teaching is something that I would have probably enjoyed.”
- “I incorporated things from just about any curriculum and looked for things online and through organizations.”

These were the key words that emerged through the participants’ support-related responses: mentoring program, support, professional development, orientation, and curriculum.

### ***Theme 2***

The second theme identified through one-on-one interviews was related to which challenges were the most influential when it came to alternatively certified educators’ decisions to exit the field. As referenced in Table 3, some notable responses collected from study participants included:

- “As you build those relationships, the stuff that you’re telling them in seriousness holds more weight.”
- “I had poor classroom management style.”
- “There’s so many different things that you have to do outside of the classroom from a time commitment perspective.”
- “The lack of resources probably would have made somebody leave.”
- “I was kind of worried because I’d never been in the classroom.”

These were the key words that emerged through the participants’ challenge-related responses: relationships, classroom management, time commitment, lack of resources, and worried.



### *Theme 3*

The third theme identified through one-on-one interviews was related to the adoption and implementation of faculty-focused behavior management systems by local school administrators.

As referenced in Table 3, some notable responses collected from study participants included:

- “My direct rater was providing encouragement and providing constructive feedback to make me a better teacher.”
- He was always striving to make sure that you understood that you were valued.”
- “I had one observation from somebody in administration, and the only feedback I got from that was a thumbs up as they were leaving the room.”
- “Being around is huge. I never saw them.”
- “Whereas one administrator would start something, you’re have turnover and then the new regime really wouldn’t know where other people left off.”

These were the key words that emerged through the participants’ responses related to the implementation of behavior management systems for faculty by administrators: feedback, valued, observation, never, and turnover.

**Table 3***Interview Question Response Themes*

Themes	Quotations	Subthemes
Supports	"I think that <b>mentoring program</b> made the biggest difference for me."	Mentor Teacher
	"The other teachers in my discipline really stepped up to help and <b>support</b> one another."	Support
	"Content-specific <b>professional development</b> wasn't even offered to us."	Professional Development
	"A longer <b>orientation</b> to teach the basics of teaching is something that I would have probably enjoyed."	Beginning Teacher Program
	"I incorporated things from just about any <b>curriculum</b> and looked for things online and through organizations."	Additional Supports
Challenges	"As you build those <b>relationships</b> , the stuff that you're telling them in seriousness holds more weight."	Relationships
	"I had poor <b>classroom management</b> style."	Classroom Management
	"There's so many different things that you have to do outside of the classroom from a <b>time commitment</b> perspective."	Time Commitment
	"The <b>lack of resources</b> probably would have made somebody leave."	Lack of Preparation and Resources
	"I was kind of <b>worried</b> because I'd never been in the classroom."	Uneasiness
Administrators and Behavior Management Systems	"My direct rater was providing encouragement and providing constructive <b>feedback</b> to make me a better teacher."	Post-Observation Feedback
	"He was always striving to make sure that you understood that you were <b>valued</b> ."	Administrative Support

Themes	Quotations	Subthemes
	“I had <b>one observation</b> from somebody in administration, and the only feedback I got from that was a thumbs up as they were leaving the room.	Observation Frequency
	“Being around is huge. I <b>never</b> saw them.”	Lack of Availability
	“Whereas one administrator would start something, you’d have <b>turnover</b> and then the new regime really wouldn’t know where to pick up or where other people left off.”	Turnover

## **Chapter V: Conclusion and Discussion**

### **Summary of Study**

To summarize the study, a group of 10 alternatively certified educators were asked to share with the researcher about their unique experiences as novice teachers. The main goals of the study were to assess which supports these educators deemed to be the most helpful to the overall success of alternatively certified educators, which challenges were the hardest to overcome, and how local school administrators influenced the overall success of alternatively certified educators through the behavior management systems that were implemented with the faculty.

Prior to working with the study participants, a literature review was conducted in order to better understand alternatively certified teachers' impact on the national teacher shortage. Concerns that were revealed in the literature included a lack of a traditional internship, a lack of resources, and difficulty forming relationships with local administrators. The responses shared by the study participants coincided with many of the themes identified in Chapter II.

To analyze each participant's individual thoughts on their experiences as an alternatively certified educator, participants were asked to complete the following tasks: review, sign, and return a signed participation consent form, complete a 20-question onboarding survey, take part in an audio-only recorded and transcribed Zoom interview, and participate in member checking once the interview transcription was returned to each participant for review and approval after the conclusion of each interview. Once the member checking process was completed, the researcher extracted notable quotes from each participant and identified themes which existed throughout the collection of their responses to each question.

## **Conclusions**

While it seems practical to assume that alternatively certified educators possess the ability to help solve the current teacher shortage that the United States continues to face, it is imperative that those educators be given adequate supports and interventions as they transition from the industry into the classroom. The study demonstrates that without appropriate supports and interventions, alternatively certified educators run the risk of choosing to exit the classroom and return to the industry in an attempt to feel confident and successful within their line of work. One issue with seeking to increase the supports offered to this group of educators is that without a standardized mandate being implemented nationwide, there is no guarantee that systems will choose to implement the interventions necessary to provide alternatively certified educators with a successful transition. The participants' responses prove that the absence of mandated supports results in varying levels of self-efficacy dependent upon each participant's individual assignment.

### ***Onboarding Survey Responses***

The onboarding survey suggested that the study's alternatively certified participants underwent similar experiences throughout their first three years spent in the classroom. While discrepancies existed between the onboarding survey and the interview responses, this could likely be attributed to the fact that participants were given a copy of the interview questions in advance in order to encourage ample thought and reflection. Participants were not given a copy of the onboarding survey questions ahead of time, which likely resulted in a quick submission upon receipt.

Regarding the outcomes of the onboarding survey, it was not surprising that the majority of the participants indicated that they would or did consider going into a different occupation,

which has likely contributed to the nation's teacher shortage (Brooks, 2015). Surprisingly, half of the study participants neither agreed nor disagreed that they were sometimes dissatisfied with the occupation. These findings go against the assumption that the unique set of challenges faced by the alternatively certified population cause them to feel dissatisfied on the job (Disberger et al., 2023).

There is no surprise that the majority of participants agreed that a good work-life balance for alternatively certified educators helps provide a more effective and successful education profession. Similarly, the majority of participants agreed that their work takes up time that they would like to spend with family and friends. Previous research suggests that work-life balance is critical to the overall success rate of educators regardless of their certification pathway (Crutchfield, 2010).

The fact that participant responses were distributed across the board when asked if they often feel as though they receive adequate supports at work was unexpected. Based on previous research, it was assumed that the majority of the responses would indicate at least some level of disagreement with this statement. According to the research conducted by Keese et al. (2022), one study participant had considered exiting the profession prior to the end of the school year due to the minimal support received from their school. Regardless of certification route novice educators possess an increased need for school-level supports (Malow-Iroff et al., 2007).

There was some variance in the responses that related to administrative support. Participants indicated a varying level of confidence in their respective administration's support level. The interview responses supported this trend. Only one participant indicated that they disagreed with the statement that they feel confident in their ability to do their job, while the vast

majority agreed to some extent. Unfortunately, the survey did not provide the ability to gauge what caused the one participant to respond as an outlier.

The majority of participants disagreed to some extent that they felt that the teacher preparation program that provided them with alternative certification did a good job of preparing them for success. Surprisingly, four of the participants indicated that they neither agreed nor disagreed with this statement. The interview questions revealed an obvious need for better preparation programs and more specialized professional development opportunities.

The majority of participants agreed to some extent that the challenges faced at work were minor and could be easily overcome. Additionally, over half of the participants indicated that they felt confident that they have a mentor teacher that they can approach with any questions or concerns at work. This supports the fact that participants indicated that their most valuable support during their first few years in the classroom was the assignment of a willing and able mentor teacher.

Participants indicated varying levels of agreement with the statement that as a novice educator, they felt as though the daily workload was manageable. Responses being scattered across the board came as a surprise, as some of the interview question responses indicated that time management and time commitments had proven to be issues for novice alternatively certified educators. Participants indicated significant agreement that if given access to additional supports and resources, they would be quick to utilize them in their classroom. The interview question responses suggested the same.

The vast majority of participants indicated that they performed best when they felt as though their administration was taking time to recognize the positive things that they were doing in their classroom. Again, these responses are supported by the need for administrative feedback

and availability, which are frequently referenced through interview responses and previous literature. Local school administrators possess the ability to positively impact teacher self-efficacy through feedback that accurately praises their performance in the classroom (Mireles-Rios & Becchio, 2018).

### ***Interview Responses***

Through speaking with 10 study participants about their individual experiences as novice alternatively certified educators, it has become apparent that the individuals experienced various levels of supports. This is primarily dependent of their individual state department of education requirements, their system's implementation of a beginning or new teacher program, their local school's administrative levels of support, their ability to receive content-specific and new teacher professional development experiences, and their access to veteran and mentor teachers that served as positive role models throughout their transition into the classroom. Study participants indicated increased levels of self-efficacy after the completion of their first three years in the classroom if they were given access to additional supports which were catered towards the alternatively certified population.

The first theme identified through the responses of the 10 study participants was related to the supports deemed most effective for success during the first three years of teaching. Participants suggested through their responses that one of the most valuable supports in the early years of their teaching career had been the assignment of a committed mentor teacher. Additionally, they felt as though they had put forth their best efforts in making use of the supports and resources that had been provided to them within the first few years of teaching. Some even mentioned seeking additional supports on their own accord. However, the majority of participants felt as though they would benefit from additional professional development



opportunities that were catered specifically towards the alternatively certified population. They also referenced the desire to have easier access to resources that could have better assisted them in learning to create lesson plans and assessments for their own students.

The second theme identified through the responses of the 10 study participants related to influential challenges faced the first three years of teaching. The most notable challenge referenced by the study's participants was a lack of preparation. This was due to the fact that the participants had not been formally trained to manage a classroom through their time spent in the industry. Participants also referenced issues with time commitments within the first few years in the classroom and struggled to find time during actual contract hours to get things accomplished. Finally, study participants experienced challenges with forming relationships during the early years. While some struggled to find a group of like-minded individuals that they could confide in, others struggled to learn how to form meaningful relationships with their students.

The third theme identified through the responses of the 10 study participants related to the administrators' implementation of behavior management systems. Study participants felt as though turnover within their administrative staff prevented the consistent implementation of behavior management systems amongst the faculty and staff. Additionally, those that experienced inconsistency or a lack of availability with their administrators admitted to forming negative opinions of those in administrative positions. Finally, participants that experienced administrators that provided a great deal of support and encouragement through both formal and informal observations and check-ins expressed a significantly more positive interpretation of their feelings of self-efficacy during their first few years spent in the classroom.

## **Relationship of Conclusions to Other Research**

As with previous research, the survey and interviews conducted throughout the duration of the study suggest that alternatively certified educators possess a unique set of needs upon entering the classroom from the industry. The limitations of teacher preparation programs are referenced by the study's participants. These limitations are supported by Claflin et al. in referencing that some teacher preparation programs for alternatively certified educators often work to educate participants on lesson planning and classroom management but vary in the exposure given to content knowledge and pedagogy (2022). New teachers come into the field because they desire to make a difference in the lives of the students that have been tasked to teach (Claflin et al., 2023), so it is imperative that they be given the tools necessary to do so regardless of their certification route.

Professional development opportunities that are catered to the specific needs of the alternatively certified population were also mentioned frequently by study participants. This notion is supported by research conducted by LaRose et al. (2023) and Rose and Sughrue (2021) that suggested that professional development programs created specifically for alternatively certified teachers should be tailored to basic classroom management practices, effective lesson planning, and mastering the best practices to encourage student involvement and commitment. The stress associated with feeling ill-prepared within the first few years spent in the classroom seemed to be a trend among the alternatively certified population.

The research of Redding and Smith (2016) acknowledged that alternatively certified educators received the bulk of their training during the first two years of their time in the classroom. Understanding how critical the first few years can be for the trajectory of the alternatively certified population should influence school systems to better cater to their needs

through professional development and mentoring programs. “The promotion of student learning with alternatively certified teachers is made possible when school or district leadership ‘fill the gaps’ in their preparation through the employment of appropriate supports” (Rose & Sughrue, 2021, p. 458).

The lack of a traditional student teaching internship prevented new educators from drawing on past experiences within their classrooms and contributed to the attrition of alternatively certified educators (Redding & Smith, 2016). As a result, on-site job training is critical to the overall success of an alternatively certified educator. Mandated beginning teacher programs, professional development courses that focus on the basics of classroom management and lesson preparation, and mentor/mentee relationships are just some of the ways that school systems can better support their alternatively certified population, as alternatively certified educators lack the formal classroom training that exists within traditional certification programs (Duncan et al., 2013).

The study’s participants indicated positive feelings towards their experiences with a mentor teacher. These programs can serve as an asset to alternatively certified educators; however, it is important that those serving in these roles be prepared to do so. In addition to a lack of time, some mentors are unable to fulfill the requirements of their position because they are not adequately trained to take on a mentee during the early stages of their career (O’Connor et al., 2011). School systems would benefit from providing additional trainings to mentors that are both willing and able to provide adequate supports to novice alternatively certified teachers. New teachers look forward to collaborating with peers, working with mentors, and receiving constructive criticism and feedback on their performance as they progress through the early stages of their careers (Harfitt, 2015).

The most prevalent obstacles faced by novice alternatively certified teachers include “meeting the needs of diverse student populations, classroom management and instructional strategies, lesson planning, assessment, student motivation, parent interaction, time management, and management of job-related stress” (Rose & Sughrue, 2021, p. 451). Study participants also indicated feeling incapable of implementing effective classroom management strategies, struggling to write a lesson plan, having little to no knowledge of assessment, and issues with time management during the early years in the classroom. Alternatively certified teachers need to be educated on “the use of rubrics, formative and summative assessment, aligning instruction with standards and 21st-century skills, forming relationships with students, engaging students in developing classroom rules and procedures, and classroom management” (Bowling & Ball, 2018, p. 115). Neglecting to provide alternatively certified teachers with the tools necessary to accomplish these goals only increases the stress that they experience during the early stages of their career.

The leadership of the employing school district or local school has a great deal of influence when it comes to the long-term success of alternatively certified educators. Research suggests that one of the most influential challenges that novice teachers face is the environment in which they teach and the school climate that has been established (Grant & Brantlinger, 2022). Keese et al. (2022) suggested “that of all the contextual factors affecting teachers’ decisions to remain in the classroom, their perceptions of their administrator(s) are the most predictive.” Varying levels of perceived administrative support were referenced by the study’s participants. The positive feelings associated with supportive administrators that continually make themselves available to alternatively certified educators seem to have a significant influence as to whether or not they choose to remain within the classroom.

The feedback that was received from administration during the first few years of teaching made an impact on the study's participants. They made it clear that routine interactions with their administrators that resulted in constructive but encouraging feedback made a significant difference in their feelings of self-efficacy. For some participants, the informal and formal observation schedules were initially intimidating. However, they mentioned that the consistency of helpful and supportive administrators through informal observations helped them to feel better prepared in their daily performance as an educator. As for formal observations, it is suggested that meaningful and constructive conversations serve as a better follow-up method than assigning a numeric score (Vandermolen & Meyer-Looze, 2021).

## **Discussion**

The following hypotheses have been tested throughout the duration of the study:

1. Supports, such as community engagement, reduced workloads, increased planning time, administrative support, and tailored professional development opportunities, would be considered valuable resources to novice alternatively certified educators.
2. Challenges, such as lack of support, increased stressors, the inability to establish a functional work-life balance, and the opportunity to earn increased pay and respect within the industry, are challenges associated with the decision of alternatively certified educators to exit the field.
3. Behavior management systems that are implemented by local administrators possess the ability to positively impact an alternatively certified educator's perception of the culture, values, and long-term impact of their individual workplace assignment.

The data collected throughout this study suggests that while alternatively certified educators do appreciate community engagement and feel as though they struggle to complete all

necessary tasks during their allotted planning time, the most valuable supports indicated by study participants include the assignment of a willing and able mentor teacher and tailored professional development opportunities. Ironically, none of the study participants referenced pay or respect as the most prevalent challenges faced during their initial three years in the classroom. The most notable challenges referenced by the participants are a lack of preparation, issues with time commitments, and the inability to form meaningful relationships with both peers and students. This, however, is encouraging, as state departments and local school systems can more easily remedy the identified challenges with little to no financial burden.

The third hypothesis proved to be true in that the local school administration's implementation of behavior management systems results in a positive impact on the alternatively certified educator's perception of school culture and values. However, study participants indicated that turnover within the local school administration hindered the consistent implementation of behavior management systems and therefore increased the likelihood that negative opinions could be formed towards those in administrative positions. While participants agreed with portions of each hypothesis, they felt as though some components were not as relevant as others.

### **Practical Significance**

The practical significance of this study to today's educational model is that alternatively certified educators possess the ability to increase the overall value of a student's educational experience by bringing real-world experience into the classroom. Filling classroom vacancies with individuals seeking alternative certification exposes students to the various needs and expectations of today's workforce. Traditionally, certified educators that have spent the entirety

of their career inside of a classroom may not be able to provide students with the same insights that alternatively certified educators are able to provide.

As alternatively certified educators are forced to make long-term decisions as to whether or not they wish to remain in the classroom, it is important that state departments of education work with school systems to implement additional supports, mitigate challenges, and train local administrators to better implement behavior management systems in order to increase the overall success rate of this group of educators. Understanding shortcomings and areas for improvement from the perceptions of actual alternatively certified educators provides better insight to both state departments of education and teacher preparation programs as to what changes need to be made to current mandates. If these entities work to implement the changes addressed by the alternatively certified population as being the most critical to their overall success, the P-20 system stands a chance to replace attrition with retention for future cohorts of alternatively certified or nontraditional educators.

### **P-20 Implications**

The significance of an alternatively certified educator's successful transition into the classroom is undeniable within the P-20 system. As the purpose of the system is to support a student's educational experience from preschool to graduate school as they prepare to enter into the workforce, it is imperative that schools retain teachers on a long-term basis. While alternatively certified educators present the possibility of filling vacancies within schools, the benefits that they offer to their students are reduced if they are unable to form lasting bonds. This is especially true within secondary education where students are often assigned to the same teachers for multiple years.

***Innovation***

Within the P-20 system, it is critical that innovative techniques be employed in order to both design and offer professional development opportunities that are catered specifically towards the alternatively certified population of educators. Neglecting to offer experiences that teach these educators how to maintain basic classroom management techniques, how to create and carry out engaging lesson plans and assignments, and how to create a pacing guide for the year that works to present all required curriculum standards to students fails to set newly employed alternatively certified educators up for success. In order for the P-20 system to be innovative in regard to alternatively certified educators, state departments of education must prioritize establishing mandated guidelines to instruct both teacher preparation programs and individual school systems on presenting innovative trainings that are both useful and relevant to their alternatively certified populations.

***Implementation***

Implementing the supports necessary to assist the alternatively certified population in increasing their overall self-efficacy while transitioning into the classroom from the industry provides the P-20 system and its students with many additional benefits. The most meaningful supports indicated by the responses of the study's participants include mentor teacher programs that provide unlimited access to veteran teachers that aim to increase the confidence of alternatively certified educators, tailored professional development opportunities, mandated beginning teacher programs, and additional access to provided resources and materials. In order for alternatively certified educators to successfully transition from the industry into the classroom, the P-20 system must work to implement these supports to this unique group of educators at an increased frequency.



### ***Diversity***

Alternatively certified educators bring a great deal of diversity to the P-20 system through their exposure to various facets of the workforce. Their ability to share stories and experiences from their time spent in the industry inspires students that would otherwise neglect to pursue certain career paths to broaden their horizons and diversify the workforce. For example, a female alternatively certified Career and Technical Education instructor at the secondary level that teaches a welding course at the technical school possesses the ability to inspire young women to pursue a nontraditional certificate at the local community college. As the P-20 system works to implement initiatives to strengthen its equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts, bringing nontraditional or alternatively certified educators into vacant classrooms possesses the ability to further these initiatives through the personal experiences that they choose to share with their students.

### ***Leadership***

In order to produce leaders in education that will be viewed as assets to the P-20 system, it is urgent that both state departments of education, as well as teacher preparation programs work to establish both mandated and standardized new teacher programs that cater to the needs of the alternatively certified population. One of the study's alternatively certified participants highlighted their journey from the industry to the classroom and ultimately into administration. He detailed the shortcomings that he experienced with his administration's lack of visibility throughout his first few years spent in the classroom and noted that he works now to serve his teachers in such a way that allows for him to be present and exist as a support.

## Limitations of Study

Due to the nature of the study, it lacks generalizability. This is due to the fact that qualitative methods allow only for transferability. Only two other limitations to the study existed. First, one of the original 10 participants that chose to exit the field after their first three years came to an end stopped responding to emails and phone calls. Ultimately, the participant chose to exit the study. The study was delayed briefly, as the researcher had chosen to assign interview dates and times once all 10 consent forms and onboarding surveys had been returned. Upon the acceptance that the participant would no longer be participating in the study, the researcher returned to social media to seek a replacement participant. Once a 10<sup>th</sup> participant had been identified, the study was able to proceed as planned.

Additionally, the researcher noticed a discrepancy between the IRB application and consent form midway through the interview process. The IRB application mentioned two separate consent forms: one for general participation and a secondary form to consent to the recording and transcription of the Zoom audio interviews. Ultimately, the researcher chose to combine the two forms to simplify procedures for the study participants. The combined consent form was submitted to the IRB along with the application, but the application was not updated to reference a single consent form. Upon this realization, the researcher worked alongside the dissertation chair and MSU's IRB to amend the study's IRB application to reflect the change. This delayed the interview process slightly, as the researcher was instructed to pause involvement with study participants until the amendment was completed.

As participants were identified through their voluntary disclosure of alternative certification status through a social media account post and one-on-one conversations, there were no other limitations. Thanks to the participants' willingness to share their personal experiences,

the study revealed that supports are provided at different rates depending on state policy, individual school systems, and local administration. Additionally, a variety of challenges were disclosed, some of which were deemed easier to overcome than others. Finally, participants were not limited in their responses to questions that directly pertained to the behavior management systems implemented by their local schools' administrations. The fact that the study's design allowed for complete anonymity encouraged participants to be candid about their experiences without fear of repercussion from current or former local school administrators.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Considering that the 10 participants interviewed expressed varying amounts of support from local administrators, it seems as though future research pertaining to administrative influence on long-term commitment to the field would be helpful in combatting the teacher shortage that the nation continues to face post-COVID-19. Research should also be conducted in order to analyze the subject matter that should be included within potentially mandatory beginning teacher programs. Additionally, state departments of education would also benefit to establish whether or not there is a higher success rate for alternatively certified educators that are enrolled in and complete new or beginning teacher programs with only alternatively certified peers in comparison to programs that serve both traditionally and alternatively certified populations. Lastly, individual state departments of education and local school districts would benefit from conducting the research necessary to determine the future costs of managing the potential for the increased turnover rates that alternatively certified educators have previously experienced in comparison to that of their traditionally certified peers.

The alternatively certified population brings many benefits to the P-20 system. Their time spent in the industry prior to entering into the classroom provides students with both unique and

useful insight as to what employers are seeking from potential hires. Limiting the alternatively certified population within their first three years spent in the classroom hinders their ability to experience increased levels of self-efficacy while attempting to successfully transition from the industry to the classroom. Future research as to how the P-20 system can better cater to this unique group of individuals is critical to the success of both the educators and the students, as well as to the success of the P-20 system's initiative to reconcile the national teacher shortage that currently exists throughout the United States of America.

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## Appendix A: IRB Approval



Institutional Review Board  
328 Wells Hall  
Murray, KY 42071-3318  
(270)809-2916  
[Msu.irb@murraystate.edu](mailto:Msu.irb@murraystate.edu)

Date: 08/09/2024

Principal Investigator: Allison Heald

Faculty Sponsor: Stephanie Sullivan

IRB Approver: Candace Alvey

IRB Reference Number: 25-003

The IRB has completed its review of **Exempt** protocol Alternative Certified Educators' Impact on the Nation's Current Teacher Shortage. After review and consideration, the IRB has determined that the research as described in the protocol form, will be conducted in compliance with Murray State University Guidelines for the Protection of human participants.

**The forms and materials approved for use in this research study are attached to the email containing this letter. These are the forms and materials that must be presented to the subjects. Use of any process or forms other than those approved by the IRB will be considered misconduct in research as stated in the MSU IRB procedures and Guidelines section 20.3.**

**Your stated data collection period is from 08/09/2024-08/09/2025**

If data collection extends beyond this period, please submit a continuation to an approved protocol form detailing the new data collection period and the reason for the change.

**This Exempt approval is valid until 08/09/2024-08/09/2025.**

If data collection and analysis extends beyond this date, the research project must be reviewed as a continuation project by the IRB prior to the end of the approval period, 08/09/2025. You must reapply for IRB approval by submitting a Project Update and Closure form (available at [murraystate.edu/IRB](http://murraystate.edu/IRB)). You must allow ample time for IRB processing and decision before your expiration date, or your research must stop until IRB approval is received. If the research project is completed by the end of the approval period, a Project Update and Closure form must be submitted for the IRB review so your protocol may be closed. It is your responsibility to submit the appropriate paperwork promptly.

**This protocol is approved. You may begin data collection now.**

## Appendix B: IRB Application Amendment

Approved

09/04/2024

*Raigh Kemp*

### Institutional Review Board (IRB)

#### Application for Amendment to a Previously Approved Protocol For Investigations Involving Human Participants Murray State University

It is the principal investigator's responsibility to obtain IRB approval *PRIOR* to revising or altering the approved research protocol or Informed Consent documents *IN ANY WAY*. If the principal investigator is a student, it is the faculty sponsor's responsibility to ensure that IRB written approval is obtained *PRIOR* to revising or altering the approved research protocol or Informed Consent documents. You must submit the signed form as a pdf document and the appropriate materials that support that request as *Word* documents to [msu.irb@murraystate.edu](mailto:msu.irb@murraystate.edu).

Principal Investigator's Name: Allison Biddle Heald

Faculty Sponsor's Name: Dr. Stephanie Sullivan

IRB Protocol Number: 25-003

Project Title: Alternative Certified Educators' Impact on the Nation's Current Teacher Shortage

Description of the change being requested to an approved protocol or informed consent document: Since initial approval on 8/9/24, I noticed that there was a discrepancy between the application and the actual consent form. The application references two consent form (initial and recorded interview), but the form that was approved by the IRB was a combined consent form. That is the form that has been utilized for all 10 participants. The amendment needed is to change the verbiage on the application to reference only

Reason for the change: Since initial approval on 8/9/24, I noticed that there was a discrepancy between the application and the actual consent form. The application references two consent form (initial and recorded interview), but the form that was approved by the IRB was a combined consent form. That is the form that has been utilized for all 10 participants. The amendment needed is to change the verbiage on the application to reference only

Please attach a copy of the current approved consent form. If you are requesting permission to alter this form, please attach a copy of the revised form that you wish to use with the requested changes highlighted on it.

**You may not implement any changes to the approved protocol or informed consent documents without prior written approval of the IRB. You must submit this signed form and the appropriate supporting documents via email to [msu.irb@murraystate.edu](mailto:msu.irb@murraystate.edu).**

**Assurance Statement:** I certify that to the best of my knowledge, the changes that I am requesting will not alter the risk/benefit ratio as presented in the originally approved protocol. If the changes that I am requesting will alter this ratio, I understand that I **MUST** resubmit the full protocol with the request for alteration or revision to the IRB for a complete review.

A. *all B*

9/4/24

Principal Investigator

Date

**Approval by faculty sponsor (required for all students):**

I have read and do confirm the accuracy of this application, and I accept responsibility for the conduct of this activity.

B. Stephanie Sullivan  
Faculty Sponsor

9/4/24  
Date

---

### **Appendix C: Social Media Recruitment Post**

If you are an AL or NC educator that is currently seeking alternative certification, are alternatively certified, or previously held alternative certification, please comment below. I would greatly appreciate the opportunity to follow up with you in regard to my upcoming dissertation research. Your participation is completely voluntary but will hopefully give both state departments of education and teacher preparation programs an opportunity to make improvements for future cohorts. I will send a direct message with follow-up information to those that are willing to learn more. Thank you!





## **Appendix D: Informed Consent**

### **ALTERNATIVELY CERTIFIED EDUCATORS' IMPACT ON THE NATION'S CURRENT TEACHER SHORTAGE - INFORMED CONSENT**

**Project Period:** Summer- Fall 2024

**Principal Investigator:** Allison Heald

#### **1) PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This study will seek to identify the types of supports that alternatively certified educators find to be the most useful to their transition from the industry into the classroom. The study will also seek to assist in identifying which challenges most influence novice alternatively certified educators to depart from the field. Finally, the study will analyze the implementation of behavior management systems by local administrators and how the presence of these positively impact the overall retention rate of alternatively certified educators within classrooms.

#### **2) PARTICIPANT EXPECTATIONS**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Participants will be asked to consent to both general participation and recording of the interview. All participants will be asked to complete a 20-question online survey upon completion of the consent form. The survey will cover demographics along with a Likert scale self-reflection. Once the survey is completed, participants will be asked to schedule a 20-minute audio-only Zoom interview. Transcriptions will be taken so that the principal investigator can review for inaccuracies. After interviews are completed, participants will have access to their transcribed recordings to verify that all information is correct. After research is conducted and results are finalized, copies of the results will be made available to all participants. Participants maintain the right to exit the study at any time.

#### **3) PROCEDURES**

##### **A) RESEARCH DESIGN**

This study's research design will utilize qualitative data to analyze the experiences and stories of secondary alternatively certified educators from various subject areas. The experiences of these educators will be analyzed in an attempt to identify potential themes that can assist both state departments of education and teacher preparation programs in better preparing alternatively certified educators to experience a seamless transition into the classroom. Surveys will be distributed electronically, and interviews will be conducted and transcribed via Zoom.

##### **B) POPULATION**

Rather than focusing solely on one subject area, the participants that will make up the population will be selected from the following subject areas: physical education, art, career and

technical education (health science, business, family and consumer science, and agriscience), math, English, and history. The wide range of participants is meant to prevent bias and produce a broader range of data for state departments and teacher preparation programs to utilize for future cohorts. The participants will be identified as being or having been alternatively certified and will be approached with the intent of transcribing their personal experiences in an attempt to assist future educators.

### **C) MEASUREMENT/INSTRUMENTATION**

Data collection will include a 20-question online onboarding survey and a 20-minute audio-only transcribed Zoom interview.

### **4) EXPECTED COSTS**

Participation in this study will yield zero associated costs.

### **5) RISKS OF PARTICIPATION**

There are no known risks associated with participation in this study.

### **6) BENEFITS OF PARTICIPATION**

The results collected through this study can be utilized by alternative certification programs and state departments of education to better cater to the needs of present and future novice alternatively certified educators as they seek employment in the field. This study's goal is to establish norms that can then be transformed into potential improvements to the retention rate of alternatively certified educators during their initial three years of employment. A better understanding of what could be done to negate the attrition experienced within education is critical to the overall success of this group of educators. Assuming that norms can be established through this study, certification programs can be updated to reflect and address basic needs. These programs could then be mandated throughout all 50 states to establish uniformity and positive change.

### **7) COMPENSATION**

Participation in this study will produce zero compensation.

### **8) VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

Participants who have been identified as holding or having held alternative certification will be told about the research being done to better assist state departments and teacher preparation programs in facilitating a more seamless transition from the industry into the classroom. Participation in the study will be completely voluntary, and participants will be allowed to cease involvement at any point throughout the study. The study will in no way be affiliated with or mandated by any employing school systems within the states of Alabama or

North Carolina. Participation will take place outside of contract hours to prevent participants of being held liable of the misuse of contract hours.

## 9) CONFIDENTIALITY

Participants' opinions and experiences will be kept confidential throughout the study. All survey responses will be stored on a password-protected device. Additionally, transcribed interviews will feature audio only and will also be stored on a password-protected device. The absence of video recording is intentional to further protect the identity of the study's participants. To protect the integrity of the study, it is important that participants feel as though their input is safe in the hands of the principal investigator. This process will prevent any concern that current or future employers will gain access to any identifiable data or personal viewpoints of the alternative certification system.

## 10) CONTACT INFORMATION FOR QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS

Participants are granted the right to ask any necessary questions or seek any clarification throughout the duration of the study. Should participants have any questions or need any assistance, they are free to call principal investigator, Allison Heald, at (256) 438-3018.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant or you have concerns or general questions about the research, you may call the MSU IRB at (270) 809-2916. You may also email [msu.irb@murraystate.edu](mailto:msu.irb@murraystate.edu) to obtain any additional information or clarification.

This study and all methods were reviewed and approved by the MSU Institutional Review Board. For more information about participation in a research study and about an institutional review board (IRB) please visit [MSU IRB](#).

## 11) SIGNATURE FOR CONSENT

Your signature below indicates that you have received and reviewed study-related information and expectations. All participants will receive a copy of the signed form to keep for their records.

**Participant Decision:** By signing this consent form, you indicate that you are voluntarily choosing to take part in this study and all research components associated with it including an audio-only recorded Zoom interview.

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<b>Signature of Participant</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Printed Name</b>
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### Appendix E: Onboarding Survey

*For questions 1-5 listed below, please complete the demographic information. For questions 6-20 listed below, indicate the response that best describes your feelings towards the statement where: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. Questions are worded so that both current and former alternatively certified educators can respond to the statement.*

1. How old are you?
  - a. 18-24 Years
  - b. 25-30 Years
  - c. 31-40 Years
  - d. 51+ Years
2. What is your gender identity?
  - a. Male
  - b. Female
  - c. Transgender
  - d. Nonbinary
  - e. Prefer not to say
3. Which of the following best describes your racial/ethnic identity? Select all that apply.
  - a. African American or Black
  - b. American Indian or Alaskan Native
  - c. Asian or Pacific Islander
  - d. Hispanic or Latino
  - e. White or Caucasian

- f. Other
4. How many years of industry experience did you have prior to entering into the classroom?
- a. 0-3
  - b. 4-6
  - c. 7-10
  - d. 11-15
  - e. 16-20
  - f. 21+
5. How many years have you currently completed in the classroom?
- a. 0-3
  - b. 4-6
  - c. 7-10
  - d. 11-15
  - e. 16-20
  - f. 21+

---

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
6. My education was not originally for this occupation.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I can/could see myself in this occupation for many years.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I would/did consider going into a different occupation.	1	2	3	4	5

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	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
9. Sometimes I am/was dissatisfied with this occupation.	1	2	3	4	5
10. A good work-life balance for alternatively certified educators helps provide a more effective and successful education profession.	1	2	3	4	5
11. My work takes/took up time that I'd like to spend with family/friends.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I often feel/felt as though I receive adequate supports at work.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I feel/felt that my administration is very supportive of me at work.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I am/was confident in my ability to do my job.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I feel that the teacher preparation program that provided/was providing me with alternative certification did a good job of preparing me for success.	1	2	3	4	5
16. The challenges faced at work are/were minor and could be easily overcome.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I feel/felt confident that I had a mentor teacher that I can/could approach with any questions or concerns at work.	1	2	3	4	5
18. As a novice educator, I feel/felt as though the daily workload is/was manageable.	1	2	3	4	5

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
19. If given access to additional supports and resources, I would be/have been quick to utilize them in my classroom.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I perform best when I feel as though my administration is taking time to recognize the positive things that I am doing in my classroom.	1	2	3	4	5