NEW BEGINNINGS: THE INFLUENCE OF NEW TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAMS

ON ALTERNATIVELY CERTIFIED TEACHERS IN TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

A Record of Study

by

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates alternatively certified, first and second year teachers within a region in Texas and will present focus group findings and survey results on how new teacher induction programs could influence the thoughts and perceptions of alternatively certified teachers during their first years of teaching. This study seeks to understand new teacher induction programs that take place in the respective school districts and then explain the importance of a quality new teacher induction program for alternatively certified teachers. Findings from the focus groups and surveys will identify the aspects of the new teacher induction programs that new teachers felt were most important, followed by feedback and suggestions on how to improve new teacher induction programs moving forward. Data were analyzed using qualitative inductive analysis. The results will give administration insight on different practices to support alternatively certified, new teachers when they enter into the education profession through a new teacher induction program and recommendations for further study on induction programs.

DEDICATION

This Record of Study is dedicated to my family. To my dad, who has continuously challenged me to be the best version of myself, a strong leader, and reminds me that relationships are the most important thing. Without his encouragement and leadership, I wouldn't have dreamed this was possible. To my mom who has been my number one cheerleader, supporter, and babysitter throughout this entire process. Thank you for always being there when I needed you the most. My sister who keep me grounded and taught me how to remain positive, even when I wasn't sure I could continue. Thank you for your phone calls and texts to remind me that I could conquer this! To my son, Jackson, who has taught me what it truly means to love someone unconditionally. And finally, to my amazing husband, Derek. Without his love, support, encouragement, and cooking, this Record of Study would not have happened. Thank you for putting up with me always being on my laptop or having to go to Starbucks to work. We made it!

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CHAPTER 1

LEADERSHIP CONTEXT AND INTRODUCTION

The Context

A quality induction program for new teachers, specifically teachers who are alternatively certified, has been documented as an effective way to prepare new teachers adequately for the profession, as well as to increase teacher retention. With education focusing more on testing and accountability as a way to measure teacher and student success, school districts around the United States have begun to realize that the more prepared and educated teachers are, the better students perform in the classroom (Grossman & Loeb, 2008). Regardless of a first-year teacher's certification background, there is always a level of fear and concern laced throughout the first year of teaching. Wayman, Foster, and Mantle-Bromley (2003) found that teachers from a traditional certification background have more confidence during the first weeks of teaching, while alternatively certified teachers have higher levels of concern when it comes to preparation and pedagogy. In an effort to alleviate this concern, many school districts have recognized the importance of professional development in the form of a new teacher induction program (NTIP) at the beginning of the school year to assist new teachers and calm some of their fears as they prepare for their first time stepping into a classroom (Fox & Peters, 2013). With first-year teachers coming to school districts each year from a variety of educational and certification backgrounds, it is imperative for a school district to have a program in place to offer support and guidance for new teachers.

National Context

Presently, alternative certification programs (ACPs) are available in 47 states throughout the United States, leading to approximately one out of every five school teachers obtaining

certification through an alternative route (Grossman & Loeb, 2008). With the steady increase of alternatively certified teachers throughout the United States, it stands to reason that school districts would implement or mandate a program to assist new teachers before and during their first year of teaching. Goldrick (2016), as cited in Mitchell, Kwok, and Huston (2019), stated that less than half of the states offering alternative certification require any support for new teachers during their first year of teaching, and fewer than 10 states offer support during the teacher's second year in the profession. This lack of support across the nation could be attributed to the fact that no mandate exists for school districts to follow regarding new teachers and no funding is allocated directly to induction programs. This inconsistency contributes to the majority of states and school districts in the United States not prioritizing NTIPs during the school year.

Situational Context

Throughout the state of Texas, approximately one-third of teachers obtain a teaching certificate through an ACP (Grossman & Loeb, 2008). These new teachers come to school districts not having been in a classroom, and they rely on their school district's NTIP and certification courses to prepare for their first year in the classroom. This lack of experience can lead to many new teachers feeling unprepared when they step in front of students on the first day of school, potentially leading to classroom management issues, lack of content knowledge, and a choice to leave the profession because they are learning to teach on the job (Grossman & Loeb, 2008). One way that a first-year, alternatively certified teacher can obtain a better understanding of expectations of a campus and teaching is through the respective school district's NTIP.

Presently, the region where the study was conducted consists of 57 school districts, ranging from 1A to 6A districts. There are 20 regions that were set by the legislature in 1967 to provide structure and guidance to school districts across the state. The region's Educational

Service Center offers an ACP for aspiring teachers, similar to other service centers across Texas. These teachers do not have much, if any, experience in or knowledge of a classroom; each ACP is unique and requires a different amount of observations prior to teaching (Grossman & Loeb, 2008, p. 78). The region's program, similar to other ACPs, provides teachers the opportunity to earn their teaching certificate by going through a certification program while also serving in their first year of teaching. Grossman and Loeb (2008) discussed how these alternatively certified teachers are learning to teach "on-the-job" and rely on their colleagues and administrators, along with their ACP, to provide support throughout their first year of teaching (p. 80). Some teachers who decide not to teach anymore attribute this decision to lack of support during their first year of teaching.

The Problem

Many teachers start their teaching careers from a background other than education after completing or being accepted into an ACP because it is more easily accessible and convenient than traditional certification. Grossman and Loeb (2008) defined an alternative route as "any pathway into teaching other than the traditional, college- or university-based four-year teacher-preparation program" (p. 4). These first-year teachers are starting their teaching career after obtaining a degree in another area or after working in a different profession altogether. On the one hand, this background can be considered a benefit to incoming teachers because alternatively certified teachers are able to bring life experiences and knowledge with them to the classroom that can enhance student learning (Grossman & Loeb, 2008). On the other hand, with their lack of experience in the education field, alternatively certified first-year teachers struggle with understanding the content they are teaching, the processes in place on a campus and in the school district, and, ultimately, what to expect when they enter a classroom for the first time. Dukes and

Jones (2007) found that the "majority of ACPs place teachers in classrooms following a condensed period of pedagogical coursework and little if any practice in the classroom with an experienced teacher" (p. 1). In order to combat the lack of experience of first-year teachers, specifically teachers who are alternatively certified, a quality NTIP can be beneficial because it provides much of the foundational information needed to be successful.

Relevant History of the Problem

According to Cohen-Vogel and Smith (2007), alternative certification started because of teacher shortages across the nation. Henning-Smith (2018) found that "about 13 percent of teachers, which is about half a million teachers every year, either change schools or change professions every year" (p. 16). This high turnover rate is one reason driving school districts to encourage aspiring teachers to obtain their certification through an ACP; because it is a faster route to certification, teachers can be available to fill a gap faster. As ACPs have become more popular, they attract not only potential teachers who obtained their undergraduate degree in a different field but also recent graduates who find it was faster to get a teaching job through an ACP compared to a traditional certification route. A new influx of certified teachers has helped reduce teacher shortage due to high annual turnover because replacement teachers are produced at a faster rate than the traditional certification route (Cohen-Voehl & Smith, 2007, p. 747). These new teachers, however, may not be adequately prepared to step into a classroom on the first day of school, creating a multitude of other problems for school districts and students—continuing the cycle of teacher turnover.

Significance of the Problem

First-year teachers begin their career eager and ready to change the world with the impact they will have on future generations. This enthusiasm and passion is something that parents,

students, administrators, and community members all want to see from the teachers who stand in front of students every single day. If appropriate guidance and support are not given to first-year teachers, their enthusiasm and passion will quickly dissipate because they may not feel as though they know what they are doing and will lose their confidence. Each year, schools have a group of brand-new teachers entering into the building, not fully knowing what to expect in the classroom. The new teachers who come into the profession with a limited amount of background knowledge on teaching and the education world struggle with the necessary knowledge and processes of the school. These struggles appear before they can even begin to start worrying about other aspects of teaching (Grossman & Loeb, 2008).

According to the Texas Education Agency (2018), the number of alternatively certified teachers has been increasing each year within the region I focused on; starting with 1,931 alternatively certified teachers in Texas in 2009 to 3,722 alternatively certified teachers in 2018. This increase in alternatively certified teachers also increases the importance of school districts having NTIPs for new teachers to meet the needs of all who enter the profession. Thus, school districts need to devote more time to NTIPs to support alternatively certified teachers throughout their first years of teaching.

Research Questions

Three research questions guide my study:

1. What are alternatively certified teachers' perceptions of new teacher induction programs in Texas school districts?

2. How did new teacher induction programs influence the alternatively certified teachers in their teaching practice and instruction throughout their first and second year of teaching?

3. Were mentor programs embedded within the new teacher induction programs? If so, how did the mentors assist alternatively certified teachers in their first year of teaching?

Personal Context

Both of my parents have been educators for my entire life. Throughout this time, I have seen my dad play many roles in education, ranging from a high school basketball coach to a district superintendent. Having seen both of my parents face challenges and criticism as educators while pouring their hearts and time into the school system, I decided against teaching as a career and went to college to study finance. In my junior year of college, I began to realize that I was not enjoying the finance classes as much as others and started thinking about other options for my future career. Though I continued to focus on finance, I knew that I did not want to pursue that career. After graduation, I started an ACP to be a teacher and followed in my parents' footsteps. The ACP in which I enrolled was one of the highest-ranked programs in Texas, so I felt like it would adequately prepare me for my first teaching position. I did the coursework, watched the videos, and even did online classroom observations. Student teaching or an internship was not required for the program, so I did not have to delay obtaining my teaching certificate. I was able to pass all certification tests and get my first teaching job. The first time I walked into a classroom and stood in front of students was the first day of my teaching career.

The lack of preparation and the amount of anxiety I had that first day of teaching is something that many new teachers face on the first day of school because, as alternatively certified teachers, they have never before been in front of a class of students. Given this lack of knowledge of teaching, content, and preparation, new teachers struggle to maintain classroom management and often feel like they are failing their students, colleagues, and administration.

With this overwhelming feeling of the unknown, many alternatively certified teachers leave the profession after their first year, sometimes by their choice and sometimes by the school district's choice.

I know well the confusion and lack of knowledge inherent to first-year teachers who are alternatively certified, and I feel as though school districts across the region and state can do a better job to prepare first-year teachers, specifically alternatively certified teachers, for their first year by having an NTIP. There is much information that ACPs do not teach aspiring teachers that can be discussed and taught in an NTIP put on by the school district or campus. In order to solidify whether an NTIP is beneficial, I conducted focus groups of first-year, alternatively certified teachers to understand their perceptions of their NTIP, different components of the program, and how they were impacted by it throughout their first year.

Researcher's Roles and Personal History

Currently, I am in my second year as Associate Principal over Curriculum and Instruction at a 5A high school outside of Houston, Texas within a district that has grown exponentially over the past 15 years. This role has allowed me to work closely with teachers on the curriculum being taught to our students and the manner in which it is being taught. Not only have I been able to build strong bonds with the teachers on campus, but I also work alongside our Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, the Director of Teaching and Learning for the school district, and secondary content directors. In working with a variety of people on the curriculum that is taught and the implementation of that curriculum, I have been able to learn the different viewpoints and understand better what is best for students and our district as a whole.

Before becoming an associate principal, I served for two years as an assistant principal over the junior class and the English department. Serving as an assistant principal taught me that

there are always two sides to every story and that students are most likely to act up when not engaged in class. While communicating with students over discipline situations, it became clear to me that my passion is with the curriculum side of education. If our curriculum and instruction are rigorous and relevant to students, minute discipline problems will decrease because students are interested and engaged in what is being taught.

I started my teaching career nine years ago as a sophomore English teacher and volleyball and soccer coach at the same high school where I currently work. The five years I spent teaching and coaching were some of the most fun years I have ever had. I was able to build relationships with students and colleagues on whom I rely on every day in my job now. I was also a student at the high school where I work—so the campus holds a very special place in my heart. The variety of roles I have had on campus beginning as a student has made me a more effective administrator and leader because I can relate to almost every single person on our campus, from student to teacher to coach to assistant principal and now to associate principal; I have done it all.

Journey to the Problem

My interest in NTIPs began when I struggled at the beginning of my teaching career and extends throughout the time I have dedicated to and spent with new teachers. Part of my job consists of working with new teachers each school year on my campus. I have the pleasure of meeting with new teachers regularly throughout the school year to make sure they are getting the support they need. Over the past three years as an administrator meeting with first-year teachers on my campus, I have started to realize the importance of supporting first-year teachers, specifically dedicating time and support to teachers who are alternatively certified.

In the 2018–2019 school year, out of the 11 new teachers on my campus, 6 were alternatively certified. At the beginning of the school year, the needs of the new teachers varied

based on their certification background. The traditionally certified teachers needed guidance on classroom management, parental contact, and processes on campus, whereas the alternatively certified teachers needed an understanding of primary education terms, expectations, and roles, in addition to the aforementioned support needed by the traditionally certified teachers. The traditionally certified teachers seemed to be a couple of months, if not years, ahead in their educational knowledge. This variance in the knowledge had by the two different groups of first-year teachers made me realize the deficit experienced by alternatively certified teachers when they begin teaching compared to their traditionally certified peers.

After a couple of months into the school year, the gap in knowledge between the two groups of first-year teachers seemed to decrease, as all the new teachers needed support on similar topics or situations. New teacher meetings made me realize the disservice supplied by school districts and campuses to alternatively certified teachers. I quickly took it upon myself to support the new teachers (some years being better than others) throughout their first year of teaching in order to give the teachers the confidence and information needed to be successful and contribute to student success. If school districts are not dedicating time and resources to first-year teachers, they will lose many quality teachers who could have a major impact on our students and the future of public education. With this knowledge, I have started to work with my school district to make first-year teachers, not only on my campus but also throughout the district, go through a quality NTIP that gives first-year, explicitly alternatively certified teachers the foundational knowledge they need to be confident during their first year of teaching.

Significant Stakeholders

There are four major stakeholder groups in this research study. The first group of stakeholders includes alternatively certified first-year teachers. Teachers who are brand new to

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teaching and are still completing, or have just completed, an ACP are required to start teaching the first day of school, just like all teachers, even though they have never been in charge of a classroom or group of students before. The expectations placed on these teachers without any prior knowledge or foundation of teaching is unrealistic and sets up the first-year teachers for failure. These teachers require support from the campus and district levels in order to have the knowledge and support to be successful.

The second group is campus and district administrators, consisting of the campus principal, associate principal (if applicable), assistant principals, and the district administration team. Campus- and district-level administrations are ultimately responsible for the preparation and support of alternatively certified first-year teachers when they are hired into the teaching position. Typically, the school district has an induction program for teachers who are new to the school district, but not necessarily anything specific for teachers brand new to the education field. This holds true for many campuses. With so many other mandated trainings, campus-level administrators may not have time to dedicate to first-year teachers. Brand-new teachers struggle throughout the school year and require additional time from administration, time that could have been avoided if the appropriate time and preparation were given to them before school started.

The third group consists of experienced teachers who serve as mentors to the brand-new teachers. These mentors act as a support system for new teachers and assist them in a variety of ways, not only during their first year of teaching but throughout their teaching career. New teacher mentors are a group of experienced teachers, sometimes consisting of department chairs or team leads, who work with first-year teachers throughout the school year. These mentor teachers dedicate time and energy to first-year teachers to be their support system when the new teachers do not feel comfortable going to administration for guidance or when they just have

small questions or concerns. Mentor teachers ideally spend a lot of time with new teachers outside of the school day and visit their classroom to ensure that the brand-new teacher is successful.

The final group of stakeholders consists of students who are directly and indirectly impacted by the first-year, alternatively certified teachers on a campus and in a school district. These stakeholders are the most critical in this research study because the students are the ones who will have an alternatively certified first-year teacher. If first-year teachers do not have the knowledge and support they need to be successful, then the students will be negatively impacted. In order for students to become contributing citizens in the ever-changing society in which we live, they need the alternatively certified first-year teachers to be adequately prepared and efficacious.

Important Terms

1. Alternative Certification Program: A way for teachers to obtain their teaching certification if they have at least a bachelor's degree in a different field of study. These programs are available through educational service centers, online, or at accredited postsecondary schools throughout the nation.

2. Mentor Teacher: an experienced teacher who supports and/or meets with a brand-new teacher throughout his or her first year of teaching.

3. New Teacher: Someone who has recently (fewer than three years) been hired in the teaching profession.

4. New Teacher Induction Program: A program offered by the region's Educational Service Center, school district, and/or campus to give information, training, and support to first-year teachers prior to and during their first year of teaching.

5. Professional Development: Specialized training provided to educators to improve their skillset and knowledge on specific topics throughout their educational career.

6. Region: The state of Texas is broken up into 20 different regions that supports school districts within each respective region. An Educational Support Center is located centrally in each region throughout Texas that encompasses school districts, ranging from 1A to 6A school districts. The school districts within each Region obtain support and training from specialists within the Region Educational Support Center during the school year.

7. School District: An area filled with communities and a town that offers an education for all the children in the communities and town.

8. Traditional Certification Program: The route by which an educator obtains his or her teaching certification by earning a bachelor's degree in education through an accredited college. This program consists of education courses throughout college, as well as observation hours and an internship or student teaching requiring the student to assist a certified teacher in a classroom for an extended period of time and then teach the class. During this program, the student is observed by the college and is provided feedback on ways to improve before graduating and becoming a teacher.

Closing Thoughts on Chapter 1

The inspiration for this study began with my educational background—earning a finance degree and then obtaining my teaching certification through an ACP— and continued with my experience teaching high school English without being in the front of a classroom before my first day as a teacher. The nervousness I felt walking into the first day of school as a teacher and not fully understanding what I was walking into or even what to expect is something I want to

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alleviate from other alternatively certified teachers during their first year of teaching. Current research shows that alternatively certified teachers struggle with classroom management, understanding the content they are teaching, and lack of understanding of the many processes in place on a school campus (Grossman & Loeb, 2008). I believe that if a school district has a quality NTIP, the program will alleviate many of the struggles faced by alternatively certified teachers during their first year of teaching. The purpose of this research study was to gain a better understanding of the perceptions held by alternatively certified teachers of their NTIP, the components of the NTIP, and the resulting impact of the NTIP on their teaching practices.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section of my research reviews the literature pertinent to alternative certification and NTIPs. Specifically, it focuses on the background of alternative certification, ACP requirements, NTIPs, mentoring alternatively certified teachers, and struggles of first-year teachers.

Background of Alternative Certification

According to May, Katsinas, and Moore (2003), the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) released a study predicting a teacher shortage of more than 2 million new teachers in 2008 across the United States (p. 68). States, in response, created alternative ways for teachers to become certified and allowed around 25,000 teachers to become certified through an ACP between 1999 and 2001 nationwide (May et al., 2003, p.69). Cohen-Vogel and Smith (2007) stated that the thought behind alternative certification was that "by relaxing the entry requirements, a new pool of potential teachers could be tapped-persons who would consider teaching were they not required to return to a university to fulfill a host of requirements beyond their baccalaureate degrees" (p. 733). They were correct because presently, ACPs are available in 41 states throughout the United States, leading to about 18% of all school teachers obtaining their certification through alternative routes (May et al., 2003, p.69). According to Zhang and Zeller (2016), "alternative route certification programs (ARC) have been specifically designed to recruit, prepare, and license talented individuals who already have at least a bachelor's degree" (p. 74). O'Connor, Malow, and Bisland (2011) described that "one of the major aims of alternative certification is to appeal to talented individuals from all walks of life who wouldn't ordinarily consider teaching . . . the basic goal of all these types of alternative programs is to fast-track teachers with various degrees of prior preparation into the classroom" (p. 220). Many

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alternatively certified teachers "possess a bachelor's degree specific to their subject areas of expertise before entering an alternative certification program," allowing them to have a wide variety of skills they can bring to the classroom (McCarty & Dietz, 2011, p. 47). Allowing professionals to become teachers without necessarily having had that desire during college provides opportunities for more professionals to get into the education field.

As the main reason ACPs exist, teacher shortages can be attributed to the small amount of funding available for public schools throughout the United States, as well as teachers changing professions. According to Henning-Smith (2018), "the Alliance for Excellent Education (2014) found that about 13 percent of teachers, which is about half a million teachers every year, either change schools or change professions every year" (p. 16). This turnover rate leads to poor standardized test scores across the nation, regardless of the quality of teachers. Instead of states trying to find a way to increase teacher retention through better pay and benefits, they created more ACPs to obtain more certified teachers. One of the reasons that teachers, specifically those who are alternatively certified, leave the profession quickly is because "the majority of ACPs place teachers in classrooms following a condensed period of pedagogical coursework and little if any practice in a classroom with an experienced teacher" (Dukes & Jones, 2007, p.1). This limited experience leads to a lack of preparation and confidence in the classroom.

Each state has the freedom to require different standards for becoming certified through ACPs, with the standards centered around the specific criteria that need to be met for the content knowledge of the field in which the teacher wants to become certified. ACPs facilitate preservice teachers as they navigate through student teaching along with their college classes, hopefully allowing for firsthand experience and observations in the classroom to prepare them for when they have their own classroom (Henning-Smith, 2018, p. 17). While many agree that having

classroom exposure is critical to a teacher's success, "students seeking certification in Texas are limited to eighteen hours of education courses in their academic preparation (Baines, McDowell, & Foulk, 2001, p. 34). Texas has a multitude of alternative certification programs to choose from, and TEA (2019) offers a list of all the ACPs that are accredited so aspiring teachers are aware of options that are available. According to TEA (2019), each program varies on entry requirements "such as basic skills, GPA, and demonstration of content knowledge"; some of which reflect the standards of the program. An internship or student teaching is not something that is required by Texas or every ACP, but it is something that can be embedded within the program if the aspiring teacher chooses to partake in that portion of the ACP. This can be considered one of the downfalls of discrepancies between states and programs when it comes to teacher certification.

Requirements for Alternative Certification Programs

Initially, the "alternative route to teacher certification was intended to address shortages while simultaneously ensuring a high-quality teacher for every student; teacher quality would not be sacrificed for teacher quantity" (Lewis-Spector, 2016, p. 5). Almost immediately, the increase in alternative certification was drastic and unexpected by traditional certification programs, school districts, and the ACPs themselves. Lewis-Spector (2016) stated that "by 2000, more than 40 states had formalized alternate pathways to initial teacher certification, and by 2015 all but two states had initial alternate route teacher certification programs, primarily for individuals already holding BA degrees and who had not majored in education" (p. 6). This alternate route can be considered a positive addition to the education field in that it can help alleviate teacher shortages, but with more than 700 different ACPs available to those who are interested in becoming certified, discrepancies can exist in what future teachers are learning and how they are

being prepared to work in a school (Lewis-Spector, 2016, p. 6). Hung and Smith (2012) stated the following:

> Many AC programs generally consist of the following components: (a) a bachelor's degree in the subject to be taught along with a passing score on a certification test; (b) a supervised internship coinciding with assumption of full teaching responsibilities, as well as additional hours of training and substantial supervision; and (c) certification recommendation by the employing district. (p. 4)

Even though a majority of the programs require the student to go through those components, each state has different needs; it is important that there is consistency across the nation, as within in each state, in what the programs require for the students. TEA (2019) states that each program has different components that have to be met in order for the aspiring teacher to meet the qualifications of the ACP, but with each program the prospective teacher must determine a grade level and subject area to teach before starting the program.

Similar to any accredited college or vocational school, ACPs have expectations for their entering students. In ACPs, aspiring teachers must have a college degree with a minimum grade-point average (GPA) of 2.5 (Lewis-Spector, 2016, p. 8). These requirements are in line with teacher requirements held by different states regardless of certification background. The difference is that aspiring teachers who are considering an ACP are not usually accepted into the program until after obtaining a teaching position—making the first time they are in the classroom being when they are in front of their students on the first day of school (Lewis-Spector, 2016, p. 8). It is important to note that "the traditionally prepared teachers have spent 4 years studying both their content area and professional pedagogy and have at least one semester of full-time student teaching"; this experience is very rare in an ACP (Zhang & Zeller, 2016, p. 88). This difference in content knowledge and student teaching can sometimes lead to a difficult first year for an alternatively certified teacher.

The increase in ACPs has given more people the opportunity to become a teacher, but has also served as "a fast-track path to the classroom with little formal instruction in pedagogy, including limitations on preparation for teaching literacy, and little accountability for the quality of classroom instruction" (Lewis-Spector, 2016, p. 6). Alternatively certified teachers not only have to figure out what to teach in the classroom but also how to teach effectively and run their classroom well. Traditionally certified teachers are "required to have some supervised student teaching experience in graduate school, the alternatively certified and uncertified teachers typically have little prior classroom experience" (Kane, Rockoff, & Staiger, 2008, p. 624). There are a variety of factors that go into the success of a first-year teacher, but "research over the last 30 years has found that teachers who have completed traditional teacher education programs and enter the classroom fully certified, as compared to teachers with alternative certification who tend to be more successful, receive higher evaluations from supervisors, and have students who achieve at a higher level" (Linek, Sampson, & Haas, 2012, p. 69). These results are likely credited to the content knowledge and experience obtained by traditionally certified teachers throughout their education.

One of the challenging aspects of alternative and traditional certification is that there is an "increased pressure placed on school districts to increase pupil performance . . . creating a growing reluctance on the part of school districts to accept placements of students for practicum experiences who are preparing to become teachers" (Monk, 2015, p. 222). This legitimate concern leads to some school administrators focusing energy and time on aspiring teachers who are student-teaching on their campus instead of improving the teachers already in their district. It is critical that student-teaching or practicum experience takes place so that aspiring teachers have a more realistic view of what a classroom looks like. Many soon-to-be teachers in an ACP do not

participate in a student-teaching program or practicum, so they come into their first year of

teaching with unrealistic expectations. This lack of experience leads to the "concerns regarding

content preparation of teachers and the emerging concern regarding commitment (and

preparation) of individuals entering the teaching profession" (Wayman, Foster, & Mantle-

Bromley, 2003, p. 35). Like stated before, there is not a requirement to have any type of

internship or student-teaching before becoming the teacher of record, but some ACPs do require

this classroom experience before the aspiring teachers have a classroom of their own (Uriegas,

Kupczynski, & Mundy, 2014). Many aspiring teachers choose not to partake in an internship or

student teaching because it is unpaid and delays the start date of a teaching job. Even though it

would take more time to become a certified teacher, the benefits of student teaching or an

internship would significantly increase the chances for teacher success during the beginning

years of their career.

<div align="center">**New Teacher Induction Programs**</div>

One of the first requirements of a new teacher is attending the NTIP offered by school

districts at the beginning of the school year. The purpose of an induction program is to assist in

transitioning a first-year teacher into the profession, providing the necessary tools and

knowledge to be successful (Bartell, 1995, p. 35). Wong (2004) stated that in order for a NTIP to

be positive, administration must be willing to set aside time to work with new teachers, answer

questions, and equip them with the tools necessary to be an effective teacher (p. 46). This could

mean that the induction program provides information regarding classroom management, whom

to contact in certain situations, content knowledge, and information on what goes on throughout

the school year. Even though the information may seem like common sense to many experienced

teachers and administrators, first-year teachers, specifically those who are alternatively certified,

do not have previous knowledge to draw from during their first year of teaching. Having an induction program for new teachers that provides this support and information supports a teacher's confidence during their first year of teaching (Bartell, 1995, p. 38). This confidence ultimately leads to the teacher becoming more effective in the classroom.

It has been noted that professional development throughout the school year is not always beneficial to teachers if there is not a specific topic to cover, but induction programs for new teachers have a wide array of benefits that last past the first year of teaching (Ayvaz-Tuncel & Cobanoglu, 2018, p. 160). For the school to produce effective teachers, there must be opportunities for professional development throughout the school year for teachers to improve on their skills as teachers (Wong, 2004, p. 46). These opportunities do not necessarily have to be a training or a structured professional development, but can be a time for new teachers to collaborate with their teams, both content-level and cross-curricular, or to observe other experienced teachers.

Wong (2004) discussed that time allotted for collaboration and learning among teachers within the campus and/or district during an ongoing NTIP provides great opportunities for all teachers to grow and support one another, creating a positive school climate and culture of collaboration (p. 46). A support system is also created for new teachers within the profession. Bickmore and Bickmore (2009) stated that an NTIP assists first-year teachers in gaining self-efficacy and knowledge of what is expected to be a quality teacher, contributing to the teacher choosing to stay in the profession (p. 1007). If an NTIP is not held within a school district, the negative impact of this extends well beyond the first weeks of the school year (Moir & Gless, 2001). If teachers do not feel equipped and confident within the classroom, they are most likely going to leave the profession: "a continual cycle of teachers being hired and then leaving before

they gain the expertise to become effective provides an unstable, unproductive environment for schools and students" (LoCascio, Smeaton, & Waters, 2016, p. 104). Unfortunately, teachers leaving the profession after one or two years of teaching "has been documented as having a negative effect on both student achievement and school budgets" (LoCascio et al., 2016, p. 104). Knowing the negative impact on a school campus of teachers who are inadequately prepared, an NTIP is a necessity when it comes to retaining teachers.

With this ongoing cycle of alternatively certified teachers coming into the profession and then leaving, it is noted that school districts need to do a better job of preparing these teachers at the beginning of their careers. Induction programs that include a mentor have begun to produce positive results in teacher retention (LoCascio et al., 2016, p. 106). Professional development within induction programs allows new teachers to have a better understanding of what to expect when they enter into the classroom, knowledge that experienced teachers and traditionally certified teachers already have. LoCascio and colleagues (2016) found that if a new teacher in their study did not participate in an induction program, "there was a high probability that they planned on changing professions at the end of the school year" (p. 113). This lack of support throughout the school year that leads to teachers leaving the profession is something that can possibly be alleviated if a quality NTIP is implemented within a school district and/or campus.

One of the major roles of an administrator on a campus and within a school district is to facilitate and lead the NTIP. The campus leaders are responsible for including the campus vision in the induction program and encouraging collaboration to take place; otherwise, the leadership will create a culture of isolation for first-year teachers (Moir & Gless, 2001, p. 111). This can be difficult for administrators to accomplish, but much success comes down to effective communication throughout the teaching staff. If all teachers feel as though they are a part of a

collaborative team, the new teachers begin to fit into that collaborative culture as well (Moir & Gless, 2001, p. 111). Creating a positive culture in the NTIP that encourages participation among all staff members, administrators included, benefits the campus as a whole throughout the school year.

After a certain point in the school year, it can be easy for a principal to get caught up in other aspects of his or her job and assume that new teachers do not need any additional support, when in reality they are a first-year teacher for the entire nine months of the school year, not just the first semester (Brock & Grady, 1998, p. 7). Even though new teachers become more comfortable and confident in their teaching skills, there is still a level of support needed not just from administration, but from colleagues as well. This support can vary based on who is providing it, it just looks different as the school year continues. Monthly check-ins with other new teachers and/or team leads would be a way to provide support throughout the entire first year of teaching and also encourage a positive culture on campus. Moir and Gless (2001) found many teachers leaving early in their career because they did not feel like any attention or support was given to them during the first years of their career (p. 109). Having an NTIP that continues throughout the school year, rather than a one-time event, is critical for new teachers, specifically those who are alternatively certified.

This study revealed, along with the literature, that the alternatively certified new teachers need and want support throughout the entire first year of teaching because different situations arise as the school year goes on. Having structured and continuous support, through colleagues and administration, available for the entire nine months of the first school year can not only give new teachers confidence in their decisions, but also add to a positive first-year experience.

Mentoring Alternatively Certified Teachers

Incorporating an induction program mentor is common because it provides another level of guidance and support for new teachers throughout the beginning years in the profession (Anthony, Gimbert, Fultz, & Parker, 2011). With the increase in alternatively certified teachers entering the field of education, having a strong mentor component available is often one of the most important aspects of a district's NTIP (Upson Bradbury & Koballa, 2007). It is critical for a new teacher to have a mentor because "the early experiences of non-traditional pre-service teachers have been described as isolating, challenging, and overwhelming" (Anthony et al., 2011, p. 47). When acquiring certification through an ACP, "alternatively certified teachers have little to no experience in the classroom other than their own previous experience as students, [and] their relationships with mentors can be an important part of their transition into the teaching profession" (Upson Bradbury & Koballa, 2007, p. 818). Not only does a mentor help guide the new teacher in day-to-day tasks, they also help the teacher become more comfortable and acclimated to the culture of the campus to which they are employed. This sense of belonging created by a mentor also contributes to teachers having a sense of moral fulfillment and acceptance at the campus (Easley, 2008). Anthony and associates (2011) found in their study "that mentoring can be an effective strategy for positively influencing teachers' long-term experiences and perspectives and retention in the teaching profession" (p. 48). Mentoring can increase teacher retention and self-efficacy.

A common component in ACPs across the United States is the importance of new teachers having a mentor. Smith and Evans (2008) stated that "although alternate route programs can differ dramatically from state to state, they uniformly stress the importance of providing mentoring for alternate route (AR) teachers" (p. 251). Research has shown that "effective

mentoring increases teacher retention, develops beginning teachers' expertise and confidence, and fosters beginning teachers' reflection and development" (Smith & Evans, 2008, p. 251). In a study conducted by Upson-Bradbury and Koballa (2007), they discussed that "a strong mentoring component is often included as an important aspect of alternative certification programs . . . because alternatively certified teachers have little to no experience in the classroom other than their own previous experience as students, their relationships with mentors can be an important part of their transition into the teaching profession" (p. 818). A new teacher has a lot to worry about during the first year of teaching. Pankowski (2016) stated that "few novice teachers feel prepared to address their students' often wide-ranging intellectual, emotional, and behavioral characteristics" (p. 4). This feeling of lack of preparation can be alleviated if the new teacher has a more experienced teacher from whom to seek advice on meeting the needs of all students after the initial induction program is complete.

Having a mentor on campus is a huge component of a new teacher's confidence and preparation for the classroom, and according to Upson-Bradbury and Koballa (2007), new teachers in their study felt that having a mentor on campus helped them become more effective teachers. It is imperative that "mentors should be on-site; work closely with AR teachers; and acculturate AR teachers to the school setting and terminology" because these first-year teachers, in particular, have not gotten that knowledge from their certification classes at that point in their career (Smith & Evans, 2008, p. 253). Anthony and colleagues (2011) said that sometimes "mentees may find it difficult to share confidences with senior colleagues who are employed by the same district" (p. 48). This could be attributed to the first-year teacher not wanting to talk negatively about the campus, so it is important to maintain professional balance in communication.

A mentor for a first-year teacher is important for a variety of reasons. Not only do mentors provide knowledge on the campus and education field, "effective mentors provide emotional support, establish trust and respect, and have strong interpersonal skills" (Smith & Evans, 2008, p. 253). Conversations between first-year teachers and mentors are critical because "the advice given by a mentor teacher can form an important component of how to teach effectively" (Upson-Bradbury & Koballa, 2007, p. 819). Anthony et al. (2011) said in their research, "it is reasonable to assume that alternative certification programs that couple mentoring and coaching might successfully support teachers with facing the realities and complexity of teaching and developing self-efficacy" (p. 51). This can be a lot of pressure to put on an experienced teacher on top of their normal day-to-day responsibilities. For a mentor to be able to fill the role of guiding a new teacher, especially a teacher who is alternatively certified, mentors need to be given additional time throughout the school day to devote to new teachers. Because of the time constraint, "many beginning teachers are mentored by teachers with whom they have the most contact—those on their hallway, those who share their classroom, or those who take it upon themselves to help new teachers" (Smith & Evans, 2008, p. 263). As Upson-Bradbury and Koballa (2007) stated, "viewing mentoring as a short-term remedy to help novice teachers survive their student teaching and the first year on the job diminishes the impact that these relationships can have" (p. 838). Mentor relationships ultimately lead to teacher retention because the teachers feel as though they are a part of the school culture and play an essential role on the campus.

Having a mentor is very beneficial to new teachers, but it comes with many challenges, the greatest of which is the time required to be an effective mentor. Some ACPs have considered this and have created an online forum for new teachers that "provide[s] a consistent and readily

available opportunity to correspond with both mentors and university faculty" (Dukes & Jones, 2007, p. 9). The online community has been shown to take away the time constraints of a mentor and also the pressure of having a formal mentor on campus, allowing new teachers to rely on colleagues around whom they feel comfortable because "mentees may find it difficult to share confidences with senior colleagues who are employed by the same district" (Anthony et al., 2011, p. 48). Having an online forum where new teachers can go for advice on a situation takes away the fear of disloyalty to the campus or district where the teacher is employed.

The study showed the how participants that had a positive mentor experience felt as though the mentor was a crucial aspect of the NTIP and those that did not have a positive mentor experience wish they would have. Participants in each focus group expressed the desire to have a mentor teacher they could go to for support and guidance throughout the school year.

Struggles of First-Year Teachers

Teachers who enter the teaching profession have many struggles throughout the beginning of their career, but three that have the biggest impact on the teachers are self-efficacy, teacher retention, and classroom management. Although the study does not specifically look into these struggles, it addresses how NTIP can alleviate some of the struggles of alternatively certified, first year teachers by providing support for the teachers throughout the school year.

Self-Efficacy

Teacher self-efficacy is the "belief in his or her capacity to organize and execute a course of action to accomplish a teaching task, even in highly complex setting" (Anthony et al., 2011, p. 50). Research has shown that when teachers begin the profession from an ACP, they tend to feel unprepared for what the classroom is truly like because they have not been exposed to a classroom for an extended period like their traditionally certified peers have been with student

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teaching. Lewis-Spector (2016) stated that "adequate preparation can affect a teacher's beliefs about the level of their teaching craft, and studies have shown that teachers' beliefs in their ability to perform instructional tasks have been related to student achievement" (p. 10). If a teacher is not adequately prepared and student achievement decreases, a lack of confidence exists in the teacher and student—negatively impacting the campus as a whole.

Self-efficacy is critical when it comes to teaching. This characteristic is vital for a variety of reasons; it "is related to teacher motivation to improve practice, teacher retention, and student efficacy," and if developed, it could "increase teachers' capacity to teach in hard-to-staff schools" (Anthony et al., 2011, p. 50). Self-efficacy can be difficult to teach and obtain because "teacher efficacy refers to one's ability to teach and motivate students" (Easley, 2008, p. 28). Anthony and colleagues (2011) stated that "self-efficacy can be developed through exposure to mastery learning experiences in which learners receive explicit instruction on how to perform a task, observe modeled performance, and receive feedback on practice" (p. 50).

Having more knowledge sometimes leads to higher self-efficacy. Fox and Peters (2013) found that first-year teachers who went through a traditional certification program reported "the opportunity to have experience working with students in the classroom . . . as the most important criteria to support a positive self-efficacy" (p. 9). Fox and Peters (2013) defined teacher self-efficacy as "a teacher's perception of their ability to be effective in a classroom. It is the belief that student learning can be obtained, even with difficult and unmotivated students" (p. 5). This perception can be attributed to "student motivation, classroom management strategies, and innovative teaching that is directly linked to teacher performance" (Fox & Peters, 2013, p. 5). Findings have shown that beginning teachers who have gone through a traditional certification program have a higher sense of self-efficacy compared to those who have completed an ACP,

most likely "due to pedagogical training of traditionally certified teachers," as well as student

teaching (Fox & Peters, 2013, p. 5). Other studies have shown that teachers who are alternatively

certified "have higher levels of concern regarding preparation, and in some cases, actually

display lower skills in the area of instructional methods," which leads to less confidence in the

classroom overall (Wayman et al., 2003, p. 38). ACPs can sometimes have a negative reputation

by having "lower training standards" for teachers who are becoming certified that could "lead to

the misassignment of teachers"—causing a first-year teacher to be in the classroom lacking

confidence in the knowledge they are expected to have (Cohen-Vogel & Smith, 2007, p. 738).

Although ACPs offer classes that require the students to know the content knowledge, it may not

be enough information to give the teacher the confidence needed to be in front of a classroom

full of students.

Self-efficacy can be used as a tool for teacher evaluation and self-perception. Fox and

Peters (2013) found that "teachers with a high sense of self-efficacy work harder and are more

successful with difficult students" (p. 2). This tenacity in the classroom can lead to retention in

the education field, overall teacher performance, and ultimately student achievement (Fox &

Peters, 2013). Overall, "research shows that teacher self-efficacy influences teacher

effectiveness; especially in a teacher's first year and that teacher self-efficacy levels have a direct

relationship to student learning and performance" (Fox & Peters, 2013, p. 2). It is true that "all

teachers will enter their first year of teaching with concerns, and all teachers will encounter

problems during their first year," but if they have confidence and a solid foundation of support,

they will be able to overcome these challenges (Wayman et al., 2003, p. 39). Alternatively

certified teachers' "sense of fulfillment can be characterized by an environment that supports the

actualization of their moral ideas for social change, an increase in student learning, and

improving the lives of students" (Easley, 2008, p. 28). Relationships with colleagues, students, and mentors are critical to teacher self-efficacy through the first years of teaching.

Teacher Retention

Although the number of alternatively certified teachers has increased, teachers who become certified through an ACP typically leave the education field faster than traditionally certified teachers because of lack of support and knowledge (Redding & Smith, 2016, p. 1088). This exit of alternatively certified teachers from the education field can be attributed to a multitude of reasons. Haj-Broussard, Hall, Allen, Stephens, Person, and Johnson (2016) attributed this discrepancy between traditionally trained and alternatively certified teachers to "pedagogical preparation such as practice teaching, feedback on teaching, and observations of teachers, that affected attribution" (p. 6). Having consistency in teachers for a campus "is important because teacher turnover creates instability and costs and negatively impacts teaching quality," negatively impacting the campus and the students on it (Zhang & Zeller, 2016, p. 74). Easley (2008) discussed that many teachers enter the teaching field to work in an environment where they are fulfilled by what they do on a daily basis, but many teachers stay at their campus when there is a "focus on the relationships between teachers and principals" that creates an "environment of fulfillment" (p. 28). Like any workplace, culture is a critical component of employee retention.

In addition to campus culture playing a part in teacher retention, preparation plays an almost equally important role. According to Zhang and Zeller (2016), "it is evident that teacher preparation has a significant impact on retention; that is, teacher retention likelihood partially depends on the type of preparation teachers receive" (p. 85). This preparation does not just refer to the classes completed by new teachers for certification, but also "the lack of student teaching

in alternative route certification programs contributing to the high rate of attrition" (Zhang & Zeller, 2016, p. 79). When a new teacher experiences what it is like in a classroom after being hired, it is almost too late to feel confident in front of students. Unfair as it is for the teacher and students, "alternate route candidates begin teaching immediately as the *teacher of record* as soon as they set foot in the classroom, which is typically after a few weeks of summer seminars. They receive on-the-job training, a teacher's salary, and mentoring, but there are typically no regulations specifying what mentorship might include except that the mentor must be an experienced teacher" (Lewis-Spector, 2016, p. 8). Because alternatively certified teachers don't have the classroom experience and preparation to contribute to attrition, "supportive relationships (between teachers and principals) directly impact the potential for alternative route certification teacher retention" (Easley, 2008, p. 32). Having a quality NTIP along with quality mentors and colleagues surrounding a new teacher can provide the support needed for a first-year teacher to feel successful. It can be difficult to pinpoint what leads a first-year teacher to stay in the field of education, but the benefits of teacher retention expand outside of the four walls of a classroom.

Classroom Management

A first-year teacher understanding the content that is supposed to be taught in the classroom is only half the battle. Controlling the students can be the most difficult part of being a teacher. Classroom and behavior management "has been shown to be the most common concern for both pre-service and experienced teachers," but specifically for first-year teachers who are alternatively certified because they typically do not have any classroom experience until they are in the classroom (Sokal, Smith, & Mowat, 2003). One of the main reasons given by new teachers for leaving the profession is classroom management, along with lack of support and

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overwhelming bureaucracy (O' Connor, 2011, p. 221). Pankowski and Walker (2016) defined classroom management as "establishing order-asserting teacher control and expectations for student behavior— while also supporting students' intellectual and social development" (p. 7). Lack of classroom experience and exposure plays a major role in knowing how to manage a variety of students present in a classroom.

Classroom management can be difficult for all first-year teachers, but alternatively certified teachers tend to struggle more often than traditionally certified teachers during their first year of teaching. Pankowski and Walker (2016) stated that alternatively certified teachers are more likely to have classroom management problems than their traditionally prepared peers "due to a lack of training and teaching in the alternative certification programs" (p. 6). According to Dukes and Jones (2007), "the majority of ACPs place teachers in classrooms following a condensed period of pedagogical coursework and little if any practice in a classroom with an experienced teacher" (p. 1). This lack of exposure can lead to not fully understanding the realities of a classroom. While teachers who are traditionally certified are immersed in schools and have learned basic skills needed in the classroom and on campus, many alternatively certified teachers have stated that it has been difficult for them to "learn such basics as how to write lesson plans and document students' grades and that this experience is stressful. Furthermore, student teaching would eliminate some of the stress for novice teachers" because they would learn those processes during that time instead of during their first year (Hung & Smith, 2012, p. 11). For some reason, classroom management has begun to be known as something a new teacher either has a knack for or doesn't; many school administrators and certification programs feel like it is something that can't be taught or learned. This attitude toward classroom management has led to teachers leaving the profession quickly. Pankowski and

Walker (2016) said that "the stress of managing student behavior is a primary antecedent of teacher burnout, which detracts from workforce productivity" (p. 5). This is another reason why the turnover rate of teachers is so high within the first years of teaching.

Research shows that depending on the teacher's educational background and ACP they are involved in has an impact on their classroom management beliefs and confidence. Kwok (2018) states that teachers from alternative routes believe they are less responsible for controlling student behavior over time compared to traditional route teachers" (p. 23). Even though these teachers do not have as much confidence in regards to their classroom management skills when they enter into the classroom, a lot of it still depends on the teacher's teaching style and personality and the students (Ritter & Hancock, 2007). If a campus can continue to grow teachers and focus on one of the top problems for first-year teachers, classroom management, that support could be what keeps teachers in the profession.

Closing Thoughts on Chapter 2

ACPs were created to fulfill a need left by teacher shortages, allowing a wide variety of professionals to become educators who do not necessarily have the educational background typically required to become a certified teacher. Inadvertently, alternative certification has become increasingly popular, almost more so than traditional certification because it allows for more freedom and flexibility. Because of the growing popularity of ACPs, there do not seem to be consistent standards or requirements for each program, causing discrepancy among the classes that have to be taken for each program. This lack of standardization across programs and states makes it difficult for teachers to truly be prepared for the variety of obstacles faced when they begin teaching.

One of the ways that ACPs can assist teachers throughout their classes and the first year of teaching is by requiring them to participate in an NTIP within their school district and to have a mentor on campus. NTIPs provide information to new teachers on which they can reflect throughout the school year, and the mentor is someone to whom the first-year teacher can turn with day-to-day questions and also significant issues or situations that come up throughout the school year. Research has shown that if a first-year teacher has someone on whom they can depend for support, their confidence immediately increases, making it more likely that the teacher will stay in the profession. Even though having a mentor is critical to a first-year teacher, some find that being assigned someone does not make the mentor relationship as natural or comfortable. To alleviate awkwardness between coworkers, some ACPs have begun to have an online forum on which new teachers can ask questions instead of having to turn to someone on their campus.

Proper preparation for becoming a teacher is the key to success. If a first-year teacher does not feel as though he or she is adequately prepared for the classroom, they are not going to have high self-efficacy or good classroom management and will probably leave the profession soon after they begin. With a variety of teacher certification routes, it is unclear whether ACPs properly prepare first-year teachers for the challenges they will soon take on in teaching.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Outline of the Proposed Solution

The purpose of this study was to examine how alternatively certified teachers are affected by NTIPs in Texas school districts. The development of new teachers is critical for every school district with regard to teacher and student success. This growth begins the first day that new teachers step foot on campus for the NTIP and continues throughout the first and second year of their career. Having an NTIP that meets the needs of traditionally certified teachers, as well as the additional needs of alternatively certified teachers, ensures that new teachers have the knowledge required to be successful in the teaching profession, not only in their first year of teaching but throughout their career.

During this study, I worked with school districts throughout a specific region in Texas. The school districts' superintendents and principals identified first- and/or second-year, alternatively certified teachers within their school district to participate in focus groups regarding the perceptions of NTIPs within their school district. The purpose of these focus groups was to encourage "talk from multiple perspectives from the participants so that the researcher [could] learn what the range of views are, or to promote talk on a topic that informants might not be able to talk so thoughtfully about in individual interviews" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 109). The alternatively certified new teachers worked at different school districts, ranging from 2A to 6A schools, allowing multiple perspectives to be gathered throughout the process. These focus groups allowed me to gather information from new teachers regarding the NTIP in which they participated. The data gathered from these focus groups provided a foundation of information I

can use to inform administrators on ways to support new teachers through an NTIP for my current school district and other school districts throughout the region.

Justification of Proposed Solution

The nation has begun to see a decrease in teacher retention, with 40% of teachers leaving the profession with fewer than five years of teaching (Haj-Broussard, Hall, Allen, Stephens, Person, & Johnson, 2016, p. 5). This percentage could be a representative of a variety of reasons on why teachers leave the profession; one being that there is currently inconsistent support in place for new teachers during their beginning years in education. As a result, many school districts and campuses are incorporating a NTIP into the professional development that takes place before the school year starts to create a foundation of support and knowledge for new teachers. The NTIP allows new teachers to gain experience they would not necessarily have from their previous careers and certification programs, especially those teachers who are alternatively certified. By participating in an NTIP, new teachers have the opportunity to build relationships with colleagues, mentors, and administration before the school year begins. These relationships are some of the key factors in teacher effectiveness and self-efficacy, leading to student achievement and ultimately teacher retention.

Study Context and Participants

My study sought to understand how the different NTIPs experienced by the study participants played a role in the teacher's first or second year of teaching. By obtaining different perceptions held by alternatively certified new teachers on various aspects of the NTIPs through focus groups and surveys, a better understanding was gained of what could benefit alternatively certified teachers throughout their first and second years of teaching.

Six school districts within a specific region in Texas were the focus of the study. The information for each school district and participant is located in Appendix A.

The central office administration for each school district identified first- and second-year teachers who were alternatively certified, meeting the requirements to participate in the research study. Whom I contacted within the administration departments to set up my focus groups varied by school district.

For Districts A and B, I was required to submit a research proposal to a committee in order to obtain permission to conduct my focus groups. After my proposal was approved by the committee, the Director of Human Resources for each district put me in contact with the teachers who met the requirements for my study. For both of these school districts, I met with the respective focus groups in the district's central administration building. More than half of the participants for both of these school districts, that are close to each other in proximity, had studied business in school and/or worked in the business world before starting teaching. This can provide insight into some of their struggles when it comes to their perceptions on prior expectations upon entering the profession and also needing support throughout the year because that is something they would have been used to in their previous job.

When I reached out to District C, I was able to contact the superintendent directly, and he reached out to the teachers himself. I held the focus group in the school district's board room and was given a key to the administration building to lock up upon completion. There was definitely a "small-town" feel to this environment, which was evident in the focus group for this district as well. All of the participants for this school district had grown up in the town they were currently living and working in, so the sense of community and family culture was present in the focus group and survey results.

Conducting the focus group with teachers from District D was definitely the easiest to coordinate because I personally know the superintendent and principals within the district. I first met with District D's superintendent and asked him the best route to take to obtain teachers for the focus group. He directed me to email each principal asking them to find volunteers on each of their campuses. I held this focus group at the district's event center where professional development takes place. The participants from District D had biggest variety of backgrounds out of all the other districts. This could be due to the location of the school district and the proximity it has to a larger city.

Working with District E was the biggest challenge I faced throughout the research process. This school district is smaller than the others, and the superintendent holds many job roles that are filled by other people in bigger districts. For example, I emailed the superintendent directly to ask about conducting the focus group, and I did not hear back from him for more than three weeks. Eventually, when he gave me a call, he said that his email had been down for the past couple of weeks, and it took the district's technology director some time to get it running correctly. When I asked how it would be best to obtain teacher contact information for participation requests, he suggested that I email all the teachers in the entire district and see who responds. He directed me to include in the email that I had been in contact with him, hoping that would encourage participation. This focus group took place at the high school library. When I walked onto campus and introduced myself, the principal of the high school had no idea I was coming. I mentioned that I had been in contact with the superintendent who suggested I hold my focus group at this location, and the principal responded that although he was about to go home, I was welcome to stay on campus.

Lastly, working with District F was the most enjoyable and the superintendent went above and beyond with assisting me in getting together focus group participants. The superintendent of this district emailed each campus principal throughout the district, obtained contact information for the teachers, and then emailed them directly to tell them about the focus group. Because the superintendent emailed the teachers directly, I had a lot of participants. The superintendent set up the focus group to take place in his private conference room at the district's central office building. Overall, the participants in District F started teaching later in their careers than many of the other districts. Their previous experiences from other professions created interesting conversations and perspectives throughout the focus groups and surveys.

The teachers for each school district who agreed to take part in the study participated in one focus group that took place in a building in their respective school district. The teachers understood that participation would not have any impact on their current teaching position and that action research studies are common within education to improve our profession.

Proposed Research Paradigm

In this study, a qualitative research design was used. Qualitative research is used for "capturing and understanding diverse perspectives . . . and looking for patterns in what human beings do and think" (Patton, 2015, p. 8). Creswell (2014) defined qualitative research as "an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4). Qualitative research uses quotations, direct observations, and the context as data rather than collecting numbers for quantitative research. This type of data is beneficial because "the richness of detail provided by qualitative research gives insights into the complicated nature of teaching and learning that would be missed through other means" (Cooley, 2013, p. 250). Qualitative data gives the researcher the opportunity to understand the perceptions

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and thoughts behind the topic and study participants rather than just numbers to explain specific points.

The data in a qualitative study can "include whatever emerges as important to understanding participants experiences" (Patton, 2015, p. 49). With this being a significant part of the data, the researcher must understand and recognize that "qualitative inquiry requires that the investigator carefully reflect on, deal with, and report potential sources of bias and error" (Patton, 2015, p. 58). In many cases, the researcher is deeply involved in qualitative research and has a personal investment in the topic being researched. This investment can be both a positive and negative attribute to the research study. With the study being a part of the researcher's life, objectivity is something that is not always attainable. According to Bhattacharya (2017), it is essential that qualitative researchers are "transparent about the values, beliefs, and assumptions with which they operate and how such things interact and inform their studies" (p. 36). This vulnerability is key to conducting high-level qualitative research because it is not possible for the researcher to claim neutrality in the study, so he or she needs to embrace the subjectivities and be aware of them during the research process.

In qualitative research, the purpose is to "understand a cultural practice by interacting with the members of the culture being studied" (Cooley, 2013, p. 249). The purpose of qualitative research is for the researcher to have a better understanding of the situation or topic than before by observing or interviewing people within the situation firsthand and gathering their opinions, thoughts, perceptions, etc. In order for the researcher to have a better understanding, he or she either must dedicate time to get to know the participants within the study to get a grasp on the situation or must already have a vested interest in the topic. I have a passion for this topic because being an alternatively certified teacher and not having participated in an NTIP, I faced

many challenges during my first and second years of teaching, and I know how much an NTIP would have helped me throughout this time. Now, working with new teachers on my campus, I am able to see firsthand what new teachers can gain from taking part in an NTIP, specifically those teachers who are alternatively certified.

Analyzing data can be very time-consuming in a qualitative study, but it allows the researcher to have a full understanding of how the participants feel about a subject in their own words and to gather narrative accounts of human perception. This positively impacts the study because the researcher is invested in the situation and participants. Yilmaz (2013) described that within qualitative research, it is critical that the researcher fully understand the setting of the study and strive to understand it rather than trying to make predictions about it beforehand (p. 317). Each school district in my study is unique, so it was important for me to research the districts beforehand to have a better understanding of each district's size and student demographics. Having this foundational knowledge of each district before meeting with its teachers allowed me to have a better understanding of their district make-up throughout the study.

Data Collection Methods

Focus groups were chosen to conduct this study, given that focus groups utilize characteristics that are most conducive when used for data collection in this type of research. Creswell (2014) indicated that focus groups within qualitative interviews "involve unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants" (p. 190). This type of qualitative interview "allows [the] researcher control over the line of questioning" and focuses on specific topics or experiences that are brought up throughout the focus group (Creswell, 2014, p. 190). Thus, the focus group

framework proved to be an appropriate avenue to examine how the perceptions and practices of alternatively certified teachers are affected by NTIPs in Texas school districts. After each focus group was conducted, the participants took a three-minute survey asking them more individualized questions about their educational background, experience within their first years of teaching, and perceptions of the NTIP they had been through. This survey allowed me to gather more in-depth knowledge from each individual participant. By using focus groups and a survey, I was able to focus on specific thoughts, feelings, and experiences of alternatively certified teachers to encapsulate a deeper understanding of how their NTIPs influenced them throughout their first years of teaching.

Employing focus groups in this qualitative study was also important because of the necessity to contextualize the phenomenon in question. Focus groups provide an opportunity for "in-depth data collection involving multiple sources" by interacting with participants who are involved in the topic at hand and for unstructured conversations to take place (Patton, 2015, p. 259). A focus group allows for a variety of information to be collected through discussion by getting to know a specific group of people who are impacted by the topic or situation being researched. The survey filled out by each participant after the conclusion of the focus group allowed the participant to provide more detailed thoughts on the NTIP that they would not have necessarily expressed in a group setting. The survey allowed me the opportunity to enrich the data I collected throughout the focus groups by layering the survey answers with the focus group conversations. By conducting focus groups and anonymous surveys within six specific school districts in the region, I was able to obtain detailed, rich information regarding the perceptions of alternatively certified new teachers on their respective NTIPs within their school district or campus.

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) described a focus group as "an interview on a topic with a group of people who have knowledge of the topic" (p. 114). My focus groups comprised first- and second-year teachers who were alternatively certified and working in a school district in a specific region in Texas. These teachers had been through an NTIP within their campus or district and described the impact it had on their first years of teaching. Taking in the information gathered from the six focus groups allowed me to fully understand the NTIPs held throughout these school districts and the influence the programs have had on the beginning teachers.

Merriam and Tisdell (2015) also pointed out that a focus group is unique because there is interactive discussion between participants and the researcher, which allows for data and themes to arise that would not have been accounted for initially (p. 114). This fluidity within a focus group is an attribute that allows the researcher to obtain data that would not have otherwise been collected with close-ended questions. A focus group works best when it is based around a topic with which the participants are familiar because the participants feel more comfortable sharing their opinions and beliefs on the subject (Patton, 2015, p. 259). When the participants are confident in their statements, they are more likely to share more details regarding the topic, allowing more data and themes to be produced and possibly bringing new meaning to the researcher's initial question.

With this in mind, the desired product of this qualitative study was a description of the participants' perceptions and experiences related to NTIPs. By conducting focus groups, I obtained alternatively certified teachers' perceptions and practices regarding their involvement in NTIPs within their school districts.

Justification of Use of Instruments

In a qualitative research study, the researcher is the main tool used to gather data. The researcher has a vested interest in the topic and embeds him- or herself into the culture and situation to fully understand it. This immersion allows for the researcher to pick up on perceptions and viewpoints and to ask for clarification on topics or ideas that he or she otherwise would not be able to obtain. The qualitative researcher has an "insider's point of view" and is able to understand the collected data more fully because they are a part of the culture being researched (Yilmaz, 2013, p. 314). Conducting qualitative research requires the researcher to self-reflect on personal opinions and beliefs to ensure that they do not impact the study. Merriam and Grenier (2019) reinforced that "when the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, it is wise to be aware of one's shortcomings and biases that might impact the study" (p. 23). Instead of the researcher trying to eliminate the biases altogether, it is more realistic to have the researcher simply be aware of the biases and monitor them.

Data Analysis

A challenge that comes from conducting a qualitative research study is finding a way to make sense of the amount of data collected, "identifying significant patterns, and constructing a framework for communicating the essence of what the data revealed" (Patton, 2015, p. 521). Qualitative inductive analysis was used for this research study to generate new concepts and explanations from data collected during the qualitative study (Patton, 2015, p. 541). For this study, I conducted six focus group sessions with participating school districts within a specific region with alternatively certified first- and/or second-year teachers to obtain information on their perceptions of their respective NTIPs. Prior to scheduling the focus group sessions, I gathered input from professors and colleagues concerning the quality of questions that would be

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appropriate to use. The focus group sessions lasted approximately 45 minutes each with the

purpose of gathering pertinent information by asking the participants to describe and discuss

their views concerning the NTIP offered by their school district, the impact it made on their

teaching, and potential improvements that could be made to the NTIP moving forward. During

the focus group session, questions were designed to gain more insight and clarity into methods

that could be effectively applied in schools and possibly improve practices related to NTIPs.

Following the focus group sessions, the data were transcribed to determine if any smaller

but significant portions might possibly explain the perceptions held by alternatively certified new

teachers on NTIPs and their impact on their first year of teaching. For each focus group, an audio

recording was made, and I made notes throughout the focus group. After each focus group, I read

over my notes and listened to the recordings to transcribe each focus group. After the

transcription process was complete, the coding process began. During the coding process, the

text data were divided into similar segments and phrases that were further collapsed into themes

related to the perceptions of NTIPs and their influence on new, alternatively certified teachers.

As key words were extracted from the focus groups, seven codes were assigned to each

word considered important to developing a more formal analysis of the data using a code rubric.

In particular, all data collected from each focus group and participant survey were reviewed

multiple times to ensure accuracy. This step allowed me to assess whether the codes obtained

from the specific data gathered from one focus group were the same as those developed when a

comparison was made of all focus group data as a whole.

Next, the codes were translated into themes. This inductive analysis allowed me to search

for "themes and then generate general patterns and discover common themes through cross-case

analysis" (Patton, 2015, p. 551). Once the themes were identified, they were connected to the

focus group data as a whole, according to Merriam's (2002) suggestion that researchers "carefully review the connection between the words and themes" (p. 112). The themes were reviewed multiple times by me and another researcher to ensure that appropriate codes and themes were identified throughout the coding process.

Following Merriam's (2002) guidelines for qualitative research, a form of inductive open coding was used to analyze the data. After each day of conducting a focus group, data were coded and categorized according to the constant comparative method, which entails continuously searching for and comparing data across and within categories (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

By continuously comparing data, I identified all key words, word repetitions, phrases, and sentences that would provide insight in answering my three research questions. Next, code words were assigned to the word repetitions and phrases followed by engaging in a more formal data analysis. Specifically, all data provided by each focus group were reviewed several times during this step, which allowed me to determine if the codes taken from these data matched the same ones that were developed when a comparison was made of all data obtained from the focus groups.

Trustworthiness

According to Patton (2015) and Lincoln and Guba (1985), the purpose of trustworthiness in conducting qualitative research is to support the argument that the findings are valid and worth paying attention to, as well as worth taking into account (p. 685). Lincoln and Guba (1985) further suggested that researchers use credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to establish trustworthiness.

Credibility is used to evaluate whether the findings of a study represent a true interpretation of the original viewpoints of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In this

study, credibility was achieved through member-checking and peer-debriefing with my committee chair. Both of these types of credibility are vital to ensuring that the research study is a true representation of the participants' opinions and statements.

Patton (2015) viewed transferability as the degree to which the findings of a research study can apply or transfer to other settings beyond the bounds of a specific study. In this study, transferability was achieved by providing thick, rich descriptions of the teachers' perceptions of, practices in, and experiences in their respective district's NTIP. In accordance with Lincoln and Guba (1985), these strategies were used to allow the reader to make accurate judgments and assumptions regarding the findings of this study.

Dependability and confirmability measure how well research findings are supported by the data that were originally collected (Patton, 2015; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability and confirmability were achieved by demonstrating qualitative rigor and by developing an audit trail. For example, I maintained a file of all documents gathered and used during the data collection process, including consent forms, interview protocols, interview tapes, and transcripts. Lincoln and Guba (1985) noted that "another researcher should be able to read these documents and reach similar conclusions about the study" (p. 685).

Timeline

The timeline for completing my record of study is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Timeline for Record of Study

Topic	Information Collected/Needed	Approximate Date of Completion
Complete proposal for record of study		March 2019
Contact school districts for approval to conduct study	Proposal of study and site authorization form	March 2019

Table 1. Continued

Topic	Information Collected/Needed	Approximate Date of Completion
Submit the Institutional Review Board (IRB) application	All necessary documentation and information for the IRB application	April 2019
Complete chapter 2	Research related to record of study	Summer 2019
Begin writing draft of chapter 1	Related research and information	Summer 2019
Complete chapter 1		Summer 2019
Contact school districts to set up focus groups	Contact information for teachers from superintendent or director of human resources	September 2019
Begin writing draft of chapter 3	Methodology and data analysis research	September 2019
Submit draft of chapters 1–3 to chairs for review	Draft of chapters 1–3 of record of study	September 2019
Conduct focus groups	Research questions, focus group questions, and informed consent documents	October–November 2019
Submit updated chapters 1–3 to chairs	Feedback from chairs	October 2019
Orally defend proposal to committee		October 2019
Begin data analysis	Transcriptions of focus groups	November 2019
Submit draft of chapters 4–5 to chairs for review	Data collected from focus groups	November–December 2019
Submit final copy of record of study to committee		February 2020
Orally defend record of study to committee		February 2020
Graduate from Texas A&M		May 2020

Closing Thoughts on Chapter 3

This qualitative research involved focus groups and a survey in which I focused on how the perceptions and practices of alternatively certified teachers are affected by NTIPs in Texas school districts. By conducting six focus groups throughout the specific region in Texas and having the individual participants complete a survey following the focus group, I was able to

gather data reflecting the importance of NTIPs for alternatively certified new teachers and the impact of the program not only during the first year of teaching, but throughout the teachers' careers moving forward.

Data were collected from six focus group sessions. The focus group discussions were designed to acquire information regarding how the perceptions and practices of alternatively certified new teachers were impacted by their respective district's NTIP. The study proved its reliability by using a variety of participants from different school districts within a specific region in Texas to provide a diverse view of the subject. The design, data collection, and data analysis were carefully considered in order to guarantee the highest degree of ethical standards.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The focus groups and surveys took place throughout 2019, and the analyses were conducted following each focus groups. Each group consisted of an average of five alternatively certified first- or second-year teachers working in one of the six school districts throughout a specific region in Texas. Data analysis took place in November 2019 once all the focus group data were transcribed. During the data analysis, key words and phrases were extracted from the data and then were translated into codes. The codes that developed throughout each focus group and survey then were broken down and categorized into themes. The themes that arose from the focus groups and the entire study provided the data needed to determine the overall results of the study.

Several instruments were utilized to collect data related to my research questions. The first instrument used was an interview protocol developed by this researcher and used in a focus group setting. Questions used in the researcher-developed focus groups (located in Appendix B were developed to understand the new teacher's background, NTIP experience, and the influence of the NTIP on their teaching career thus far.

The second instrument used in data collection was a survey given to the participants at the conclusion of the focus group. The first four questions provided answer choices for the participants, while the remainder of the questions in the survey allowed participants the opportunity to select if they strongly agreed, somewhat agreed, neither agreed nor disagreed, somewhat disagreed, or strongly disagreed with the statements listed. Out of the 31 participants for the focus groups, 28 completed the survey. The questions used in the researcher-developed survey are located in Appendix C.

All the responses given by the participants regarding the focus groups and survey questions are presented in the subsection on presentation of data, organized by research question.

Methodological Approach

The type of qualitative analysis used for this particular study was an inductive process in which codes and themes emerge from the participants' responses. To identify initial codes and then themes related to each participant's experiences with the NTIP, the following steps were taken:

1. I reviewed transcripts from each focus group and survey and highlighted key phrases that were considered meaningful.

2. Highlighted phrases were reviewed to ensure that they had a direct relation to the central research questions:

   a. What are alternatively certified teachers' perceptions of new teacher induction programs in Texas school districts?

   b. How did teacher induction programs influence the alternatively certified teachers in their teaching practice and instruction throughout their first and second year of teaching?

   c. Were mentor programs embedded within the studied school districts' new teacher induction programs? If so, how did the mentor programs assist alternatively certified teachers in their first year of teaching?

3. Key phrases that were not considered directly related to the aforementioned research questions were not included in the final analysis.

4. Responses of each focus group were analyzed separately so as to not be influenced by each other.

5. As each participant's responses were analyzed, emerging codes were added to the overall analysis.

6. After codes were identified, credibility was achieved by peer-debriefing and member-checking before identifying themes.

7. The themes that emerged from the analysis were separated, and a complete illustration was developed of all the data collected from the study.

Presentation of Data

Six focus groups (31 participants) consisting of first- and/or second-year, alternatively certified teachers were completed for this study. This study sought to understand how NTIPs impact alternatively certified teachers during their first and/or second year of teaching. While this study focused only on alternatively certified teachers, much of the information can be beneficial for school districts that have traditionally certified new teachers within their districts as well. Out of the 31 participants, only 28 participants completed the survey following the focus group for a response rate of 90.3%. This could have been caused by teachers having to leave the focus group immediately when it ended or because they said they would complete the survey at a later time and never did. In accordance with the IRB, the identities of the participants remain anonymous. Each participant is identified using a number instead of their actual name.

Analysis of Data

Snapshot of Codes and Themes

The following list is an overview of the codes and themes that emerged from the data which exemplify the overall perceptions of first- and second-year alternatively certified teachers in relation to NTIPs. From the seven codes that initially arose during analysis (located in Appendix D), I was able to further analyze the data to identify four themes that exemplify the

perceptions of the participants. Following this overview is a detailed account of the responses of the participants.

- Code 1—Need for focused NTIP

- Code 2—NTIP was overwhelming

- Code 3—Assumptions of prior knowledge

- Code 4—Time management

- Code 5—Importance of mentor program

- Code 6—Supporting new teachers throughout the year

- Code 7—Expectations vs. reality of students

From the primary codes listed above, I went through and conducted a second coding analysis and identified four themes. The themes (described in the final coding rubric shown on Table 2) were identified as what emerged during the final coding process to identify the major themes present in the focus groups and surveys. Under the themes presented in the table, quotes are presented to show support and evidence of that particular theme.

Table 2. Final Coding Rubric

Theme	Description	Examples
Need for focused NTIP	First- and second-year alternatively certified teachers discussed how there was a lot of information disseminated during the NTIP, but that it was difficult to determine what was vital and what was not in order to be successful at the beginning of the school year. NTIPs need to be focused on providing foundational information to new teachers in order to be successful in their first years of teaching.	"The principal would just say 'If you have any questions, come to me.' But you don't even know what you don't know at that point. There was no rhyme or reason for anything." (Participant 26) "To me they didn't cover what they needed to cover…" (Participant 29)

Table 2. Continued

Theme	Description	Examples
Importance of mentor program	New teachers expressed the significant impact on the first years of teaching of having a mentor program embedded into the NTIP; from having a built-in support system to having a sounding board, it was mentioned as providing new teachers with a level of assistance they felt was needed to be successful.	"My mentor teacher has not been helpful whatsoever… I don't think my mentor teacher has ever been in my room. She hasn't been incredibly helpful. It makes me sad because I really needed help and thought she would be that person." (Participant 25) "I had to seek out a mentor. Actually, Texas Teachers told me that I needed to find one. She has been great. She gives me guidance and I just go to her on a case by case basis." (Participant 1)
Support of new teachers throughout the school year	Alternatively certified new teachers typically enter the profession without much knowledge on the education profession. Some of this information is given during the NTIP, but the teachers also expressed the need to have support and for the NTIP to continue throughout the entire school year, not just at the beginning of the year.	"…It's a lot in that first week that is thrown at us, which is fine, we can handle it, but it's a lot. I wish they would spread it out throughout the first semester and even into the second semester. I forgot almost everything they talked about those first two days." (Participant 17)
Prior expectations of new teachers	First- and second-year teachers stated that they were not expecting the amount of time that must go into teaching outside of the classroom in order to be prepared and successful during the school day with kids and that they expected students to not be as apathetic.	"…I wasn't expecting to not be able to leave my work at work. I didn't expect that at all, not having that balance. That has been an adjustment." (Participant 27) "…I was just kind of left on my own to figure it out. It's just been managing my time to grade all this stuff." (Participant 16)

Theme 1—Need for Focused NTIP

Based on the information obtained through focus groups and the survey, the first theme to emerge was that the teachers who obtained certification through an ACP wanted a focused NTIP to prepare and assist them throughout out their first year. In this theme, teachers indicated that they needed information on small tasks and procedures related to teaching rather than big-picture information. One participant gave the suggestion that the program should "delete a lot of the fluff and make things simple. Give easier access to the things that are important. It's so difficult to find answers" (Participant 24). Another participant suggested that there needs to be time set aside to go into more detail over topics and to have "more individualized help" (Participant 1).

A significant number of participants also felt that in addition to the NTIP not being focused enough, the amount of information given was overwhelming. Although the participants indicated that the information was important, responses from the focus groups indicate that it was too much to take at one time. For example, one participant stated the following:

> It was just overwhelming. It was just so much. It was just information overload. We had days when we were with the district and then days on campus, a couple of days we were both locations. And for me, it was just overwhelming because at the time you're trying to set up your classroom and ready for the first day of school and back to school night, but I felt like I was drowning and would forget all the information they were telling me . . . which I did. (Participant 8)

Other participants agreed that the information they were given would be beneficial at some point in the school year, but at the time it was too much to take in. For example, one participant said, "It was informational, but if you don't know anything about working on a campus, like me, it literally meant nothing. Like, I had no idea what they were talking about" (Participant 29). Another participant stated, "There were so many meetings, when all I felt like I needed was some time to myself to dissect and process everything and get my classroom ready. I just felt very unprepared and overwhelmed" (Participant 2). Participants said it seemed like the

school districts were attempting to provide every single piece of information they could ever need to know in two days. One participant described the NTIP as being "just a lot. A lot at the beginning . . . so many meetings. I think it was beneficial because it gave us more information that we didn't know. It's a lot in that first week that is thrown at us, which is fine, we can handle it, but it's a lot" (Participant 17).

In addition, within this theme emerging from the study was the assumption made by experienced teachers and administrators that new teachers have more knowledge regarding teaching than they actually do, so specific pieces of information were not covered during the NTIP. Participant responses indicated that although they came into teaching eager to learn and open to the information, there was still much they had to learn around teaching and the education field in general. Many colleagues and administrators did not take the time to explain foundational information. For example, a participant stated needing "more basic information about the 'basics.' I think people assume that new teachers know more than they actually do. A lot is thrown at new teachers without really being explained. I wish there was less assumption of alt-certs to know the same as someone who isn't alt-cert" (Participant 6). Another participant shared frustration with the NTIP and assumptions about their knowledge by giving an example of an experience had so far into the school year. The participant shared a possible solution to this problem: "During breakout sessions, there should be a breakout session just for alt-cert teachers that dumbs down everything. The people leading the breakout session are willing to go step by step for everything because the alt-cert teachers don't really even know what to ask" (Participant 24).

On the surveys, 18 out of 28 participants strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that their NTIP gave them adequate information on day-to-day campus procedures like discipline

information, attendance information, gradebook information, duty information, etc. The results

of the survey are shown in Figure 1. In comparison to the focus groups, this percentage aligns

with the participants answers to the questions regarding having a focused NTIP. It is apparent

that the participants that were provided information regarding day-to-day procedures had the

perception of the NTIP being more beneficial.

Figure 1. Results of the survey question "The NTIP gave me adequate information on day-to-day procedures (discipline information, attendance information, gradebook information, duty, etc.) that are present for the school campus."
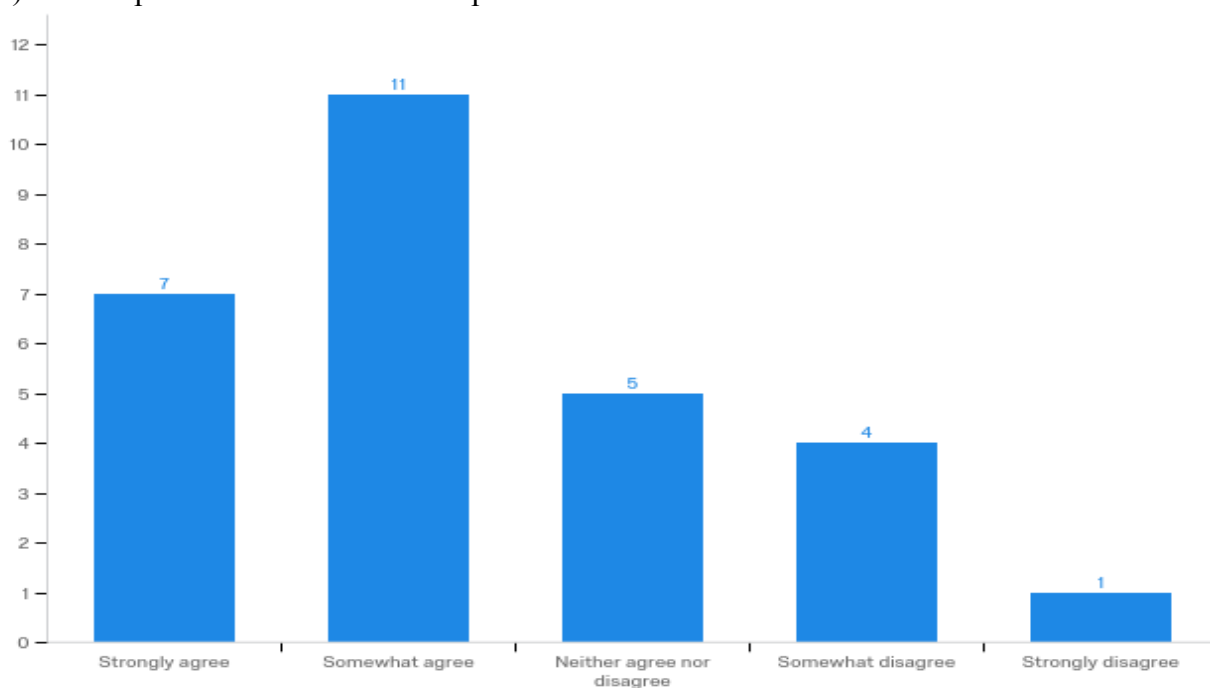
Theme 2—Importance of Mentor Program

The focus group data revealed that having a mentor program embedded into an NTIP is a

critical element for new teacher support throughout their first and/or second year of teaching,

representing the second theme that arose during the study. Although many new teachers reported

that as the year went on, the mentor teacher did not check in on them as often as the beginning of

the year, but overall the experience was extremely helpful. One participant said that at the

beginning of the year her mentor "was my go-to person . . . If I had any questions, she would

help me" (Participant 17). Many participants reported that it was not uncommon for the mentor to also be in a leadership position on campus. For instance, a participant said, "Mine is really helpful. And she is my team lead. I don't feel like any question is stupid when I ask them, which is nice. I don't feel uncomfortable asking them, so that's good" (Participant 18).

Throughout the focus groups, participants indicated that their mentor teacher provided a great support system in more ways than one throughout the school year. For instance, one teacher said, "My mentor saved my life. My professional life. Because the first couple of days I was overwhelmed" (Participant 23). Another participant described her mentor as being more than a colleague throughout the school year and that the relationship "became more, not just a mentor and not even a coworker, she became family, a friend" (Participant 16). When school districts are creating their NTIPs, embedding a mentor program should be the ultimate goal of the program—to create a support system and camaraderie among teachers, not just a coworker relationship.

According to the survey that was given, 10 participants were given a mentor from both their ACP and NTIP, 5 teachers were given a mentor from their ACP, 12 teachers were given a mentor from their school district's NTIP, and 1 was not given a mentor from either program. Based on these results, the programs understand the importance of having a mentor teacher for the new teachers, but the coaching aspect of the mentor program is not always present based on the feedback from the participants. As discussed in the literature, ACPs typically require new teachers to have a mentor teacher but there is not any accountability or check-ins that are put in place by the program. With that in mind, a mentor is also assigned through the school district's NTIP to ensure support is in place for the alternatively certified teachers. This could possibly be one of the reasons 10 participants stated in the survey they have a mentor from both the ACP and

the NTIP. Results from the survey regarding the mentor program are shown in Figure 2. This

figure represents the relationship participants in the study had with their administration and

mentor they were given through the NTIP. Overall, the survey and focus groups showed the

participants had a positive relationship with their mentor and felt supported by them throughout

the school year.

Figure 2. Results of the survey question regarding the new teachers having a mentor on campus
and the support they received from the mentor program.
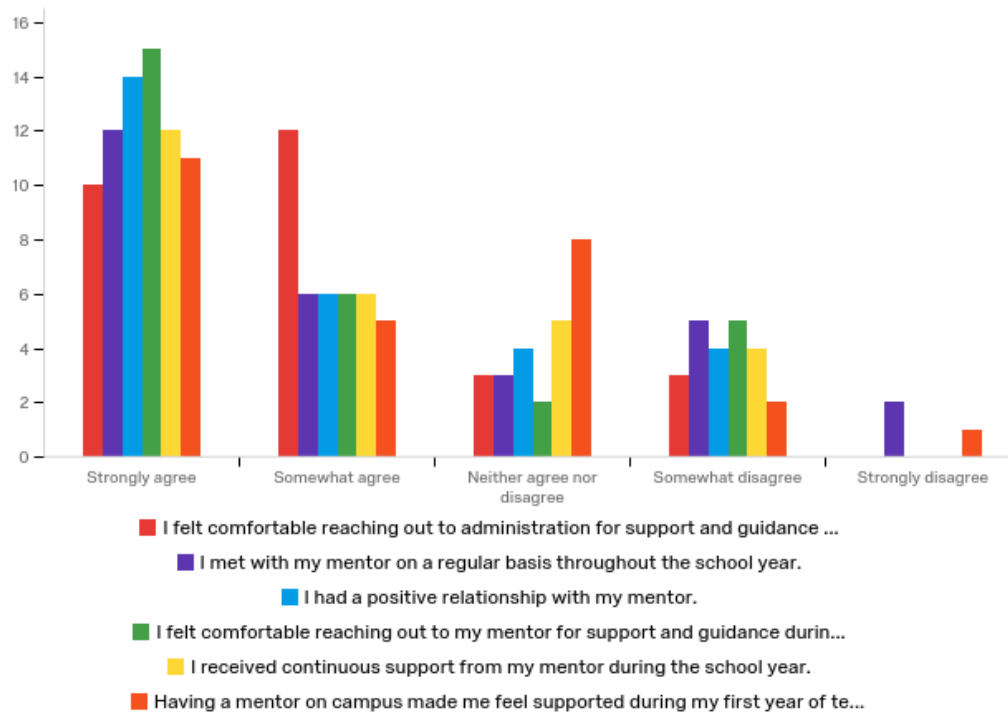
Theme 3—Supporting New Teachers Throughout the Year

The third theme was that alternatively certified teachers need support throughout the

entire first year of teaching, not just at the beginning when the NTIP takes place. Based on the

focus group responses, participants indicated that having support at the beginning of their first

year of teaching and continuing throughout the school year was an important factor in their

confidence as a new teacher. For example, one participant said, "I think I need someone to check on me more periodically and show me how to do something. Because things come up now that I wasn't aware of; I'm a new teacher for the entire school year, not just the first day" (Participant 31). Another participant suggested making the NTIP more than just a couple of days at the beginning of the school year. The participant expressed, "I wish they would spread it out throughout the first semester and even into the second semester. I forgot almost everything they talked about those first two days" (Participant 17). This sentiment of forgetting the information provided by the NTIP after the year began was common in the focus groups.

Another participant suggested organizing the information and paperwork into a binder, giving the new teachers access to the information throughout the entire school year. The participant said that it would have "all the stuff that they're covering in the binder because then we can look it up later or have another session because we aren't going to remember it from the very beginning of the year . . . it just needs to be spread out" (Participant 19).

Participants stated that the first years of teaching are challenging in different ways, but having a welcoming and inviting school culture can alleviate some of the challenges and stress. Although this is not something that can be changed during the induction process, it plays a role in the support that new teachers receive throughout the year, in addition to how comfortable they feel on the campus. On the surveys, 22 out of 28 participants reported feeling comfortable reaching out to administration for support and guidance during their first year of teaching, showing that the culture made them feel comfortable to ask questions and seek guidance. The other six participants did not report having a positive experience with the culture on their respective campuses.

The school district and campus cultures play a part in the experiences of new teachers throughout the entire school year, not just during the NTIP. The very beginning of the school year is overwhelming because of the amount of information, but once things get going, everyone gets busy and can forget about the new teachers. One participant described the positive school culture, but also the challenges of other people getting busy and being unable to help:

> I think they did a really good job making you feel welcome and included and comfortable and that they wanted you there during the beginning part. I thought the whole induction process was very positive and I felt good; as soon as it ended and real life started, it was scary. That's when I needed help and support and just felt kind of alone. I still do sometimes. I know I can go to people, but I feel bad bothering them when they have other things going on. (Participant 7)

This feeling of being alone after the school year getting started was mentioned throughout the focus groups. Another participant said, "And now, three months into teaching, is when I need the most help because it's real now . . . not just talking about what will happen during the school year. It's actually happening now" (Participant 26). This theme was represented in the results of the survey (shown in Figure 3); 47% of participants reported having support from their respective NTIP throughout the entire school year.

Figure 3. Results from the survey representing participant perceptions on whether their NTIP provided support throughout the school year.

THE NEW TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAM PROVIDED SUPPORT THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL YEAR

- Strongly Disagree 7%
- Somewhat Disagree 7%
- Strongly Agree 25%
- Neither Agree or Disagree 39%
- Somewhat Agree 22%
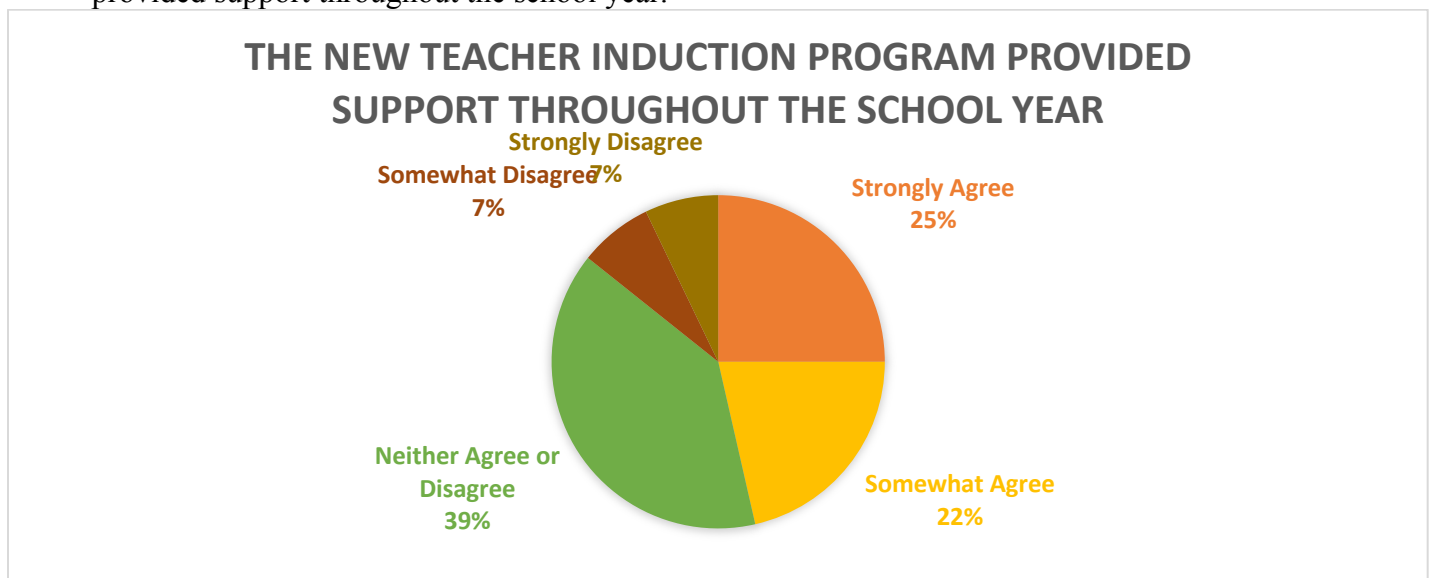
Theme 4—Prior Expectations of New Teachers

The fourth theme that emerged from this study is that one of the biggest struggles faced by new, alternatively certified teachers is entering into the profession with prior expectations. First, the new teachers expressed their lack of preparation around the amount of time needed outside of the school day to prepare for each lesson in the classroom. For example, a participant said, "I passed the content test, but it didn't really prepare me for actually teaching the content. So I have to spend a lot of my time trying to understand the content and then planning the lessons. That's all I pretty much do when I leave here and while I am here" (Participant 7). Another participant expressed awe that other, more experienced teachers are able to leave school when they do. The participant stated, "It's just been hard managing my time to grade all this stuff. [Another teacher] will go home every day at three and I'm here 'til six or seven, and I don't know how she stays on top of her grading" (Participant 16).

One participant expressed the time commitment for not only teaching, but also simultaneously obtaining certification through an ACP:

> I'm currently going through my alt-cert program right now, and honestly it's kind of taken a back-burner. So anytime I take a break from school, I am playing catch up on that. I knew the first year was going to be incredibly tough, but it's been really tough. I feel like I don't have time for anything and don't really know how to manage everything. Because you have lesson plans, paperwork, and grading . . . everything to do with the job, and then you have to go home and write papers and take tests and do all that on the other side. So it's just a lot. (Participant 25)

Alternatively certified new teachers also have unrealistic expectations of student behavior within the classroom. Typically, teachers go into the profession because they were a "good" student and enjoyed school, so it can be shocking to realize that not all students are similar to that. One participant said, "There is a level of apathy that I don't remember when I was in school. I did not expect the students to be so apathetic about their grades and school . . . I guess

it's a generational thing" (Participant 28). Another participant reported having similar

expectations and expressed, "It was just crazy to me how some of the students really don't care

about their grades. Like, for me, if a teacher were to tell me I was going to get a zero on

something, I would have freaked out. They just shrug their shoulders and go back to sleep"

(Participant 23).

These expectations of students also relate to the classroom management aspect of

teaching and disrespect within the classroom. For example, one participant described the

difference in learning and respect from when the participant was a student:

> I expected it to be when I was in school. I graduated in 1997; it never occurred to
> me that this is a generation that has grown up so completely different. They have
> social media, and devices . . . I expected kids to come in and still want to learn.
> Not having this apathy of "what's the point." And I didn't expect, I expected
> some disrespect, but I didn't expect the level of disrespect that I have now.
> Because that would have never occurred to me in high school. You didn't want to
> always do it, but you sat down and did it. Now they will just walk out if they
> don't want to do the work. Even as a sub, I saw it. But I didn't think it would be
> like that as a real teacher. (Participant 28)

Other participants described similar situations of being surprised with the disrespect

displayed by students in the classroom and expressed the difference from when they were in

school. One participant explained, "I expected kids to still be innocent, but they aren't. I have

second graders that will get up and leave. They just feel so entitled, and I know that reflects on

the household, so I just expected more innocence, and it's not there" (Participant 27).

Survey Results

The results of the four themes that emerged from the study show that regardless of the

ACP or the school district, alternatively certified teachers need relatively the same information

from an NTIP to provide them with the necessary support to start their teaching career. Figure 4

illustrates these responses in the form of percentages.

Figure 4. Themes identified through qualitative data analysis.
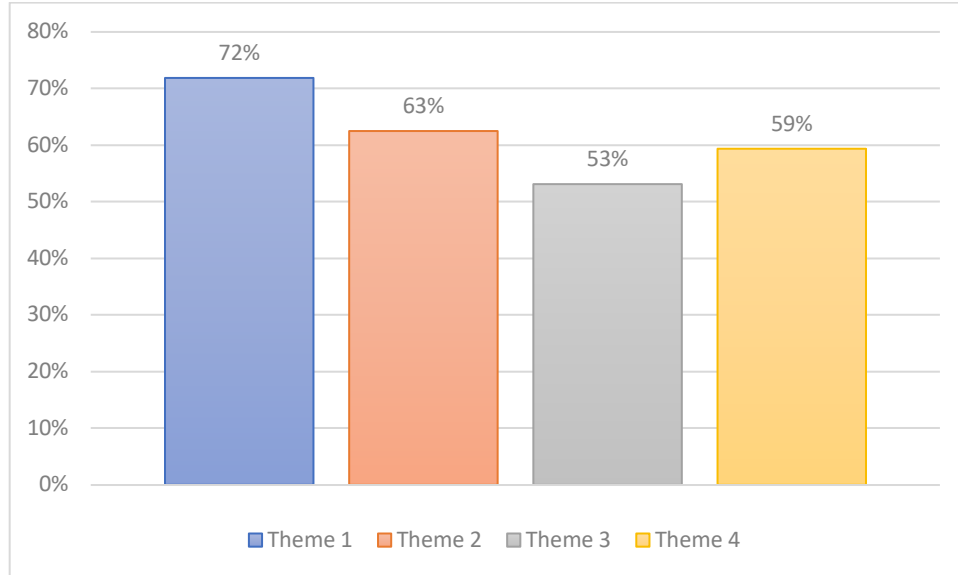
Theme 1 received the highest number of responses, with a total of 23 responses, or 72%. Theme 1 focused on the importance of having a focused NTIP for alternatively certified new teachers because all the information can be very overwhelming. Participants in the study indicated that focusing on the day-to-day procedures and processes key to being successful on campus was a vital part of having a positive NTIP. When new teachers have a focused NTIP, they are more likely to be confident going into the first day of school because they have a good grasp on what to expect on campus, having not have much knowledge prior to starting the NTIP. All of the new teachers that participated in this study had just completed their ACP or were still going through their ACP, so they did not have an abundance of knowledge to pull from regarding the education system. The participants expressed feeling that not enough explanation was provided on certain critical aspects of the campus and district because the NTIP leaders and administration assumed they knew more than they really did. In addition, participants recognized that an abundance of information was disseminated throughout the NTIP, making it difficult to

retain the important and necessary pieces of information. The participants knew that the information was vital, but it was too much to take in during a short amount of time.

Theme 2 received a total of 20 responses, representing 63% of all responses. In Theme 2, participants talked about the importance of a mentor program being embedded within an NTIP. In particular, having a mentor who checks up on the new teacher and has regularly scheduled meetings with the new teacher can provide a level of support that the NTIP and administration cannot. The goal of having a mentor program embedded into an NTIP is supplying a new teacher with a person whom they can seek throughout the school year for questions and guidance, ultimately leading to more of a friendship than just a mentor relationship. This can be a huge factor in a new teacher feeling confident and comfortable throughout their first years of teaching.

The third theme that emerged from this study was the importance of supporting new teachers throughout the school year, not just at the very beginning of the year. This theme received 17 responses, or 53%. In Theme 3, participants stressed their new teacher experiences lasting the entire nine months of the school year, not just the first couple of days during the NTIP. Within this theme, the importance of having a positive and inviting school culture for new teachers was stressed as well. If new teachers do not feel comfortable reaching out to colleagues, their mentor, or administration, they will not develop a sense of belonging on the campus. This is a challenge faced by many campuses and districts, one that is not easily fixed but is vitally important for new teachers.

Theme 4 provided information regarding new teachers struggling with prior expectations of the teaching profession, specifically the time commitment of teaching and student behavior within the classroom. Theme 4 received 19 responses, representing 59% of all responses. In this theme, new teachers indicated that in their experience thus far, they were not prepared for the

amount of work teaching would take outside of the classroom and normal school day. It takes time to get into a routine of grading, completing lesson plans, and other necessary paperwork in order to be prepared for the school day. It also proved challenging for many of the participants to come to an understanding that students hold a certain sense of apathy unfamiliar to the new teachers. This is a tough realization for every new teacher when entering the profession.

With the responses directly related to the importance of an NTIP for alternatively certified new teachers, it is obvious that the participants in the study considered the NTIP to have a significant influence on their first years of teaching and felt certain pieces of the NTIP to be more critical than others. The survey results and the focus groups resulted in similar data that showed different aspects of the NTIP to be beneficial and influential on alternatively certified teachers during their first and/or second year of teaching. Specifically, participants felt that having a quality and structured mentor a part of the NTIP is one of the most beneficial aspects of the NTIP. This is also similar to what was found in the literature on mentor programs for new teachers. Also, participants in the focus group discussed how influential the NTIP could be if it was more focused on day-to-day procedures, which was also apparent in the survey results when asked on how prepared the new teachers felt at the beginning of their teaching career. The survey results showed that the participants felt that the NTIP lasted throughout the entire first year of their teaching, but in the focus groups the participants did not share this same feeling when this support was discussed as a group. This difference in results is something that would be worth exploring in more detail in another study. Based on the data collected and the four themes that emerged from the seven initial codes, it is fair to assume that reliable inferences can be made from the data.

Interaction Between the Research and the Context

All school districts and campuses employ teachers each year who do not have an educational background, but instead have chosen to obtain teacher certification through an ACP. These programs do a great job of recruiting teachers who would not have originally sought out the profession, but the programs do not always adequately prepare teachers for their first teaching experience. With this in mind, school districts are given the task to provide some sort of induction and training to first-and second-year teachers, specifically those who are alternatively certified, in order for them to have the foundational knowledge necessary to be successful in the classroom. This study sought to understand the perceptions held by first- and second-year teachers on their NTIP and its influence on their first and/or second year of teaching. NTIPs have the opportunity to provide knowledge and skills necessary for new teachers to be effective in the classroom. Additionally, if teachers feel more confident in the pedagogy and content for which they are responsible for teaching, there is a better chance for students to be more successful because the teachers are more effective in the classroom. With a rapidly increasing amount of teachers leaving the profession within five years of teaching, an effectively conducted NTIP can increase retention, as well as create a foundation of knowledge for first- and second-year teachers. The goal of this study was to gain a better understanding of how NTIPs influence first-and second-year, alternatively certified teachers and the different components of the program that are most beneficial.

One of the biggest challenges faced throughout this qualitative study was finding a time during the months of October and November to meet with teachers who met the predetermined qualifications to participate in the study. The teachers who participated were working at various campus levels in the school districts, so their school days ended at different times, and they all

had after-school responsibilities. Finding a day and time in which all participants were available and without work or personal conflicts was a challenge, and some willing participants were not able to participate in the study because they could not attend the designated focus group time.

The first- and second-year, alternatively certified new teachers who did participate in the study enjoyed talking about the subject because they felt that it was important and could be improved on. Depending on the school district, the teachers who participated had a variety of views on the NTIP in which they participated. Overall, there was consensus that the NTIP is vital for alternatively certified teachers because these teachers come into the profession without any true knowledge or experience of what a classroom should look like. The only information and knowledge that these new teachers have is that gained from the NTIPs conducted by the school districts. This fact indicates that school districts need to have an NTIP for not only the betterment of new teachers, but also for the future of the impacted school district and campuses. The campus administration and the students of the alternatively certified teachers are ultimately impacted. If there is not a program provided for new teachers, they will not have a depth of knowledge from which to draw during their first years of teaching.

Administrative leaders in all six school districts were open to assist in providing contact information for teachers meeting the requirements to participate in the study because they felt that the study would be informative and beneficial to the education profession. Many superintendents expressed that their school district could do a better job with their NTIP because although they understood the importance of the program, they were just not sure what would be most beneficial to the new teachers. This solidifies the extreme importance of the study to the retention and recruitment of new teachers, as well as to school districts that could benefit from the data and understanding gained from the study.

Research Impact on the Context

The school district where I currently work plans to review the findings of the study at different levels. First, I will meet with the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction and the Director of Teaching and Learning for my school district because they oversee the district's NTIP, which takes place each August. This will provide time to understand the perceptions of the new teachers throughout the region and which part of the NTIP has the biggest influence on the new teachers, helping to determine if the current way the district conducts the NTIP needs to be adjusted to better meet the needs of new teachers, specifically those who are alternatively certified.

After the first discussion, I will present the findings to the board of trustees and the superintendent, who have been aware of my research throughout the entire process and have discussed adjustments or improvements to be made. Based on this presentation, I will then conduct a similar presentation to the executive director and board of trustees for the region I currently work in to show the perceptions the participants had regarding the importance of NTIPs in effectiveness and preparedness for first- and second-year, alternatively certified teachers. This presentation could potentially be shared at a superintendents' meeting that takes place each month for all region superintendents, and the information could be taken and implemented for each school district's NTIP (which should be conducted every school year). Many school districts I have worked with during this process have expressed an interest in improving their NTIPs; therefore, this would be the most effective and opportune way to share the results and provide information to all school districts within the region.

Closing Thoughts on Chapter 4

The results of this study provide a foundation for the influence an NTIP can have on first- and second-year, alternatively certified teachers, but I believe that more research is needed on the background of new teachers in order to improve specifics of the program to meet the needs of individual teachers. With that in mind, the next study conducted should provide more in-depth survey questions to gather background information on first- and second-year, alternatively certified teachers. This would provide school districts with a better understanding of the knowledge and experience that new teachers come into the profession with and what information needs to be given to new teachers before the school year begins.

Given the results gathered from the study, it is evident that each school district should provide an NTIP for new teachers, specifically alternatively certified teachers, because it has a positive influence on the teachers, campus, and students. With the suggested changes of gathering more information prior to the NTIP, future induction programs can be tailored to provide specific information and content knowledge to incoming teachers to better prepare them for their first years in the profession. These improvements will significantly improve the culture, self-efficacy, and possibly even retention of new teachers as a whole.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

Prior to this study, I had an idea of the importance of a quality NTIP and the influence it has on alternatively certified teachers during their first and second years of teaching, but I was still surprised at the overwhelming themes that arose from the focus groups and surveys. I knew that an NTIP is critical in preparing new teachers for the beginning of their career and that it is important for creating a foundation of knowledge during this time; what I was not expecting was hearing that the alternatively certified first- and second-year teachers need the NTIP to continue throughout the school year instead of being constrained to the beginning of the year. Along with the focus groups, the survey also showed the need for support through the NTIP and a mentor throughout the entire school year, not just the first couple of weeks.

Several codes and themes from the focus groups and survey completed by the participants were delineated in the results of this qualitative research study. These codes and themes reveal the importance of this study in terms of the importance of an NTIP for alternatively certified first- and second-year teachers and its impact during their teaching career. Themes that emerged from the study provided detailed information that help in understanding the influence of NTIPs on alternatively certified new teachers. These data may also be beneficial in developing a structured NTIP that school personnel can utilize to better serve alternatively certified teachers entering the profession

Discussion of Results in Relation to the Literature

The current study shows that the NTIP is critical not only at the beginning of the school year; many alternatively certified teachers expressed the importance of the NTIP lasting

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throughout all nine months of the school year. Wong (2004) said that in order for the induction process to be effective and worthwhile for all stakeholders, it should last two or three years. An extensive induction program was expressed as desirable by the participants in my study; they stated that the induction program looks different throughout the course of the school year, but is still beneficial. The continuous support provided by the NTIP to alternatively certified teachers throughout their first few years of teaching is something that can drastically impact the alternatively certified teacher's career by providing a level of support and knowledge that otherwise would not be in place because they do not have the pedagogical and classroom knowledge that traditionally certified teachers have when they begin their careers (Linek et al., 2012).

In addition, the results of the study emphasize the need for and importance of a mentor program being a major part of the NTIP. The participants discussed how much their mentors assisted them throughout the school year; those without a mentor expressed wishing they would have had one available to them. Smith and Evans (2008) discussed that a mentor is critical for new teacher success in the pedagogical issues that arise for new teachers, along with simply providing a support system to teachers throughout the school year. Participants in the current study expressed a mentor as being important to have because they are someone who can assist with content questions and also serve as a colleague and sounding board they can go to when they need help with issues outside of what is being taught. Mentoring is one of the most important parts of the NTIP, but in order for the mentor program to be effective, the mentors must be involved in other parts of the induction process and have a clear vision on the purpose of the NTIP (Wong, 2004). If the mentors are not following the mission of the NTIP, then the mentor component of the program could be counterproductive. Participants within this study

who had a mentor throughout their first year of teaching discussed the positive impact it had on their experience; those who did not have a mentor expressed wishing they had had someone they could have gone to for various reasons throughout the school year.

The results of the study also show that teachers who are alternatively certified enter into the profession with prior expectations of how students will act within the classroom and are also shocked with the time-commitment that is needed to prepare for each lesson. The teachers who participated in the study thought of themselves as good students and enjoyed school, so they were surprised when the students they were teaching did not comply and enjoy school like they did as students. Anthony and associates (2001) state that "teachers from alternative certification programs have reported feeling unprepared for the realities and complexities of teaching" (p. 48). Whether that be dealing with students or time-management, the expectations for what the job will be like is typically not accurate to the realities of the classroom. The novice teachers in my study shared numerous times they were not prepared for these aspects of teaching.

Lastly, the study indicates that novice teachers need the NTIP to be focused throughout the entire program because the amount of information that is being conveyed is overwhelming. The participants, along with the literature, state that not only does the NTIP need to meet the needs of the new teachers' professional needs, but it also needs to support and focus on the teacher's personal concerns as well (Bickmore & Bickmore, 2008). This is a balance that can be difficult to attain during the NTIP, but can provide new teachers with the information that is needed at the beginning of the school year for them to be successful within the classroom and also provide them with guidance on how to be a part of the campus culture. Participants conveyed that this is vital for their success and in order for this to be possible, the NTIP would

need to be structured and planned accordingly so it is not overwhelming to teachers first entering into the profession.

Implications for Practice

As stated in previous research and this study, alternatively certified teachers do not enter teaching with foundational knowledge or support that could be argued is vital when starting in the profession. In order for these teachers to be set up for success, a school district's NTIP is the avenue by which this information needs to be disseminated to alternatively certified new teachers. Recommendations should be made to school districts to provide these teachers with the day-to-day procedures and information necessary to be successful on campus. It can be helpful to include breakout sessions specifically for alternatively certified teachers during the beginning days of the NTIP and then continue to provide meetings throughout the school year. Meeting with just alternatively certified, new teachers separately would provide an avenue for the novice teachers to express their concerns and specific questions they may have before starting the school year. This would allow for guidance for the beginning of the school year so the teachers are not caught off guard with the realities of the classroom based on prior expectations.

Another critical piece of an NTIP provided by many school districts but not necessarily monitored is that of a mentor program. This study stresses how important a mentor is to alternatively certified new teachers and how the mentor can positively or negatively impact the new teacher during their beginning days on campus. The results state that a majority of school districts do have a mentor program embedded into their NTIP, but that it is not always beneficial to new teachers because no guidelines or structures are in place to guide the mentor program throughout the school year. Thus, I recommend that every new teacher has a designated mentor to meet with them throughout the school year. This aspect of the NTIP would require an

administrator to oversee the mentor program to ensure the mentors are meeting the requirements of meeting with the new teachers, but this accountability would provide support and guidance to the new teachers that would not otherwise be in place. This support from a colleague will ensure the alternatively certified, new teacher has someone to go to for advice while also introducing them to the culture of the campus and school district.

Lastly, this study reveals that the NTIP needs to be an ongoing program that encompasses the entire first year of a teacher's first year of teaching rather than just a couple of days before the school year begins. Participants within the study stated multiple times that they were a new teacher for the entire nine months of their first year of teaching rather than just the first day in the classroom. Different situations and problems present themselves throughout the schoolyear, so having the NTIP last the entire school year would provide support for the new teachers that they would not have otherwise. This program would evolve throughout the school year to be regular check-ins with administration and other new teachers to allow time for discussion and camaraderie among the novice teachers.

These adjustments to the NTIPs already taking place throughout the region, if implemented, can have a huge impact on the alternatively certified new teachers when they enter the profession. Collaborating with campus and district stakeholders to discuss recommendations for the existing NTIP at the district level should be addressed in order to meet the needs of new teachers.

Connections to Field of Study

This record of study adds to the research that has already been conducted on NTIPs, but brings in a different focus with the importance of NTIPs for alternatively certified teachers. This study focused specifically on alternatively certified teachers and explored the critical nature of

NTIPs to their first and second years of teaching. By revealing the NTIP as playing a critical role in a teacher's first years of teaching to administrators in my district and across the region, my hope is that they begin to realize the necessity for a more focused and structured NTIP. While the results of my study are not spread throughout Texas, I do believe that they can be transferable to any school district to provide information on what alternatively certified new teachers need from a NTIP to be successful. Even though the teachers who participated in this study work at a variety of schools that vary on size and demographics, they all wanted the NTIP to provide the same information and level of support throughout their first and second year of teaching. With that in mind, I believe all school districts can benefit from incorporating aspects of this study into their NTIP to better support their alternatively certified, new teachers. This research study identifies specific parts of NTIPs that are beneficial to alternatively certified teachers, such as focused NTIP, mentor program, and regular check-ins throughout the school year.

While this record of study had a very small scope being limited to six school districts with one region in Texas, I plan to share my study and results with other administrators in my area. While this study is very specific to the area in which I currently work, the results and data can serve as a foundation for a case study or further research to take place on the impact of NTIPs and the perceptions of alternatively certified new teachers on NTIPs. While this research was not able to have a wide scope of participants and information, it adds to the existing research on NTIPs while creating another layer of information that is specific to alternatively certified teachers. This will encourage and begin additional research to take place regarding alternatively certified teachers and how NTIPs can be more tailored to these teachers to promote success and knowledge during their first year in the profession.

Discussion of Personal Lessons Learned

Conducting this research provided me with the opportunity to grow as a learner and also as an administrator. Throughout the research process, I was able to realize how much I did not know about other school districts and the way they conduct certain aspects of the business. Only having worked in one school district and also attending school in this district, I have only seen one or two ways of doing things. Going outside of that bubble and talking with teachers outside of my school district was a huge learning experience because there are so many great things being done by other districts that I would love to bring back to my district. This, in turn, also made me a better administrator. I was able to talk to teachers around the region to understand the struggles they faced in their first or second year of teaching and then implement changes on my campus to better meet the needs of my new teachers. I also realized the importance of answering emails or phone calls in a timely manner. The data collection part of my action research was the most challenging for me because I was at the mercy of administrators in other school districts to give me a timeframe on when I could meet with their teachers. Many times, I found myself frustrated because I had not been emailed back, and I had to remind myself that even though this study was a top priority for me, it was not a top priority for the other administrators.

Even though the data collection portion of the study was tedious and did not go as quickly as I thought it would, actually conducting the focus groups and then reading the completed surveys were extremely enjoyable tasks. I loved sitting down with teachers from around the region to hear about their struggles, accomplishments, and love for teaching. More often than not, the teachers discussed something they wished they had gotten information on during the NTIP, but then talked about how being in the classroom working with kids makes the struggles all worthwhile. These focus groups were a great reminder on why I do what I do every

day—for the students. Many times I feel that professional development, such as an NTIP, is conducted just for administrators to check a box and say that a learning opportunity was provided. In reality, providing a quality NTIP vastly impacts not only the teachers, but the students whom they teach every single day. This study reminded me that we as educators cannot lose sight of the impact had by every teacher on the students within their classrooms.

<div align="center">**Limitations and Future Research**</div>

Throughout the study, I was faced with a variety of limitations that limited the scope of my study. One of the limitations I faced during this study was not having the information on what ACP each participant was currently going through or had completed. This information would have provided me with a better understanding of what each ACP provided the new teacher and the level of support that the school district needs to provide to compensate for potential deficiencies.

The results of this study indicate that further research needs to be performed across Texas, expanding to other regions outside of the region I conducted the study in. Additionally, using a mixed-methods research method to conduct the research could be more beneficial and could possibly provide a more in-depth, rich data collection to obtain information needed to fully understand the perceptions held by alternatively certified teachers on their NTIP and its influence. The focus groups and surveys are just a glimpse of each participant, so it would be interesting to work in different regions and create a case study. During this process, I would conduct the same study, consisting of the focus groups and the surveys, across multiple regions throughout Texas. This would provide information that could be transferable to other similar cases and school districts through Texas and other states that school districts could use when creating and conducting their NTIPs. Looking back through the data, I noticed that participants

from District E had the most negative feedback regarding their school district's NTIP and their experience as alternatively certified teachers at the point in the school year the focus groups was held. I am unsure if this is due to it being a smaller district that does not have resources in place to support the new teachers as well as the larger ones, or if it is related to the district failing in other areas; such as, accountability and teacher retention. The correlation between the district's struggles and the perception the participants have of the NTIP is something I would be interested in exploring in other districts throughout the state.

In addition, it would be beneficial to conduct additional research at the end of the school year to meet with the participants from the study and obtain an understanding of how the NTIP discussed during the study influenced them throughout the school year and whether they will be returning to their current school district, changing school districts, or getting out of the profession all together. This limitation of not understanding how the NTIP influenced the participants, if at all, throughout the school year is definitely something that is worth exploring with future research. This additional research would provide more in-depth knowledge of the influence, if any, had by NTIPs on the teacher continuing their career in education.

With the results in mind, I recommend that principals focus not just on new teachers at the beginning of the school year, but make a point to have specific portions of the NTIP tailored to alternatively certified new teachers. This would provide an opportunity for the induction program to be more focused to the needs of the alternatively certified teachers to ensure they have the opportunity to gain knowledge and understanding of what to expect coming into the profession. Also, I recommend that the NTIP is an on-going process that provides support and guidance throughout the entire school year in a form of an assigned mentor for each new teacher and monthly check-ins. These two built in levels of support will help create a foundation for

alternatively certified new teachers to build upon not only throughout their first year of teaching but also continuing the teaching profession in years to come. Having a structured NTIP in place for alternatively certified, new teachers could benefit the campus and school district not just for that school year, but in following years as well.

Closing Thoughts on Chapter 5

This record of study examined how NTIPs throughout a specific region in Texas influence the perceptions and practices of alternatively certified teachers during their first and second years of teaching. The alternative certification route for aspiring teachers has become more popular over the past couple of years and should impact the way that school districts are running their NTIPs at the beginning of the school year. Throughout this study, while conducting focus groups and analyzing the surveys, the results show that even though it is well-known that ACPs are increasing the number of teaching certifications earned, NTIPs are not adjusting to meet the needs of these teachers.

In order for school districts to adjust their NTIPs to better support alternatively certified teachers who are beginning their career, administrators need to be involved with NTIPs and understand the specific needs of the teachers. A time commitment is required from both administrators and mentor teachers in order for an NTIP to be effective. If a structured NTIP is put in place and feedback is obtained at the end of the school year from new teachers, a quality NTIP can have a greater impact on future alternatively certified teachers and on the campus and school district as a whole.

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APPENDIX A

DISTRICT AND PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

	District Total # of Students	Classification	Eco Disadvantaged Percentage	Participant Information				
				Participant Number	Gender	Age	Background	First or Second Year Teaching
Focus Group A	16,157	6A	75%	Participant 1	Male	40 – 49 yrs old	Business	First Year
				Participant 2	Male	40 – 49 yrs old	Business	First Year
				Participant 3	Female	21 – 29 yrs old	Business	First Year
				Participant 4	Female	30 – 39 yrs old	Psychology	Second Year
				Participant 5	Male	21 – 29 yrs old	Social Sciences	First Year
				Participant 6	Female	21 – 29 yrs old	Art	First Year
Focus Group B	13,508	5A	33.70%	Participant 1	Female	21 – 29 yrs old	General Major	First Year
				Participant 2	Female	30 – 39 yrs old	Business	First Year
				Participant 3	Male	21 – 29 yrs old	Business	First Year
				Participant 4	Female	40 – 49 yrs old	Health Profession	First Year
				Participant 5	Female	21 – 29 yrs old	Business	First Year
Focus Group C	2,357	3A	70.20%	Participant 1	Female	21 – 29 yrs old	Business	First Year
				Participant 2	Female	30 – 39 yrs old	Health Profession	First Year
				Participant 3	Female	21 – 29 yrs old	Unknown	First Year
				Participant 4	Female	30 – 39 yrs old	Health Profession	First Year
Focus Group D	12,955	5A	44.20%	Participant 1	Female	21 – 29 yrs old	Art	First Year
				Participant 2	Female	40 – 49 yrs old	Business	First Year
				Participant 3	Female	21 – 29 yrs old	Health Profession	First Year
				Participant 4	Male	30 – 39 yrs old	Technology	First Year
				Participant 5	Female	21 – 29 yrs old	Church/Missions	Second Year
				Participant 6	Female	21 – 29 yrs old	Science	First Year
Focus Group E	1,066	2A	49.20%	Participant 1	Female	40 – 49 yrs old	Police	First Year
				Participant 2	Male	40 – 49 yrs old	Coach	First Year
				Participant 3	Female	21 – 29 yrs old	Business	First Year
				Participant 4	Female	30 – 39 yrs old	Coach/Business	First Year
				Participant 5	Female	30 – 39 yrs old	Unknown	First Year
Focus Group F	7,254	4A	57.50%	Participant 1	Female	21 – 29 yrs old	Grad Student	Second Year
				Participant 2	Female	30 – 39 yrs old	Business	First Year
				Participant 3	Male	30 – 39 yrs old	Health Profession	First Year
				Participant 4	Female	40 – 49 yrs old	Professor	First Year
				Participant 5	Female	30 – 39 yrs old	Business	First Year

APPENDIX B

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Describe your background and what led to your decision to pursue a career in teaching.

2. What prior expectations did you have prior to entering the classroom?

   a. What fears did you have about becoming a teacher?

3. Have you faced any difficulties in making the transition to being a classroom teacher? If so, what difficulties have you faced?

4. Briefly describe your districts New Teacher Induction Program.

5. What do you consider to be the most beneficial aspects of the NTIP?

6. In your opinion, how could the NTIP be improved to better serve Alternatively Certified Teachers?

7. Does your district have a mentor program embedded in the NTIP?

   a. If so, did the mentor program help you as a beginning teacher? In what ways?

8. What do you consider to be the most beneficial aspects of the mentor program?

9. If you could make any changes or additions to the mentor program, what would you change?

   a. Why would you make those changes?

APPENDIX C

SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Gender

2. Ethnicity

3. Age

4. Previous Education

5. My previous education and/or career prepared me for teaching.

6. I felt confident stepping into the classroom on the first day of school because of my Alternative Certification Program.

7. The New Teacher Induction Program gave me adequate information on day-to-day procedures (discipline information, attendance information, gradebook information, duty, etc.) that are present for the school campus.

8. The Alternative Certification Program offered support during my first weeks of teaching.

9. The New Teacher Induction Program provided support throughout the school year.

10. If you received support from your Alternative Certification Program what were those supports?

11. If you received continuous support from the New Teacher Induction Program what were those supports?

12. The New Teacher Induction program held regular meetings that assisted me throughout the school year. (Yes or No)

13. The New Teacher Induction Program provided opportunities for me to observe experienced teachers. (Yes or No)

14. Does student diversity impact how a classroom is managed? (Yes or No)

15. Does student diversity impact how literacy should be taught in a classroom? (Yes or No)

16. Which program provided you with a mentor?

17. I felt comfortable reaching out to administration for support and guidance during my first year of teaching.

18. I met with my mentor on a regular basis throughout the school year.

19. I had a positive relationship with my mentor.

20. I felt comfortable reaching out to my mentor for support and guidance during my first year of teaching.

21. Having a mentor on campus made me feel supported during my first year of teaching.

22. Provide an illustration of what you envision a "well-managed" classroom looks like.

23. Does culturally relevant teaching apply to literacy? Why or why not?

24. How long do you plan to teach?

25. How long do you plan to work in education (in any capacity)?

APPENDIX D

PRELIMINARY CODING RUBRIC

Code	Description	Examples
Need for Focused NTIP	Throughout the NTIP, alternatively certified teachers felt as though the material was very "big picture" and there was not enough day-to-day information and procedures provided to teachers to prepare them for the beginning of the year.	"The thing they left out, that I found lacking, was practical running of the classroom… to be honest, there should be much more focus on practical day-to-day information. They mainly had big picture stuff, which is great, but we just need more." – Participant 1 "Yea, to improve it, have it focus on more procedural stuff. The day-to-day stuff is definitely needed." – Participant 2 "Just things like taking attendance, making a seating chart, inputting grades. We didn't go over any of that." – Participant 3
NTIP and Beginning of the Year Was Overwhelming	With not a lot of time set aside for new teachers at the beginning of the school year, the new teachers are given a lot of important information that is hard to decipher was is considered a top priority. With so much new information and people introduced at the same time, alternatively certified teachers found it to be very overwhelming.	"It was very overwhelming, I didn't know where to start. And I came in with no resources, so having to figure it out would have been nice for lesson plans." – Participant 4 "It's hard because it's so overwhelming. And so much information… I don't even know what to ask for for help from my mentor half the time. I just know I need help." – Participant 2

Code	Description	Examples
Assumptions of Prior Knowledge	Alternatively certified teachers enter into teaching without a foundation of knowledge, but many colleagues and administrators forget that these teachers do not have the knowledge traditionally certified teachers have when they enter the profession.	"We have co-workers that expect us to know everything they know, but it can be frustrating when they assume we know things and we really don't." – Participant 6 "Being alt-cert, I knew nothing coming in because I'm still in my program." – Participant 4 "My mentor has helped me a lot with lesson plans and curriculum. But at first, it was trial and error working cohesively because she would assume I would know what she was talking about and I would be lost." – Participant 4
Time Management	Unlike other jobs, teaching is one that does not end when the school day is finished. Many new teachers were surprised to find how much of a time commitment is required outside of the contract times in order to be successful in the classroom. The alternatively certified teachers discussed the amount of time they dedicate in the evenings and weekends to ensure they have everything prepared for their students the next day.	"I did not expect it to be so emotionally draining. I am tired. I have done a lot of hard physical work, but I have to say, classroom teaching is exhausting." – Participant 1 "I feel like other jobs, like the job I had before, was 9-6. And when I left work, I left work. And teaching, it's always something. And it's always in the back of your mind too. It's constant and the nights I go home and don't do anything, I feel guilty. I wasn't expecting to not be able to leave my work at work. I didn't expect that at all. Not having that balance… so I'm trying to figure that out. That has been an adjustment." - Participant 27

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Code	Description	Examples
Importance of Mentor Program	Participants in the focus groups and surveys indicated that the most critical part of the NTIP or the part they felt that was missing if it wasn't available was the component of the mentor program. The participants desired to have someone to go to for advice and guidance throughout the school year.	"Region 11 program is very intense and also provides a mentor from my campus. I have to do more with my mentor through my alt cert program like observe her and have her come into my room. She has helped me a lot and made it a very personable and comfortable situation." – Participant 6 "I want my mentor to actually be knowledgeable. I feel like my mentor teacher just did it for the paycheck. She didn't want to help me and really didn't know that much more than me honestly. She just isn't what I needed. She wasn't comfortable with showing me how to do things or answer my questions… it was and still is always awkward interactions with her." - Participant 28 "The mentor part is probably the best part of the NTIP. Having someone I can go to with questions." – Participant 3
Supporting New Teachers Throughout the Year	Participants expressed they needed support at the very beginning of their career, but that they also needed support as the year continued. The support and guidance will probably look different, because the alternatively certified teachers are facing different challenges, but the need is still present.	"I think having it better organized for the entire year; like if we get a little binder at the beginning with all the paperwork. All the stuff that they're covering in the binder because then we can look it up later or have another session because we aren't going to remember it from the very beginning of the year." - Participant 19

Code	Description	Examples
Expectations vs Reality of Students	Majority of new teachers typically enter into teaching because they want to make a difference and have a passion for teaching and learning; participants in the study expressed how surprised they were in the apathy students had in school. Participants were expecting students to be engaged and enthusiastic about learning the material and were surprised when that was not the case.	"Most of the students are fine, but some just don't have any ambition…. They are just indifferent in general." – Participant 2 "The lack of engagement for kids is difficult. It's not discipline, but if they don't care about what they are learning, they just check out. So getting them to focus is hard." – Participant 1 "When I was a kid and I was in school, if I dared rolled my eyes, you don't do that. I expected kids to still be innocent, but they aren't. They're talking about kids that are walking out, I have second graders that will get up and leave. They just feel so entitled and I know that reflects on the household, so I just expected more innocence and it's not there." - Participant 27