

OPPORTUNITY AND CAPACITY: CLOSING THE CURRICULUM, STRATEGY, AND
CULTURE CAPACITY GAPS FOR BEGINNING, PROVISIONAL, AND
ALTERNATIVELY LICENSED TEACHERS WHO SERVE IN A PREDOMINANTLY
BLACK AND LATINX RURAL SCHOOL

By

Kimberly T. Lucas

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Director of Dissertation: Jerry Johnson, EdD
Department of Educational Leadership and Foundations

ABSTRACT

The educational landscape regarding human resources is changing. Fewer students are graduating from college with education degrees and obtaining traditional teaching licenses. The lack of highly qualified teachers creates unstaffed positions. As an alternative to these vacancies, schools and systems are hiring international teachers who hold a provisional license, or recruiting people who only hold a closely related degree in the field, and providing them with an alternative license. The purpose of this inquiry was to provide schools and systems with insight into teacher capacity gaps and to propose differentiated support through professional learning pathways that target those gaps. Educators in this study participated in a three-part survey and a focus group to identify knowledge gaps in curriculum, strategy, or culture, and then engaged in professional learning tailored to those gaps. The findings in this study revealed several areas where teachers have capacity gaps, and the post-survey results at the conclusion of professional learning support

the notion that professional learning for teachers should be intentionally planned to target identified areas to build teacher confidence, efficacy, and efficiency. When systems examine how they support beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers, they may find that identified teacher capacity gaps provide clues to where the system actually lacks support.

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By
Kimberly T. Lucas
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Director of Dissertation: Jerry Johnson, EdD
Dissertation Committee Members:
Elizabeth Hodge, PhD
Travis Lewis, EdD
Kamara Roach, EdD

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DEDICATION

Several people contributed to the successful completion of this dissertation. Whether by lending belief, offering wisdom, providing affirmation, mentorship, encouragement, or support, I am grateful for their help during this arduous journey to obtain a terminal degree.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

There is a growing teacher shortage in the United States, and the complexity of this issue compounds the negative impact on the quality of education students receive. Veteran teachers are retiring early, experienced teachers are leaving to join other fields, and the number of college graduates choosing the field of education is dwindling by the thousands (Edsall, 2022), leaving school systems across the nation scrambling to fill the vacancies that are plaguing their buildings. This reduction in the pool of highly qualified teachers is alarming for a myriad of reasons. Student learning is negatively impacted, teacher quality and effectiveness decline, and instability in teacher longevity results in high turnover, which costs about \$7.3 billion per year to recruit and train new teachers (Garcia & Weiss, 2019).

For the purpose of this study, highly qualified refers to educators who have completed traditional educational programs, are fully certified with at least 5 years of experience, and have an educational background in the subject they teach (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). One of the most pressing issues with teacher vacancies is the inequities that not having highly qualified teachers causes among schools that serve predominantly Black and Latinx populations in high-poverty locations. For the purposes of this inquiry, high-poverty refers to schools where more than 75% of the school population is eligible for free or reduced-price meals (Oakes et al., 2019). It is within these schools that vacancies created by this growing teacher shortage have the potential to negatively impact these already marginalized communities.

Districts filling vacancies with those seeking alternative routes in education need to pay particular attention to teacher capacity. Teacher capacity refers to three key components: teacher knowledge, instructional skills, and professional dispositions (Liu et al., 2022). Teacher capacity

poses a challenge when teachers, even those who are not highly qualified, are still held to the same testing and accountability standards. This is even more true when such teachers are put in a high-needs context with a predominantly high-needs minority majority. If there are not significant efforts to recruit highly qualified teachers, to close teacher capacity gaps, or to replace current substitutes in the system with highly qualified teachers, marginalized students will continue to fall behind and lack the quality teaching needed to close historically existing gaps.

Primary Leadership Academy, a pseudonym, is a rural school in eastern North Carolina that, at the time of this inquiry, has a current enrollment of 647 Pre-K through eighth-grade students (see Figure 1). There are 46 Pre-K through eighth-grade core, encore teachers, and special education teachers (see Table 1). Core teachers teach the core subjects: reading, math, science, and social studies. Encore teachers teach special subjects and the arts: band, chorus, art, foreign language, media, and physical education. Special education teachers provide additional services to students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Of those 46 teachers, 15 are classified as beginning teachers, six are provisionally licensed (international teachers), and nine are alternatively licensed (bachelor's degree-holding professionals seeking a career in education holding a limited residential license status). At the time of this inquiry, there are five vacancies that will most likely be filled by substitutes (see Table 2). These numbers equate to 37% of the staff being classified as beginning, provisionally, and/or alternatively licensed. The student population consists of 323 Black students, 220 Hispanic students, 41 biracial students, 62 White students, and one Asian student (see Figure 2). At the beginning of the 2023–2024 fiscal year, the school had 24 vacancies to fill. At the beginning of the 2024–2025 school year, the school had to fill 19 vacancies, although it is important to note that three were due to teacher promotions

within the building and three to new positions created there. Beginning, provisionally, and alternatively-licensed teachers were employed to fill many of those slots in both years. Even

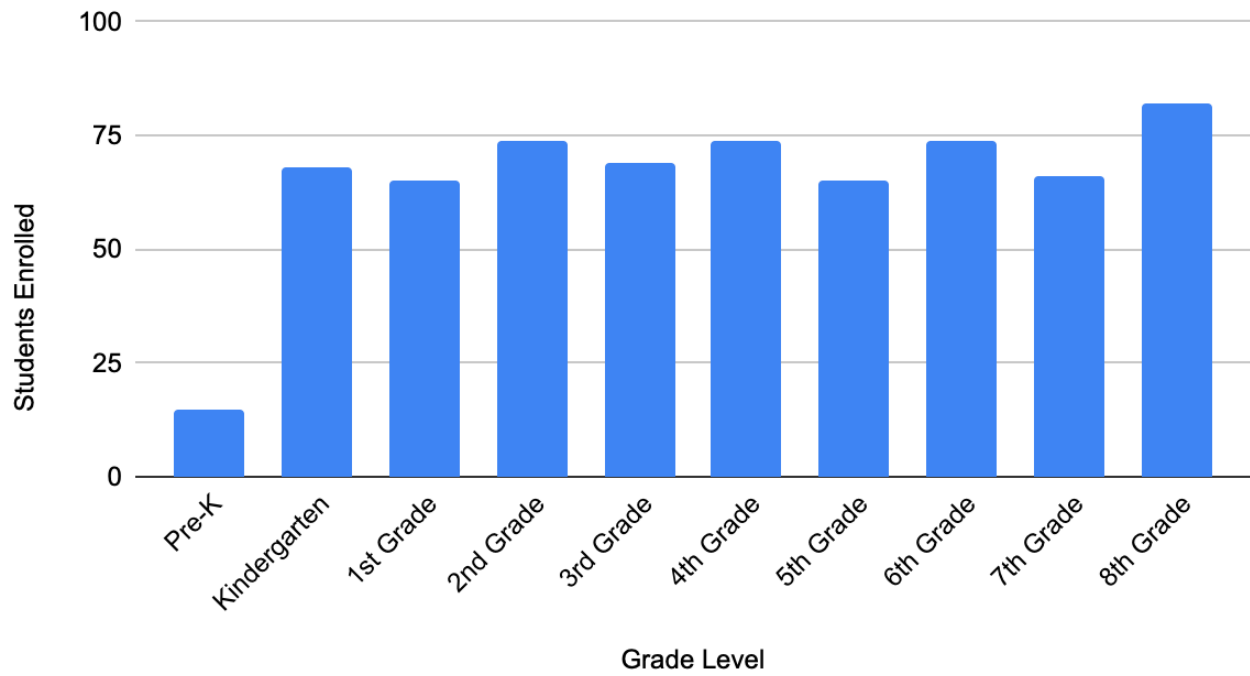


Figure 1. March 2024 Student enrollment by grade level for Primary Leadership Academy.

Table 1

Number of Teachers and Teacher Assistants (TAs) Per Grade Level at Primary Leadership Academy During the 2023–2024 and 2024–2025 School Years

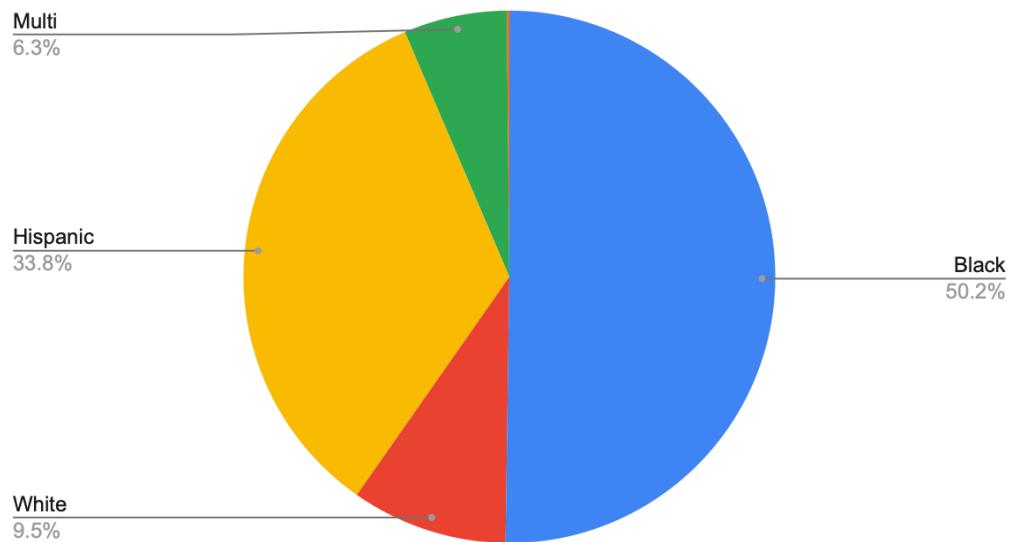
Grade Level	Teachers in Grade Level in 2023–2024	TA in Grade Level in 2023–2024	Teachers in Grade Level in 2024–2025	TA in Grade Level in 2024–2025
Pre-K	1	1	1	1
Kindergarten	3	3	3	3
1 st Grade	4	1	3	1.5
2 nd Grade	4	1	3	1.5
3 rd Grade	3	0	6	0
4 th Grade	3	0	3	0
5 th Grade	3	0	3	0
6 th Grade	3	0	3	0
7 th Grade	3	0	3	0
8 th Grade	3	0	3	0
EC	4	0	4	0
Encore	9	2	9	2
Total	43	8	46	9

Table 2

Beginning Teacher Licensure Status Per Grade Level at Primary Leadership Academy during the 2023–2024 School Year

Grade	# Teachers 23–24	# Teachers 24–25	TL BTs 23–24	TL BTs 24–25	PL 23–24	PL 24–25	RL 23–24	RL 24–25	Sub or No Teachers 23–24	Sub or No Teachers 24–25
Pre-K	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
K	3	3	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	0
1 st	4	4	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	1
2 nd	4	4	0	0	3	2	0	1	0	1
3 rd	3	6	0	0	1	2	1	1	0	0
4 th	3	3	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
5 th	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1
6 th	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
7 th	3	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	2	1
8 th	3	3	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
EC	3	3	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0
Encore	9	9	1	1	4	1	1	0	0	0
Total	42	45	2	2	12	9	2	9	3	4

Note. TL (Traditionally Licensed Teachers), PL (Provisionally Licensed Teachers), RL (Residency Licensed Teachers)



Note. Primary Leadership Academy enrollment numbers by grade level in March of the 2023–2024 school year.

Figure 2. March 2024 student enrollment by race for Primary Leadership Academy.

though the school met academic growth in 2022–2024, the school is currently designated by the State of North Carolina as a low-performing school, having received a school-wide letter grade of a D, with a C in math and an F in reading.

Considering the case at Primary Leadership Academy and other schools throughout the nation similar to Primary Leadership Academy that are facing staffing situations, it is imperative for schools and systems to identify specific teacher capacity gaps and find effective strategies to help narrow those teaching gaps as it relates to teacher knowledge of the curriculum, teacher knowledge of strategies and teacher knowledge of school and student cultures.

This inquiry will examine how to build capacity among beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers serving in poor, rural schools with a majority Black and Latinx student population. This chapter begins by providing both background and context before establishing an overview and focus of this inquiry, which includes significance, assumptions, and limitations associated with this work, before exploring the literature review.

Background of Inquiry

The term “achievement gap” has a long history in education. It has been used to account for differences in standardized test scores, course exams, and State assessments among students based on racial and ethnic demographics (Coleman et al., 1966). The research surrounding this phenomenon often places the onus on the individual child or the collective racial demographic, rather than examining the system that helps produce those results for that demographic. Another term, opportunity gap, is also present within the field. The term opportunity gap seeks to take responsibility off the individual child and examine the system that creates deficits in student performance (Shukla et al., 2022).

Specifically, opportunity gaps embody the difference in performance between students from historically and currently marginalized groups and middle and upper-class, White, male students, with primary emphasis on opportunities that students have or have not had, rather than on their current performance (i.e., achievement) in a class. (Shukla et al., 2022, pp. 4–5)

Teacher vacancies contribute to the opportunity gap. High-poverty schools are more likely to have less-qualified teachers. Research shows that teachers in low-poverty schools tend to be less qualified than those in higher-poverty schools (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). Combining the “achievement gap” and the “opportunity gap” with a post-pandemic workforce shortage compounds the problem’s complexity. The Covid-19 pandemic forced mass school closures and immediate virtual instruction, which students and/or teachers may not have been accustomed to. On March 14, 2020, Governor Roy Cooper issued an executive order closing North Carolina schools for two weeks. Due to public health concerns, those two weeks stretched to the remainder of the 2019–2020 school year. In August of 2020, schools reopened but were under strict guidelines for masking and social distancing. There was also a protocol in place for students or staff diagnosed with COVID-19. It was also during this time that another term was coined: “The Great Resignation.” A significant number of workers, close to 47 million, quit their jobs on their own volition (Fuller & Kerr, 2022). Fuller and Kerr (2022) attributed it to five “Rs”: retirement, relocation, reconsideration, reshuffling, and reluctance. Systems witnessed teachers retiring and other teachers leaving because they found working remotely less stressful and more beneficial (Varghese, 2022). The system also saw teachers resigning due to pressure, burnout, and the politics that plagued educational systems (Varghese, 2022). Even though

research shows that Covid-19 exacerbated the problem, it did not initiate it, and the forces that underlie it remain (Fuller & Kerr, 2022).

This leads to where the field of education currently stands. “We find at least 36,000 vacant positions and at least 163,000 positions held by underqualified teachers. Both are conservative estimates of the national teacher shortage” (Nguyen et al., 2022, p. 1). A drop in students graduating with bachelor’s degrees in education exacerbates this: from 176,307 in 1970–1971, to 104,008 in 2010–2011, then to 85,058 in 2019–2020 (Edsall, 2022). The proportion of graduates entering teaching has hit a 50-year low (Edsall, 2022), which can significantly impact the field. These shortages did not just appear. Demand for teachers has risen, and supply shrunk rapidly, with shortages more than quadrupling in just 5 years (Garcia & Weiss, 2019).

Schools throughout the country have classrooms without teachers, let alone highly qualified ones (Nguyen et al., 2022). Despite this, accountability measures for state testing and school performance in North Carolina remain unchanged. There is statistical evidence showing that many educators are not highly qualified and are seeking alternative licensure. This creates a challenge when those tasked with teaching content are still learning it themselves. Therefore, schools would benefit from supporting this teacher demographic if education is trending in this direction.

Context of Inquiry

Tip County (a pseudonym) in eastern North Carolina has a population of about 173,500, with 53% female, 58.2% White, 36.5% Black, and 7.1% Hispanic residents. Among adults 25 and older, 89.9% graduated high school and 32.6% hold at least a bachelor’s degree. The poverty rate is 21.6% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2024).

Tip County Schools, a pseudonym, has 38 schools in the system. The County has one preschool headquarters, 16 elementary schools, six K-8 Schools, seven traditional middle schools, six high schools, two early colleges, one virtual academy, and three dual immersion programs. There are nearly 28,000 students in the county. In 2023, 17 of Tip County Schools were identified as low-performing. This is up from 13 in the previous year.

This inquiry takes place at Primary Leadership Academy, a Title I rural school located in eastern North Carolina. It is one of the schools in the Tip district designated as low-performing at the end of the 2022–2023 school year. Title I designation stems from the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, which was later superseded by the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], n.d.). This Act assists in funding and distributing federal dollars to schools with high populations of low-income families. These federal dollars are to be spent on children to help them meet state standards.

Primary Leadership Academy has 653 students, with roughly 70% being economically disadvantaged, and the whole school is Title I. The school has one principal, one assistant principal, and one full-time school resource officer (SRO) assigned to the site. A school resource officer is a law enforcement officer placed in each school building for security purposes. The SRO is an extension of the local sheriff's office. There is a total of 59 teaching staff at Primary Leadership Academy (see Table 1). However, there is a combined total of 89 employees who work for the institution.

Among the 51 certified staff (including one MTSS Coordinator, two instructional coaches, and two counselors), 20 educators—39% of all certified staff—hold initial, provisional, or emergency licenses. An initial license is awarded to beginning teachers after 4 years in an approved North Carolina teaching program. A provisional license allows professionals to teach

while completing required coursework or other requirements; all international teachers at Primary Leadership Academy fall into this category. An emergency license is a one-year, non-renewable license in North Carolina that requires at least a Bachelor's degree and 18 relevant coursework hours (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction [NCDPI], 2024a).

For Primary Leadership Academy, 39% of the total staff licensed to teach are not highly qualified. When considering the staff that teach in school accountability areas, there are 19 positions, eight of which are initial or alternatively licensed or substitutes. Another two are provisionally licensed international teachers. This equates to 53% of Primary Leadership Academy certified teaching staff responsible for school accountability performance being initial, provisional, or alternatively licensed (see Figure 3). It is important to note that one co-teacher is being trained to take over a dual classroom next year, and one teacher in an advanced role is not factored into this data because their assistance will be supplemental to the teacher who will receive EOG scores for accountability measures. Accountability areas are core subject classes that determine the school's report card grade. This includes grades 3–8 English Language Arts and Math, grade 5 science, and grade 8 science. Students take End-of-Grade (EOG) assessments, and the state then calculates whole-school performance grades.

At the start of the 2024–2025 academic year, Primary Leadership Academy had five grade levels with no teachers. Students in these classrooms will have a long-term substitute. Primary Leadership Academy is not alone in this position. These types of shortages can currently be felt at local, state, and national levels (Haj-Broussard et al., 2016). During the 2023–2024 school year, Primary Leadership Academy's sixth-grade science and social studies students and seventh-grade math students did not have a full-time teacher for the entire year. These classes were covered by a variety of substitutes. These substitutes do not have teaching degrees, nor do

they have degrees that align with the subject area they are covering. The seventh-grade math position was assisted by a substitute retiree who worked four days a week alongside the long-term substitute. During the 2024–2025 school year, seventh-grade math will have a highly qualified teacher.

A traditionally licensed teacher and an initially licensed beginning teacher (BT) both pursue the traditional certification route; however, BTs are in their first 5 years of teaching. A provisionally licensed teacher must complete additional coursework or requirements to be fully licensed—this license is also granted to international teachers. A residency-licensed teacher holds a 4-year degree in a non-teaching field and receives a license upon agreeing to enroll in a local university for required coursework. A substitute teacher in Tip County Schools is employed by a local agency to oversee classrooms during teacher absences.

Historically, the school has had an F in reading and a C in math, with school growth measures that have vacillated between meeting and exceeding growth; however, the school has remained a D school (North Carolina School Report Cards, 2023). In 2022, the school exceeded growth; however, in 2023, the school met growth and entered into low-performing status (North Carolina School Report Cards, 2023). The long-standing principal transitioned to another school in January of 2023, and an interim principal was designated through July 1, 2023. The new principal walked into the 2023–2024 school year facing the feat of filling 24 vacancies on July 1, 2023.

From June 2022 to February 2023, Tip County School System hired 360 licensed educators: teachers, counselors, and media coordinators. Of the 360 licensed educators, 187 are provisionally licensed or hold a residency license. Almost 52% of hires in Tip County Schools are not highly qualified. Since this data was originally collected, it has shifted to over 60%.

Through this inquiry, an attempt will be made to reduce the capacity gap for initial- and provisionally licensed teachers serving in predominantly minority schools. The aim is to improve the quality of the teaching these students receive to ensure they are adequately educated. If this problem is not addressed, students in poorer, rural communities will continue to have unqualified teachers throughout their pre-K through 8th-grade experience. Table 3 highlights other schools in the same district facing the same staffing and equity issue: having to hire beginning and alternatively licensed candidates to be fully staffed.

Statement of the Problem of Practice

The problem of practice this inquiry seeks to address is how to narrow the capacity gap in curriculum, strategy, and culture among beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers in rural schools with majority Black and Latinx populations. As teaching vacancies due to teacher shortages continue to rise nationwide (Weiss et al., 2020), open positions are being filled by teachers taking non-traditional pathways.

Building teacher capacity is paramount, but it is also multifaceted. “Capacity building includes various aspects of individual teachers’ growth such as teacher efficacy, resilience, and emotions, as well as collective strength of the group such as social capital and trust building” (Hong et al., 2020, para. 6). It can be argued that capacity is not unilateral in nature, but more multi-dimensional. Building capacity requires a layered approach that must be done with intention, attention to detail, and proper support in order to be effective and sustainable. Horner et al. (2017) suggest within their research that “too often effective practices are proposed without attention to and implementation of the tools needed to facilitate adoption, reliable use, and sustainability over time” (p. 26). Effective capacity building, in this instance, deals with the

Table 3

Staffing Conditions During the 2023–2024 School Year for Title I Schools in Close Physical Proximity to Primary Leadership Academy

School	Low-Performing	Letter Grade	# Teaching Positions	# Vacancies	# Non-Traditional Teachers	# BTs (1-5)	% Staff Not Highly Qualified
School P	Yes	D	39	3	9	9	46%
School BV	Yes	D	28	0	7	3	36%
School N	Yes	F	25	0	10	7	68%
School S	No	C					
School W	Yes	F	33	0	11	4	45%
School NP	No	C					
School B	Yes	D	22	2	4	8	50%

educators' ability, but also considers the strategies and systems surrounding the support these individuals receive during any attempts to narrow existing gaps.

Capacity research often centers on a single area such as capacity, culturally relevant teaching, or student engagement. This inquiry, however, adopts a multi-layered approach, reflecting the multi-dimensional nature of teaching and learning. Therefore, support for beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers must also be multi-dimensional, focusing on three key aspects: knowledge of standards, strategies, and culture. Without sufficient support, continued teacher turnover will likely exacerbate the teacher shortage (Boyd et al., 2009).

This inquiry investigates a significant factor influencing the teaching and learning contexts for Black and Latinx students in economically disadvantaged and rural areas. This persistent problem affects teachers, students, and educational systems. At Primary Leadership Academy, certain vacancies have remained unfilled for several years.

Inquiry Guiding Questions

This inquiry is guided by the following questions:

1. What capacity gaps exist for beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers?
 - a. What capacity gaps exist for BTs and ALTs in the area of curriculum?
 - b. What capacity gaps exist for BTs and ALTs in the area of strategies?
 - c. What capacity gaps exist for BTs and ALTs in the area of culture?
2. How does strategically layered professional development and coaching impact capacity gaps for beginning and alternatively licensed teachers?

The purpose of this inquiry is to discover the needs of beginning, provisional, and emergency licensed teachers as it relates to the curriculum, strategy, or culture. The main objective is to identify these needs to begin formulating a support plan for these educators, as they are now the majority of personnel.

By implementing strategic, targeted support, school systems can align their support systematically to make positive gains in teacher capacity, which, in turn, should impact teacher preparedness, longevity, and ultimately student performance.

Overview of Inquiry

To answer the questions guiding this inquiry, I will use a convergent mixed-methods study design (Mertler, 2022) to gather qualitative and quantitative data from a cohort of beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers. The inquiry is grounded in improvement science PDSA cycles, which include three phases.

During Phase I, I will establish a baseline dataset for the participating teachers. The baseline data will be collected through a survey and a focus group that will hone in on curriculum, strategies, and culture. The baseline will be used to assess their curriculum, strategies, and cultural knowledge prior to grouping them by license classification and their identified gaps.

After the survey and focus group data has been analyzed and disaggregated, a baseline will be established. The baseline will determine where participants need support in curriculum, strategies, culture, or a combination of the three. It will not be until the data has been analyzed and disaggregated that the researcher will be able to determine how the participants will be grouped for the inquiry. The inquiry will be shaped according to both individual and group responses. Participants will be placed on a support pathway (curriculum, strategies, or culture),

and data will be collected via post-survey at the conclusion of professional development sessions to monitor and gauge the impact of the support being provided (see Figures 3 and 4). These pre- and post-surveys will also serve as the basis for evaluating the program, its impact, and the cohort's progression. The participants in this inquiry are all K-8 educators at Primary Leadership Academy, a rural school in North Carolina serving a majority-Black and Latinx student population.

Participants will be invited to engage in this inquiry by way of a personal invitation to do a face-to-face explanation of the inquiry. During the meet-and-greet, the purpose, focus, and intent will be outlined. Willing participants will be provided a consent form to indicate their willingness to participate in the inquiry. For educators who choose to participate, the work will occur in short cycles of training and support that follow the Plan, Do, Study, Act cycle (see Figure 4). Keeping activities intentional, focused, and fast-paced will help ensure momentum is not lost.

The support interventions will be evaluated and rated for effectiveness based on participants' perceptions through post-surveys and focus groups, in conjunction with walkthroughs. Feedback will be analyzed and compared with the data collected from the pre-survey and focus group session to gauge growth that occurred or did not occur throughout the research process.

Inquiry Partners

Collaboration is a key component of this inquiry. At the start of this inquiry, collaborating with professors and other doctoral candidates who served as critical friends helped refine the inquiry's focus and direction. This was significant pre-work necessary to solidify the problem of practice and brainstorm remedies.

Opportunity and Capacity: Closing the capacity gap for beginning, provisionally and alternative licensed teachers who serve in predominately Black and Latinx rural schools

Output

- Differentiated Educator Interventions
- Professional Development Process
- Professional Development Model

Intervention

- Targeted Support In:
- Curriculum
 - Strategies
 - Culture

Designed For

- Alternative Licensure Teachers
- Beginning Teachers (Years 1-2)
- Provisionally Licensed International Teachers



Research Question # 1

What capacity gaps exist for beginning (BT), provisionally licensed (PL) and alternatively licensed teachers (ALT)?

Data

Pre-survey
Focus Group

Analysis

Disaggregate data to determine strengths and gaps

Results

Determine who needs which supports in which area or areas

Design

Examine implications for content and delivery of intervention and build PD Plan



Research Question # 2

How does strategic professional development impact capacity gaps for beginning (BT), provisionally licensed (PL) and alternatively licensed teachers (ALT)?

Data

Post-survey
Focus Group
Walkthroughs

Analysis

Disaggregate data to determine changes and improvements

Results

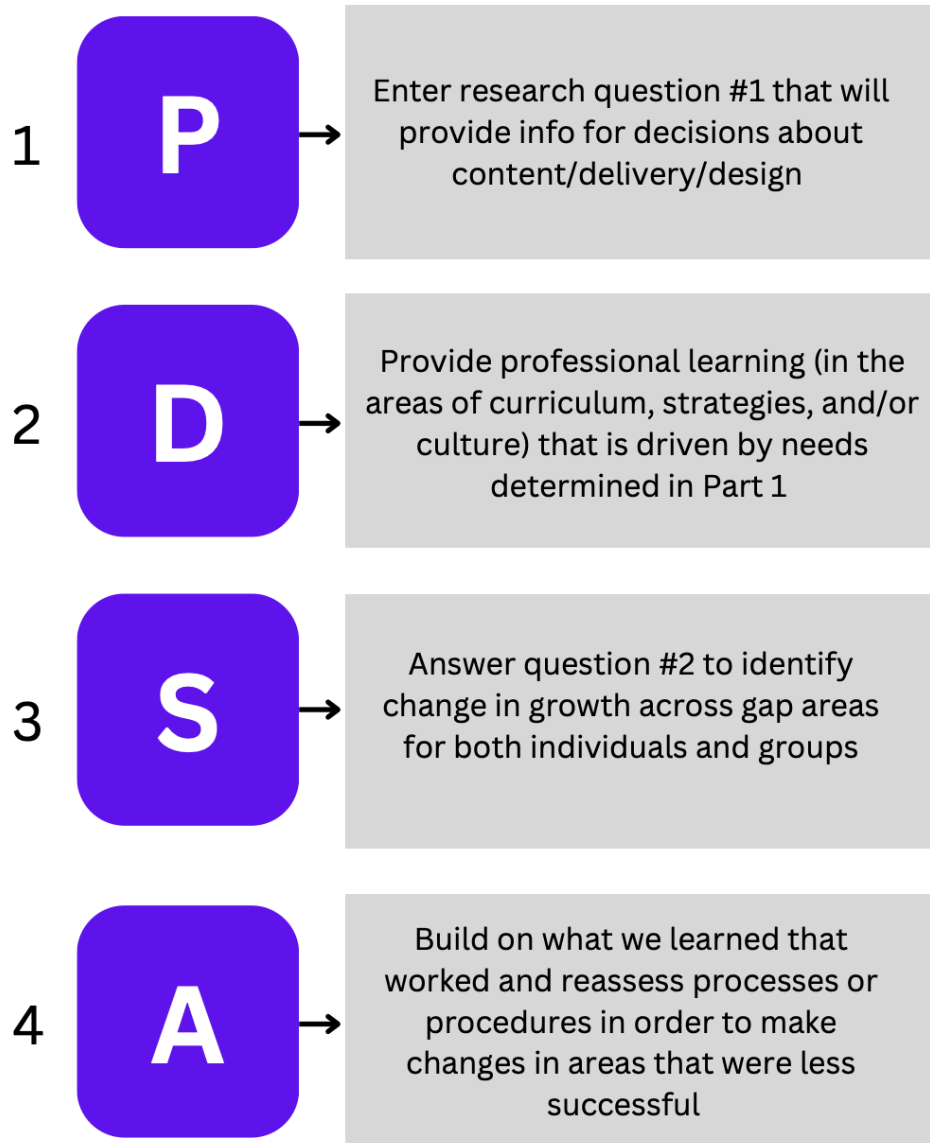
Determine how much growth in each area across gaps (for individual and groups) with specific examples



By: Kimberly T. Lucas

Note. Chart of Inquiry.

Figure 3. Outline of inquiry research design.



Note. PDSA Cycle for Inquiry

Figure 4. Outline of inquiry for research design.

For this inquiry, I will have several inquiry partners. These inquiry partners include the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction, the Beginning Teacher Coordinator, the Director of Opportunity and Access, the Director of Human Resources, my assistant principal and instructional coaches, and the county's curriculum specialists. Initially, I also collaborated with the Director of Human Resources to collect pertinent data regarding beginning and alternatively licensed teachers within our district.

The Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction will serve as an advisor to the project. The Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction oversees all of the curriculum departments for Tip County Schools. They are second in command to the Office of the Superintendent. The Director of Opportunity and Access, who works to identify and address inequities in district schools, and the Beginning Teacher Coordinator, who provides professional development for beginning teachers during their first 3 years in school, will also be partners on this project. They will be a point of contact for planning support for beginning teachers. This collaboration will involve discussing and implementing strategies to build participant capacity.

The instructional coaches will serve as inquiry partners, responsible for assisting with note-taking during the focus group, providing daily teacher support, and assisting with program implementation using the coaching model prescribed by the researcher. They will assist in analyzing the data for two purposes: to prevent a single interpretation and to provide targeted, tailored support to participants. The county curriculum specialists will also be vital in helping participants unpack the standards and in providing specific classroom strategies to build teacher capacity for curriculum and instructional planning. Collaboration with inquiry partners will be kept via Google Calendar. Notes will be used throughout the inquiry.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this inquiry includes the Capacity Building Theory of Action and the Theory of Change. Within these frameworks, the focus is on building educators' capacity and implementing change. This framework emphasizes research-based and evidence-based strategies to make teaching and learning more effective. In Capacity Building theory, content knowledge, classroom management, and understanding the whole child are key. This inquiry builds on Roumell et al. (2020), which considers both implementation and a system's ability to maintain change. Chapter 2 will discuss components such as framing, community climate, leadership and stakeholders, evaluation and data use, planning and maintainability, and evidence-based practices. The Capacity Building Theory of Change and the Theory of Change center on three components: current conditions, desired outcomes (building capacity), and long-standing change (see Figure 5). The Theory of Change, which emerged from the Aspen Institute Roundtable on community change, identifies long-term goals and maps backward to necessary outcomes (Reinholz & Andrews, 2020). The interplay between the two theories is significant in this inquiry.

These theoretical frameworks are central to my inquiry approach and guiding questions, as their integration helps segment key components throughout the research. By tying together effective practice (from Capacity Building) and effective process (from Theory of Change), the inquiry is structured to address both what needs to change and how that change can be achieved.

Key Terms

The following terms are used throughout the inquiry and are defined as follows:

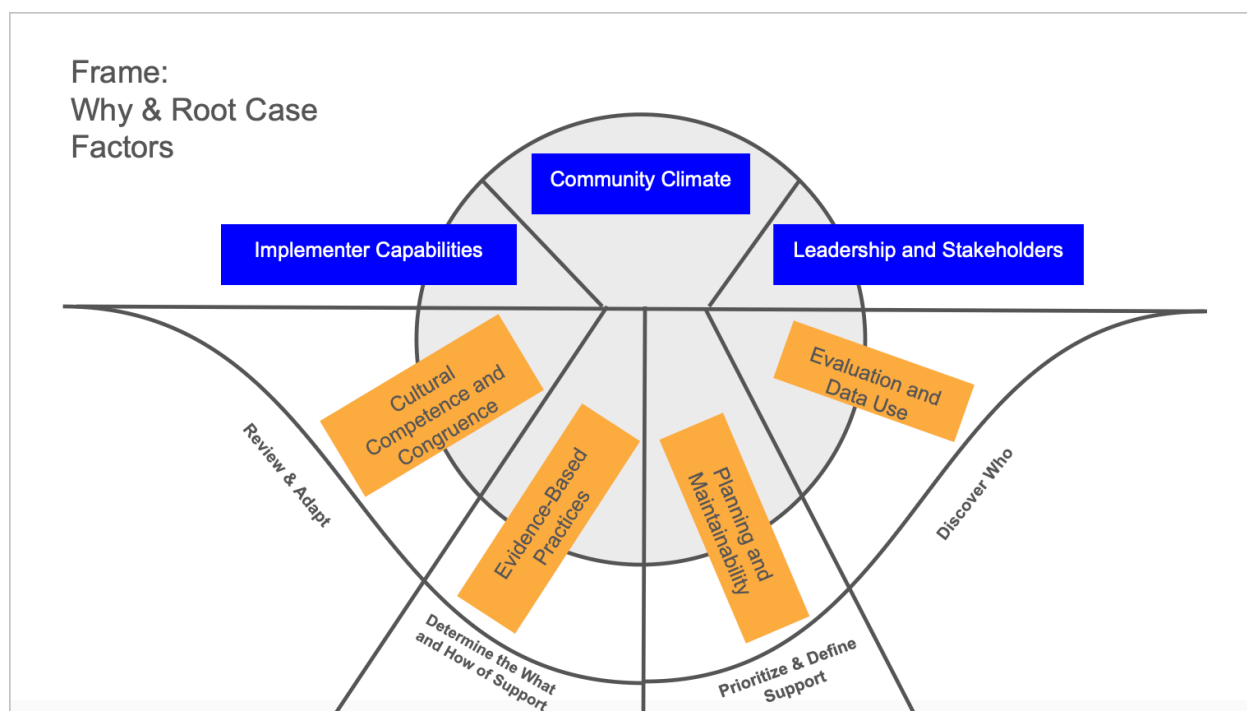


Figure 5. Framework blending the Capacity Building Theory of Change and the Theory of Change.

Alternative Licensure (AL)—Taking a different pathway into teaching than the traditional teacher education prep pathway, which does not require candidates to obtain an additional bachelor’s degree (Yin & Partelow, 2020).

Beginning Teacher (BT)—Teachers who have fewer than 5 years of experience (Lacrieno-Paquet et al., 2012).

Capacity—Teacher knowledge, instructional skills, and professional dispositions (Liu, 2022).

Culture—The many aspects of human life, which include beliefs, values, customs, and behaviors (Naik et al., 2023).

Emergency Licensed (EL)—Emergency is a non-renewable license offered to teachers hired for one year only, paid based on degree/experience. These individuals have 18–23 hours of content-area instruction (ECU, 2023).

Provisionally Licensed (PL)—A teacher who meets the following criteria listed below (NCDPI, 2023a):

- Has earned a bachelor’s degree.
- Has earned a 2.7 cumulative GPA on their degree.
- Has either completed 24 semester hours of coursework in the requested licensure area or passed the content area examination(s) required by the N.C. State Board of Education for the requested licensure area.
- Is enrolled in a recognized EPP, and;
- Has completed preservice requirements prior to teaching.
- Has been offered employment by an LEA.

Strategies—The methods, techniques, procedures, and processes that a teacher uses during instruction (Edith Cowan University, 2021).

Assumptions

The inquiry assumes participants will answer honestly; however, since they answer to their evaluator, they may hesitate to be candid. Participants may also be more modest or reserved to avoid looking incompetent in front of peers or the evaluator.

Levels of ego, self-awareness, and self-confidence will all impact survey responses, and unfortunately, this may not always align with more subjective truths. This may introduce bias, leading participants to rank themselves higher in a category than an objective evaluator would. Additionally, events on the participants' day up to the point they take their survey could skew responses.

The time of day empathy groups are held, and the relationships among participants could influence participants' readiness and willingness to respond. If there is tension among participants or no environment of trust and comfort is established from the beginning, responses may be short, distant, or lack substance.

Another assumption that can be found during the strategy and implementation process surrounds individuals and their current classrooms. This assumption is that all participants will integrate strategies with fidelity and that students will allow participants to complete the strategies as outlined. With this, it is assumed that the classroom climate and management are ready to implement the strategies and techniques suggested by the inquiry without further groundwork.

Scope and Delimitations

The inquiry will be conducted at a single school in a single district and will include only provisional-licensed, emergency-licensed, and beginning teachers in their first and second years of teaching at Primary Leadership Academy. I have chosen to exclude those in year three of their classification because they have been in the system for more than 2 years, during which they have had time to acclimate to the standards and strategies tied to their curriculum. They would also have had at least 2 years to get acclimated to the school's culture.

For the purpose of this inquiry, it would be essential to have participants who are new to their assignment and school. This inquiry will include teachers with zero or less than 3 years of teaching experience in the education field. There is potential for a variety of teachers spanning grades K-8.

My inquiry will include only teachers who opt in to the research and sign a consent form prior to the start of the inquiry. These will be educators who also indicate their intent to continue working at Primary Leadership Academy throughout the inquiry.

Limitations

The limitations of this inquiry stem from the fact that all the teachers are housed in the same school, which limits the scope of the inquiry. The limited number of participants is also a factor. Since there will be fewer than 20 participants, the inquiry lacks the broad scope characteristic of educational research.

An additional limitation lies in the fact that since the profession is fluid in this moment, teachers who start the study may not continue to be a part of the study should they decide to resign from teaching at Primary Leadership Academy School.

As the principal of PGS, I could influence outcomes because I have a history and connection with the participants. Because I am the evaluator at this school, teachers may feel unwarranted pressure to respond a certain way. Given that this is a mixed-methods qualitative and quantitative inquiry, my connection to the dataset would impact the findings and conclusions. It would be during the discussions conducted by the researcher that the data set could impact findings (Creswell, 2014). To avoid such biases, I will use a data team to analyze and disaggregate data.

Significance of Inquiry

This inquiry is important because the poor and the marginalized are usually hit the hardest by teacher shortages (Nguyen et al., 2022). This creates a problem when there has been a long-standing achievement gap in public schools among White students and their counterparts.

Students should not have to travel grade spans without having highly qualified teachers in more than one tested subject that feeds into the school accountability model. However, this is often the case, widening the already-existing, long-standing achievement gap. The Achievement Gap is the difference in academic performance between poor and wealthy students, between students with and without special education, and between native and non-native speakers (Grant, 2009). Typically, Black students start one year behind their white counterparts with regard to vocabulary; yet, by the time they graduate, they are 4 years behind their white counterparts in reading and math (Grant, 2009).

For this inquiry, we will consider schools, including one in particular, designated “North of the River” in Tip County Schools. These schools deserve quality teachers and an education of the same caliber as those in the city or the suburbs. There are six schools that are considered North of the River. These schools are located in the rural parts of Tip County and are highly

populated with Black and Latinx students. These schools are classified as high-needs and are characterized by high poverty. The data currently indicates a need for quality educators. The vacancies and number of non-traditional teachers in these buildings are significant (see Table 1). If nothing is done, the education system will continue to perpetuate educational and societal problems that affect student outcomes.

This problem is not isolated to our school, but it exists throughout the school, the system, the state, and the nation. We hope the information presented will help schools and systems adjust to the current changes and challenges in the field of education regarding building teacher capacity within their buildings. Attempting to address layers of teacher capacity by considering the multiple facets and developing a framework for implementation has the potential to help systems build and sustain the new personnel recruited to address vacancies within their buildings. This inquiry is especially important for low-wealth schools, as they are more susceptible to high turnover rates (Haj-Broussard et al., 2016). The purpose of this is to explore how to narrow the teacher capacity gap in a rural school serving a majority Black and Latinx population.

This Problem of Practice is important because it is not only a problem at my current school but also within the district (see Table 3), the state, and the nation. Latinx and Black children and poorer communities lacking highly qualified teachers impact educational quality, scholarship opportunities, college admission, career skills and options, future compensation, and ultimately, the trajectory of their lives (Mason-Williams, 2015; Whitford et al., 2018).

Ignoring what not having highly qualified teachers in the classroom really means could result in long-term effects that impact society and the next generation, affecting their life choices and life chances as a result of educational failures (Grant, 2009). When we see the damaging or

concerning effects, lawmakers and educational systems must be resourceful and innovative in rectifying these wrongs.

Advancing Equity and Social Justice

Poor, rural communities often face challenges that may not be as prevalent in other schools. Rural schools often face limited resources, a strong need for behavioral support, and high teacher turnover due to the demands and nature of the job. Rural schools with high poverty rates that also serve a high population of students of color tend to have scarce resources and inadequate funding as well (Tieken & Montgomery, 2021). One could even argue that burnout occurs more quickly in these settings. There is typically a higher turnover rate in rural schools serving low-performing, non-White rural schools (Boyd et al., 2009). This becomes a pervasive equity issue when veteran teachers with advanced degrees may choose to teach at other schools with more resources, more parental support, and fewer pervasive problems often associated with serving in a high-poverty school.

Ladson-Billings (2006) describes it as an educational debt that focuses on addressing the pre-existing inequities that plague our system. Poor and rural schools often have teachers who are not veteran educators and are ill-equipped to handle what they face when students show up with significant educational gaps and traumatic pasts. Compounded with a national teacher shortage and a sharp rise in alternatively licensed teachers, the impact of the existing inequity widens.

This inquiry will seek remedies to the inequity of the lack of highly qualified teachers in areas where students arguably need them most. This inquiry will attempt to identify the needs of non-traditional and non-highly qualified staff in order to best support and strengthen them and their ability to effectively do the job they have been assigned, because currently the data is

trending towards alternative licensure becoming the new norm as the number of educators who are non-traditional continues to rise to over 60% of the personnel within my district.

Advances in Practice

During a national teacher shortage affecting districts country-wide, this research provides timely and relevant insight. As many districts pursue alternative licensure routes, this work is anticipated to identify the capacity gap among beginning, provisional, and emergency-licensed hires.

As a result of this inquiry, I expect to contribute data and strategies that will help districts hire, support, and retain these educators, in hopes of reducing the negative impact of the current highly qualified teacher shortage. This research will attempt to help districts identify how to strengthen their onboarding processes for these employees. Knowing common gaps should help the district be more proactive rather than reactive, and an established system of support should help these hires become long-term educators.

This research aims to find out what these teachers want and need to succeed. When teachers succeed, so do students. Addressing teacher capacity gaps builds confidence for teachers, who are often given classrooms and curricula without a clear plan and left to figure out what they do not know.

Lastly, this framework may apply to other workforce areas with new hire capacity gaps. I also expect this work to help alternative licensing companies and programs better prepare people entering the education workforce.

Summary

The problem of practice that this inquiry is attempting to identify is how to narrow the capacity gap for current beginning and alternative licensed teachers who serve in rural schools that have majority Black and Latinx populations. Due to the growing trend of fewer people entering and existing in the field of education, prepared to enter classrooms, this inquiry's significance is relevant to schools on a local, state, and national level, with great pressure being felt in rural schools where teacher turnover is higher. Chapter 2 will provide more context through literature that supports the idea that teacher vacancies are a prevalent issue and also confirms that filling vacancies with alternative licensure candidates is a growing trend throughout the American system. This will be followed by a proposal to explore the issue through a Plan, Do, Study, Act model, with the attempt to answer questions surrounding capacity gaps in curriculum, strategies, and culture as it relates to BTs and ALTs.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Veteran teachers are retiring early, experienced teachers are leaving to join other fields, and the number of college graduates choosing the field of education is dwindling by the thousands (Edsall, 2022), leaving school systems across the nation scrambling to fill vacancies. This reduction in the pool of highly qualified teachers adds to the existing academic and systemic issues impacting rural schools with predominantly Black and Latinx populations. Not having highly qualified teachers in these schools possibly adds to the “academic gap” and “opportunity gaps” that have long plagued the American School system for these subgroups. Classrooms throughout the United States are struggling to find highly qualified teachers due to “The Great Resignation,” known as the time when 47 million Americans voluntarily quit their jobs to retire, relocate, reconsider, reshuffle, or were reluctant to return to work during the Covid-19 pandemic (Fuller & Kerr, 2022). Hardest hit by these vacancies are rural schools, where there are fewer extrinsic and tangible rewards for teaching, leaving them filling vacancies with beginning, emergency, and provisionally licensed teachers. This chapter will cover the status and conditions of schools as they relate to staffing, what the research tells us about the effectiveness of emergency, beginning, and provisionally licensed teachers in classrooms before examining what research identifies as the best way to close the capacity gap for emergency, beginning, and provisionally licensed teachers. Read collectively, these areas of literature suggest that a growing number of alternative licensure candidates are serving in classrooms due to a desperate need to fill vacancies in the field of education. The research also suggests that these candidates need strategic, layered support to build their capacity, with the hope of positively influencing their longevity in the field. Attentive to that understanding, the proposed

inquiry will seek to support alternative-licensure teachers serving in rural schools that predominantly serve Black and Latinx students.

Theoretical Framework

This inquiry includes the Capacity Building Theory of Action. It will be used in conjunction with the Theory of Change. The focus is on building educators' capacity through professional learning to address gaps. Research-based and evidence-based strategies are central to the design of the professional learning within the inquiry. Within the theory of Capacity Building, content knowledge, classroom management, and understanding the whole child are key. This inquiry will build on "A Framework for Capacity Building and Workforce Education Programming" by Roumell et al. (2020), which includes both implementation considerations and system capacity to maintain them (Roumell et al., 2020). The components of the work include, but are not limited to, framing, community climate, leadership and stakeholders, evaluation and data use, planning and maintainability, and evidence-based practices.

Framing & Community climate assesses whether stakeholders and the community are interested and willing to take initiative and ownership of the prevailing issue, and it also examines their attitudes toward it (Roumell et al., 2020). Leadership & stakeholders would comprise the buy-in, beliefs, and values that exist within leadership. It questions if the leadership is willing and capable of implementing the intervention with fidelity (Roumell et al., 2020). The Evaluation & Data Use section focuses on data analysis. During this component, questions about "which data" are either needed or available to support strategic planning (Roumell et al., 2020). This is essential to decision-making regarding the direction, process, and intervention utilized within the inquiry. The section will be followed by the Planning and Maintainability portion, in which the scholarly practitioner and inquiry partners collaborate as a decision-making group to

plan an intervention with long-term sustainability in mind. This section considers infrastructure, availability, and resources, followed by the clear specification of roles and processes. This is followed up by Cultural Competence and Congruence. This phase aims to ensure that the practices and interventions are congruent with the participants' needs within the inquiry (Roumell et al., 2020). The final section considers the implementer's capabilities and whether they can execute the initiative. This also assumes that personnel working with participants are well-trained and can provide resources to help close participants' capacity gaps.

This inquiry examines how the Capacity Building Theory of Action and Theory of Change interrelate by focusing on three main components: current conditions, desired outcomes (building capacity), and long-standing change (see Figure 5). The Theory of Change, developed by the Aspen Institute Roundtable on community change, sets long-term goals and works backward to determine necessary outcomes for those goals (Reinholz & Andrews, 2020). Understanding how these two theories interact is central to this study. These theoretical frameworks inform my inquiry approach and guiding questions by shaping how I examine both practice and process.

Status and Conditions of Schools

The educational landscape is shifting, and school systems are facing staffing challenges that have led to innovative hiring practices to fill vacancies across the country. Fewer college students are entering education programs with the intent of becoming educators (Edsall, 2022). This, coupled with educators leaving the field, creates a hiring challenge for professionals in education. Qualified candidates are exiting the field, and non-licensed, bachelor-holding individuals are filling the vacancies. Beginning teachers, residency-licensed, emergency-

licensed, and provisionally licensed teachers are being hired to address the shortage of highly qualified teachers (Haj-Broussard et al., 2016).

Collectively, the literature reiterates the decline in teacher preparation numbers and confirms the increase in teacher shortages (Weiss et al., 2020). However, alternative routes to becoming a teacher provide a gateway into the field, and while hiring these individuals fills the vacancy, drawbacks remain because their capacity to teach, as they obtain licensure, still needs to be addressed.

Current Landscape

Teacher shortages are currently felt at the local, state, and national levels (Haj-Broussard et al., 2016). Early exit, retirement, school employees leaving the profession for non-educational pursuits, and college graduates with education degrees choosing a different career path all contribute to the large number of vacancies plaguing many school systems today (Merod, 2023). Almost half of teachers in the profession left within the first 5 years of teaching at the beginning of the 21st century. These numbers had a significant impact as they created a lack of qualified teachers, causing school systems to have to pivot (Gonzalez et al., 2008; Greiner & Smith, 2006; Haj-Broussard et al., 2016; Heller, 2004; Ingersoll, 2002, 2003; Kaff, 2004; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future [NCTAF], 2003). At the time of this inquiry, we find that there are at least 36,000 vacant positions and at least 163,000 positions held by underqualified teachers, both of which are conservative estimates of the extent of teacher shortages nationally (Nguyen et al., 2022). According to the NCES, the number of students graduating from college with bachelor's degrees in education fell from 176,307 in 1970–1971 to 104,008 in 2010–2011 to 85,058 in 2019–2020 (Edsall, 2022). Coupled with this, the proportion

of college graduates who enter teaching is at a 50-year low (Edsall, 2022), and the trend of rising vacancies becomes clear.

The industrial arts preparation began in the mid-1970s, and it is important to note that teacher preparation has been on a steady decline since inception (Litowitz, 1998), and “teacher shortages have increased by 40% over the past 10 years” (Weiss et al., 2020, p. 52). Education entities responded by creating alternative routes into the field to address human resource deficits (Litowitz, 1998). “Places, such as the Commonwealth, are choosing to combat the shortage by granting provisional teaching licenses to individuals who have a college degree, have completed one course toward licensure, and have secured a position in a school” (Weiss et al., 2020, p. 52). Other states and districts are doing a variation of the same thing. Most traditional systems possess similar requirements. In general, teachers must (a) have at least a bachelor’s degree; (b) complete an approved, accredited education program; (c) have a major in education (or a minor in elementary education); (d) have a major in the subject area in which they plan to teach (for middle - and high school teaching); (e) have a strong foundation in the liberal arts; and (f) pass a teacher licensure exam (Jang & Horn, 2017; Roth & Swail, 2000; U.S. Department of Education, 2011). “Nearly all states require that graduates of alternative as well as traditional programs pass a licensure exam, such as the Praxis developed by the Educational Testing Service or assessments ...” (Jang & Horn, 2017, p. 2).

Not considering innovative routes, like provisional or emergency licensure, could leave positions vacant until a qualified candidate arrives. With the national shortage, there is no guarantee that vacancies will be filled. Students may be left without a highly qualified teacher for an unknown period.

Alternative Licensure

Due to the limited number of teachers entering the profession and the number exiting, North Carolina schools have faced a vacancy crisis. According to the North Carolina Justice System, the 40-day teacher vacancy rate has risen sharply from 2018 to 2023. On the 40th day of the 2022–2023 school year, 5,095 classrooms were vacant, which is equivalent to one in every 18 classrooms lacking an appropriately licensed teacher (Nordstrom, 2023). To address the situation, the alternative education route provides degree-holding or degree-seeking, non-licensed adults the opportunity to become employed as educators, even with little classroom experience. As in other states, North Carolina has an alternative licensure and certification system. This system provides individuals with a bachelor's degree an entry route into the profession, enabling them to work as educators while simultaneously seeking certification and licensure that do not require another bachelor's degree. In such instances, these candidates “begin teaching before completing all of their certification requirements” (Yin & Partelow, 2020, p. 4). It is important to note that these alternative certification programs can be run by a postsecondary institution.

These teachers are often referred to as residency-licensed teachers; however, this term can also encompass other terms, such as emergency, lateral-entry, and provisionally licensed teachers, with provisionally licensed teachers encompassing beginning teachers through veteran teachers under special circumstances, such as international teachers. These teachers enter the classrooms and assume full responsibilities as educators on day one. Most often, they are simultaneously completing academic coursework to satisfy certification requirements, which eliminates the option to scaffold an introduction that's similar to that often found in the teaching

and mentoring that traditional teacher candidates receive within an integrated field experience and internship (Weiss et al., 2020).

The Drawbacks to Alternative Licensure and Controversy

While the route to licensure has become more relaxed throughout the years, testing and accountability have not. Students are still expected to perform at grade level at the end of the year, regardless of the quality of teaching they have received. North Carolina's accountability model includes both growth and proficiency. Growth is the amount of progress a student makes over the course of a grade or class. Proficiency indicates that the student has met a certain level of grade-level mastery. Both attempt to measure educator effectiveness and student learning.

Research suggests that students taught by alternative, provisional, temporary, or emergency-certified candidates do not perform as well as those taught by teachers who have completed the traditional route of teacher certification (Clotfelter et al., 2010; Jang & Horn, 2017).

Henry et al. (2014) found that math and science scores of high school students, as well as math scores of middle school students with teachers who had completed traditional preparation, were higher than those of students with teachers who had completed alternative preparation, except for Teacher for America in Math and Science. (Jang & Horn, 2017, p. 38)

The literature lacks a comprehensive overview of alternative licensure educators, their effectiveness, and their needs as educators. Several pieces of literature focused on specific content areas, such as special education, STEM, and technology.

North Carolina Teachers

North Carolina's teacher status between March 2021 and March 2022 was as follows: 15,588 beginning teachers, 6,684 Lateral entry or Residency-Licensed Teachers, 551 International Teachers, and 80,663 licensed and experienced teachers (NC State Board of Education, 2023).

Filling vacancies with a residency-licensed teacher is not always the ultimate answer, either, because research indicates these professionals also have a high attrition rate, which contributes to the teacher shortage. In North Carolina, teachers who are classified as residency-licensed teachers typically leave the profession at a rate almost 60 percent (58.7%) higher than that of their non-lateral-entry peers (NC State Board of Education, 2023). Teachers who are traditionally trained typically have a higher retention rate (Andrew & Schwab, 1995; Haj-Broussard et al., 2016; Lutz & Hutton, 1989; Stoddart, 1992). This could leave room to assume that proper supports are not in place for these teachers, and that the sustainability model could withstand improvements. The attrition rate is particularly important because it affects the consistency that school systems and students can maintain after investing valuable time, money, and resources in qualifying personnel who may or may not stay. "Boyd et al. (2009) found that high turnover schools serve large populations of low-performing, non-White, low-income students and that principals have preferences for schools with higher achieving students and low proportions of poverty, just as teachers do" (Haj-Broussard et al., 2016, p. 5). Research indicates that low student test scores are correlated with lower teacher retention from year to year (Haj-Broussard et al., 2016); therefore, the problem is complex, as vacancies, turnover, and teacher effectiveness all impact student achievement.

Strengths and Weaknesses

There are both pros and cons associated with filling vacancies with provisionally licensed teachers. The most obvious benefit is having someone who has committed to being a constant in the classroom for that school year. There are also clear benefits for the educator, including the teacher actually fine-tuning their own practice (Gul & Gokce, 2020). Their different perspective actually aids in this regard. However, the research also suggests that barriers often impede classroom progress. Language, culture, and knowledge gaps are among those challenges (Gul & Gokce, 2020). The cons pose a much greater problem, including significant capacity gaps.

Read collectively, these areas of literature emphasize the importance of highly qualified teachers; however, poorer schools are often greatly impacted by a lack of such teachers and are more likely to face additional teaching and learning challenges, which can worsen student achievement (Mason-Williams, 2015).

Pros and Cons of Provisionally Licensed International Teachers

A growing trend in education is the hiring of international teachers to fill vacancies. This solution, adopted by school systems in North Carolina, has both pros and cons for teachers and students. Teachers who travel from their home countries to teach in another country tend to develop and refine their pedagogical skills by providing students with diverse perspectives (Gul & Gokce, 2020; Shiveley & Misco, 2015). It is through international work that teachers reap the benefits of working abroad. “Teachers become more open-minded and critical about educational practices and get rid of their dogmatic thinking since they encounter a different culture. Thus, they can develop instructional strategies with their ideas” (Gul & Gokce, 2020, p. 35). Because the cultures are different, typically, these teachers have the ability to use their perspectives to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their education systems (Gul & Gokce, 2020).

The literature suggests a significant number of cons for international provisionally licensed teachers. In a study of Turkish teachers working abroad, it was found that these teachers faced economic, social, and professional difficulties, including language barriers, spoken and unspoken traditions, religious norms, and communication styles. This often leads to challenges with adaptation (Gul & Gokce, 2020). Studies also suggest that this was true only for teachers teaching in a foreign country for the first time, and that if they visited a second time, adaptation was unlikely to be a problem (Gul & Gokce, 2020). Such adaptation included aligning with educational and school culture, given prior knowledge gaps regarding student and parent profiles (Gul & Gokce, 2020). Outside of language and knowledge gaps, international teachers may at times find it difficult to believe the level of readiness their students have (Gul & Gokce, 2020).

Such cultural differences can cause distress for these provisionally licensed teachers as they try to maintain their cultural values while adjusting to the social and cultural norms of the countries where they are serving (Gul & Gokce, 2020). The cultural disconnect appeared to be significant. Several studies have indicated negative effects of culture shock on educators when working abroad (Gul & Gokce, 2020).

Effects on Students: Black, Latinx, and Rural

In the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (ESSA) (U.S. Congress, 2015), there was an expressed need for effective teachers working with students who were minorities or had low socioeconomic status. The United States government has taken specific initiatives to address the issue. The problem seems more central to the influx of educators in alternative teacher programs. When the rate of alternative teachers rises due to vacancies, the rate of highly qualified teachers falls.

From an economic perspective, the expansion of expedited alternative preparation programs might be an efficient method for increasing the number of teachers, but many

have questioned whether such a singular focus on efficiency sacrifices quality in terms of teacher skills and knowledge and, ultimately, student learning outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2002; Goldhaber et al., 2013; Jang & Horn, 2017; Kane et al., 2008). (Jang & Horn, 2017, p. 1)

The training that alternative-licensed teachers receive is a mere fraction of the time that traditional teachers must complete to attain their certification (U.S. Department of Education, 2011; Whitford et al., 2018). This matters because alternative licensure teachers are often placed in schools that need highly qualified teachers. Those most vulnerable to teacher shortages are students who are already at a disadvantage. Disadvantaged students are those in special education, students of color, students in rural regions, and students in poorer school districts. These subgroups and demographics are more likely to have teachers prepared through alternative licensure programs who are not considered highly qualified (Mason-Williams, 2015; Whitford et al., 2018). Reports indicate that teacher preparation is one of the strongest links to student achievement in reading and mathematics, regardless of socio-economic status and language background (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Whitford et al., 2018).

A critical element of student success lies not only in having a teacher in every classroom but in having strong teachers in every classroom (Ny et al., 2004; Stronge et al., 2011). There is a significant lack of literature examining the effectiveness of provisionally licensed, beginning, and emergency teachers with disadvantaged students; however, criticism surrounds the idea of having emergent teachers serving already disadvantaged students because there is a belief that, ultimately, it will result in a decline in student achievement (Mason-Williams, 2015; Whitford et al., 2018). The literature also lacks guidance on what teachers need to be more effective with their students.

Effective Strategies for Closing the Capacity Gap

Beginning teachers and provisionally licensed teachers who are new to the content or country may need additional support. Beginning teachers may tend to struggle with things such as classroom management, relationship building, and curriculum because they assume the following responsibilities when they transition into education: planning for instruction, delivering instruction, assessing student mastery of the curriculum, and managing their classrooms (Stewart & Jansky, 2022). This is why some states choose to have Beginning Teacher Support Programs. At least 31 states, along with the District of Columbia, have laws or statutes that require and regulate induction for beginning teachers (Education Commission of the States [ECS], 2023).

In North Carolina, the beginning teacher support program has standards that outline the expectations for support provided by North Carolina Schools. Each public school unit must have a beginning teacher program that is driven by the following standards: creating an institutional plan of support, assigning mentors to beginning teachers, providing time for the mentor and mentee to work together, creating and delivering professional development that orients them to the teaching profession, and having a formal evaluation system in place for feedback (NCDPI, 2024a). Formal evaluations are comprehensive and include three formal 45-minute observations from an administrator over the course of a year, one 45-minute evaluation from a peer, and a summative evaluation at the end of the year. This is also paired with the creation of a professional development goal that is created at the beginning of the year, after the teacher has been trained on how they will be evaluated throughout the year based on the North Carolina Teacher Effectiveness rubric, and after they complete their self-assessment to determine their knowledge gaps, while also setting a goal for growth in one or two areas.

The literature suggests that goal setting with guided practice is important for addressing these gaps. However, a drawback in the literature is that most research focuses on one or two elements of teaching capacity and does not address the interplay among standard knowledge, strategies, and cultural competency.

Professional Learning Through Coaching

Beginning teacher support can be provided in a variety of ways; however, a cyclical approach that is short, consistent, specific, evidence-based, and intentional may help address the capacity gap for these educators. Provisionally licensed teachers may have teaching experience and understand the curriculum; however, if they are provisionally licensed as international teachers, cultural differences could affect instruction and student outcomes. Provisionally licensed teachers who are new to the profession will need just as much support as beginning teachers. Research suggests that there is a real need for provisionally-licensed teachers to have a coaching and feedback cycle in place where they can have plenty of opportunity to practice strategies and be continuously coached in evidence-based practices in order for there to be fidelity (Leko & Brownell, 2011; Weiss et al., 2020). The model incorporates a gradual release of responsibility as experts offer guidance through modeling and scaffolding in order for these educators to master the content and strategies being taught (Brownell & Leko, 2018).

It is important to note that providing instruction to provisionally-licensed teachers can be somewhat complex, as they may be classified as both pre-service and in-service educators (Weiss et al., 2020). This means they can learn to teach while teaching and taking courses to become a highly qualified teacher. This raises questions about how to properly and strategically support these individuals, who already face heavy demands on both time and cognitive load.

Several of the coaching models include observations, goal setting, reflections and feedback, but it is important to note that a contributing factor towards effectiveness lies in the person coaching having a relationship with the teacher, by interacting with teachers on a more frequent basis than the traditional professional learning that these teachers typically receive (Knight, 2007; Weiss et al., 2020). One way to do this is through the frequent and effective use of technology. School districts could potentially benefit by incorporating technology into their coaching models for instruction (Weiss et al., 2020). Using technology as a reflection tool would allow teachers to be coached through reflection, enabling them to watch themselves in their own classroom and evaluate the effectiveness of their instruction, processes, procedures, relationships, and cultural awareness. One video could be viewed and coached through a different lens, whether in the categories of curriculum, strategy, or culture.

Literature Gaps: Effectiveness

Literature fails to assess the three domains of standards, strategies, and culture altogether. While there is a wide array of literature on teacher capacity and teacher effectiveness, there remains a need for a comprehensive inquiry into the various dimensions of the educator and the capacity gaps in each area that educators across different classifications may possess. Researchers have approached these areas individually but have yet to examine the layered aspects of teaching and how to close educator gaps, with the aim of improving student learning outcomes. Because provisionally-licensed teachers straddle the fence between in-service and pre-service, there is little research on their effectiveness (Weiss et al., 2020).

Summary

Teacher vacancies require that states remain flexible and innovative in staffing schools nationwide. The alternative licensure route, which includes emergency and provisionally licensed teachers, enables schools and districts to address the large number of vacancies currently plaguing the system. While the model provides a solution, the reality is that beginning, emergency, and provisionally licensed teachers need support with standards, strategies, and culture to positively impact teacher efficacy and efficiency, and to address the growing attrition rate.

The research suggests that professional development in the form of mentoring and coaching with timely, immediate feedback has proven beneficial in closing the capacity gap for these alternative licensure candidates. The purpose of this inquiry is to identify capacity gaps for beginning, provisionally licensed, and emergency-licensed teachers and to determine effective strategies to build their teacher and self-efficacy, in an effort to positively impact student achievement. The next chapter will explore methods guiding this inquiry.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS OF INQUIRY

The problem of practice that this inquiry is attempting to identify is how to narrow the capacity gap for current beginning and alternative licensed teachers who serve in rural schools that have majority Black and Latinx populations. As teaching vacancies due to teacher shortages continue to rise nationwide (Weiss et al., 2020), open positions are being filled by teachers taking non-traditional pathways.

Building teacher capacity is paramount, but it is also multifaceted. “Capacity building includes various aspects of individual teachers’ growth such as teacher efficacy, resilience, and emotions, as well as collective strength of the group such as social capital and trust building” (Hong et al., 2020, para. 6). As such, it can be argued that capacity is not unilateral in nature, but more multi-dimensional. Building capacity requires a layered approach that must be done with intention, attention to detail, and proper support in order to be effective and sustainable. Horner et al. (2017) suggest within their research that “too often effective practices are proposed without attention to and implementation of the tools needed to facilitate adoption, reliable use, and sustainability over time” (p. 26). Effective capacity building, in this instance, concerns educators’ abilities and considers the strategies and systems that support them in their efforts to narrow existing gaps.

Capacity research is often centered around a singular focus: capacity, culturally relevant teaching, or student engagement. This inquiry has a multi-layered focus. If the literature holds that both teaching and learning are multidimensional, we anticipate that the support provided to beginning and alternatively licensed teachers will need to be multidimensional as well. This inquiry will explore three key dimensions associated with teacher capacity: knowledge of the standards, knowledge of strategies, and knowledge of student culture. If these teachers do not

receive adequate support, it is highly likely that teacher turnover will continue to contribute to the existing teacher shortage (Boyd et al., 2009). Drivers of teacher supply at the local level include the following: compensation, teacher preparation and entry, personnel management, working conditions, and induction and early career support (Rash, 2023). Knowing that teacher preparation, entry, induction, and early career support are essential, it is advantageous to determine the support needed to build capacity for these individuals.

This inquiry centers on examining an important layer that shapes the teaching and learning environment for Black and Latinx students in poor and rural communities. This layer involves adequately preparing educators tasked with teaching in a time when the supply of high-qualified teachers is low but demand is high. Teachers, students, and systems are affected by this problem of practice.

This chapter will review questions guiding this entry, the design and rationale of the inquiry, and provide context and explain procedures. This chapter will also explore ethical considerations, delimitations, limitations, assumptions, and the role of the scholarly practitioner within this inquiry.

Inquiry Guiding Questions

The following questions guided this inquiry:

1. What capacity gaps exist for beginning (BT) and alternatively licensed teachers (ALT)?
 - a. What capacity gaps exist for BTs and ALTs in the area of curriculum?
 - b. What capacity gaps exist for BTs and ALTs in the area of strategies?
 - c. What capacity gaps exist for BTs and ALTs in the area of culture?

2. How does strategically layered professional development and coaching impact capacity gaps for beginning and alternatively licensed teachers?

The purpose of this inquiry is to discover the needs of beginning and alternatively licensed teachers as it relates to the curriculum, strategy, or culture. The main objective is to identify these needs to begin formulating a support plan for this population of educators, who are now the majority of personnel in some school districts. According to the HR Director at Tip County Schools, alternative-licensed teachers account for 60% of the workforce. The number of residency-licensed teachers hired in North Carolina has increased every year since 2021 (Rash, 2023). Of the 115 reporting districts, 5,041 residency-licensed teachers were hired in 2023 (Rash, 2023). That's up from 3,618 in 2022 and again from 1,942 in 2021 (Rash, 2023). That is a 159.6% increase in just 2 years.

The findings from this inquiry may inform the development of strategic and targeted support so that school systems can begin to align their beginning and alternatively licensed teacher support in a systematic way in order to increase teacher capacity with the intentions of positively impacting teacher preparedness, teacher longevity within the profession, and ultimately, increasing student performance gains.

Inquiry Design and Rationale

The problem of practice that this inquiry is attempting to address is how to narrow the capacity gap for current beginning and alternative licensed teachers who serve in rural schools that have majority Black and Latinx populations. This is a convergent mixed-methods inquiry that follows an explanatory sequential design. The concurrent and triangulation design method will be utilized. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches will be used to complete this research because they “tends to provide a better understanding of a given research problem”

(Mertler, 2022, p. 15) rather than data in isolation. This method is most appropriate because each data set has an identified purpose, and the sequence in which the data will be collected is imperative.

Quantitative research within this inquiry will be derived from a survey. There will be demographic questions that elicit responses on gender, education, subjects, degrees, preparation, and work experience. Some questions will be multiple-choice, while others will be open-ended. The open-ended response questions are follow-ups that allow participants to elaborate on multiple-choice responses, offering the researcher insight into why the respondent answered the question in a particular way. Additional questions within the same questionnaire/survey will delve into what they know and believe about their standards, the strategies they currently use or need to meet those standards, and the cultural norms and approaches they are aware of that help them reach and engage the students they serve.

After the questionnaire/survey, participants will participate in a semi-structured focus group. While questioning consistency is important, for the purpose of this research, flexibility is needed to ask follow-up questions that are based on the nature of participant responses. The ultimate goal is to gather as much information from participants in order to capture capacity insight and to determine the professional development style, need, and focus based on the data collected from both the questionnaire/survey and the focus group.

During the focus group session, participants will be asked questions about curriculum, strategies, culture, and professional development. Professional development questions will be open-ended and general. For example, one question will ask, “When it comes to learning, how do you learn best?” The hope is to gain greater depth in the preferred professional development design for participants once the capacity gap questions are answered. This may offer a more

collective, holistic approach. Since individuals tend to “feed off of others’ comments” (Mertler, 2002, p. 200), it is highly probable that my inquiry partners and I will gain additional insight beyond what the survey captures.

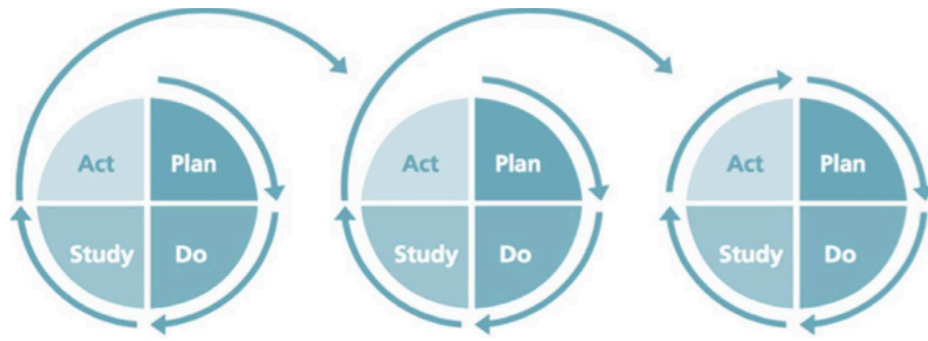
Having both sets of data will enable cross-referencing and trend identification during data analysis. After professional learning, participants will take a post-survey to assess the impact on capacity gaps at the conclusion of the inquiry.

This inquiry is grounded in improvement science and structured to follow the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) cycles (see Figure 6). The planning stage focuses on approaching a problem with the intention of implementing change, while the Do phase is when the work is being done. During the inquiry change, data is analyzed and interpreted. The Act portion focuses on producing modifications and next steps. In conjunction with the Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle, the concurrent triangulation design will be used. Within this design, qualitative and quantitative data will be utilized throughout each cycle (see Figure 7). The concurrent inquiry design model and the concurrent triangulation strategy involve multiple designs carried out simultaneously.

This method best supports the inquiry-guiding questions because they require a wide range of data to strategically and intentionally design meaningful, relevant, and necessary support for alternatively licensed and beginning teachers. Quantitative and qualitative data will be analyzed separately; however, the results from both data sets will be combined to achieve an “overall interpretation” (Mertler, 2002, p. 145) for each cycle of the inquiry.

Context of the Inquiry

Tip County is located in Eastern North Carolina. The total population for the county is roughly 173,500 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2024). Over 53% of the population is female, 58.2% is



Note. Source: Chen et al. (2021).

Figure 6. Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle flow chart.

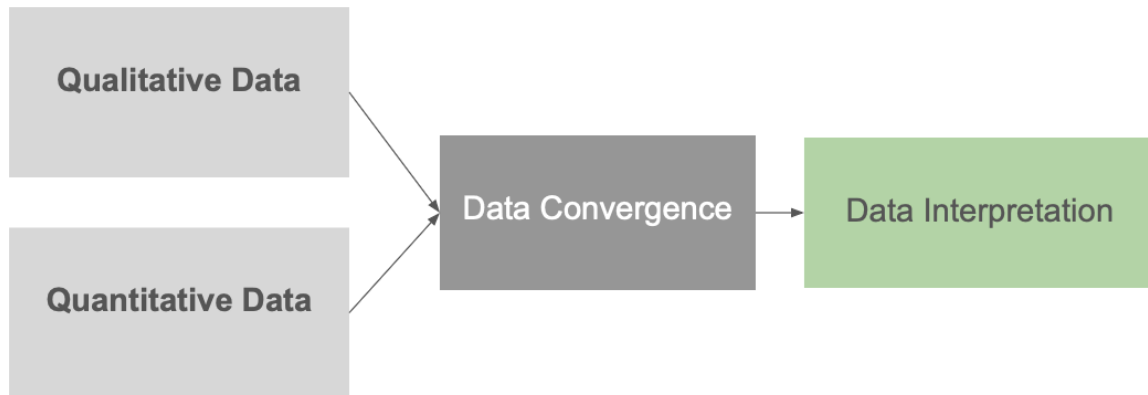


Figure 7. Convergent Mixed-Method Model; Concurrent Triangulation Strategy.

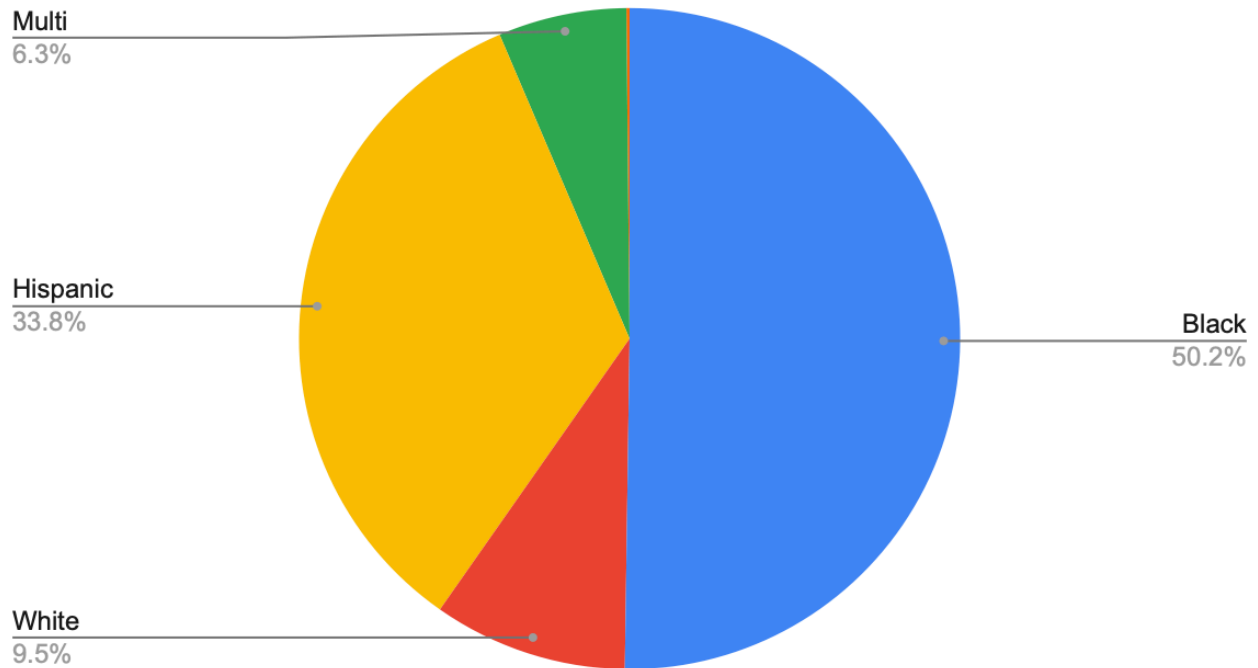
White, 36.5% is Black, and Hispanic is 7.1% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2024). Of those 25 years of age and older, 89.9% are high school graduates, and 32.6% have a bachelor's degree or higher. 21.6% of the population lives in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, 2024).

Tip County Schools' mission is to lead collaboration between school, home, and community. Their goal is to foster student growth and success, both socially and academically, to develop productive, global citizens. The vision is to inspire and motivate all learners. They aim to provide educational opportunities that engage, empower, and elevate students to lead healthy, resourceful, and responsible lives.

Tip County Schools comprises 38 schools: one preschool headquarters, 16 elementary schools, six K-8 schools, seven traditional middle schools, six high schools, two early colleges, one virtual academy, and three dual-immersion programs. In 2023, 17 of those schools were identified as low-performing, up from 13 the previous year.

This inquiry takes place at Primary Leadership Academy, a Title I, rural school located in eastern North Carolina and within the Tip County School District. It is one of the schools designated as low performing as of 2023. This school is considered low-performing because it received a D letter grade, and students only met growth. The school would have had to exceed growth to avoid a low-performing designation. Title I designation stems from the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, which was later superseded by the *Every Student Succeeds Act* (NCES, n.d.). This Act assists in funding and distributes federal dollars to schools with high populations of low-income families (NCES, n.d.). These federal dollars are to be spent on children to help them meet state proficiency standards (NCES, n.d.). Primary Leadership Academy serves pre-kindergarten through eighth grade with 687 enrolled students. Figure 8 shows the student breakdown by grade and ethnicity.

Enrolled



Note. Primary Leadership Academy enrollment numbers by grade level in March of the 2023–2024 school year.

Figure 8. March 2024 student enrollment by race for Primary Leadership Academy.

Around 1920, two smaller schools were consolidated, and those students were bused to Primary Leadership Academy. In 1947, the school experienced a fire that destroyed the building; however, it was built without an auditorium due to a lack of funds, though one was added just a few years later (PCS, 2024). In 1954, the school was integrated under a Supreme Court desegregation ruling, and Black students came from two surrounding schools. The school continues to grow, change, and adapt; however, its largely rural, agricultural setting remains unchanged. Being a rural school presents challenges. These challenges include attracting and retaining highly qualified staff, as teachers typically live within the city limits and often choose other schools for shorter commutes rather than driving to the district's rural outskirts. This leaves the school highly populated with beginning and alternatively licensed staff who are not designated as highly qualified.

Inquiry Partners

For this inquiry, I will have several inquiry partners (see Table 4). These inquiry partners include the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction, the Beginning Teacher Coordinator, the Director of Opportunity and Access, the Director of Human Resources, my instructional coaches, and the county's curriculum specialists. I also collaborated with the Director of Human Resources to collect pertinent data on beginning and alternatively licensed teachers within our district, prior to determining the need and legitimacy of the study.

The Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum & Instruction will serve as an advisor to the project. The Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction oversees all of the curriculum departments for Tip County Schools. They are second in command to the Office of the Superintendent. The Director of Opportunity and Access, who works to identify and address inequities in district schools, and the Beginning Teacher Coordinator, who provides professional

Table 4

Inquiry Partners by Duties

Partner	Duties	Research Role
Beginning and alternatively licensed teachers	Educate students	Provide insight into capacity gaps, participate in focus groups, surveys, and professional learning
Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction	Observe curriculum and instruction for the district	To be a thought partner in the construction and deliberation of the study
Beginning Teacher Coordinator	Serve as the trainer for beginning teachers	Provide insight into some of the capacity gaps beginning and provisionally licensed teachers face
Director of Human Resources	Manage Human Resources within the district	Provide district data on hiring and licensure status
Administrators	Lead Schools	Provide data for their buildings relevant to beginning and provisionally licensed teachers
Instructional Coaches	Monitor instruction and facilitate teacher growth within the building	Lead focus groups, analyze data, plan and help prepare PD, support teachers
District Specialists	Guide curriculum instruction within the district	Help analyze data and present PD

development for beginning teachers during their first 3 years in school, will also be partners on this project. They will serve as a point of contact for planning support and for delivering surveys to beginning teachers within the district. Collaboration with them will also involve discussing and implementing strategies to build participant capacity. The instructional coaches will serve as inquiry partners, supporting teachers and program implementation as they use the coaching model. They will also serve as data analyst to prevent a singular interpretation of the data. The county curriculum specialists will be vital in helping participants unpack the standards and in providing strategies to build teacher capacity. Collaboration with inquiry partners will be maintained via Google Calendar and notes taken throughout the inquiry.

Ethical Considerations

East Carolina University has processes and requirements that must be followed to conduct research. One requirement is that researchers complete the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) modules. This course required participants to understand the ethical aspects of scholarly research. Participants are taught how to access, collect, analyze, and protect data for research. This course was completed in the first full year of this inquiry, prior to collecting any research or engaging with any participants.

I had to obtain permission to conduct the inquiry within my district. Tip County Schools has a school board policy and related process that guide the request for permission to conduct research. The policy requires that the research benefit students or the system, align with the county's goals and objectives, and cause no disruption to instruction.

After completing the CITI course and obtaining permission from Tip County Schools, I had to obtain IRB approval. The process involved presenting a pre-proposal defense to the IRB board in order to obtain permission to conduct the inquiry. See Appendix A. Once both

institutions have granted permission to conduct the inquiry, participants will be required to complete an informed consent form to participate. See Appendix B.

To ensure confidentiality, I will use pseudonyms to protect the names of the institutions and individuals involved in the inquiry. These pseudonyms will not resemble the participants' original names to protect the privacy of those who chose to participate in this inquiry. Data will be collected digitally and protected with a password. Printed files will remain in a locked filing cabinet accessible only to me. All data will be stored for up to 3 years after the inquiry.

Inquiry Procedures

This inquiry followed the Plan-Do-Study-Act cycle (see Figure 6). This cycle is often used by researchers as a model for improvement. The cycle consists of three phases, and the process can be repeated as many times as necessary for research purposes. Statistician Edward W. Deming is credited with developing the model, as his goal was to apply the scientific method to improve business processes (Chen et al., 2021). Each portion of the cycle has a different focus (see Figure 9).

Phase I

Phase I is designed to determine a baseline and entry point into the inquiry. Due to the fact that this inquiry could have a variety of entry points, it is important to understand the needs of the participants so that Phase II is purposeful and intentional in design. Phase I will address the guiding question: What capacity gaps exist for beginning (BT) and alternatively licensed teachers (ALT)? What capacity gaps exist for BTs and ALTs in the area of curriculum? What capacity gaps exist for BTs and ALTs in the area of strategies? What capacity gaps exist for BTs and ALTs in the area of culture?

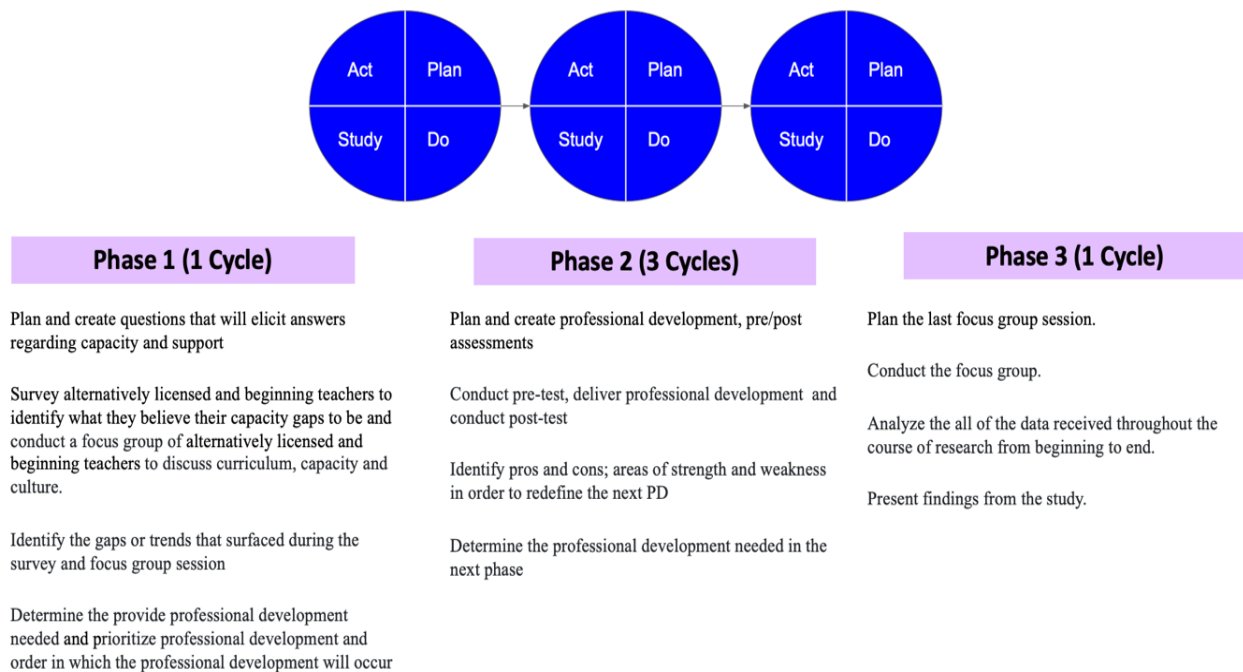


Figure 9. A visual of the phases and cycles within this inquiry.

Description of Participants and Recruitment Strategies

My inquiry will include only instructors who opt in to the research and sign a consent form before the end of the year. This inquiry will include only provisional, emergency, residency, and beginning teachers in their first and second years of work at Primary Leadership Academy School. I have chosen to exclude those in year three of their classification because they have been in the system for more than 2 years. Over the span of 3 years, they have had time to familiarize themselves with the standards and strategies tied to their curriculum. They would also have had at least 2 years to get acclimated to the school's culture.

For this inquiry, participants should be new to their assignment and school. I expect to include three males and three females. Two males are White; one is from a country outside the United States. One female is White; the other two are Black. Two teachers teach health and PE for all grades. The others teach second grade, exceptional children, third grade, and eighth grade. All educators have only one year of experience at Primary Leadership Academy.

Since this inquiry aligns directly with the researcher's and participants' guidelines, the main incentive will be to receive continuing education credits for their participation. A total of 2 CEUs will be credited. This is equivalent to 20 hours of work within this inquiry. For this inquiry, I will collect data on years of education, ethnicity, age, degree classification, previous and current schooling, and future plans.

Instrumentation

The focus of this inquiry is attempting to identify how to narrow the capacity gap for beginning and alternative licensed teachers who serve in rural schools with majority Black and Latinx populations. This inquiry will be conducted as a mixed methods inquiry that utilizes both qualitative and quantitative approaches.

In preparation for this inquiry, I tested questions from the initial survey, focus group and professional development post-assessment. I wanted to ensure that all questions asked were relevant and beneficial in answer the main inquiry questions. I chose to use the following people as a part of the pilot inquiry. I used a K-5 literacy coach, a recent college graduate with no background in education, and an engineer who works in another field. I chose these three distinct candidates for the following reasons. The K-5 literacy coach has a wealth of knowledge within the field. She could help me look at the survey and questions through the lens of clarity and value. The recent college graduate represented what a typical alternative licensure candidate would possess, which is a college degree. Her perspective and insight were valuable because they brought to light any bias or assumptions of knowledge that were embedded within my survey. Overall, the questions were effective in answering the main inquiry questions; however, minor adjustments were made based on the group's recommendation, as seen in Table 5.

Pilot Inquiry/Baseline Data Collection

Plan. The first part of Phase 1 is planning. This is an important part of the process, and “sufficient time and resources should be allocated to this stage” (Chen et al., 2021). During the planning stage, the researcher will focus on survey and focus group questions that elicit answers to the first inquiry question in this inquiry: “What capacity gaps in curriculum, strategies, and culture exist for beginning and alternatively licensed teachers serving in predominantly Black and Latinx schools?” The first portion of the survey, created in Qualtrics, will collect demographic information, such as teacher status, subject, years of service, etc. It will be used quantitatively. The second portion of the survey largely uses multiple-choice and open-response questions. Participant consent will be included on the first page of the survey and must be completed prior to entering the survey. It will also be during the planning stage that the semi-

Table 5

Feedback from Piloting Instruments

Instrument	Question	Feedback	Researcher's Decision
Initial Survey	Question #3	Explain what vet means. This may be common knowledge to a veteran teacher but not a beginning teacher or residency licensed teacher.	Include definition of vet within the question.
Initial Survey	Question #4	Explain what vet means. This may be common knowledge to a veteran teacher but not a beginning teacher or residency licensed teacher.	Include definition of vet within the question.
Initial Survey	Question #13	Question 12 had the meaning of strategies marked as different ways.	Added a more solid and comprehensive definition to questions #12, #13 and #23.
Initial Survey	Question #14	Explain what a formative assessment looks like.	Added the definition and examples within the question.
Initial Survey	Question #15	Explain what summative assessment looks like.	Added the definition and examples within the question.
Initial Survey	Question #19	Explain immersed.	Added the definition and examples within the question.
Initial Survey	Question #21	Explain immersed.	Added the definition and examples within the question.
Initial Survey	Question #23	For consistency with previous question, explain what the word strategies mean.	Added a more solid and comprehensive definition to questions #12, #13 and #23.

structured, focused questions will be created and recorded in an official document to be shared with the focus group facilitator. Dates for the issuance of the survey and for conducting the focus group will also be decided during this phase.

Do. The survey will be sent to participants through their official school email. The survey instructions will direct participants to complete the survey in one sitting and advise them that it should not take longer than 30 minutes. Participants will also be advised in the email to complete the survey at a time of day and week when their emotions are less likely to influence their responses. For this reason, the focus group will be scheduled for a Monday at 8:00. The idea is that participants will likely not be bogged down by frustrations from the workday or workweek and will be in a clear headspace.

Study. After the survey and focus groups have been conducted, the data will be triangulated for interpretation. What can be quantified will be quantified, and the qualitative data will be coded for themes.

Act. After reviewing the data, the researcher and partners will develop a professional development plan based on the main gaps and patterns identified. Then, they will make a timeline for the rest of the project.

Data Analysis

Once the data has been collected from the questionnaire/survey and focus groups, it will be studied through a triangulation approach. I plan to use Qualtrics software to examine the data received from the survey/questionnaire. The descriptive statistical method for this quantitative data will be the mean and the mode. If any questions are not answered, that respondent's data will not be included in the quantitative data points to ensure reliable calculations. However, short answer and focus questions will be analyzed with inquiry partners. This data will undergo inductive coding to identify themes and trends in responses. The emphasis will be on locating

commonalities to determine the type of professional learning needed by participants participating in the inquiry.

Summary of Phase I

Phase I will consist of a survey/questionnaire and a focus group. This information will be used to identify baselines and entry points into the inquiry. This phase is vital to the first inquiry question. Phase I lays the groundwork for Phase II by guiding the researcher and inquiry partners in understanding the participants' needs and gaps. This aids in developing the professional development approach.

Phase II

During Phase II, I will use the data from Phase I to determine the style, order, length, and content of the professional learning. They will also clarify how support will be provided to research participants as I address their capacity gaps. A timeline for implementation will be created to ensure the research stays on course. The post survey will be utilized before and after each professional development session in order to gauge the effectiveness of professional development and participant perception of the impact on teacher capacity. Phase II directly ties to the second inquiry question: How does strategically layered professional development and coaching address capacity gaps for beginning and alternatively licensed teachers?

Inquiry Approach/Intervention

Plan. Based on the professional learning plan and process outlined in Phase 1, I, as the scholarly practitioner, will work with inquiry partners to plan the necessary professional learning and correlating post-survey for each session. The focus of the first session will be on the curriculum.

Do. The initial survey conducted at the beginning of the project will serve as a baseline for participants' knowledge and capacity. Participants will complete the in-person professional

learning, which will also include the next steps for them in their classrooms. At the conclusion of the professional learning sessions, participants will take a posttest to assess the knowledge gained and to provide the researchers with insight into the training's effectiveness and impact on capacity.

Study. I, as the scholarly practitioner, alongside my inquiry partners, will analyze the post-survey to help refine or redefine the next session.

Act. The researcher and the inquiry partners will determine the adjustments needed for the next professional development.

It is important to note that Phase II will go through three cycles, following the same model. Each cycle will focus on a different aspect. One cycle will focus on the curriculum. One cycle will focus on strategies. One cycle will focus on culture. All of these cycles will occur before moving on to Phase III.

Summary of Phase II

Phase II will consist of providing professional learning to the participants in the areas of curriculum, strategies, or culture. This phase is vital to the overall research inquiry because, at its conclusion, it will help answer both of the inquiry questions outlined in this inquiry. Phase II provides the answers, while Phase III requires the researchers and inquiry partners to seek them by analyzing the data in its entirety.

Phase III

After professional learning and all data have been collected, the data will be analyzed during Phase III to identify the pros and cons of the professional development offered. Areas of strength and weakness will be analyzed. Participants' areas for growth will also be evaluated, and the findings from the inquiry will be presented. During this phase of the research, the

research questions and sub-questions will be answered. Data will be coded for both the content and the themes that arise from the inquiry.

Analysis of Approach

The goal of this inquiry is to narrow the capacity gap for beginning and alternatively licensed teachers who receive strategic, layered support in curriculum, strategies, and culture. As a potential result of this inquiry, the individuals who are in charge of institutional processes will become more strategic with the onboarding of beginning and alternatively licensed teachers, and those same teachers will engage in sound and reflective educational practice that positively impacts their knowledge of the curriculum, their knowledge of strategies, and their knowledge of the students they serve.

Phase I data helps systems to identify common gaps that beginning and alternatively licensed teachers face in today's system. Phase II helps to narrow the focus. It answers the question of whether capacity gaps are largely curriculum, strategy, culture, or all three. The post-surveys associated with the professional learning will allow the researcher to gauge learning, impact, and effectiveness of the professional learning on the capacity gap.

Finding answers to these inquiry questions might not only show how to support beginning and alternatively licensed teachers, but also reveal why teachers are leaving and possibly how we might retain them by ensuring the proper supports are in place.

It will be during this phase that I will present my findings not only to participants but also to key stakeholders in my district responsible for educational programs and teacher support. These people include the Associate Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, the Beginning Teacher Coordinator, the District Curriculum Specialists, the Director of Professional Development, and the Director of Human Resources. These individuals in the system must work

together to refine processes and procedures in order to positively impact and support the new and growing wave of educators.

This inquiry helped me to understand all that accompanies scholarly research and educational organizational change. I had to research the problem before deciding what to do. That was important to learn. We must know what has already been done before we waste time and energy on assumptions. Research must be driven by research. It is about building on and refining what has already been discovered to move the needle of progress. I also learned a great deal about ethics and the vital role it plays in quality work. No matter how much you want the data to say one thing, we must not change or negate what it actually tells us, because there is still learning and discovery to be done. In field notes, I learned to become both intentional and reflective in my work as a leader, researcher, and educational practitioner. This inquiry helped me refine the skills necessary to become more reliable and relevant in the work I do daily, as I try to positively impact the field in which I have dedicated my entire adult career.

Summary of Phase III

Phase I provided the baseline and entry point into the inquiry, focusing on the first question. Phase II provided data regarding the second question in this inquiry; however, Phase III is where all the data from Phase I and Phase II are analyzed to provide answers and meaning for the inquiry. Phase III allows us to fully identify capacity gaps among beginning and alternatively licensed teachers, in hopes of finding a better, more systematic approach to supporting this now-dominant demographic within the field of education.

Inquiry Design Rigor

Rigor in the terms of action research refers to “the quality, validity, accuracy, and credibility of the action research and its findings” (Mertler, 2020, p. 167). Since action research that is conducted by educators may already have inaccurate and distorted perceptions as it pertains to quality, it is important that, as a scholarly researcher, I ensure the validity and accuracy of research results. There is a pressing need to ensure I remain objective. My background and experience will play a key role because I have over 21 years in the field, 12 of which were directly focused on narrowing capacity gaps for educators in curriculum, serving as both a facilitator and developer of adult learning content throughout the years. In this research, the data will be triangulated to provide multiple data points throughout the inquiry. Having multiple data points should enhance the validity of this inquiry. These data points will eventually undergo member checking to ensure accuracy. Throughout the inquiry, participants will be presented with the data to confirm that the information accurately reflects their beliefs. Confirmability means there is a process in place to ensure the data remains neutral and that researchers remain objective. To achieve this, codes matching participants to a randomized number will be assigned, and multiple people will offer insight into what the data actually say. Having multiple perspectives and varied insights can help ensure the data is analyzed from different viewpoints. My inquiry partners will serve as external auditors, reviewing, evaluating, and potentially questioning each report to ensure the validity of the findings.

Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions

The limitations of this inquiry stem from the fact that all the teachers are housed at the same school, which limits its scope. The limited number of participants is also a factor. Since there will be fewer than 20 participants, the inquiry lacks the broad scope characteristic of

educational research. An additional limitation is that, since the profession is fluid at this time, teachers who start the inquiry may no longer be part of it should they decide to resign from teaching at Primary Leadership Academy.

As the principal of Primary Leadership Academy, I could influence outcomes because I have both a history and a connection with the participants. Because I am the evaluator at this school, teachers may feel unwarranted pressure to respond a certain way. Given that this is a mixed-methods inquiry, my connection to the dataset would affect the findings and conclusions. During the researcher's discussions, the data set could influence the findings (Creswell, 2014). To avoid such biases, I will use a data team to analyze and disaggregate data.

We assume participants will provide honest and transparent answers; however, because they are answering questions for their evaluator, they may be hesitant to be candid. It could also be assumed that participants may be more modest or reserved in their answers to prevent looking incompetent in front of their peers or their evaluator.

Levels of ego, self-awareness, and self-confidence will all impact survey responses, and unfortunately, this may not always align with more subjective truths. This may introduce bias, leading participants to rank themselves higher in a category than an objective evaluator would. Additionally, events on the participants' day up to the point they take their survey could skew responses.

The time of day empathy groups are held, and the relationships among participants could influence participants' readiness and willingness to respond. If there is tension among participants or no environment of trust and comfort is established from the beginning, responses may be short, distant, or lack substance.

Another assumption that can be found during the strategy and implementation process surrounds individuals and their current classrooms. This assumption is that all participants will complete strategies with fidelity and that students will allow participants to complete the strategies as outlined. With this, it is assumed that the classroom climate and management are ready to implement the strategies and techniques suggested by the inquiry without further groundwork.

Role of the Scholarly Practitioner

I serve as the principal of Primary Leadership Academy and as the scholarly practitioner for this inquiry. This will be my second year at Primary Leadership Academy, and there is a high population of beginning and alternatively licensed teachers within my building. This is not uncommon among rural schools in the Tip District. Therefore, my attempt to narrow the capacity gap for beginning and alternatively licensed teachers is relevant not only for my school but, according to research found in Chapter 2 of this inquiry, also for local, district, state, and national levels.

I am the direct supervisor and primary evaluator for all participants within this inquiry. I will be responsible for creating instruments and professional development, and collecting and analyzing data. I have put in place safeguards to prevent my subjectivity and positionality from influencing my responsibility to report findings free of bias and presuppositions. I will utilize my instructional coaches and other inquiry partners as needed to facilitate focus groups and help mask respondents' identities on the questionnaires. They will be responsible for assigning each person a code before analyzing the data.

Summary

My inquiry is designed to identify the capacity gaps for beginning and alternatively licensed teachers in predominantly Black and Latinx rural schools and to assess the impact that layered professional learning would have on those gaps. The following chapter, Chapter 4, presents the findings from this inquiry, including data and visual displays.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this inquiry is to identify ways to narrow the capacity gap for current beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers serving in rural schools with predominantly Black and Latinx populations. The inquiry specifically examines the capacity gap across curriculum, strategies, and culture. As a result of the declining number of graduates seeking to pursue a degree in education, especially as teaching vacancies continue to increase across the nation (Weiss et al., 2020). Open positions within are being filled by teachers who are beginning, provisional, or educators taking non-traditional pathways. Beyond the clinical teaching that traditional beginning teachers must complete, these educators often enter the classroom at the beginning of the year with limited experience and are not adequately prepared for what they will face in the profession. This can be especially true for international teachers granted a provisional teaching license in North Carolina. Not only do these educators often face culture shock, but they also have to learn an entirely new curriculum and the strategies to teach it to a different type of student. This was a Convergent Mixed-Methods inquiry that followed an explanatory sequential design. The concurrent and triangulation design method was used, merging both qualitative and quantitative approaches. During this study, participants answered questions surrounding three categories: curriculum, strategies, and culture, after which they were put on an intervention pathway. Once on a pathway, participants engaged in professional learning designed to address their capacity gaps in the three identified areas. Upon completion of the professional learning, participants were surveyed to gauge its effectiveness. This chapter will provide a review of the inquiry's guiding questions, an explanation of the implementation design, specifics on demographics, a complete data analysis, and results and study implications.

Inquiry Guiding Questions

This inquiry was guided by two major questions, one of which had 3 area-specific sub-questions. The questions that guided this inquiry were as follows:

1. What capacity gaps exist for beginning and alternatively licensed teachers?
 - a. What capacity gaps exist for BTs, provisional, and ALTs in the area of curriculum?
 - b. What capacity gaps exist for BTs, provisional, and ALTs in the area of strategies?
 - c. What capacity gaps exist for BTs, provisional, and ALTs in the area of culture?
2. How does strategically layered professional development and coaching impact capacity gaps for beginning and alternatively licensed teachers?

With the first question, my goal was to identify the capacity gaps that beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers may face that could create barriers in the classroom. Determining the answers to Question One would inform the professional learning scope and design needed to target specific needs. The idea was to determine the capacity needed first before attempting to design the professional learning. This would create a more differentiated and intentional professional learning experience.

Implementation

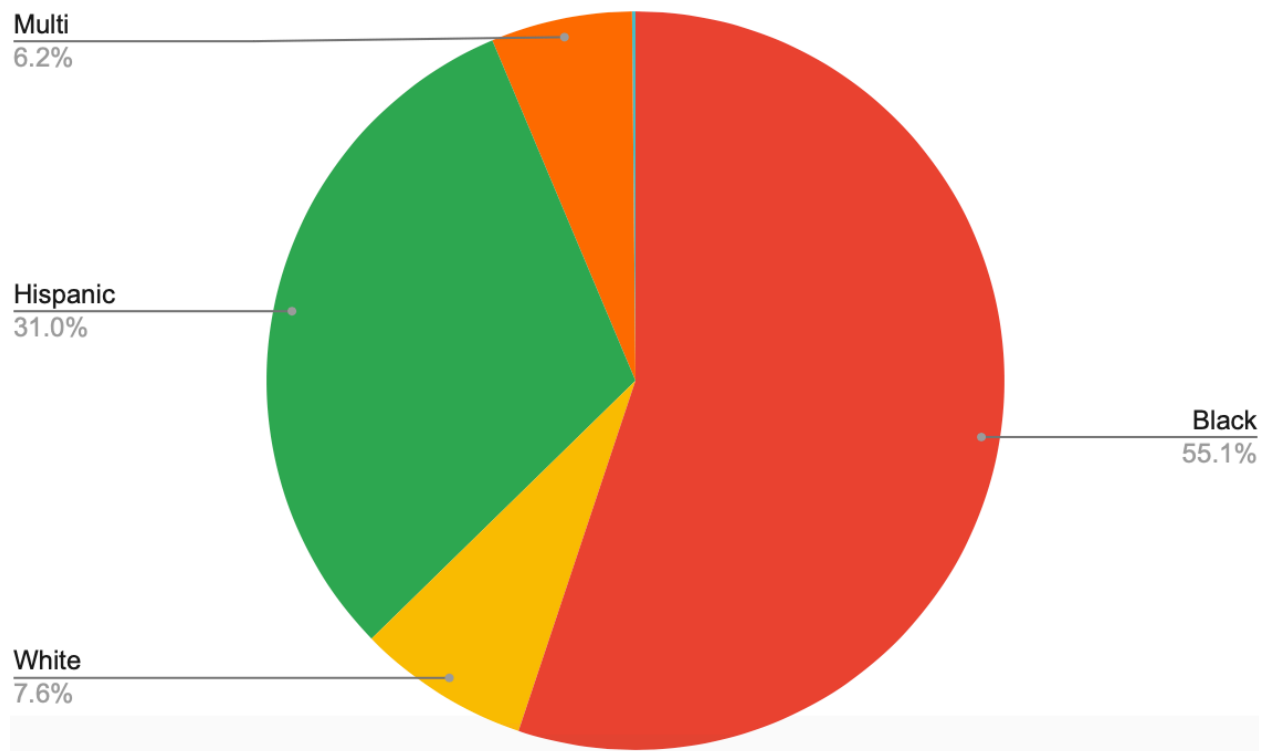
The problem of practice this inquiry seeks to address is how to narrow the capacity gap for current beginning, provisional, and alternative-licensed teachers serving in rural schools with majority Black and Latinx populations. This was a convergent mixed-methods inquiry that followed the explanatory sequential design. The concurrent and triangulation design method was utilized with qualitative and quantitative approaches.

This inquiry followed the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) model. During the Plan phase, I identified the problem: due to changes in the educational landscape, there were more beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers entering the field than in previous years. The study's desired outcome was to narrow the teacher capacity gap for those teachers. While brainstorming a variety of solutions, I settled on the idea that effective teaching is a layered, interconnected process that requires proficiency and competence across a range of areas. Because teaching is layered and interconnected, I thought it would be beneficial to target professional learning based on teacher needs. During this stage, I conducted a survey and a focus group to gain insight into teachers' needs and capacity. During the Do phase, participants were placed on a professional learning pathway to address capacity gaps in curriculum, strategies, or culture. After the professional learning sessions, I analyzed the collected data, focusing on successes and failures. I adopted the overall concept, but adapted the design for efficiency.

Demographics

The participants of this inquiry are all K-8 educators at Primary Leadership Academy. Primary Leadership Academy is a rural school in North Carolina that serves a majority-Black and Latinx student population. During the 2024–2025 school year, the student population consisted of 323 Black students, 220 Hispanic students, 41 biracial students, 62 White students, and one Asian student (see Figure 1). During the 2025–2026 school year, the student demographic consisted of 365 Black students, 205 Hispanic students, 41 biracial students, 50 white students, and 1 Asian student (see Figure 10).

In this study, there were two traditionally licensed teachers, two alternatively licensed teachers, and four international teachers holding provisional J-1 Visa licenses. Participants were selected through a participant email recruitment process. An invitation was sent out via email to



Note. Primary Leadership Academy enrollment numbers by grade level from August 2025 to December 2025.

Figure 10. December 2025 student enrollment by race for Primary Leadership Academy.

approximately 22 teachers. Eight teachers chose to participate: two taught middle school, three taught K-2, two taught 3-5, and one taught K-5. Their subject spans included elementary P.E., middle school P.E., K-5 general curriculum, and 6-8 general curriculum (see Table 6). There were two white Americans, two African Americans, two Chileans, one Jamaican, and one South African participant. The study consisted of one male and seven female educators.

After the recruitment process, eight participants completed the survey, and six participated in the focus group. Random selection was utilized to determine who would be put on which pathway. Two participants (6-8 general curriculum, 3-5 general curriculum) were put on the curriculum pathway, three participants (K-2 general curriculum and K-5 P.E.) were put on the strategies pathway, and three participants (two K-2 general curriculum, and 6-8 P.E.) were put on the culture pathway (see Table 7).

This study had three major components: survey, focus group, and professional learning. All eight participated in the survey; seven of the eight participated in the focus group; and eight participated in the professional learning component.

Data Collection and Analysis

This study was conducted in four phases. During the first phase, participants completed a survey. The survey link was sent via email and completed separately, at a time that was most convenient for them during their personal time. They were asked to complete the survey within a three-day window, and a follow-up email went out the day after the deadline to encourage participants who hadn't completed it to do so. A short window of approximately 5 more days was provided to ensure participants did not impede the inquiry timeline and to prevent them from discussing the survey. After participants completed the survey, they were brought together for an hour-long focus group in which they were asked specific questions about culture, curriculum,

Table 6

Teacher Demographics for Study

Demographics		Number of Teachers (<i>n</i> = 8)	Percent
Designation	K–2	3	0.375
	3–5	2	0.25
	6–8	3	0.375
Licensure Status	Beginning	2	0.25
	Provisional	4	0.50
	Alternative	2	0.25
Race	African-American	2	0.25
	White	2	0.25
	Chilean	2	0.25
	South African	1	0.125
	Jamaican	1	0.125
Teaching Experience	0–1	1	0.125
	2	3	0.375
	3		
	4+	4	0.50

Table 7

Professional Learning Participation

Participants		Participant Grade Level	Years of Service	Status: Beginning, Provisional, Alternative
Curriculum Participants	K–2			
	3–5	1	4+	Provisional
	6–8	1	2	Beginning
Strategies Participants	K–2	2	1 4+	Alternative Provisional
	3–5	1	2	Traditional
	6–8			
Culture Participants	K–2	1	4+	Provisional
	3–5	1	2	Provisional
	6–8	1	2	Alternative

and strategies (see Appendix C). An initial review of both data tools was conducted during phase 2. During the review, I looked for survey trends that needed to be addressed in the professional learning sessions. During phase 3, participants were selected to attend professional learning sessions. Since there were no clear outliers in the survey results, random selection was used to prevent an imbalance in participant distribution across pathways during the study. At the completion of the sessions, participants took a post-survey to provide feedback. The post-survey was closely aligned with the pre-survey.

From beginning to end, the entire process took 3 years, and the data collection and analysis portion took approximately a year. Permission to conduct the survey was received from TIP County Schools, and IRB approval was obtained from ECU. On March 22, 2025, I sent an email to all staff who met the criteria of being beginning, provisional, or alternatively licensed to recruit participants. By April 2, I had secured 8 participants for the study. A survey (see Appendix D) was mailed to participants that same day, and they were asked to complete it by the end of the week. After participants completed the survey, a focus group (see Appendix C) was held with participants the week of June 12. After the focus group, the data were reviewed by me, instructional coaches (ICs), and a district specialist who served as an inquiry partner. Professional learning sessions were developed, and teachers were assigned to each pathway and invited to attend their sessions. These sessions were held off-site, away from school distractions. At the end of the professional learning sessions, participants took a post-survey (see Appendix E, F, & G). Once all sessions were complete, the data were analyzed, and the study's results were determined.

The survey is divided into 4 sections: demographics, curriculum, strategies, and culture. Each section has about ten to twelve questions and can be found in Appendix D. The focus group

questions can be found in Appendix C. The post-survey was generated from the pre-survey; therefore, there is clear alignment between the questions asked. This was done to see whether participants felt more confident in one of the pathways after professional learning. The post-survey can be found in Appendices E, F, & G.

I created the survey based on the components of culture, strategies, and curriculum. The survey was based largely on my personal and professional experiences and observations over the years in the field of education, working with teachers as a district specialist. I took a broad concept, such as curriculum, and attempted to reduce the whole to parts. This was done for strategies and culture as well. I attempted to identify aspects that aligned with each topic. This was done to identify where beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers felt confident and where they had gaps in confidence and ability. After the survey was created, I asked participants who were not a part of the study to spend time answering the survey questions. I did this verbally because I wanted to see in real-time where questions caused confusion. This was noted when participants had to ask a follow-up question for clarity. This allowed me to see where the question was vague, unclear, or nuanced. After having non-participants take the survey, I used their feedback, along with my observations during the process, to refine the questions for clarity.

Prior to participation, participants gave permission and signed a consent form. The focus group was held in a centralized location to ensure the discussion space was neutral and free of distractions for participants. The session was recorded on a virtual platform, with video and transcripts available. Teachers were seated in a U formation at tables to give equal voice to all. Questions were asked in the order they appear in the Focus Group Protocol (see Appendix C), and each teacher was given space and time to answer, should they choose to do so, but they were

not obligated to answer all the questions. Follow-up questions were asked to clarify. The follow-up questions flowed naturally from the conversation. Even after refining the survey tool prior to dissemination, one question had to be reworded to provide more clarity. At the conclusion of the session, the audio recording of the focus group was transcribed by the software, and the transcription is 11 pages long. The transcript had to be edited because the software could not identify the speaker. The video was used to clean up the transcript and maintain the integrity of the process. I had to go back and correct words, phrases, and speaker attributions because the transcription couldn't identify who was speaking. Additionally, the software struggled to correctly translate some words due to dialect. These corrections were made while preserving the integrity of the focus group conversations and responses. I made several notes on the transcript and began organizing answers to identify themes and findings.

The analysis was conducted a week after the conclusion of the professional learning sessions. It took approximately a month to analyze and synthesize all of the data. Tables were created throughout the process. This helped with processing and making sense of the data, since there was an overwhelming amount of data to sift through. The type of analysis that was used was thematic. I used curriculum, strategies and culture as “a priori” codes for categorizing the data into groups. Afterwards, I analyzed and synthesized data (with inquiry members) within three groups to derive insights.

For the initial survey, respondents' answers were consolidated into tables by curriculum section, strategies, and culture. The curriculum portion showed that teachers did not feel comfortable with all the standards they were required to teach, and they were only somewhat confident in their ability to create lesson plans that aligned with the standards; however, they felt they had a strong ability to vet resources (see Table 8).

Table 8

Results from the Curriculum Section of the Initial Survey

Curriculum Pre-Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1 I know where to find the North Carolina Standard Course of Study for the content I teach.	4	5	0	0	0	0	0
2 I know where to find ample resources that align with the curriculum I teach.	2	3	2	0	2	0	0
3 I am confident in my ability to vet whether a resource that I find aligns with my curriculum from the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.	2	2	4	1	0	0	0
4 I am confident in my ability to vet whether a resource is on grade level for the curriculum I teach.	3	4	1	0	1	0	0
5 I am confident in my knowledge of the content I am required to teach.	2	4	2	0	1	0	0
6 I fully understand, in depth, all of the standards I am required to teach with the curriculum.	1	3	1	0	4	0	0
7 I feel confident creating lesson plans that align with the standard course of study I teach.	3	1	4	0	1	0	0

Table 8 (continued)

Curriculum Pre-Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8 I am confident in my ability to correctly answer questions that my colleague may ask regarding my curriculum.	2	3	2	0	2	0	0
9 I am confident in my ability to correctly answer questions that my students may ask regarding my curriculum.	2	3	2	0	2	0	0
10 I fully understand any STATE assessments tied to my content and curriculum.	2	2	3	2	0	0	0

For the strategies portion, 50% of participants reported not having effective strategies to teach each standard in their curriculum (see Table 9). Within the culture portion, it is important to note that participants who were associated with that culture rated themselves more highly; however, those who were not from that culture did not rate as highly. Understanding triggers and the language students used also seemed to be where participants had a capacity gap (see Table 10).

Even though the surveys provided quantitative data, they also included some qualitative data. The pre- and post-surveys consisted of open responses. I consolidated these responses into a table to help visualize similarities and differences between the pre- and post-surveys. Since the data from these questions were designed to be comparative, it was less about themes and more about gaining perspective on the participants' views of their cultural knowledge, understanding, relatability, and comfort levels (see Table 11).

For the qualitative data analysis portion of the focus groups, I created a 2- to 3-word gist (summary) on a whiteboard to record the answers to the questions I asked. Once the list was generated, I sorted and grouped like terms. This was done with inquiry partners as we sought to find an appropriate heading for each category. The category heading had to encompass each word or sentiment within the group of words or phrases. I cross-referenced them with themes we identified, and there was overlap in what we derived from the transcript.

For each question, several themes arose. When teachers were asked why they chose to teach, the themes that arose were altruistic motivation and vocation, relationships, personal satisfaction, personal experiences and influences, and variety (see Table 12).

When teachers were asked what has been the most challenging thing about being a beginning, provisional or alternative licensed teacher, the following themes arose: navigating

Table 9

Results from the Strategies Section of the Initial Survey

Strategies Pre-Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1 I feel confident creating activities that teach each standard in its entirety.	3	2	0	2	1
2 I know several strategies (different ways) to teach each standard within my curriculum.	2	3	1	1	1
3 I know effective strategies to teach each standard within my curriculum.	0	3	0	2	2
4 I am confident in creating a grade level formative assessment that accurately assesses my students' mastery level with a standard, concept or term.	2	4	1	0	1
5 I am confident in creating a grade level summative assessment that accurately assesses my students' mastery level with a standard, concept or term.	1	5	1	0	1
6 I know how to adjust my instruction when the data indicates that students were unsuccessful with something that I taught.	0	5	2	0	1
7 I know how to use student performance data to drive my instructional decisions.	4	2	1	0	1
8 I am confident in my ability to thoroughly analyze multiple student data points for the purpose of making instructional decisions.	2	4	0	1	1

Table 10

Results from the Culture Section of the Initial Survey

Culture Pre-Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1 I am more immersed in the Black culture.	0	3	1	2	2
2 Explain your answer for the previous question.	Open Response				
3 I am more immersed in the Latinx culture.	2	0	3	0	3
4 Explain your answer for the previous question.	Open Response				
5 I know where to find culturally relevant resources and strategies that are applicable to my classroom and curriculum.	1	4	0	2	1
6 I am confident in my ability to create a culturally responsive classroom.	4	2	0	1	1
7 I understand the connection student culture has with my curriculum.	4	0	3	0	1
8 I understand and can explain triggers associated in Black cultures.	2	3	0	0	3
9 I understand and can explain triggers associated in Latinx cultures.	2	4	0	1	1
10 I understand the language that my Black students use.	3	3	1	0	1
11 I understand the language that my Latinx students use.	2	2	1	2	1

Table 10 (continued)

Culture Pre-Survey Questions	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree
12 I understand and can explain the slang and phrases used by my students.	2	4	1	0	1

Table 11

Results from Open-Ended Questions on Pre and Post Surveys

	Question	Response
Pre-Survey (Culture)	2 Explain your answer for the previous question. (Black culture)	Our music is chosen by the students so some music comes from the African American culture. In class we hear the lingo that comes from the African American culture. I wouldn't say I'm confident in my knowledge about the African American culture. I am well informed on the history of African-Americans, am aware of the current climate, and participate in some traditions/believe in some superstitions. My Jamaican background shares some cultural roots with African American culture, especially in areas like music and storytelling. As a new teacher in America, I try to listen, observe and ask questions to better understand and honor the unique contributions and perspectives within the African-American culture. There's no African American culture in my country so this is new to me; however, I am trying to (very respectfully) grasp more knowledge. However, immersion takes time. I am still learning the culture. I am fully engaged with their experiences the traditions, history, art, music and literature. I also recognize the challenges and celebrate the contributions of African Americans to society, while also acknowledging the resilience and diverse expressions of identity that come from African American experience.
Pre-Survey (Culture)	4 Explain your answer for the previous question. (Latinx Culture)	In class, we play music that the students choose. Some of the music that we play is from the Latinx culture. Being around students a part of that culture, they share some traditions and customs they practice. I don't know a ton of their traditions and customs or they're day to day traditions/ cultures or even struggles. I am somewhat informed on the Latinx history and aware of a few of their traditions and customs. I am Latina. I would not say that I am deeply involved in Latinx culture. I know certain things on a base level, but nothing more than that.
Post Survey (Culture)	2 Explain your answer for the previous question. (Black culture)	I feel as taking this training, I can better look at a student's culture and have a better understanding of them. I still wonder about a lot of things, but I think it is because I was mostly ignorant about these before. The more I hear and see, the more I learn.

Table 11 (continued)

	Question	Response
Post Survey (Culture)	4 Explain your answer for the previous question. (Latinx culture)	I can have a better look at the students' culture and help me get a better understanding of them. I am into that culture. That's a part of who I am.

Table 12

Results for Why Did You Decide to Teach

Theme	Example Quote
Altruistic Motivation & Vocation	“I found this almost like a moral compass in teaching, changing society or contributing to a greater change.”
Relationships	“For me, I would say I’m a very relationship person and I think students need a safe place, and I know I provide a safe place. Probably because I feel like my teachers growing up had a lot to do with how I became like the person I am and almost I kind of want to be that person for the kids and give back in a way.”
Personal Satisfaction	“I decided to teach because of my love of teaching.”
Past Experiences and Influences	“Everyone in my family teaches, and it’s something that I kind of felt like I was called to do.”
Variety	“I decided to teach because I think it’s really fun. You’re always learning, and it’s never the same. No two classes are going to be the same, even though they might be planned the same. So, basically, - yeah - it’s because it’s fun, and I’m a very curious person.”

cultural and communication barriers; navigating the differences in educational systems, structures, and the expectations within those systems; inadequate preparation for real-life scenarios; having reactive rather than proactive measures for teacher learning and growth; and having to navigate emotional and psychological stressors (see Table 13).

Teachers were asked what the classroom or curriculum required of them that they were not prepared for, and several gave lengthy responses. As a result, I used ChatGPT to help analyze themes in their responses, ensuring I captured them all. Prior to using, though, I followed the same process outlined earlier, creating gist words or phrases. Those statements, words, and phrases from the transcript were entered to help consolidate responses into themes. The themes that emerged from the entire process were having a lack of clarity around required programs and processes, having a need for clear student data access and continuity, being unclear about referral, documentation, and compliance procedures, having an overreliance on learning by doing instead of preparation, and not being equipped to handle the emotional strain from that lack of preparedness (see Table 14).

Interestingly, when asked about the strategies they need, the overwhelming majority had the same answer. A single theme organically emerged: student behavior. Participants mentioned that they did not know how to deal with screaming children who did not get their way, or when students have no background or understanding of what school is and how to do school, like sitting in a seat, or what to do when they are given students who are so behind that they can't tell or spell their name.

The cultural shocks and shifts question brought about themes of lack of respect, communication barriers, dysfunctional and unstable home environments, student apathy, aggression, reactivity, and systemic issues (see Table 15).

Table 13

Results for Challenges Beginning, Provisional, and Alternative Licensed Teachers Face

Theme	Example Quote
Navigating Cultural and Communication Barriers	“It’s been like human relations communication in every way with the students, and it’s not only the language for me; it’s really a cultural barrier, and it’s difficult sometimes to grasp those communicative clues in another culture.”
Navigating the differences in Educational Systems, Structures and Expectations	“For example, children with ADHD, they have a classroom they recommend. They do one student of that type in each classroom. Right? So, they would limit the number...”
Inadequate preparation for real-life scenarios	“I feel like alternative license, you’re kind of just thrown into it. My degree is health fitness and is closely related to physical education, but it’s close enough. So, it’s like you have four teacher work days before the students are actually there.”
	“For me, I would say the change in the role because I went from TA where somebody told me what to do to being the one telling somebody else what to do and how to assist me.”
Having reactive rather than proactive measures for teacher learning and growth	“You don’t know what questions or problems will arise until they’ve already happened. Then, it’s like, this shouldn’t have happened, but it already did.”
Navigating emotional and psychological stressors	“You come home feeling defeated. I think the first year is also a lot more challenging.”
	“Yeah, we want to hold on too, but at some point I decided that I wouldn’t let it get to me that I didn’t have to take it personal. But I guess the days where I felt most defeated or actually it was changing my confidence overall - it was just the constantly asking questions and trying to understand and (still) not understanding.”

Table 14

Results for Classroom and Curriculum Requirements

Theme	Example Quote
Lack of Clarity Around Required Programs and Processes	“For example, kindergarten Eli and in third grade, RTA, which are very important pieces of the things that we have to do. I think that we don’t have clarity about the place to go to get that information.”
Need for Clear Student Data Access and Continuity	“Where do I actually find that information? For example, for RTA? Because we don’t have the time to learn by doing. It’s something that we need to apply the correct way from the beginning.”
Unclear Referral, Documentation, and Compliance Procedures	“I wish I knew all of that. I learned it late, when the students were literally half or more than halfway in the school year, and I really wish if I knew all of that information earlier, so that I could have been effective in that.” “We know that when you refer a student, there has to be a certain order of things that are needed to happen, right? I was not prepared for anything.” “... Illnesses referrals, like immunization process. I have no idea, and I still don’t understand why I have to call the parent and say this part of the Kindergarten Health Assessment is not complete. And they’re like, ‘Hey, where do I go?’ I don’t know. And they’re like, ‘Hey, where do I go?’ I don’t know. Go somewhere. But I was like, I don’t even know who received it. So, I don’t know anything about the process. And having to repeat it twice this year, that triggered me because I didn’t know what to do three times, and by the third time, I just felt like have I not learned, and am I dumb that I’m not getting it. I still don’t know what to do. It’s like I’ve never done this in my life, and now I got to do it in another language. There’s also the communication issue that I have; so, it’s just a lot.”
Overreliance on Informal Learning (“Learning by Doing”)	“We don’t have the time to learn by doing because it’s something that we need to apply the correct way from the beginning.” “Another thing I would say is that generally we are expected to have a very clear idea of the situation of our students.”
Emotional Strain from Lack of Preparedness	“I try to figure it on my own, and I try to do something many evenings when I get home. I just feel defeated because I didn’t think I was reaching the students.” “I know, for sure, that I used to be extraordinary where teaching is concerned, and then when I come here, I feel like I’m struggling. I would call my son sometime and I would cry. He would say, ‘Mommy, you have you got this. Just take your time.’ And I still feel like I’m not where I really want to be with teaching and reaching these students.”

Table 15

Results for Cultural Shocks and Shifts

Theme	Example Quote
Lack of respect	“The parents they don’t see us a partner. It’s us. For them, it’s like the opposite side. So that was a huge shock for me.” “I think they (the parents) don’t think that we work together. It’s a lot of a defensive stance.”
Communication Barriers	“The communication, like I said, is super difficult because there is a lot of expressions that I think go with the communication too.”
Dysfunctional and Unstable home environments	“They (parents) don’t pour positivity about school - then the child is not going to really care and open up.”
Student Apathy	“We have eighth graders who probably can’t spell their own name. That’s your name. Something you’re going to have to sign on legal documents for the rest of your life and you can’t spell because they didn’t pass the law. And, then, the attitude or lack of care.”
Aggression and reactivity	“She punches them. When I ask why? Because she was in my face, because she was looking at me. But I tried to get in their minds to understand, but at the same time, I don’t understand the looking at me. So, right, that’s difficult.”
Systemic Issues	“(Some) parents can’t read or they don’t have the skills in place. You would think that you would want your kid to not struggle like you did, but some parents are I don’t want my kid to be better than me.”

Because this question was complicated by myriad responses, ChatGPT was used to help identify themes from the answers. As before, after creating a gist of the answers, I asked ChatGPT the following question: “What themes emerge from the following shocks?” Sending students to ISS, disrespect for teachers, female forms of expression and communication, yelling, parents treating older children like babies, seeing parents yelling and grabbing children, aggressive behavior from students, violent environments, parents who can’t read and don’t want better for their kids, student apathy, parents not supporting the school, homes that have no structure or routines, and low expectations were the initial responses. It generated some themes that I would use to help identify my own.

It is important to note that I did not take the themes verbatim. I consolidated ideas and created themes that better aligned with my thinking, drawing on my knowledge and expertise in education. Lastly, teachers identified that they learned best in five distinct ways: hands-on, modeling, self-reflection through video, custom and personalized to their specific needs, and consideration of their cognitive load (see Table 16).

Results

The results section includes findings from the pre-survey, the focus group, and the post-survey that were conducted as part of this study. This inquiry sought to answer two questions:

1. What capacity gaps exist for beginning and alternatively licensed teachers?
 - a. What capacity gaps exist for BTs, provisional, and ALTs in the area of curriculum?
 - b. What capacity gaps exist for BTs, provisional, and ALTs in the area of strategies?
 - c. What capacity gaps exist for BTs, provisional, and ALTs in the area of culture?

Table 16

Results for Learning Preferences

Theme	Example Quote
Hands-On	“Hands-on. I need to watch someone do it.”
Modeling	“I like to watch someone do it. Just with these kids. Then, I do it with supervision, and then, I just do it myself.”
Self-Reflection through video	“I go back and watch what I do and how I say it, and what my face is like. I’m like, ‘I see why they ain’t (didn’t) understand. Girl, you didn’t even know what you were talking about.’ It’s like a self-reflection without somebody drilling.”
	“I would love, for example, to sit down and watch my recordings.”
Custom and personalized to my needs	“I think it just needs to be catered towards the person. As much as I appreciate the instructional coaches that (Vocab PD) was a waste of my time.”
Consideration of Cognitive Load Capacity	“I’ll be very honest. I don’t know what other jobs do meetings starting after eight hours of work. I can’t imagine in any office or place that they say, ‘Hey, the time is over. Now we start meetings.’”

2. How does strategically layered professional development and coaching impact capacity gaps for beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers?

Answers to these questions are provided in the form of narratives and tables to showcase the data that emerged from this study.

Before answering the first inquiry question, the first question within the focus group served a purpose in the study by satisfying curiosity about why these teachers chose to teach (see Table 17). Answers such as personal satisfaction, relationship building, past experiences, personal influence, and the need for variety were given as reasons (see Table 17); however, one reason received an overwhelming response: having a vocation or altruistic motivation (see Table 17). Participants said they entered the field because it aligned with their moral compass or because they felt called to teach. They cited the need to play their part by contributing to broader change and giving back, with the ambitious hope of changing society. One participant stated, “I found this – almost like a moral compass in teaching, changing society, and contributing to a greater change.” It is important to know a person’s why for doing anything. Knowing the why gives the work purpose and serves as a guide or point of reference when one gets lost or discouraged while doing it.

The first survey question sought to identify capacity gaps among beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers. Results from the curriculum portion of the initial survey indicate that participants are evenly split between confidence and understanding. All participants knew where to find the Standard Course of Study; however, only half were fully confident about where to find resources that aligned with those standards. Even if they could find the resources, only half were confident in their ability to vet whether those resources aligned with their standards. More than half of the participants were confident in their knowledge of the content

Table 17

Reasons for Teaching

Vocation & Altruistic Motivation	Relationships	Personal Satisfaction	Past Experience and Influence	Variety
A Calling	Relationships	Love	Former teachers had a lot to do with who I became	No two classes are the same
Moral Compass		Fun		
Changing Society		Always Learning		
Contributing to Greater Change				
Giving Back				
Helping Students Better Themselves				
Playing My Part				
Students Need a Safe Place				
Seeing Growth				

and the depth to which they needed to teach their standards. The majority of the participants shifted when asked about their confidence in creating lesson plans. Respondents largely believed that they could answer questions from colleagues and students regarding the curriculum. Those who marked agree and strongly agree for understanding state assessment indicate a strong confidence, whereas the other half seemed somewhat agreeable (see Table 8). Thirty-eight percent of participants did not feel confident creating activities that teach the entirety of the standard, whereas 50% said that they did not know effective strategies to teach each standard within the curriculum (see Table 9). Twenty-five percent said that they did not know different ways to teach the same standard. Seventy-five percent of the participants were confident in creating grade-level formative and summative assessments. It is important to note that they somewhat agreed with the questions surrounding formative and summative assessments. Seventy-five percent agreed that they knew how to use student performance data to inform instructional decisions. In fact, knowing how to use student data had the highest confidence rating of all the questions on the strategies portion of the survey. The culture survey (see Table 10) produced a greater range of responses, from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Each question in this portion of the survey (see Table 10) had a wide range of answers. Fifty percent of the participants said that they are not immersed in the Black culture, while 25% said that they were immersed in the Latinx culture. Approximately 63% felt they knew where to find culturally relevant resources and strategies applicable to their classroom and curriculum. 50% said they understood the connection between a student's culture and the curriculum. 65% felt as though they could identify triggers in the Black culture, while 75% felt as though they could identify triggers in the Latinx culture. 75% of teachers stated that they could understand the language that Black students use, while only 50% could understand the language that their Latinx students use.

75% also felt fairly confident that they could explain the slang and phrases that their students use.

Questions 2, 3, 4, and 5 of the focus survey helped to identify specific gaps that beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers have. Question 2 asked teachers to identify the most challenging aspect of being a beginning, alternative-licensed, or provisionally licensed teacher. Participants shared their struggles with communication, and international teachers specifically mentioned not understanding the non-verbal cues used in American culture (see Table 18). Several of the provisionally licensed international teachers mentioned the differences in the educational setting. For instance, they mentioned that the number of students with special needs and diagnoses was limited within each classroom in their home countries. This is unlike the host school system, where there is no cap on the number of students with special needs in a classroom. Participants reported feeling ill-prepared for the realities of teaching. One teacher mentioned being thrown into the classroom with only 4 days to prepare, while another said she had been in a classroom before but had served as a teacher assistant (TA). She talked about how things were different because she was used to being told what to do, whereas now she finds herself telling others how they can help her in the classroom. One participant mentioned that everything seems reactive instead of proactive. This was explained by the group, which said it doesn't know what to ask or what problems might arise until they happen. Lastly, more than one international teacher shared that they were excellent teachers in their home country but felt defeated and noticed their confidence change. They shared that it felt like they were starting over. One teacher stated, "I guess the days where I felt most defeated, or actually it was changing my confidence, overall it was just the constantly asking questions and trying to understand and not understanding."

Table 18

Challenges Being a Beginning, Provisional or Alternatively Licensed Teacher

Navigating Cultural and Communication Barriers	Navigating the differences in Educational Systems, Structures and Expectations	Inadequate preparation for real-life scenarios	Having reactive rather than proactive measures for teacher learning and growth	Navigating Emotional and Psychological Stressors
International teachers adapting to cultural norms	School structures, expectations	Alternatively licensed teachers feeling unprepared and overwhelmed because they enter the classroom with limited pedagogical training or induction support	Responding to challenges after problems have already happened	Nervousness
Understanding and dealing with student behavior	School expectations,			Uncertainty
Communication styles	Inclusion practices between their home countries and the U.S.			Isolation as teachers; navigating new professional and cultural environments without clear guidance
Difference from home countries				
Classroom noise levels				
Joining in with student excitement				

Question #3 asked teachers to identify what the classroom or curriculum required that they felt like they were not fully prepared or equipped to handle. Teachers reported not knowing how to conduct state testing or implement initiatives, and did not know where to get the information. They also mentioned wanting to know how to access student data so they don't have to learn it halfway through the year. One participant stated, "I learned it late, when the students were literally half or more than halfway in the school year, and I really wish I knew all of that information earlier, so that I could have been effective in that." Participants noted a lack of clarity regarding referral and compliance procedures (see Table 19). Additionally, not having time to learn how to do things the right way was mentioned, as was participants' emotional strain from not being fully prepared for the task or job.

Teachers were also asked to identify cultural shocks or shifts they experienced or encountered (see Table 20). Participants reported being shocked by both student apathy and aggression. They mentioned the parents' lack of respect and their unwillingness to see educators as partners. One participant said, "The parents, they don't see us as a partner. It's us. For them, it's like the opposite side. So that was a huge shock for me." Participants also mentioned systemic issues and students' home environments as requiring a cultural shift in perspective. As with other barriers, communication barriers were again cited in this question.

To address the first inquiry question for this study, the capacity gaps that exist for beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers, as identified within this study, were as follows:

- Navigating cultural barriers
- Navigating communication barriers
- Navigating differences in educational systems, structures, and expectations

Table 19

Classroom and Curriculum Requirements Not Fully Prepared to Do

Lack of Clarity Around Required Programs and Processes	Need for Clear Student Data Access and Continuity	Unclear Referral, Documentation, and Compliance Procedures	Overreliance on Informal Learning ("Learning by Doing")	Emotional Strain from Lack of Preparedness
ELI	IEP	Kindergarten Assessments	No clear milestones for Beginning Teachers	Self-care
RTA	504	Referrals to nurses, special education, outside agencies, etc.		Boundaries
	Counselor Referral			

Table 20

Cultural Shocks and Shifts

Lack of respect	Communication Barriers	Dysfunctional and Unstable home environments	Student Apathy	Aggression and reactivity	Systemic Issues
Disrespect for teachers from students and parents	Style: yelling, aggressive	Parents treating older children like babies	Student apathy; lack of care or concern	Aggressive behavior from students	Parents who can't read
	Tension between how teacher communicates and parents communicate	Seeing parents yelling and grabbing children			Students who can't read
		Violent environments			Sending students to ISS
		Parents who can't read and don't want better for their kids			Parents not supporting the school
		Homes that have no structure or routines			
		Low expectations for children			

- Navigating inadequate preparation for real-life scenarios
- Knowing how to be proactive rather than reactive
- Navigating emotional and psychological stressors
- Lacking clarity around required programs, processes, and assessments
- Knowing where to access student data and how to understand and utilize data
- Lack of understanding for referrals, documentation, and compliance procedures (at the school and system level)
- Knowing how to deal with emotional strain from a lack of preparedness
- Understanding differences in culture, expectations, and communication, including responses to situations
- Knowing how to deal with student behavior and how to close the gap for students who are not adequately prepared

When considering teaching induction programs, it would be advantageous for systems to address these gaps during onboarding for beginning teachers, international teachers with a provisional license, and alternatively licensed teachers.

The second inquiry question examined how strategically layered professional development and coaching impacted capacity gaps for beginning and alternatively licensed teachers. The post-survey and focus group question #6 (see Appendix C) addressed this within the inquiry. Teachers who were participants in the curriculum planning session overwhelmingly agreed or strongly agreed that the professional learning had an impact on their knowledge. Areas where there was a strong consensus were as follows:

- As a result of this professional development, I know where to find the North Carolina Standard Course of Study for the content I teach.

As a result of this professional development, I know where to find ample resources that align with the curriculum I teach.

- As a result of this professional development, I am confident in my ability to vet whether a resource that I find aligns with my curriculum from the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.
- As a result of this professional development, I am confident in my ability to answer my students' questions about my curriculum.
- As a result of this professional development, I fully understand any STATE assessments tied to my content and curriculum.

Participants were evenly split on other questions that addressed confidence in vetting resources, knowing the content, depth of standards, standards-aligned lesson plans, and answering a colleague's question about curriculum (see Table 21).

Participants who completed the Strategy professional learning sessions only collectively agreed on two statements:

- As a result of this professional learning, I know several strategies to teach each standard within my curriculum and
- As a result of this professional development, I know how to use student performance data to drive my instructional decisions.

Participants only somewhat agreed that, as part of this professional development, they knew effective strategies to teach each standard in their curriculum, and only somewhat agreed that they were confident in creating grade-level summative assessments that accurately assess student mastery of a concept or term. Two of the participants strongly agreed that, as a result of professional development, they were confident in creating grade-level formative assessments,

Table 21

Curriculum Post-Survey Results

Curriculum Post-Survey Questions	SA	A	SA	NAD	SD	D	SD
1 As a result of this professional development, I know where to find the North Carolina Standard Course of Study for the content I teach.	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
2 As a result of this professional development, I know where to find ample resources that align with the curriculum I teach.	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
3 As a result of this professional development, I am confident in my ability to vet whether a resource that I find aligns with my curriculum from the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
4 As a result of this professional development, I am confident in my ability to vet whether a resource is on grade level for the curriculum I teach.	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
5 As a result of this professional development, I am confident in my knowledge of the content I am required to teach.	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
6 As a result of this professional development, I fully understand, in depth, all of the standards I am required to teach with the curriculum.	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
7 As a result of this professional development, I feel confident creating lesson plans that align with the standard course of study I teach.	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
8 As a result of this professional development, I am confident in my ability to correctly answer questions that my colleague may ask regarding my curriculum.	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
9 As a result of this professional development, I am confident in my ability to correctly answer questions that my students may ask regarding my curriculum.	2	0	0	0	0	0	0
10 As a result of this professional development, I fully understand any STATE assessments tied to my content and curriculum.	2	0	0	0	0	0	0

knowing how to adjust their instruction when data indicates that the students were not successful, and that they felt confident that they could thoroughly analyze multiple student data points for the purpose of making instructional decisions (see Table 22).

Participants who completed the culture professional learning session were less confident in their ability and understanding than those who completed the strategies and curriculum professional learning. There was a group consensus that, while somewhat, they were more immersed in Black culture and could explain triggers in Black culture as a result of the training. However, “neither agree nor disagree,” “disagree,” and “strongly disagree” were cited for the following questions (see Table 23):

- Being more immersed in the Latinx culture
- Finding culturally relevant resources
- Understanding the connection between culture and curriculum
- Latinx triggers
- Language of both Black and Latinx students

Of the three sessions, data from the culture professional learning session show that it was less successful in addressing teacher gaps than the others. This suggests that the wide scope of culture makes it difficult to address effectively in a single session.

The last focus group question explored how beginning, provisional, and alternative licensed teachers learn best. Their responses echoed what we advise for student learning: engaging, hands-on activities with modeling and differentiation (see Table 24). Participants preferred professional learning that is relevant, interactive, modeled, practiced with scaffolds, includes video, and involves one-to-one coaching. One participant expressed frustration with

Table 22

Strategies Post-Survey Results

Strategies Post-Survey Questions	SA	SWA	NAD	SWD	SD
1 As a result of this professional development, I feel confident creating activities that teach each standard in its entirety.	2	1	0	0	0
2 As a result of this professional development, I know several strategies (different ways) to teach each standard within my curriculum.	3	0	0	0	0
3 As a result of this professional development, I know effective strategies to teach each standard within my curriculum.	1	2	0	0	0
4 As a result of this professional development, I am confident in creating a grade level formative assessment that accurately assesses my students' mastery level with a standard, concept or term.	2	1	0	0	0
5 As a result of this professional development, I am confident in creating a grade level summative assessment that accurately assesses my students' mastery level with a standard, concept or term.	1	2	0	0	0
6 As a result of this professional development, I know how to adjust my instruction when the data indicates that students were unsuccessful with something that I taught.	2	1	0	0	0
7 As a result of this professional development, I know how to use student performance data to drive my instructional decisions.	3	0	0	0	0
8 As a result of this professional development, I am confident in my ability to thoroughly analyze multiple student data points for the purpose of making instructional decisions.	2	1	0	0	0

Table 23

Culture Post-Survey Results

Culture Post-Survey Questions	SA	SWA	NAD	SWD	SD
1 As a result of this training, I am more immersed in the Black culture.	0	3	0	0	0
2 Explain your answer for the previous question.	• I feel as taking this training, I can better look at a student's culture and have a better understanding of them. • The more I hear and see, the more I learn. • I still wonder about a lot of things, but I think it is because I was mostly ignorant about these before.				
3 As a result of this professional development, I am more immersed in the Latinx culture.	0	2	0	1	0
4 Explain your answer for the previous question.	• I can have a better look at the student's culture and helps me get a better understanding of them. • I am into that culture, so that's a part of who I am. • There wasn't much of a focus on it. Loved the book idea.				
5 As a result of this professional development, I know where to find culturally relevant resources and strategies that are applicable to my classroom and curriculum.	1	1	1	0	0
6 As a result of this professional development, I am confident in my ability to create a culturally responsive classroom.	1	2	0	0	0
7 As a result of this professional development, I understand the connection student culture has with my curriculum.	1	0	2	0	0
8 As a result of this professional development, I understand and can explain triggers associated in Black cultures.	0	3	0	0	0
9 As a result of this professional development, I understand and can explain triggers associated in Latinx cultures.	1	1	0	0	1
10 As a result of this professional development, I understand the language that my Black students use.	1	1	1	0	0

Table 23 (continued)

Culture Post-Survey Questions	SA	SWA	NAD	SWD	SD
11 As a result of this professional development, I understand the language that my Latinx students use.	1	1	0	1	0
12 As a result of this professional development, I understand and can explain the slang and phrases used by my students.	2	0	1	0	0

Table 24

How Beginning, Provisional, and Alternatively Licensed Teachers Learn Best

Hands-On	Modeling	Self-Reflection Through Video	Custom and Personalized	Cognitive Load Capacity
Interactive	Show, Don't Tell	Personal time with video, asking and answering self- reflective questions	One-on-one coaching with video Relevant	When I haven't taught for 8 hours

post-teaching meetings, saying, “When I haven’t taught for eight hours. I can’t imagine being in an office or a place that says, ‘Hey, the time is over. Now we start meetings.’”

With this in mind, strategically layered professional development and coaching can help teachers fully grasp and immerse themselves in a given topic, enabling them to feel confident they can perform at mastery. Strategically layered professional development and coaching also has the potential to prevent cognitive overload and overwhelm for beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers. Instead of trying to frontload everything teachers need to know in the first few days before the start of a new school year, prioritizing what is specifically needed for individual teachers could make systems more effective and efficient. This type of professional learning also has the potential to take on a more proactive rather than a reactive approach, which participants in the study also cited as one of the challenges of being a beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teacher. This approach can be a heavy lift for larger systems; however, if done with intention and forethought, it can yield greater returns on investments.

Summary

This chapter includes an introduction, a review of the guiding questions, a review of participant demographics, the data collection process, analysis, and results. Results indicate specific capacity gaps that beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers have. These gaps can be categorized and labeled into themes that can drive professional learning agendas, assist with creating professional learning timelines, and aid in the design of systems and support structures for these educators.

In Chapter 5, I will provide a summary, recommendations, and conclusions from this study. I will review limitations of the inquiry, implications for practice and equity, in addition to

recommendations for future studies. Chapter 5 will end with conclusions and reflections on my leadership as a scholarly practitioner throughout this inquiry.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSIONS

The problem of practice this inquiry addressed concerned the capacity gaps that beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers face. This inquiry seeks to identify how to narrow the capacity gap for beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers who serve in rural schools with predominantly Black and Latinx populations. For the purpose of this inquiry, capacity was categorized into three parts: curriculum, strategies, and culture.

During this study, participants completed a survey surrounding the three categories: curriculum, strategies, and culture. The survey was followed by a focus group where participants answered questions and engaged in discourse about those same three categories. Upon completion of the survey and the focus group, participants were put on a professional learning pathway in either curriculum, strategies, or culture. Once the professional learning was complete, participants were given a post-survey to assess the effectiveness of the professional learning, as well as their perspective regarding their perceived capacity. This inquiry used a convergent-mixed methods approach. Quantitative and qualitative approaches were merged, creating a concurrent and triangulation design method.

This inquiry took part in four phases. The first phase was the data collection phase. Initially, all participants took an initial survey. That survey was broken into four parts: demographics, curriculum, strategies, and culture. The inquiry focused on the three categories of curriculum, strategies, and culture with the intention of identifying where teacher capacity gaps exist. After the survey, a focus group was conducted with the participants. The focus group acquired additional information from participants in the categories of curriculum, strategies, and culture. During the second phase, the qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed. The third

phase consisted of creating the professional learning plans and pathways, before placing participants on a specific professional learning pathway. A post-survey for the pathway was conducted as well. The fourth phase consisted of analyzing the results, drawing conclusions, and making recommendations.

Summary of the Findings

The quantitative and qualitative findings based on instruments, surveys, and focus groups conducted during this inquiry revealed the following regarding inquiry questions:

Culture

Regarding serving Black and Latinx students, there were varying levels of cultural awareness and confidence. Participants believed that they could find culturally relevant resources and identify triggers. If participants were not part of the Black or Latinx culture, they rated themselves low in their immersion in their students' culture and could not actively identify how students' culture connected to the curriculum. Quantitative results showed huge disparities in language comprehension of Latinx students. The data suggest that while participants know where to find culturally relevant texts and understand the role culture plays in the classroom, they need more opportunities to strengthen cultural competence and weave cultural identities into the classroom experience.

Curriculum and Strategies

Participants have a solid foundation in the curriculum and standards; however, lacked confidence in translating that knowledge into instructional practice. Most participants claimed to understand the depth of the content they were required to teach; fewer were confident that they could design lessons and activities that addressed the rigor the standard called for. Quantitative data suggests moderate confidence in lesson planning and resource alignment. This showed an

uncertainty around multiple approaches and strategies required to teach and reteach standards. Overall, the findings indicate that while teachers may have conceptual knowledge of the standards, they need practical ways to teach and implement them through aligned resources and instructional delivery plans.

There were strong indicators that participants knew how to access standards and use data. This supported the high quantitative measures, indicating high confidence in designing formative and summative assessments. Participants also had a strong confidence in using student performance data; yet, this confidence did not cross the threshold of instructional planning. The data suggest a capacity gap between assessment literacy and instructional planning and execution. They can measure student learning, but need guidance in planning that fully aligns with each portion of the standard.

Professional Learning

The data from both sources revealed that educators disapprove of the current structure and delivery of professional development, which are often conducted in short windows of time that leave little time to process all the information presented before implementation. Participants expressed feeling overwhelmed at the beginning of the year, having to attend information-heavy sessions while also preparing for the start of school. Educators preferred having differentiation, hands-on, real-time professional learning that leaned more into coaching and modeling. International teachers holding provisional licenses expressed a need for professional learning centered on U.S. cultural history and norms that shape U.S. schooling. This aligns with Gul and Gokce's (2020) work, which suggested that international teachers may need to adapt to educational and school culture due to prior knowledge gaps regarding student and parent profiles. As previously stated, outside of language and knowledge gaps, international teachers may, at times, find disbelief in the level of readiness their students have (Gul & Gokce, 2020).

Participants also expressed the need to understand and respect cognitive capacity, as training after a full day of teaching was neither desired nor effective. Overall, the findings suggest that professional learning would be more effective if it were designed to be on-going, responsive to individual needs, and responded to teacher capacity gaps rather than approaching professional learning as a one size fits all approach delivered through isolated and disconnected sessions.

Interpretation of the Findings

Certain patterns and trends emerged from the findings, as several questions yielded similar answers. The first trend was that most of these educators entered the profession to have an impact beyond themselves. They are in the profession because they want to fulfill a purpose or calling, making a difference in students' lives and positively impacting society. Therefore, these educators have a clear why. Historically, it has been said that most educators don't choose the profession for tangible benefits; they choose it to make a difference, and the first question within this inquiry during the focus group confirms this.

The need to understand the “why” and “how” came up several times in both the survey and the focus group. Participant gaps consisted of needing to know why something was being done or how they were supposed to do it. Participants desired to know how to complete a required task or process, how to refer a student for a service, how to deal with disruptive student behavior, how to communicate effectively, how to navigate emotional and psychological stressors, and how to remain in compliance. Therefore, it is evident that educators need support in the form of strategies, reference points, and models. This supports the idea that practices and interventions need to be congruent with the participants' needs (Roumell et al., 2020).

This contradicts how certain schools and school systems structure support for beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers. One participant in this inquiry stated it clearly. They said, “I feel like alternative license (teachers) are just thrown into it. It’s like you have four teacher work days before the students are actually there (in the classroom).” This shows that there is an overreliance on providing teachers with the “what” – what they need, what they should do, or maybe what they will see; however, with only four days, it is hard to provide teachers with in-depth “whys” and “hows” of the capacity gaps they identified within this study. Trends in this study indicate that beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers need significant time and intentional training to close current gaps. This is because gaps fall into both the personal and professional categories. We see that there can be an interplay between a teacher’s emotional state and belief system and their professional performance.

Based on the conceptual framework used within this inquiry (see Figure 5), it is the community climate, leadership, and stakeholders, and what implementers do that impact teacher effectiveness. When the system is dedicated to identifying who needs support, determining and prioritizing the support needed, developing differentiated support, and reviewing and adapting along the way, it could positively impact teacher effectiveness and help close capacity gaps.

This inquiry identifies the following trends:

- There needs to be a district-wide instructional focus that prioritizes the real needs of these educators.
- Educators, like our students, have different needs, and the district does them a disservice when it uses a one-size-fits-all approach.
- International teachers may need an additional layer of support. Even though they were master teachers in their country, several of them felt like failures in the new

system because it and society are vastly different. This is supported by the fact that such cultural differences can cause distress for these provisionally licensed teachers, as they try to maintain their cultural values while adjusting to the social and cultural norms of the countries where they are serving (Gul & Gokce, 2020).

Limitations of the Inquiry

Although this research design was well structured, this inquiry had limitations. The professional learning pathway could have been longer. This could have allowed us to see the long-term effects of intentional pathway planning. We would have been able to see how and when pathways change or crossover. Having a longer study would have rendered more data that could have been used to further explain and define the true depth of these capacity gaps. A longer study could also have provided insight into when professional learning crosses over into teacher effectiveness.

At the beginning of this inquiry, I mentioned that one limitation of this [inquiry](#) was that the sample consisted of only [eight](#) participants from one site. Even though there was representation from each group (beginning teachers, provisionally licensed teachers, and alternatively licensed teachers), more experiences and data could have been collected had the participant group been larger. Although this inquiry was conducted at a school with a large population of beginning, provisional, international, and alternatively-licensed teachers, it is just one rural school. This was beneficial for this school; however, expanding the inquiry to other rural schools across North Carolina or even the country would allow researchers to see trends in capacity gaps from a broader lens, scope, and focus.

Because I served as both the principal and the scholarly researcher, one of the limitations I identified early in the study was that my bias or participants' comfort with telling the truth

would interfere with teacher responses. While my position could have played a role in *how* teachers shared their responses, the answers provided did not seem hindered by it. Participants were honest and vulnerable with each other and me about their struggles. This can be clearly seen in their responses. However, if what was revealed in this study was what participants felt comfortable sharing so early in the inquiry, I do wonder how much more depth would be given to the answers as participants spent more time getting comfortable with each other while on a professional learning pathway not conducted by their principal.

Ego, self-awareness, and self-confidence may still have influenced survey responses that do not align with the more objective truth. This may have introduced bias, especially in the survey portion, where participants may have ranked themselves higher in a category than an objective evaluator would. This could have skewed the data.

Implications of the Findings for Practice

As a practitioner, I view these findings' implications as an indication that there needs to be a closer look at how schools and school systems support beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers. Systems that have been operating on the same support structures for decades may find it advantageous to examine the makeup of their human resources and consider that their approach to support and professional learning may need to change to see the impact on teacher effectiveness and student achievement, yielding positive results.

These findings support the idea that as the educational and societal landscapes change, systems cannot afford to continue with the business-as-usual model. A degree in a closely related field is not enough to be successful in the classroom. These educators need strategic and intentional support at their initial hiring and for years beyond, in areas outside of content, to

ensure they are successful and effective, and that they remain in the profession after schools and systems have invested both time and money in their growth.

The results from this study could be used by systems and schools with a high population of beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers to reevaluate and restructure their systems of support so that they are more meaningful and beneficial to these educators. If we pause to assess educators' needs by looking at data and make time to engage in inquiries with them, we can build systems of support that are more effective, timely, and meaningful.

Systems need to stop doing professional learning for teachers and start doing professional learning with teachers. These educators can articulate where they are struggling and can identify what they feel they need to be successful. The conversation should start there. Systems should begin by asking educators, "What do you know?" and "What do you need?" and then ask themselves, "What is the best way we can support the capacity gaps and trends that we see educators need?" If schools and systems do not take heed, they may find themselves in a continuous turnover cycle, having to train new educators who replace those who cannot be retained. This pattern of turnover will continue to cost districts several dollars, as these educators don't stay long enough to see a return on their investment.

These results can be used to begin designing supports that close capacity gaps for teachers by examining what the system already does to address them and identifying where they are not. When a system or school identifies that there is no support in an area that participants in this [inquiry](#) have identified, it would be advantageous to begin thinking about how the program needs to be redesigned or adjusted to better meet organizational goals.

Giving every beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teacher the same professional learning experience, even though their paths to success may be vastly different,

could be detrimental to the organization. Organizations should inquire first and then build the professional learning plan, rather than creating or buying pre-packaged or scripted content that merely checks the box for support. Even though this process may be more time-consuming, the results can be powerful when done with intention and with each teacher in mind.

Implications of the Findings for Equity

As noted in previous chapters, poor, rural communities often face challenges that may not be as prevalent in other schools. For several reasons, rural schools, especially those with a higher population of students of color, tend to lack resources (Tieken & Montgomery, 2021), have higher teacher turnover rates, and have a strong need for behavioral support. This creates an equity issue when these rural schools lack teachers with advanced degrees, limited resources, and parental support. If there are solutions provided to these pre-existing inequities that plague our system.

This inquiry attempted to find remedies to inequities associated with not having beginning, provisionally, and alternatively licensed teachers instead of highly qualified teachers in high-poverty rural schools. Attempting to identify the capacity gaps of non-traditional and non-highly qualified staff is essential for the following reasons: to refine the system of support these teachers receive in hopes of having a positive impact on teacher experience, teacher effectiveness, and teacher retention. Not finding solutions will leave high-poverty, low-income schools battling vacancies, with having to fill positions with substitutes and non-highly qualified staff.

Recommendations for Practice

Based on this inquiry, I propose the following recommendations to close the capacity gap for beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers in rural schools. These recommendations are presented in three parts (see Table 25): resources to be provided, what needs to be explicitly taught, and methods for teaching those things.

My first recommendation is that schools or districts create a repository that houses “how-to” videos for reference, on-demand learning, and modeling. This repository should not replace customized and personalized coaching and modeling; however, it should serve as a bank of videos that teachers can reference to build their own capacity or review previously taught or shown material.

Likewise, there should be a document hub that houses the following: flow charts that walk teachers through a process, weekly or monthly checklists that have action items that are important for them to complete or discuss with their mentors, a video reflection tool for teachers to be able to self-reflect on teaching and learning, a prioritized professional learning calendar that aligns with what is happening in real-time in relation to the school year, and FAQ sheets regarding state requirements like immunizations, health assessments or testing in multiple languages for teacher to be able to readily access and reference. There should be a coaching or co-teaching calendar that prioritizes coaching and modeling.

Results of the inquiry showed that teachers believe that differentiated, hands-on, real-time, and relevant professional learning is essential to their professional growth. The result suggests that professional learning should be customized and personalized. A one-size-fits-all approach should be avoided. Professional learning should be interactive, hands-on, and engaging for the teacher. Coaching models should reflect the coach doing something while the teacher

watches, and then the coach watching the teacher do it while providing feedback, before letting teachers navigate a concept or process alone.

Table 25

Recommendations for Closing Teacher Capacity Gaps

Things Provided	Things Taught	Methods of Teaching
Flow charts	Curriculum & Content	Interactive Professional Learning Models
Repository	Strategies for dealing with student behavior	Coaching 1-to-1
Checklists	Strategies for dealing with students who are performing poorly academically or exhibit apathy	Coaching through videos
Co-teaching calendar of support	Strategies for reteaching when students don't get it	I do, we do, you do model
PD Calendar that is differentiated	Reviewing cumulative folders, IEPs and 504s for students	
Systems to support teachers with misbehavior and academic difficulties	Culture: what it is, how to connect and incorporate	
Video reflection tool for teachers to self-reflect	Communication Cues (verbal and non-verbal)	
Strategy reflection tool to be completed for reteaching		
Build a network and community for teachers to build relationships		
Mentors for international teachers (one from another country who has been here for more than 2 years, one at the school)		
Systems and Structures in place for asking questions and providing a safe space to ask questions (requires trust establishment and response protocol)		
FAQ document hub		
Adding a Spanish or Multi-lingual Tutorial and FAQ for teachers to have while they call home about things like (ex. health assessments and immunization)		
Assessment FAQs by grade level (with examples or tutorial)		

When thinking about systems and structures that should be in place, schools must consider how they support teachers who support students who are struggling academically or behaviorally. In schools with provisionally licensed international teachers, it might be beneficial for each international teacher to have two mentors. One mentor would be another international mentor who has been in the country, school, and/or district, who has become comfortable and effective serving as a provisional teacher, and the other mentor should be a traditional teacher from the school who can help with getting acclimated to the school and system. For rural districts that lack the manpower, this would be a great opportunity to partner with neighboring districts to create an international network of provisional teachers who have been successful in teaching within the states. Having a successful international teacher as a mentor could help teachers newer to the state navigate their move, the changes, and the cultural shifts that only someone foreign to the states would understand. This type of support, in conjunction with the support of a mentor who has been successful in the states, could help aid in all of the capacity gaps presented within this inquiry.

There should also be a safe space to ask questions and a protocol in place for responding. Whether teachers are new to the country or new to teaching, responses from this inquiry suggest that support that builds capacity needs to be intentional and leveled. Lastly, systems need to consider how they are creating a community for these educators to have a space to network and feel included as a part of the school and/or district team.

Respondents provided some insight into some of the things they wish they had been taught. These things included, but were not limited to, how to communicate with students and parents, how to support students who are struggling academically or socially-emotionally, how to reteach students when they do not understand after something has been taught, and how to find

and review important student data and records. This list is not exhaustive; however, it does provide some insight into what teachers believe they need to close their capacity gap.

Essentially, when supporting beginning, provisional, or alternatively licensed teachers, the questions should be asked in the following order:

1. What is being taught?
2. How should it be taught?
3. Which resources need to be presented or reintroduced because they align with both the topic and the time?

Special consideration should be given to when those things should be provided to teachers. For professional learning, schools and systems may benefit from delivering it when cognitive load is low, ideally during the school day before teaching and classroom demands. Resources should be created and provided when most relevant to teachers. This means resources are prioritized and shared when they matter most to educators. A repository or document hub can serve as an initial go-to resource. However, professional learning should refer teachers back to these resources at timely points. For example, promotion-retention letters may not be needed in August, but will be relevant after the first nine weeks on a nine-week calendar. Schools should align professional learning calendars with real-time events for teachers.

Institutions of higher education also play a role in the success of residency licensure students in the field of education. Adequate preparation and support for these students require a lot of intentional and differentiated planning and prep. Since these students are operating as pre-service teachers while also teaching, the load in which they carry is significant since they have to work regular hours, attend afterschool events, complete mandatory state trainings (such as LETRS etc.), take classes and maintain satisfactory academic progress, institutions must be

mindful of the design of their program. Institutions should work closely with local school systems that are sending their personnel to them to complete licensure courses. It is important for these institutions to know the instructional practices within a given system prior to designing these courses so that a student's coursework and daily workload work in conjunction to one another. Partnering with the assistant superintendent of curriculum and instruction within districts as well as with principals and instructional coaches would allow for a network of support to be in alignment as not to overwhelm these candidates with conflicting expectations. The burden of support should not fall solely on districts. The entire network for beginning and residually licensed teachers should be in constant communication to identify strengths, areas of growth and trends that are seen among this demographic of teachers.

The State Board of Education (SBE) is not exempt from the work that needs to happen for beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers. Certainly, the SBE in North Carolina recognizes the need for support since they have beginning teacher program requirements in systems for a teacher's first three years in the field. However, particular attention needs to be paid to this growing and changing demographic of teaching personnel. As previously stated, the research suggests that students taught by alternative, provisional, temporary, or emergency-certified candidates do not perform as well as those taught by teachers who have completed the traditional route to teacher certification (Clotfelter et al., 2010; Jang & Horn, 2017); therefore, it would be advantageous to delve into the supports that beginning, provisional and alternatively licensed teachers need because it not only impacts their performance but it directly impacts student performance as well. This, in turn, impacts school performance and system performance.

While the system supports teachers on the traditional track by requiring that students observe in classrooms, plan lessons, and teach a unit in a local school system, provisional and alternatively licensed teachers are not afforded the same opportunity. Participants in this inquiry reported feeling unprepared prior to being required to teach. To address this concern, teachers with alternative licenses should be provided a coach that is funded by the State to work closely with candidates in the classroom to offer real-time professional learning. This is in addition to having a mentor since mentors have their own classes in which they are responsible for. This could aid in the reduction of overwhelm and frustration while indirectly positively impacting the retention rate. Onboarding for teachers should, at a minimum, include a thorough face-to-face explanation of State requirements and expectations from a Department of Instruction employee, with a clear timeline and action steps to support completion. Residency and alternatively licensed teachers should be exempt from LETRs and similar trainings while in school to meet licensure requirements. If these candidates can't be exempt, this work needs to be at least one of the courses that they take for licensure, not in addition to licensure.

Recommendations for Future Study

While much was gained from this inquiry, I would propose several recommendations for future studies should anyone else wish to replicate it. First, I would go smaller. An inquiry of this size needs to be studied in several parts to give proper attention to each component. I would suggest doing one component and one pathway at a time. I would also consider separating the initial survey into individual parts, ensuring each participant is labeled to enable stronger comparisons of growth between the initial and post-survey. I would record each participant's name and assign them an identifier to ensure effective tracking from start to finish. By focusing on one component or pathway at a time, the scholarly practitioner would have more time to plan

the study, focus on one area of improvement, and derive relevant meaning from a more focused data set. At the very least, if this inquiry is repeated in the same manner, there needs to be an entire team dedicated to the study.

Secondly, I would expand the research to include more than one school, while ensuring that participants share similar school demographics. I would consider conducting a district- or state-wide study to include a larger pool of participants and broaden the research's scope. This way, scholarly practitioners can determine if the responses are local or represent the larger community of beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers.

I would also recommend a longer study, conducted over at least 3–5 years, to allow adequate time to track lasting change and growth. Having a study that spans over years could assist in informing how professional learning directly correlates to improving teacher effectiveness, as evidenced by student performance measures. Having more data could further explain and define the depth of teacher capacity gaps, and may uncover aspects not readily seen within a shorter study such as this.

Lastly, I would redesign the culture survey or eliminate it altogether and turn the survey into a focus group. Since culture is a broad term and everyone may have varying levels of understanding of what it means, this data may be better if it were qualitative. This would provide a closer view of aspects that participants connect with and of any unrecognized gaps.

Conclusions

It can be concluded that beginning, provisional, and alternative licensed teachers need support. This has already been recognized in North Carolina. The North Carolina Department of Education requires that systems have beginning teacher induction support programs. However, systems need to begin examining what that support should look like and entail. This inquiry

suggests that support for beginning, provisional, and alternatively licensed teachers needs to be intentional, prioritized, scaffolded, and differentiated. Ironically, this can be said for student learning; however, systems can lose sight of what learning looks like for adults and just expect them to figure it out because they are adults. Learning does not work that way. Differentiating professional learning based on an educator's needs is necessary to build their sense of efficacy and capacity while supporting their mental health.

Research has shown that teacher burnout in high-poverty rural schools occurs quickly. This leads to high turnover and instability for students and the school. Districts and schools need a plan that provides proactive rather than reactive support. While I recognize that some elements of teaching will happen at random and on any given day, something that has never happened before requires ingenuity, innovation, and problem-solving; however, there are some areas of teaching that are constant: having a curriculum, having to plan lessons, dealing with student behavior, learning aspects of culture, and building relationships and community. Therefore, if we know these things to be constant in educational settings, proactively seeking to set up supports that prioritize and address these components may help train and retain teachers, thereby avoiding the 3-year turnover cycle.

Teachers mentioned that a lot of information is given to them at once in a short time span, the first few days of school. This can create cognitive overload, with what's most relevant at the time getting through, while what's not is filtered out. Systems must be mindful that professional learning should be real-time and relevant to be effective. Instead of overloading teachers with information, it may be more effective to prioritize what is most important in the present moment for each individual teacher. Grouping them by their needs could provide them with both the training and support they need to be successful.

Scholarly Practitioner Reflections on Leadership

My leadership has developed throughout this inquiry. It has been both defined and refined by this work. Initial development began with understanding the role and influence I could have in the field of education as a scholarly practitioner. This experience has taught me how to identify relevant problems and address needs within the educational landscape. I was able to sort through those problems, prioritize them, and determine which problem needs to be addressed first. I also learned the power of being well-versed in historical and current research and trends. This helped me understand that, for most work, established work already serves as building blocks that guide and influence inquiries.

I learned that leadership is about finding solutions by actively engaging in the work, and in order to do so, a plan has to be created. That plan has to include a timeline and a clear process to support an effective inquiry. This experience also taught me the importance of leaning into a culture of collaboration. As a leader, you could make decisions in a silo, but leadership is about engaging with others at various levels within an organization to incorporate their experience, expertise, and perspectives. After identifying a problem, researching it, and creating a plan that involves others, it is important to test solutions by implementing the inquiry, analyzing data, and evaluating outcomes. Learning how to construct meaning and view a topic from different angles yielded findings with new significance and advanced work in the industry. One of the most valuable lessons I learned is that quality work takes time. Implementation and understanding both need time. The aforementioned items have helped to shape who I am and what I do as a leader. Most importantly, I learned that leadership involves a great deal of listening in order to get it right. Leadership is more than being in charge and making decisions. It is more about

making decisions that take care of those I am in charge of, rather than leaving them out of the decision-making process.

This inquiry helped me hone in on four distinct styles of educational leadership: instructional leadership, participative leadership, serving leadership, and constructivist leadership. Instructional leadership focuses on teaching and learning. As an instructional leader, it is important to remember that teaching and learning encompass everyone (students, teachers, and leadership). Focusing on instruction helps teachers be successful by providing them with the tools and know-how, and it helps the students be successful because they are receiving quality teaching from educators who understand curriculum, strategies, and culture. By design, if the teachers and the students are successful, the school will be successful, thus rendering the leadership successful. I also learned the importance of participative leadership. This type of leadership involves teachers and staff in decision-making and provides a place and space for everyone to collaborate. This style ensures that school is not being done “to” people, but “with” people. Good leaders do not make a habit of making decisions in silos with limited information or perspectives. Good leaders understand that collaboration is necessary to make lasting, effective change. This joins with constructivist leadership, where learning is active and shared. Through dialogue, meaning is created, and there becomes a oneness and a sense of alignment because this thing was created together. Lastly, it all ties back to servant leadership. This is where stakeholders’ needs are noted and prioritized to ensure growth and well-being. When work is intended to help and is paired with a purpose to make effective change and a lasting, meaningful impression in both educators’ lives and the field of education, the true meaning of leadership is displayed—service. This service is for teachers, students, the community, and stakeholders. Everyone benefits when leaders want to serve and do it well.

My journey has been one of discovery and refinement. When reflecting on my leadership, I recognize two things: there is always room for growth for myself and for others. Perfection is a myth, and progress is always the goal.

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APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL LETTER



EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board
Willis Building · Mail Stop 682
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office **252-744-2914** · Fax **252-744-2284**
rede.ecu.edu/umcirb/

Notification of Exempt Certification

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: [Kimberly Lucas](#)
CC: [Jerry Johnson](#)
Date: 3/17/2025
Re: [UMCIRB 24-002465](#)
Opportunity & Capacity: Closing the Gap for Teachers

I am pleased to inform you that your research submission has been certified as exempt on 3/14/2025. This study is eligible for Exempt Certification under category # 1,2A.

It is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted in the manner reported in your application and/or protocol, as well as being consistent with the ethical principles of the Belmont Report and your profession.

This research study does not require any additional interaction with the UMCIRB unless there are proposed changes to this study. Any change, prior to implementing that change, must be submitted to the UMCIRB for review and approval. The UMCIRB will determine if the change impacts the eligibility of the research for exempt status. If more substantive review is required, you will be notified within five business days.

Document	Description
CITI - 1.pdf(0.01)	Additional Items
CITI 2.pdf(0.01)	Additional Items
CITI 3.pdf(0.01)	Additional Items
CITI 4.pdf(0.01)	Additional Items
Focus Group _IRB Submission.pdf(0.01)	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Informed Consent w/ IRB Edits(0.01)	Consent Forms
Kim Lucas Chapters 1-3 Submission for IRB.docx(0.01)	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Recruitment Email 2(0.01)	Recruitment Documents/Scripts
Screenshot 2024-10-23 at 1.43.18 AM.png(0.01)	Additional Items
Survey_IRB.pdf(0.01)	Surveys and Questionnaires

For research studies where a waiver or alteration of HIPAA Authorization has been approved, the IRB states that each of the waiver criteria in 45 CFR 164.512(i)(1)(i)(A) and (2)(i) through (v) have been met. Additionally, the elements of PHI to be collected as described in items 1 and 2 of the Application for Waiver of Authorization have been determined to be the minimal necessary for the specified research.

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

IRB00000705 East Carolina U IRB #1 (Biomedical) IORG0000418
IRB00003781 East Carolina U IRB #2 (Behavioral/SS) IORG0000418

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

[Date]

Dear Classroom Teacher,

I am currently working on my Doctor of Education at East Carolina University. As part of a course assignment, I have developed an action research project to be conducted over a 2-year period at Primary Leadership Academy (pseudonym). I am asking if you would be willing to participate in my study. This project must be submitted and approved by ECU's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before it can be implemented; your permission to allow yourself to be a part of this project is a requirement of the IRB review process. I am required to provide the IRB with a copy of your permission before the IRB will review and/or approve the project.

Please note that as your direct supervisor, your decision to participate in this research project will not affect your current job status. If you decide not to participate, no repercussions will be held against you.

Please review the **attached** action research project and sign the bottom of this form if the inclusion of your participation in this action research project titled, *Opportunity and Capacity: Closing the Capacity Gap for Beginning, Provisional, and Alternatively Licensed Teachers Who Serve in Predominately Black and Latinx Schools* meets with your approval.

Sincerely,

Kimberly T. Lucas, Principal

Teacher's Signature and Date

I have received and reviewed a copy of Kimberly Lucas' proposed action research project, and I give my permission for her to include my information and in her action research project at this school.

APPENDIX C: FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

Date of Focus Group: TBD

Time of Focus Group: TBD

Location of Focus Group: TBD

Facilitator: TBD

You are being invited to participate in a research study titled “OPPORTUNITY AND CAPACITY: Closing the Capacity Gap for Beginning and Alternatively Licensed Teachers Who Teach in Predominately Black and Latinx Schools.” You are being invited to participate in this study because you are a K-8 teacher here at where I am implementing the research. This focus session will take approximately 60–90 minutes to complete. The focus group questions are driven by this research’s main inquiry questions which are as follows: (1) What capacity gaps exist for beginning and alternatively licensed teachers? (2) How does strategically layered professional development and coaching impact capacity gaps for beginning and alternatively licensed teachers? The purpose of this focus group is to gain a better understanding of beginning and alternative licensed teachers’ knowledge and perceptions of what they feel they need in order to be successful. Questions asked during the focus group will assist me, the researcher, in identifying areas of need and support and begin planning relevant and useful professional development intended to narrow the capacity gap of beginning and alternatively licensed teachers. It is my hope that the information gained from this research will assist not only our school, but the district and the state of North Carolina in being able to effectively support beginning and alternatively licensed teachers. The goal of this research is to determine what beginning and alternatively licensed teachers feel they need in order to feel capable and confident in their teaching assignment.

In spirit of full transparency, participants will be provided with both survey questions and focus group questions in advance to allow for informed decisions on whether or not they would like to participate. The focus group session will be recorded, and the researcher may directly quote some of your responses; however, responses will be kept confidential and anonymous, and all data will be stored in a password protected database. No data will be released or used that has participant identification attached. Participation in this research is **voluntary**. You may choose to answer or not answer any question or all questions, and you may stop at any time. There is **no penalty or punishment for choosing not to take part in this research study**.

Documentation of Informed Consent

You are voluntarily deciding whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

_____ (Signature) _____ (Date)

Questions to be Asked, Listed Fully and in Order

Introductory Question

- Why did you decide to teach?

Transition Question

- What is the most challenging thing about being a beginning or alternatively licensed teacher?

Key Questions

- What does the classroom or curriculum require that you feel that you are not fully prepared or equipped to effectively do? Why?
- What strategies do you feel you need in order to be an effective teacher in this school? Why?
- What cultural shocks or shifts have you experienced or encountered while working in this school?
- When it comes to learning, how do you learn best? Why?

Ending Question

- Is there anything that we didn't cover that you think should be captured within this study?

APPENDIX D: CURRICULUM, STRATEGIES, AND CULTURE PRE-SURVEY

Opportunity and Capacity: Closing the Capacity Gap for Beginning and Alternatively Licensed Teacher

Start of Block: Curriculum

Q1 I know where to find the North Carolina Standard Course of Study for the content I teach.

- ☐ Strongly agree (1)
 - ☐ Agree (2)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (3)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (5)
 - ☐ Disagree (6)
 - ☐ Strongly disagree (7)
-

Q2 I know where to find ample resources that align with the curriculum I teach.

- ☐ Strongly agree (1)
- ☐ Agree (2)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (3)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (5)
- ☐ Disagree (6)
- ☐ Strongly disagree (7)

Q3 I am confident in my ability to vet (examine and determine) whether a resource that I find aligns with my curriculum from the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.

- ☐ Strongly agree (1)
 - ☐ Agree (2)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (3)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (5)
 - ☐ Disagree (6)
 - ☐ Strongly disagree (7)
-

Q4 I am confident in my ability to vet (examine and determine) whether a resource is on grade level for the curriculum I teach.

- ☐ Strongly agree (1)
 - ☐ Agree (2)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (3)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (5)
 - ☐ Disagree (6)
 - ☐ Strongly disagree (7)
-

Q5 I am confident in my knowledge of the content I am required to teach.

- ☐ Strongly agree (1)
 - ☐ Agree (2)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (3)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (5)
 - ☐ Disagree (6)
 - ☐ Strongly disagree (7)
-

Q6 I fully understand, in depth, all of the standards I am required to teach with the curriculum.

- ☐ Strongly agree (1)
 - ☐ Agree (2)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (3)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (5)
 - ☐ Disagree (6)
 - ☐ Strongly disagree (7)
-

Q7 I feel confident creating lesson plans that align with the standard course of study I teach.

- ☐ Strongly agree (1)
 - ☐ Agree (2)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (3)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (5)
 - ☐ Disagree (6)
 - ☐ Strongly disagree (7)
-

Q8 I am confident in my ability to correctly answer questions that my colleague may ask regarding my curriculum.

- ☐ Strongly agree (1)
 - ☐ Agree (2)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (3)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (5)
 - ☐ Disagree (6)
 - ☐ Strongly disagree (7)
-

Q9 I am confident in my ability to correctly answer questions that my students may ask regarding curriculum.

- ☐ Strongly agree (1)
 - ☐ Agree (2)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (3)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (5)
 - ☐ Disagree (6)
 - ☐ Strongly disagree (7)
-

Q10 I fully understand any STATE assessments tied to my content and curriculum.

- ☐ Strongly agree (1)
- ☐ Agree (2)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (3)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (5)
- ☐ Disagree (6)
- ☐ Strongly disagree (7)

End of Block: Curriculum

Start of Block: Strategies

Q11 I feel confident creating activities that teach each standard in its entirety.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q12 I know several strategies (different techniques) to teach each standard within my curriculum.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q13 I know effective strategies (different techniques) to teach each standard within my curriculum.

Q14 I am confident in creating a grade level formative assessment that accurately assesses my students' mastery level with a standard, concept or term. (Formative assessments are low stakes checks of student learning, that may or may not be graded. Some examples are exit tickets, short quizzes, graphic organizer. They are used throughout a lesson and are meant to guide a teacher's instruction based on what the students know and don't know.)

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q15 I am confident in creating a grade level summative assessment that accurately assesses my students' mastery level with a standard, concept or term. (Summative assessments are high stakes checks of student learning, that will be graded or scored. Some examples are unit tests, projects, or end-of-grade tests. They are used after instruction has occurred and are meant to determine student mastery of a topic and/or standard(s).)

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q16 I know how to adjust my instruction when the data indicates that students were unsuccessful with something that I taught.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q17 I know how to use student performance data to drive my instructional decisions.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q18 I am confident in my ability to thoroughly analyze multiple student data points for the purpose of making instructional decisions.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

End of Block: Strategies

Start of Block: Culture

Q19 I am immersed (deeply involved in and aware of customs, traditions, lingo, music, etc.) in the Black culture.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q20 Explain your answer for the previous question.

Q21 I am immersed (deeply involved in and aware of customs, traditions, lingo, music, etc.) immersed in the Latinx culture.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q22 Explain your answer for the previous question.

Q 23 I know where to find culturally relevant resources and strategies (different techniques) that are applicable to my classroom and curriculum.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

Q24 I am confident in my ability to create a culturally responsive classroom.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q25 I understand the connection student culture has with my curriculum.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q26 I understand and can explain triggers associated in Black cultures.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q27 I understand and can explain triggers associated in Latinx cultures.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q28 I understand the language that my Black students use.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q29 I understand the language that my Latinx students use.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q30 I understand and can explain the slang and phrases used by my students.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

End of Block: Culture

APPENDIX E: CURRICULUM PROFESSIONAL LEARNING POST-SURVEY

Curriculum Professional Development Post-Assessment

Start of Block: Curriculum

Q1 As a result of this professional development, I know where to find the North Carolina Standard Course of Study for the content I teach.

- ☐ Strongly agree (1)
 - ☐ Agree (2)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (3)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (5)
 - ☐ Disagree (6)
 - ☐ Strongly disagree (7)
-

Q2 As a result of this professional development, I know where to find ample resources that align with the curriculum I teach.

- ☐ Strongly agree (1)
 - ☐ Agree (2)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (3)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (5)
 - ☐ Disagree (6)
 - ☐ Strongly disagree (7)
-

Q3

As a result of this professional development, I am confident in my ability to vet whether a resource that I find aligns with my curriculum from the North Carolina Standard Course of Study.

- ☐ Strongly agree (1)
 - ☐ Agree (2)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (3)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (5)
 - ☐ Disagree (6)
 - ☐ Strongly disagree (7)
-

Q4 As a result of this professional development, I am confident in my ability to vet whether a resource is on grade level for the curriculum I teach.

- ☐ Strongly agree (1)
 - ☐ Agree (2)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (3)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (5)
 - ☐ Disagree (6)
 - ☐ Strongly disagree (7)
-

Q5 As a result of this professional development, I am confident in my knowledge of the content I am required to teach.

- ☐ Strongly agree (1)
 - ☐ Agree (2)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (3)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (5)
 - ☐ Disagree (6)
 - ☐ Strongly disagree (7)
-

Q6 As a result of this professional development, I fully understand, in depth, all of the standards I am required to teach with the curriculum.

- ☐ Strongly agree (1)
 - ☐ Agree (2)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (3)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (5)
 - ☐ Disagree (6)
 - ☐ Strongly disagree (7)
-

Q7 As a result of this professional development, I feel confident creating lesson plans that align with the standard course of study I teach.

- ☐ Strongly agree (1)
 - ☐ Agree (2)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (3)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (5)
 - ☐ Disagree (6)
 - ☐ Strongly disagree (7)
-

Q8 As a result of this professional development, I am confident in my ability to correctly answer questions that my colleague may ask regarding my curriculum.

- ☐ Strongly agree (1)
 - ☐ Agree (2)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (3)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (5)
 - ☐ Disagree (6)
 - ☐ Strongly disagree (7)
-

Q9 As a result of this professional development, I am confident in my ability to correctly answer questions that my students may ask regarding my curriculum.

- ☐ Strongly agree (1)
 - ☐ Agree (2)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (3)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (5)
 - ☐ Disagree (6)
 - ☐ Strongly disagree (7)
-

Q10 As a result of this professional development, I fully understand any STATE assessments tied to my content and curriculum.

- ☐ Strongly agree (1)
- ☐ Agree (2)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (3)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (4)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (5)
- ☐ Disagree (6)
- ☐ Strongly disagree (7)

End of Block: Curriculum

APPENDIX F: STRATEGIES PROFESSIONAL LEARNING POST-SURVEY

Strategies Professional Development Post-Assessment

Start of Block: Strategies

Q1 As a result of this professional development, I feel confident creating activities that teach each standard in its entirety.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q2 As a result of this professional development, I know several strategies (different ways) to teach each standard within my curriculum.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q3 As a result of this professional development, I know effective strategies to teach each standard within my curriculum.

- ☐ Click to write Choice 1 (1)
 - ☐ Click to write Choice 2 (2)
 - ☐ Click to write Choice 3 (3)
 - ☐ Click to write Choice 4 (4)
-

Q4 As a result of this professional development, I am confident in creating a grade level formative assessment that accurately assesses my students' mastery level with a standard, concept or term.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q5 As a result of this professional development, I am confident in creating a grade level summative assessment that accurately assesses my students' mastery level with a standard, concept or term.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

Q6 As a result of this professional development, I know how to adjust my instruction when the data indicates that students were unsuccessful with something that I taught.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q7 As a result of this professional development, I know how to use student performance data to drive my instructional decisions.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q8 As a result of this professional development, I am confident in my ability to thoroughly analyze multiple student data points for the purpose of making instructional decisions.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

End of Block: Strategies

APPENDIX G: CULTURE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING POST-SURVEY

Culture Professional Development Post-Assessment

Start of Block: Culture

Q1 As a result of this training, I am more immersed in the Black culture.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q2 Explain your answer for the previous question.

Q3 As a result of this professional development, I am more immersed in the Latinx culture.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q4 Explain your answer for the previous question.

Q5 As a result of this professional development, I know where to find culturally relevant resources and strategies that are applicable to my classroom and curriculum.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

Q6 As a result of this professional development, I am confident in my ability to create a culturally responsive classroom.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

Q7 As a result of this professional development, I understand the connection student culture has with my curriculum.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q8 As a result of this professional development, I understand and can explain triggers associated in Black cultures.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q9 As a result of this professional development, I understand and can explain triggers associated in Latinx cultures.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q10 As a result of this professional development, I understand the language that my Black students use.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q11 As a result of this professional development, I understand the language that my Latinx students use.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
 - ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
 - ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
 - ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
 - ☐ Strongly agree (5)
-

Q12 As a result of this professional development, I understand and can explain the slang and phrases used by my students.

- ☐ Strongly disagree (1)
- ☐ Somewhat disagree (2)
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree (3)
- ☐ Somewhat agree (4)
- ☐ Strongly agree (5)

End of Block: Culture