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Title: Perceptions of Industry Professionals Completing the Experience-Based Licensure “Boot Camp” Toward Continuing Teaching as Secondary Career and Technical Educators

The accompanying research report is submitted to the University of Wisconsin-Stout, Graduate School in partial completion of the requirements for the
Graduate Degree/ Major: MS Career and Technical Education
Research Advisor: Deanna Schultz, PhD
Submission Term/Year: Fall 2020
Number of Pages: 68

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Williams, Aaron R. *Perceptions of Industry Professionals Completing the Experience-Based Licensure “Boot Camp” Toward Continuing Teaching as Secondary Career and Technical Educators*

**Abstract**

This study sought to understand better the perception of secondary career and technical education teachers, from the Kenosha Unified School District and the Racine Unified School District who completed the first experience-based licensure (EBL) alternative certification “boot camp,” to meet the responsibilities set forth for teachers in their respective district and its impact on their continuing to teach. Semi-structured qualitative interviews garnered firsthand accounts from teachers on how the EBL professional development and other institutional supports aided their transition into the secondary career and technical education classroom. The study found that the participants positively viewed the majority of the EBL professional development in preparing them to teach as indicated by none being required to obtain additional pedagogy training as a direct result of a teaching deficiency. Additionally, a strong mentoring experience and collaboration with peers created a sense of preparedness in EBL teachers. The significance of the findings aided in understanding how the EBL teachers perceived their pedagogy training, and to make improvements to the “boot camp” model and institutional support programs to retain teachers.
Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to thank my wife for her support and subtle words of motivation for me along this journey. Without your words of encouragement, I may never have begun. I look forward to seeing where our next adventure will take us. Thank you to my advisor Dr. Deanna Schultz for your guiding feedback and always challenging me to look deeper. A special thank you to my parents who have supported me throughout my life and gave me the opportunity to pursue a career I truly enjoy. Last, but not least, I would like to thank my coworkers and mentors. Your continued support, listening ears, and desire to help not only our students grow, but each other, does not go unnoticed. I am honored to have you as friends.
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Chapter I: Introduction

A common perception of employers reveals a need for a highly-skilled workforce to keep the United States (U.S.) economy at the top of global competitiveness (Soares & Steigleder, 2012). To maintain this level of competitiveness, educating the workforce through postsecondary education, or earning non-degree level credentials is needed (Carnevale et al., 2017). The National Skills Coalition identified that 54% of jobs in the U.S. require less than a four-year degree, yet require some additional training or a credential (Kaleba, 2016). These specialized training programs and credentials may be characterized by the spectrum of career and technical education (CTE). CTE blends rigorous academic knowledge with relevant technical skills, engaging students mentally and physically in the curriculum (Association for Career and Technical Education [ACTE], 2019). Aiding students in developing career aspirations and technical skills, CTE courses can start as early as middle school and continue through high school to the postsecondary level.

As demand for CTE related skills has risen (ACTE, 2019), the number of teaching vacancies continue to increase (Sutcher et al., 2016). Gordon (2009) cites one factor of this as the declining number of university programs that are preparing CTE teachers. Attention was brought to this issue in Wisconsin in 2000 when Technical Education was listed on a nationwide teacher shortage report (Cross, 2017). In 2004, this shortage was expanded to CTE, and in 2017 further divided into the specific content areas of agriculture, business education, family and consumer sciences, marketing, and technology education.

In response to the shortage of CTE teachers, states have begun implementing alternative certification pathways to licensure (Bowers & Myers, 2018; Nagurka, 2018; Wilkin & Nwoke, 2011). Designed to shorten the preparation timeline of teachers and build teaching pedagogy
through prior content-related experiences (Woods, 2016), the goal is to continue providing students with rigorous instruction from qualified teachers (Devier, 2019).

Wisconsin’s Department of Public Instruction has developed an Experienced-Based Technical and Vocational Education Subjects pathway allowing industry professionals to gain secondary CTE licensure based on prior experiences and the completion of guided professional development (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction [WIDPI], n.d.-c). Due to the shortages of licensed secondary CTE teachers faced at the Kenosha Unified School District (KUSD) and the Racine Unified School District (RUSD), they, in partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Stout (UW-Stout), developed an experience-based license (EBL) “boot camp” for industry professionals transitioning to secondary CTE teachers (University of Wisconsin-Stout [UW-Stout], 2019a). Through a two-year cycle, professional development on pedagogy is provided to industry professionals hired as secondary CTE teachers, meeting the requirements of licensing in the CTE content area of their prior industry experience.

The EBL alternative certification “boot camp” consists of four seminars, each meeting for two days of face-to-face instruction and additional online content taught by faculty members with expertise in K-12 education (UW-Stout, 2019a). Seminar topics include: (1) Inclusion and equity in the CTE instructional environments (2) Instructional planning, CTE methods, and formative assessment (3) Assessment for learning in CTE (4) CTE foundations, work-based learning, and CTSOs (UW-Stout, 2019b, paras. 4-7). Participation in the EBL “boot camp” for KUSD and RUSD staff occurs during the second and third years of secondary CTE teaching, in which the first year they participated in their respective district’s new teacher mentoring program (C. Kothe, personal communication, March 27, 2020). Since the program’s inception in 2017, KUSD has supported participation of 11 teachers (C. Kothe, personal communication, April 14,
Statement of the Problem

The CTE teacher shortage is a detriment to secondary CTE programs in their ability to provide students a rigorous curriculum and hinders the U.S.’s ability to continue preparing a highly-skilled workforce (Bowers & Myers, 2018; Garcia & Weiss, 2019). An alternative certification pathway such as the EBL “boot camp” partnership between UW-Stout, KUSD, and RUSD is one strategy to ease the shortage at the secondary level. From the Fall of 2017 to the Spring of 2019, 24 CTE teachers from KUSD and RUSD participated in the first EBL cohort (C. Kothe, personal communication, April 14, 2020; C. Neff, personal communication, July 24, 2020). Initial data was obtained from 19 of the EBL participants immediately following their seminars regarding their level of perceived preparedness (UW-Stout, 2019a), however, more information is needed to determine the long-term effects in successfully preparing them to teach secondary CTE.

Purpose of the Study

The EBL “boot camp” aids industry professionals in developing pedagogy skills to gain secondary CTE licensure. Data obtained at the completion of each EBL seminar showed positive growth and impact of the seminar content on participant preparedness in eight of the ten program objectives covered (UW-Stout, 2019a). The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of KUSD and RUSD EBL teachers toward the “boot camp” professional development in helping them meet the expectations and responsibilities set by their school districts for teachers and its impact on them continuing to teach.

Research Questions
This study addresses the following research questions:

1. To what extent do EBL teachers perceive their pedagogy training prepared them to teach in a secondary CTE environment?
2. What institutional supports best-aided EBL teachers’ transition to the classroom?
3. What are EBL teachers’ perceptions toward continuing secondary CTE teaching?

Significance of the Topic

This research coincides with the critical need for research on pedagogical training of CTE teachers who follow alternative certification pathways (Ahn & Rose Li & Associates, Inc., 2017). Analysis of the results may allow programs to align with the EBL “boot camp” model or make changes to better align with the needs of industry professionals transitioning into teaching. Further knowledge gained on the training experiences of alternative certification teachers such as the role of mentoring and immediate application of pedagogy learning through concurrent classroom immersion, may benefit teacher training programs (Ham, 2010). With the results of this research, administrators may develop continued support systems for alternatively certified teachers to aid in teacher retention and student achievement.

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used throughout the study and are provided here for clarity.

Alternative certification. “Teacher preparation via entering the profession through means other than a professional educationally-based teacher preparation program, such as: emergency certification, temporary certification, work-based programs, and structured university and/or private providers of alternatively labeled certification pathways” (Bowling & Ball, 2018, p. 110).
Industry professionals. Teachers possessing “training and/or prior experience in a trade, technical field, and/or vocational area. Have pedagogical training/experience” (WIDPI, n.d.-c, para. 5).

Institutional supports. Activities provided to teachers including, but not limited to, mentoring, professional development, coursework, and collaboration (Redding & Smith, 2016).


Preparedness. The ability to competently complete all required tasks of a teacher related to instruction, content, assessment, inclusion, and policy (Lewis et al, 1999).

Limitations of the Study

The following limitations may affect the results of this study:

1. This study was limited to participants currently employed at KUSD or RUSD that completed the first EBL cohort that began in Fall 2017, and modifications to the program may have been implemented since the first cohort was completed.

2. This study focused on one specific alternative licensure program and the results may not be generalized with other state or national programs.

3. Each participant was not exposed to the same students, administration, peers, or culture that could have influenced their perception of their needs.

4. Participants may have participated in professional development activities outside of the EBL “boot camp” that may have influenced their preparedness.

5. The researcher completed a traditional certification route in education and unconscious bias may have influenced the collection and interpretation of the data.

Methodology
Utilizing personalized interviews with the subjects who participated in the first EBL cohort, the qualitative methodology of this study allowed the researcher to examine the intricacies of teaching in the CTE environment. Through a semi-structured interview protocol with open-ended responses, the subjects were able to expand on their thoughts and provide context to their discussion, creating rich descriptive data and first-hand experiences.
Chapter II: Review of the Literature

Alternative certification pathways have been used as one strategy to ease the shortage of secondary career and technical education (CTE) teachers (Bowers & Meyers, 2018). The experience-based license (EBL) “boot camp” is one local strategy implemented in the Kenosha Unified School District (KUSD) and the Racine Unified School District (RUSD), in partnership with the University of Wisconsin-Stout, addressing the secondary CTE teacher shortage. Through the EBL alternative certification “boot camp,” industry professionals with prior content knowledge, who have been hired by KUSD or RUSD as secondary CTE teachers, participate in four focused seminars over a two-year cycle to gain pedagogy skills and knowledge leading to licensure in the content area most closely related to their tested experiences (UW-Stout, 2019a). Twenty-four CTE teachers participated in the first EBL “boot camp” cohort that began in Fall 2017. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of EBL teachers toward the “boot camp” professional development in helping them meet the expectations and responsibilities for teachers in their districts and its impact on them continuing to teach after completing an additional full year of teaching. More specifically, the research questions of this study include:

1. To what extent do EBL teachers perceive their pedagogy training prepared them to teach in a secondary CTE environment?
2. What institutional supports best-aided EBL teachers’ transition to the classroom?
3. What are EBL teachers’ perceptions toward continuing secondary CTE teaching?

This literature review highlights teacher supply and demand from a national and local perspective, factors impacting attrition and retention, teacher credentialing, non-traditional credentialing pathways including the composition of alternative certification programs, CTE
specific credentialing pathways, the effectiveness of alternative certification teachers, and the situated learning theory.

**Teacher Supply and Demand**

An array of factors suggested by Sutcher et al. (2016) affect the supply and demand of teachers and may cause the U.S. to face potential shortages of more than 100,000 teachers annually. When investigating the supply of teachers, they utilize two factors including new teacher entrants into the teaching workforce and re-entrants of those who had previously taught, left, and are now returning. As the annual demand for K-12 teachers is expected to rise to over 316,000 by 2025, an estimated 180,000 to 212,000 teachers entered the workforce as new entrants or re-entrants in 2015-2016 (Sutcher et al., 2016). Nationally, the supply of new entrants into the teaching workforce through teacher preparation program enrollments dropped 35% between 2009 and 2014, reducing the supply of teachers by nearly 240,000. Re-entrants of teachers who left teaching, but are now returning, comprise between 37% and 49% of new teacher hires annually. The Great Recession is cited as one possible factor for negatively impacting the teacher supply due to layoffs and cuts to educational programs (Sutcher et al., 2016).

The national demand for teachers is impacted by three factors according to researchers Sutcher et al. (2016) including student enrollment, student-teacher ratio, and attrition, with attrition being the most impactful. Between 2016 and 2028, the National Center for Education Statistics estimates an increased enrollment of K-12 school-age students by two-percent, and a decrease in public elementary and secondary school student-teacher ratios to 15.2-to-1 after they rose to 16-to-1 following The Great Recession (Hussar & Bailey, 2020). This predicted growth
in enrollment, along with the predicted trend of reducing student-teacher ratios, increases the demand for teachers.

**Factors Affecting Attrition**

Brownell and Smith (1993) categorize factors of attrition into three general groupings of environmental factors of school culture, historical factors such as pedagogy preparation and commitment to teaching, and external factors of personal needs. Each grouping presents unique reasons teachers decide to remain in the classroom or not. In their study of attrition and retention of Teach for America teachers, Heineke et al. (2014) cited that positive environmental factors such as school culture led to continued teaching, as compared to 14.3% who left due to negative experiences. Teachers who left education cited historical and external factors as the primary reasons for leaving.

Research by Ingersoll et al. (2014) found that the amount of pedagogical training and preparation a teacher received significantly reduced attrition in new teachers after their first year of teaching, rather than simply the type of certification pathway teachers followed. They found that activities such as observing veteran teachers, receiving feedback on teaching styles, and practice teaching reduced the attrition of first year teachers.

With a teacher attrition rate of almost 8%, compared to other nations at 3%-4%, Sutcher et al. (2016) state, “If attrition rates were reduced to the levels of those nations, the United States would eliminate overall teacher shortages” (p. 4). According to an analysis by Sutcher et al. (2016) of a 2013 teacher follow-up survey conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, job dissatisfaction was cited by 55% of teachers as a reason for leaving the classroom; family and personal reasons as 43%. Retirement contributed to 31% of teachers leaving the classroom. They also acknowledge that teachers completing an alternative certification program
are more apt to leave their classroom than teachers completing a traditional certification pathway.

**Factors Affecting Retention**

The uniqueness and variety of factors influencing a teacher’s decision to leave the classroom also correlates to the decision to continue teaching. Retaining traditionally and alternatively certified teachers in the classroom beyond their first year of teaching by meeting their needs is one strategy of addressing the teacher shortage (Woods, 2016). Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory describes that individuals are motivated to work and succeed if they are provided satisfactory compensation, recognition for their accomplishments, and potential for personal growth (Daft, 2015).

The factors influencing the retention of teachers whether traditionally certified or alternatively certified are similar and the literature is mixed on the most effective methods of retention. Redding and Smith’s (2016) study of 18,080 teachers found that induction support programs led to lower turnover rates for teachers, but their research did not show that alternatively certified teachers benefited differently from the supports than traditionally certified teachers. This is similar to Bowen’s (2013) finding that principals suggested both alternatively and traditionally certified teachers need pedagogical professional development. Overall, teachers seek opportunities in their setting to collaborate with peers, gain knowledge, and be supported (“Proven Strategies,” n.d.). The level of support through mentoring, collaboration, and the specific professional development needs may be scaffolded to meet the identified gaps in a teacher’s ability.

**Wisconsin Supply and Demand**
Teacher shortages are unique to states and content areas, and although some commonalities are apparent, Sutcher et al. (2016) acknowledge each state experiences a different level of teacher supply and demand. When narrowing the criteria of a teacher shortage to the specific content area of CTE, Devier (2019), in reference to Cross’s (2017) report on nationwide teacher shortages, identified 32 states with shortages. Included in those states was Wisconsin.

Research by Goff et al. (2018) on the supply and demand of teachers in the state of Wisconsin echoes that of Sutcher et al. (2016), with the notion of variances in shortages of teachers amongst content areas. Overall, Goff et al. (2018) state, “Wisconsin is not experiencing a statewide teacher shortage” (p. 47), but recognize local area shortages do exist. The perceived teacher shortage in Wisconsin is multifaceted and cannot be narrowed to simply a supply problem, but rather both teacher supply and demand. Districts facing challenges filling vacant positions must evaluate their retention and recruitment practices, and if both have been met, then a shortage of teachers in that area may be present (Goff et al., 2018).

When determining the level of teacher supply in Wisconsin’s 28 teaching licensure areas, CTE content areas of family and consumer science, agricultural education, and technology education are listed in low supply with fewer than two applicants applying for each open position (Goff et al., 2018). The exception within CTE areas is marketing. Decreases in enrollment and completion rates in teacher preparation programs are two factors affecting the supply of teachers in Wisconsin. Between 2009 and 2018, enrollment in teacher preparation programs dropped from 12,323 participants to 8,472 and experienced a 29% decrease in those completing a program (DeGuire, 2020). The low supply of applicants follows the decreasing enrollment and completion trend in teacher preparation programs, both in Wisconsin (Goff et al., 2018; DeGuire, 2020) and nationally (Sutcher et al., 2016).
**Teacher Credentialing Requirements**

The 2001 federal No Child Left Behind legislation instituted the requirement that all core academic teachers meet highly qualified teacher status by having minimally a bachelor’s degree from a four-year university, a full state certification, and competence in the academic subjects they teach (Pennsylvania State Education Association, 2016). These requirements were designed to ensure students had access to the highest caliber teachers. In 2015, these federal guidelines were removed with the Every Student Succeeds Act, and teachers were considered highly qualified if they meet the certification requirements developed by their state (Pennsylvania State Education Association, 2016).

To meet the general certification requirements for obtaining a teaching license in the state of Wisconsin, including a CTE license, teachers must minimally hold a bachelor’s degree, have completed an accredited preparation program including the content testing requirements, and passed a background check (WIDPI, n.d.-a). These requirements extend to teachers completing both a traditional or alternative certification pathway, with the exception of the Experience-based Technical and Vocational Education Subjects licensure pathway. Teachers not meeting the general requirements for obtaining a teaching license have the ability to meet the qualifications through an array of alternative certification programs or enrolling in an accredited postsecondary institution to earn an education degree. Some alternative certification pathways are specific to earning CTE licensure, while others are broader with coursework leading to postsecondary degrees.

As school districts are unable to fill teaching vacancies with qualified teachers, hiring non-certified candidates and placing them on emergency teaching credentials, often without any prior teaching preparation, becomes a strategy (Goff et al., 2018; Sutcher et al., 2016). The
process of issuing emergency teaching permits allows programs to continue functioning when a district is unable to hire a fully qualified teacher (WIDPI, n.d.-b). However, a study by Ingersoll et al. (2014) found that teachers who lack prior pedagogical training leave teaching after their first year at a three times higher rate than those with prior pedagogical training. During the 2016-2017 school year in Wisconsin, 3.4% of all full-time teachers were working in classrooms with an emergency teaching credential, including 56.5% of those teachers working with an emergency permit, meaning they have a bachelor’s degree, but no teaching certification (Goff et al., 2018). The use of emergency credentials has increased in Wisconsin schools. During the 2012-2013 school year, 1,126 teachers were working with an emergency credential compared to 2,933 during the 2019-2020 school year (DeGuire, 2020). The majority of these teachers with emergency credentials were in the licensure area of cross-categorical special education, but CTE emergency credentialing has also fluctuated from 61 teachers during 2012-2013, 134 teachers during 2015-2016, and 68 during 2019-2020.

Non-Traditional Teacher Credentialing Pathways

Addressing the teacher shortage through alternative certification methods, and providing professionals transitioning into the classroom with pedagogical support, is one trend present in U.S. education (Woods, 2016). Bowling and Ball (2018) define alternative certification in education as, “Teacher preparation via entering the profession through means other than a professional educationally-based teacher preparation program” (p. 110). Alternative certification programs employ their standards and requirements for entrance and completion, often differing greatly from state-to-state (Bowen et al., 2019; Devier, 2019; Woods, 2016). A study conducted by Zirkle et al. (2007) examining the licensing requirements of both traditionally and alternatively certified CTE teachers, found diversity in alternative certification pathways in
relation to the required coursework, occupational experience, and degrees candidates must possess. For traditionally prepared CTE teachers 49 of the 51 programs responding required teachers to hold a bachelor’s degree and complete a teacher preparation program. Of the 105 alternative certification programs responding, 22 required only a high school diploma for admission, 55 required additional coursework, and 20 required a combination of occupational experience and degrees.

*Alternative Certification Pathways in Wisconsin*

The Alternative Careers in Teaching Program (ACT) is an example of one Wisconsin alternative certification program for individuals who hold a bachelor’s degree and are seeking to obtain an initial teaching credential in a variety of content areas, including the CTE content area of technology education. In addition to requiring a bachelor’s degree, admission requirements for the ACT program include a GPA requirement of 2.75, and verification of successful completion of English and math coursework (University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, 2019). Through the program, individuals are required to complete 31 education credits with additional discipline-specific credits if needed, participate in 30 hours of clinical experiences, student teach for a full semester, successfully pass the Praxis content test, and complete a portfolio.

The Project Teaching Program through eduCATE-WI, approved by the Department of Public Instruction to provide alternative certification programming in Wisconsin, is for individuals who hold a bachelor’s degree and are seeking to obtain a teaching credential in a content area with identified teacher shortages including all CTE content areas (EduCATE-WI Education Programs, 2020). Admission requirements include a 2.5 GPA and a minimum of two years of education-based activities if the individual does not have a teaching credential. Individuals enrolled in this program complete three semesters of pedagogy coursework by
attending six weekend sessions with additional online content and are required to complete a full semester of student teaching in the content area where licensure is desired. Content competency can be demonstrated by the successful completion of specific content coursework or passing of the Praxis content test.

**CTE Specific Certification Pathways**

Wisconsin’s Experience-Based Technical and Vocational Education Subjects licensure pathway allows industry professionals to obtain Tier I teacher licensing in one of the many technical and vocational subjects under the umbrella of CTE (WIDPI, n.d.-c). Through this CTE specific licensure pathway created by the passing of Wisconsin’s 2015 Act 55, candidates are not required to hold a bachelor’s degree or complete an accredited preparation program, but instead meet point qualifications based on prior industry experience, credits earned at postsecondary institutions, and prior pedagogy training (Policy and Budget Team, 2015). Candidates meeting these qualifications and hired by a school district are required to participate in professional development training during the initial three-year licensure stage. At the completion of the three-year cycle, teachers are able to apply for a five-year renewable professional experience-based license.

Wisconsin is not alone in offering industry professionals the ability to earn a teaching credential in a CTE specific content area without completing an accredited postsecondary preparation program or holding a bachelor’s degree, but instead through prior occupational experience. Colorado’s Department of Education offers candidates a three-year non-renewable initial CTE license to those meeting content knowledge and occupational experience benchmarks, but not coursework requirements (Colorado Department of Education, 2020). During the initial three-year licensure cycle, teachers are required to complete up to six
postsecondary courses related to pedagogy, depending on their prior experiences before being able to qualify for a five-year professional CTE license. In Illinois, industry professionals who have not completed an accredited preparation program and are seeking to teach CTE related courses are able to apply for one of three teacher licenses with stipulations (Illinois State Board of Education, n.d.). Candidates who have a minimum of 60 semester hours of accredited hours of pedagogical training, in addition to 2000 hours of occupational experience and successful passing of a workplace proficiency exam, may apply for a CTE license allowing them to teach in their endorsed area grades 7-12. Candidates with a minimum of 8,000 occupational hours may obtain part-time provisional CTE licensure to teach two courses in grades 6-12 only if the district is able to provide proof there are no licensed CTE teachers available. The third provisional CTE license is similar to that of the second, but only allows the teaching of grades 11-12 students, but also requires passing a workplace proficiency exam.

Although variety is present in the requirements, the research identifies threads in alternative certification programming that increase the likelihood of teacher success. Coursework must be efficient and streamlined (Bottoms et al., 2013; Bowling & Ball, 2018; Walsh & Jacobs, 2007; Woods, 2016), strong content knowledge is required by the candidate (Bowling & Ball, 2018; Walsh & Jacobs, 2007; Woods, 2016; Zirkle et al., 2019), workplace mentoring with an experienced teacher (Bottoms et al., 2013; Bowling & Ball, 2018; Walsh & Jacobs, 2007; Woods, 2016), and a continued system of support or professional development are needed in alternative certification programs (Bottoms et al., 2013; Bowling & Ball, 2018; Walsh & Jacobs, 2007; Woods, 2016).

**Classroom Effectiveness**
The increased usage of emergency credentials, and variances in the requirements of alternative certification programs, brings teacher effectiveness and its impact on student achievement into question. Bowling and Ball’s (2018) interpretation of the existing literature suggests that due to the high reliance on industry experience for candidates in some programs, “alternatively certified CTE teachers bring a considerable amount of content knowledge but are lacking in skills related to pedagogy, classroom management, and student organization advising” (p. 118). As a result, they suggest in moving forward, programs should be designed with continued supports and professional development.

A quasi-experimental study conducted by Bowen (2013) regarding student achievement, found no significant difference in student achievement on a common end-of-course assessment given to students taught by traditionally and alternatively certified teachers. It was concluded that although teaching methodologies differed, each group had comparable rates of students on-task versus off-task (Bowen, 2013). In a similar study, Stephens (2015) found that alternative certification teachers used traditional teaching pedagogy, such as reading, writing, and problem-solving while diversifying their pedagogy with increased classroom experiences. Through an examination of multiple studies, Cochran-Smith and Villegas (2015) noted that many previous studies aimed to compare teacher effectiveness and student achievement levels of traditional and alternative certification teachers. The results were mixed in determining the best educational pathway.

The perceived preparedness of alternatively certified teachers to teach has been examined with varying results. Bowen et al. (2019) concluded through a survey of 9,380 technology and engineering teachers throughout the U.S., “there are no overall statistically significant differences in the perceived preparedness of beginning teachers when comparing alternatively
and traditionally certified teachers” (p. 83). Additionally, “the only individual component that was statistically significant is behavior management” (Bowen et al., 2019, p. 83). This result aligns with the findings of Bowling and Ball (2018) and Koehler et al. (2013) that alternative certification teachers may have limited abilities in student management.

**Situated Learning Theory**

Through alternative certification pathways such as the EBL program, industry professionals are immersed in the role of teachers immediately upon hire and learn through first-hand experience drawing on their prior knowledge. The addition of first year mentoring and the pedagogical support through cohort course participation allows for collaboration with other teachers. This on-the-job learning where individuals are immersed in an authentic context-driven environment is supported by situated learning theory (Vincini, 2003).

Situated learning theory draws on the premise that individuals will use their existing knowledge-base and information presented to them within the context of an authentic problem to interpret and apply the new knowledge to the situation presented (Harley, 1993). Learning happens if the experiences aid in problem-solving issues the individual is faced with (Vincini, 2003). Rather than theoretically learning about behavior management strategies in a textbook solely, a situated learning environment allows the individual to recall their prior experiences with human behavior and the surrounding stimuli to develop an appropriate response. The context or social interactions the individual has with the surroundings impacts the learning and response. In situated learning, individuals learn in the here and now context of problems. To best learn, individuals must use the actual tools of the craft they are learning, become members of the discipline through immersion (Vincini, 2003).
Four main staples described by Herrington and Oliver (1995) as authentic context, authentic activities, expert performance, and multiple roles and perspectives support the situated learning theory. The use of authentic context and authentic activities allow the teachers direct application of new learning in their actual environment where real-time problems must be worked through with little right or wrong structure provided. A full immersion into the classroom allows teachers to frequently experience a multitude of situations and scenarios where they are able to construct their own strategies and reflect on practices (Herrington & Oliver, 1995). In 1991, Lave and Wenger (1991; as cited in Utley, 2006) expanded on the need for expert performance and modeling in situated learning to include a learning community where peers with common experiences are able to interact and share best practices. Similar to the need for a learning community in situated learning, the apprenticeship model allows teachers the ability to learn from master teachers. Through this model, new teachers are able to observe and interact with these master teachers who have the ability to breakdown complex information and gradually release information to the individual for them to apply in their classroom (Herrington & Oliver, 1995).

Views on education and it’s reform trend with societal changes. Cochran-Smith and Villegas (2015) point out that as the American society transitioned from the mindset of industrialized thinking and rote information recall to the exploration of knowledge and application in solving authentic complex problems; views on how people learn helped shape education and teacher preparation. The educational shift to situational learning in the classroom brought with it the need for collaboration in learning and an understanding that teachers themselves required pedagogical training to be able to not only provide students with
information but also adapt to the individual abilities and knowledge of each student (Cochran-Smith & Villegas, 2015).

**Summary**

The literature review presented data supporting a shortage of qualified secondary CTE teachers available to fill current and future vacancies, and the utilization of alternative certification programs to help combat this shortage (Devier, 2019). However, Bottoms et al. (2013) noted there are barriers to developing commonality in programming. The literature also presented the need for the continued professional development of pedagogy skills for both alternative and traditional certification teachers to increase the effectiveness (Bowen, 2013) and the retention (Woods, 2016). The EBL “boot camp” program structure was found to be similar to alternative CTE certification programs in other states. Also supporting the EBL structure is the situated learning theory expressing the need for authentic learning environments and context-applicable experiences for learning to take place. Further understanding of the perceived influences and needed supports of alternative certified teachers provides one strategy to aid their continued teaching in the CTE environment.
Chapter III: Methodology

The literature review highlights an array of alternative certification programs which have frequently been used to allow individuals the opportunity to obtain teacher credentials without requiring the completion of a traditional teacher preparation program. The use of these programs has often expedited the process of obtaining a credential and eased the shortage of teachers in areas of high need. The experience-based licensure (EBL) “boot camp” is an alternative certification program which provides pedagogy training to industry professionals hired by the Kenosha Unified School District (KUSD) or the Racine Unified School District (RUSD); they participate in their second and third years of secondary career and technical education (CTE) teaching. Little is known about how the EBL “boot camp” structure impacts teacher retention. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of EBL teachers toward the “boot camp” professional development in helping them meet the expectations and responsibilities for teachers in their districts and its impact on them continuing to teach in a secondary CTE classroom. This qualitative study was guided by three research questions to collect detailed personal accounts:

1. To what extent do EBL teachers perceive their pedagogy training prepared them to teach in a secondary CTE environment?
2. What institutional supports best-aided EBL teachers’ transition to the classroom?
3. What are EBL teachers’ perceptions toward continuing secondary CTE teaching?

This chapter discusses the subject selection and description, methodology used, instrumentation, and data collection procedures. A description of the data analysis techniques used is also included along with an identification of the methodology limitations.
Subject Selection and Description

Twenty-four teachers originally participated in the first EBL cohort. The targeted population for this study included KUSD and RUSD teachers who were hired to teach CTE courses based on their prior content-related experiences, had attended the first EBL cohort seminars from Fall 2017 through Spring 2019, and were continuing to teach in their districts. The coordinators of CTE for KUSD and RUSD identified 16 teachers as potential participants for this study who completed the first EBL cohort and were continuing to teach in their districts (C. Kothe, personal communication, April 14, 2020; C. Neff, personal communication, July 24, 2020).

Only the first EBL cohort participants who were currently teaching at KUSD or RUSD were selected for this study. This sampling aided the study’s focus on understanding the long-term impact EBL programming has on industry professionals transitioning successfully to teach secondary CTE. These subjects had one full year of teaching experience prior to participation in the EBL program, with an additional year of teaching since completing the EBL program. During the 2020-2021 school year, these teachers were in their fifth year of teaching.

Data collection from a sample of KUSD and RUSD administrative personnel responsible for supervising EBL teachers was also considered by the researcher. This data was not pursued due to the potential turnover of administrators in each school. The administrative personnel in current supervisory positions may not have knowledge of the EBL “boot camp” program.

Methodology

To understand the breadth of variables influencing the perceived preparedness, retention of EBL of teachers, and provide context to their insights, a qualitative research methodology was used. Specifically, a qualitative case study was chosen for this research to examine the EBL
alternative certification program and its impact on teachers. The research case focused on a specific alternative certification program and was bound to a specific group of participants to gain depth in participant responses (Simons, 2009). Through a qualitative case study, the researcher was able to observe and/or interact with the participants to gain deeper meaning to the context by which they provided their responses, enhancing the meaning of the data. Through this case study format, the participants were able to share their individualized experiences in relationship to not only the EBL programming, but also through their prior experiences and institutional setting that may have influenced them. The results of case study research can guide modifications to program implementation and provide means for decision-making (Simons, 2009).

This case study followed a modified analytic induction approach beginning with interview questions directly related to alternative licensure programming and gradually expanding to gather deeper insight into factors influencing their successful transition into CTE teachers. Research by Taylor et al. (2016) acknowledged qualitative methodologies provide personalized descriptive data valuing the context involved in the response. It allows the researcher to additionally identify and assess patterns or themes in the data, rather than generalized cause and effect relationships with quantitative studies (Taylor et al., 2016; Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). Research by Baxter and Jack (2008) echoed this, and cited several instances where qualitative case studies were beneficial, including answering open-ended questions when no manipulation of variables is present, when the context has an impact on behaviors, or when it was not definitively known if the context influences the behavior being researched.

Other research methodologies were investigated for this study. However, the range of potential influences and individual perceptions being sought aligned with a qualitative study.
Quantitative studies seek to focus on individual variables (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009) and through this study, there was no manipulation of variables that could be isolated to determine a distinct relationship between those variables and a specific outcome. The flexible design of a qualitative study, rather than the rigid design of a quantitative study, allows the researcher to expand the research if needed, based on data collection (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009).

**Qualitative Rigor**

A researcher-developed interview script (Appendix A) was used to guide this study, with questions aligned with the research questions and themes identified in the literature review. Each main research question was supported by a series of related open-ended interview questions that were asked during the semi-structured interview. Interview questions related to research question one focused on pedagogy; question two sought information on past institutional supports; and question three on understanding the influences to continuing teaching. To provide reliability to the interview questions, they were vetted by the assigned research advisor and provided to a peer subject to test the understandability of the questions. Generalization of the results of this study may not be extended past the subjects and program this study analyzed, therefore the validity of the results was specific to the population sample.

Credibility in qualitative research reflects how well the data presented reflects the actual thoughts and perspective of the participants (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). In an effort to increase the creditability of the study, participant validation was utilized prior to the inclusion of the data in the published research. This strategy helped to minimize the potential for unconscious bias of the researcher on the interpretation of the data due to completing a traditional education pathway. Participant validation allows the participants to view the researcher’s analysis of their interview
and confirm that the analysis is a true reflection of the information they provided (Simons, 2009).

Transferability represents whether the research findings can be generalized to different populations or the methodology be applied with different participants (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). The researcher provided the criteria for the specific participant pool researched in the study and the descriptive nature of the methodology aided in transferability to future studies with different participants.

Through comprehensive and descriptive documentation of the research study methodologies and reflection with a research advisor, dependability of the study has been enhanced. In qualitative research, dependability relates to how well another researcher is able to precisely follow the study methodologies used in the original research if they were conducting the study themselves (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). The descriptive outline of the subject selection, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques enhanced the ability for another researcher to conduct the study.

Confirmability in qualitative research is supported by the researcher’s understanding and control of biases to remain neutral in each aspect of the research process (Thomas & Magilvy, 2011). To help the researcher minimize bias during the research process, he first identified what his personal ideas were of the topic and was receptive to diverging into different paths that the research or interviews led to. During the semi-structured interviews, the researcher actively listened to the participants and was cognizant of not asking leading questions that sought a specific response. Biases in the data analysis were minimized through participant validation of the researcher’s interpretation.

**Data Collection Procedures**
Data for this study was obtained through semi-structured personal interviews with participants who completed the first EBL cohort and were currently employed at KUSD or RUSD. Preliminary electronic communication was sent to the 16 potential participants explaining the study and asking for their participation, and a follow-up request was sent roughly one week later. Those willing to participate, as indicated through their response to the first or follow-up electronic communication, were contacted via electronic communication to schedule an interview time within the data collection window. Participants were provided an informed consent form to be signed and returned prior to their established interview time (Appendix B). To ensure confidentiality of participating participants, each was assigned a descriptor name and number referencing the order their interviews were conducted, such as Participant 1 or Participant 5. Due to the examination of only two school districts and the number of teachers in each content area, coding by district and content area was not used to avoid potentially exposing participants.

Interviews of participants were scheduled for 45-minute time slots during an available time for both the researcher and the participant. To ease scheduling conflicts, subjects were offered the option for the interview to be conducted through the digital conferencing application Zoom or over the telephone. For notetaking purposes, and to allow for multiple reviews, each interview was digitally recorded using Zoom or the use of a digital recorder. At the conclusion of the interview, the digital recordings were transcribed through a professional online transcription service. After transcription, participants were sent electronic copies of the transcripts for review along with the researcher’s analysis prior to inclusion in the data analysis. Any discrepancies in the transcript or analysis as evidenced by communication from the participant, were corrected.
with their recommendation. Written notes by the researcher remained confidential and secured in a separate location from the descriptor name key.

Each interview began with the researcher reading a scripted introduction and IRB required terms from the interview script. Verbal consent from the participant was obtained through this process. Provided the subject’s consent, the interview continued with a set of open-ended questions and follow-up questions as needed. At the conclusion of the interview, the researcher expressed gratitude for the subjects’ participation and informed the subjects of possible additional communication if clarification or further questioning was needed. They were also reminded that electronic copies of the interview transcript and researcher’s analysis would be sent to them within two or three days for their review, and in the case of any discrepancies they should contact the researcher to discuss corrections.

**Data Analysis**

After the completion of the first interview, the transcripts and fieldnotes were read multiple times by the researcher. The initial data was coded by highlighting and annotating key phrases, ideas, and frequent words that were present in the transcript and field notes related to the research questions. The annotation codes were simplified descriptions of the referenced data. Once the initial coding process was completed, the codes related to each research question were placed onto a document specific to the research question and analyzed for common themes. The codes were sorted and grouped together into a table with broad common theme categories at the top and listed below it the codes that comprised that category.

Each subsequent interview transcript and set of fieldnotes was analyzed and coded using the same manner. The codes from each subsequent interview were added to the table of themed categories established in the first interview analysis. Codes that did not fit into any already
established categories had new categories generated. When new categories of themes were added to the table, a review of prior interviews was completed to verify that commonalities were not missed. The researcher continually monitored patterns of similarities and differences between new interview data and previously recorded data.

Quantitative analysis resulting in numerical representation of the qualitative data was also used. The quantitative analysis allowed the researcher to identify the strength of a theme present in the data. The number of participants represented in each theme and the frequency of a code being used across all of the interviews was recorded.

**Limitations**

The following limitations may affect the results of this study:

1. The use of virtual and telephone interviews, rather than face-to-face, did not allow the researcher to observe the body language or facial expressions of the participants that may have expressed answers beyond their spoken words.

2. Only a small number of teachers who completed the EBL “boot camp” participated in the study. The electronic communication sent to the teachers may have been blocked by a filter and not received by all.

3. Interviews with administrative personnel responsible for supervising EBL teachers were not conducted, and the perspectives provided are that of the participants and the researcher.
Chapter IV: Results

In an effort to help alleviate the shortage of secondary career and technical education (CTE) teachers, alternative certification programs have allowed individuals to obtain teacher credentials without the need to complete a traditional teacher preparation program. Alternative certification programs vary in their entrance and completion requirements which some research (Bowling & Ball, 2018) suggested may lead to a lack of pedagogical skills in teachers who entered classrooms through alternative certification pathways. Other research (Bowen et al., 2019) found little difference in the perceived preparedness of teachers certified through traditional and alternative means.

The Kenosha Unified School District (KUSD) and the Racine Unified School District (RUSD), in partnership with UW-Stout, developed an experience-based licensure (EBL) “boot camp” for industry professionals hired by KUSD and RUSD as secondary CTE teachers to meet the requirements for CTE teacher licensing in Wisconsin. The EBL “boot camp” provided pedagogy training to teachers during their second and third years of secondary teaching which focused on inclusion and equity, instructional planning, assessment, and CTE co-curricular activities. The purpose of this study examined the perceptions of EBL teachers toward the “boot camp” professional development in helping them meet the expectations and responsibilities for teachers in their districts, and its impact on their continuing to teach after having completed an additional full year of teaching. Three research questions were used to guide the study and include:

1. To what extent do EBL teachers perceive their pedagogy training prepared them to teach in a secondary CTE environment?
2. What institutional supports best-aided EBL teachers’ transition to the classroom?
3. What are EBL teachers’ perceptions toward continuing secondary CTE teaching?

The following chapter discusses the participant demographics and results obtained from semi-structured qualitative interviews conducted with participants of the first EBL “boot camp” cohort.

**Demographic Data**

The participant population for this study was secondary CTE teachers who were hired by KUSD or RUSD to teach courses related to their prior content-related experiences, were still employed by the districts, and had attended the first EBL cohort seminars from Fall 2017 through Spring 2019. Sixteen EBL teachers were identified as potential participants of the study and contacted by the researcher. A 50% response rate was received from the electronic communications sent to the potential participants. Five EBL teachers chose to participate in an interview, representing 31.3% of the total first cohort EBL teachers still employed by their respective district (Table 1). Two EBL teachers responded they were unable to participate in the study, and one agreed to participate, but later backed out. The CTE content areas of family and consumer science, technology and engineering, and business and marketing were represented by the teachers participating in the study.

**Table 1**

*Participant Responses for Interview*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Response</th>
<th>Number (N = 16)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agreed to participate in an interview</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreed to participate, but later backed out</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unable to participate</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response to electronic communication</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each participant had unique paths into secondary CTE teaching, but all five cited they had prior experience working with students when they committed to transitioning from their former careers into teaching. Three of the five participants had worked as substitute teachers in various educational buildings and content areas either in long-term or short-term positions before being hired by their respective districts. One participant shared that substitute teaching allowed them to “watch” other teachers teach if a co-teacher was present. The participant continued to share that these experiences were more effective in aiding in their development than the mentor experience during their first year of teaching. Two of the participants had experience teaching at the post-secondary level. One participant did not have prior experience substitute teaching or teaching at the post-secondary level but did have experience leading school age students in their prior employment.

**Research Question 1: To What Extent do EBL Teachers Perceive Their Pedagogy Training Prepared Them to Teach in a Secondary CTE Environment?**

The first research question solicited the participants' perception of the pedagogy training they received in preparing them to teach in a secondary CTE environment. To establish an understanding of their perceived needs as teachers during their first year, each participant was asked to describe the experiences they had during that year of teaching, including the responsibilities they felt the most and least prepared for.

The participants expressed mixed feelings about their first year of teaching prior to beginning the EBL professional development provided during their second and third years of teaching. Two of the participants felt their first year went very well and were not overwhelmed. Both credited this to having a developed curriculum in place for the courses they were teaching and co-workers that were very supportive in helping them establish themselves as teachers. The
three other participants described their first year as a “challenge;” a situation that made one participant feel “very nervous” and described the lack of curriculum as “very nerve wracking.” Another described that the uncertainty of educational procedures created a sense of “I don’t know what to do” in relation to building practices.

When asked what the participants felt they were the most prepared for during their first year of teaching, the majority of the participants discussed developing a positive rapport and relationship with the students in their classroom. Two of the participants felt most prepared for the understanding of the content they were responsible for teaching. One participant also felt prepared for managing classroom behaviors and procedures along with developing rapport. These were due to the prior post-secondary education coursework in education they had received. Two common themes were present among the participants when asked what they felt least prepared for as they began teaching. These commonalities were related to pedagogy and the professional responsibilities of teachers.

During the course of the interviews, each participant discussed the variety of the courses they were responsible for teaching in their respective departments. This variety of courses led one participant to express that they felt the least prepared for the “teaching of multiple different classes” and “multiple different curriculums;” some of which they had had only minimal content knowledge of. Two other participants described that although they felt comfortable with their understanding of the content they were responsible for teaching, they were unsure of the best methods of delivering it to the students. During the course of their first year, one participant recognized they were unprepared for “handling chaos in the class,” and how to manage student behavior. Additionally, two participants expressed that they were not prepared for the amount of professional responsibilities or “paperwork shuffle” as described by one participant. When
discussing the professional responsibilities of professional development and documentation of teacher effectiveness, one participant felt they were being forced to “fit into some framework of what people think we’re supposed to be,” which they were unprepared for.

Two core questions posed to the participants in relation to the first research question were to describe how the EBL professional development best prepared them for the classroom and what they continued to utilize in their classrooms. Four of the five participants expressed that the second EBL seminar related to instructional planning was significantly more beneficial to them and contained the most components they continue to utilize in their teaching. The participants referenced that the seminar helped to connect all of the pieces of teaching together and laid the groundwork for continuing to develop lessons. In discussing the instructional planning course, one participant stated “Finally, it just all clicked where everything was like, yes, that’s why we do this.” Multiple participants referenced that the course aided them in understanding how to map out a comprehensive unit of instruction by providing them with an understanding of the unit journey, from beginning to end. One participant expanded on the value of the knowledge they gained through seminars two and three by sharing their new knowledge with other district teachers. During their district provided curriculum development time, the participant was able to lead their content group to structure the curriculum maps and assessments into a common format across each of the schools in their district.

Pertaining to the other three EBL seminars, one participant felt they were valuable, but thought they lacked concrete strategies that could be directly applied to the CTE classroom and that some of the content presented was focused on elementary age students. Another participant expressed frustration that some of the content being presented in the EBL coursework conflicted with the practices expected of teachers in their school building. In particular, this was related to
the structure of assessments and the organization of the content within them. Four of the participants who were actively involved in advising career and technical student organizations felt that coursework helped reaffirm what they were already doing and allowed them to converse with others on a common topic. The ability to meet with and share ideas with other teachers experiencing similar situations was offered by one participant as a coursework benefit.

Through the course of the discussions with the participants, a theme appeared related to the timing of the EBL professional development and its impact on the teachers. One participant who felt that the professional development did have value and helped them better understand teaching, felt that waiting until the second year to begin was potentially wasteful. They explained that because they had already been exposed to much of the information during the first year of teaching, there was some “fall off” in their learning by waiting until the second year. They suggested that “front-loading” information during the first year would have helped ease some of the struggles that had occurred during year one. In closing the interview, the participant reinforced again that the EBL program “…has helped and prepared me, but it wasn't timed correctly. I feel that someone who’s serious enough to do this transition is willing to put in the extra work already.” A second participant expressed a similar view on the timing of the professional development, and that year one was the “time to overwhelm us because we’re floundering here.” Another participant felt since many of the EBL teachers were transitioning from a professional environment, they were “used to hitting the road running” and would be able to handle the professional development if it were moved to year one. They were also indifferent to it beginning during year one. Two participants felt that beginning during year two of teaching was timed correctly. Many of the teachers, whether they felt the EBL professional development should be moved to year one or not, developed a self-motivated attitude to succeed. Their
comments ranged from “I had already reached out to other teachers,” “I’ve learned that you better figure it out, because nobody’s going to come in and do it for you,” and “I want more information. I went and found it myself.”

**Research Question 2: What Institutional Supports Best-Aided EBL Teachers’ Transition to the Classroom?**

The second research question served to gather information about the different support systems the EBL teachers utilized and the impact they had on the transition into the CTE classroom. One of the primary interview questions supporting the research question asked participants to discuss their continuing interactions with their mentor and EBL cohort classmates, and how they had influenced their teaching. Three out of the five participants valued their mentoring experience and said that it had a positive impact on their teaching. Of the three participants who responded that they had positive experiences with their mentor, only one stated their mentor was also working in the same building and content area during the EBL program. The mentors of the two other participants with positive experiences worked in the same building, but not in the same content area. In describing how their mentor influenced their teaching, one participant stated that between their assigned mentor and a second departmental peer that “honestly, I feel without those two, I probably wouldn’t have made it.” The participant went on to discuss that due to the wide range of courses they were teaching, some of which they lacked a strong background in, the mentor and department peers had developed extensive organized curriculum resources for the classes that helped them “push-through” the struggles. The organized curriculum materials and support from their mentor created a sense of relief for the participant who felt they were then capable of mentoring other new teachers because of the great experience. All three participants described their mentors as a continuous support system with a
depth of knowledge they could share ideas with or seek out for help. Their interactions with each other had developed into not only a mentorship but also friendships.

Of the two participants who did not describe a positive mentoring experience, one’s mentor was located in a different building, but in the same content area and the second’s mentor was not in the same building or content area. One participant felt the mentors needed to be selected better and described it as a feeling of an “afterthought.” They had minimal contact with their mentor and as a result, lacked the valuable experience they were desiring. The second participant described some of the mentoring activities required of them, as “elementary” in nature and not applicable to the position they were teaching in. Through the course of the interview process, differences were observed in the mentoring and induction programs for new teachers in KUSD and RUSD. The participants discussed a range of activities they completed during their induction period ranging from observing other teachers, engaging in informal and formal conversations and check-ins, to attending after-school professional development courses.

The EBL cohort model created a support network for the EBL teachers to be able to work with others who have common goals. During the discussion about their continued interactions with their EBL cohort classmates, all of the participants described minimal continued communication with other EBL teachers other than those of their respective school district or content area. Although there is minimal cross district communication between the EBL teachers, all five participants spoke positively about the ability to collaborate during the EBL program. They acknowledge the ability to use each other to bounce ideas off. In reference to collaborating, one participant stated “I think it's just nice to have a sounding board, people that you’re having the same experiences with.”
To establish an understanding of the different activities that influenced the EBL teachers’ transition into the secondary CTE teachers, the participants were asked to discuss the professional development activities outside of the EBL program they had participated in. All five participants discussed attending their respective state association’s annual conference at least once, with the majority of them attending multiple years to network with other teachers and gain ideas for new instructional methods. Outside of their state association conference attendance, each participant engaged in a variety of professional development activities ranging from district provided curriculum development, school-based initiatives, and technology resources. Some of the topics they shared were related to student engagement, student behavior and development, content specific coursework, and coursework related to additional certifications.

One common thread present in all five participants was their positive reception of curriculum development and writing time allotted within their content areas in their districts. They described this time similar to that of the cohort model in that it allowed them to interact, collaborate, share ideas, and develop lessons with other teachers teaching the same courses. Additionally, content peers were cited by four of the five participants as the person they sought out most frequently when they had questions. A second specific institutional support all five participants discussed was the use of the instructional coaches in their building. Each participant described seeking out the instructional coaches to help with pedagogy items such as engaging students, structuring a lesson, or developing new instructional techniques. Each of the participants described their professional development activities as being closely related to the EBL professional development, and that they actively sought out the opportunities rather than being told or required to attend due to deficiencies in their teaching.
Research Question 3: What are EBL Teachers’ Perceptions Toward Continuing Secondary CTE Teaching?

Research question three sought to gain insight into how the EBL teachers perceived the complexities of education and their motivation to continue secondary CTE teaching. Each participant was asked to describe how their perception of teaching had changed since completing the EBL program and teaching for four years. Four out of the five participants felt their perception of teaching had not changed, or had changed slightly, during their years teaching. Each of the participants felt as though they had grown as teachers both in their teaching pedagogy and their ability to develop a rapport with students. One participant discussed how they felt their decision to become a teacher was reaffirmed when former students returned to their classroom after graduation to express their gratitude for the education they received. The participant who felt their perception had changed slightly toward the negative, referred to the lack of rigor in the curriculum materials being taught to students. They expressed the need for more rigor in the content curriculum to keep up with the needs that are present in the private sector. Although this change in perception had occurred, the participant intended to continue in education.

An area of concern arose from two participants when asked if they planned to pursue additional education for a tier three lifetime license. They shared that they are uncertain of the requirements or “additional hoops” they may be required to take to continue teaching with the EBL licensure. Both stated they would be willing to participate in additional coursework if it was required of them to continue teaching, but noted there had been a lack of clarity and understanding of the licensing process. When asked if they would pursue additional coursework, two participants stated they would not. One stated they would not, simply because of their age.
and the second was unsure if there was any benefit for themselves to obtain the additional credential. One participant felt they would pursue additional coursework, as they were financially able.

Through the course of the interview conversations, none of the participants expressed any indications that they were planning to leave the teaching profession in the near future. Four of the five participants referenced monetary occurrences as a potential factor influencing their decision to stay or leave. Two of them suggested that if a situation arose where their families were financially stable to afford them to not work, they would consider leaving the profession. The other two participants who referenced monetary occurrences discussed the need for a better compensation structure for EBL teachers. Both participants referred to the amount of work done by teachers outside of the school hours and the depth of content knowledge they bring with them, warranting higher compensation than that of an entry level teacher. One participant also identified that societal and educational changes occurring in their career may influence their decision to continue teaching. The increase of responsibilities placed on teachers and the adaptability to changes in instructional delivery plays an important factor in continuing teaching of CTE. One participant cited their physical age would be the main influence on whether they continued to teach. Since they transitioned into teaching at a later stage in their life, they felt they may not have the stamina to keep up with the educational changes and demands of the classroom as they got older.
Chapter V: Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

As the United States (U.S.) continues to strive to be a leader in global competitiveness, employers recognize the need for a highly-skilled workforce to achieve a competitive edge (Soares & Steigleder, 2012). Aiding in the development and education of the workforce, by delivering rigorous academic coursework along with relevant technical skills, are career and technical education (CTE) programs. CTE programs can extend across different education levels beginning at early middle school years and continuing through postsecondary levels. Secondary CTE programs throughout the U.S. are facing an increasing number of teacher vacancies to support the delivery of curriculum and preparing students for the future (Sutcher et al., 2016).

Alternative certification pathways, such as the experience-based license (EBL) “boot camp,” are one of the approaches states have implemented to address the shortage of CTE teachers and provide opportunities for potential teachers to receive teaching credentials through means other than a traditional preparation program. Developed in coordination between the Kenosha Unified School District (KUSD), Racine Unified School District (RUSD), and the University of Wisconsin-Stout, the EBL “boot camp” provides pedagogy training to industry professionals who have been hired by KUSD and RUSD as secondary CTE teachers. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of EBL teachers toward the “boot camp” professional development in helping them meet the expectations and responsibilities for teachers in their district, and its impact on them continuing to teach after completing an additional full year in the classroom. This study was guided by three research questions:

1. To what extent do EBL teachers perceive their pedagogy training prepared them to teach in a secondary CTE environment?

2. What institutional supports best-aided EBL teachers’ transition to the classroom?
3. What are EBL teachers’ perceptions toward continuing secondary CTE teaching?

Five secondary CTE teachers from the first EBL cohort held from Fall 2017 through Spring of 2019 and still employed by KUSD or RUSD, participated in the study. Semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted with each participant and recorded. Each interview was transcribed, analyzed, and coded to identify patterns of similarities and differences amongst the data. This chapter presents a discussion on the results, conclusions, and recommendations of the researcher.

Discussion

The first research question posed in this study sought to provide firsthand perspectives of how EBL teachers viewed their pedagogy training to prepare them to teach in a secondary CTE environment. Through a qualitative analysis of the personalized accounts of the participants' experiences related to multiple interview questions, a generally positive connection between the pedagogy training and the level of preparedness to teach in a CTE classroom was found.

To establish a baseline understanding of what the participants felt they needed to be successful in the CTE classroom, the researcher asked them to discuss what they felt most and least prepared for when they began teaching. The two most common responses for what they felt least prepared for referred to an uncertainty of pedagogical techniques and the professional responsibilities of teachers. Those themes aligned with the literature in that alternatively certified teachers may lack pedagogical skills and need related training (Bowling & Ball, 2018). Additionally, the literature identified that alternatively certified teachers lacked student management skills (Bowling & Ball, 2018; Koehler et al., 2013), but interestingly only one participant discussed that they felt unprepared to manage student behavior or “chaos” in the classroom. Three participants felt confident in their ability to develop a rapport with their
students and did not discuss a need for student management support due to their experiences substitute teaching or working with secondary aged students through prior activities.

To get to the core of research question one, the participants were asked “How did the EBL coursework best prepare you for the classroom?” and “What EBL coursework do you continue to utilize in your classroom?” The participants’ responses to these questions were the driving force behind establishing a positive correlation between the EBL professional development and the level of preparedness to teach CTE. The areas which the participants identified as being unprepared for when they began teaching were aligned and compared to their responses to these questions. The most frequent response theme correlated with curriculum design and pedagogical development. Unprompted by the researcher regarding the specific seminars the participants attended, the most common seminar discussed was the second, titled Instructional Methodology, Lesson and Unit Planning, and Formative Assessment. Four out of the five participants referenced this seminar as providing them the most valuable knowledge and tangible skills they continue to use in their classrooms. Only one participant portrayed that all four seminars were of equal value to them, with none better than the other. Prior to teaching, participants identified feelings of unpreparedness related to pedagogy. Upon their discussion of seminar two, the researcher found a positive relationship between the EBL professional development and their preparedness to teach secondary CTE. With a larger sample size, more evidence would be possible in understanding the perceived impact of the EBL professional development and may result in different findings.

Specifically related to seminar four and the topics of work-based learning and career and technical student organizations (CTSO), it was apparent that the teachers who were actively involved in working with these activities in their schools obtained the most valuable and usable
content knowledge from that seminar. At the time of the study, four of the five participants were actively advising a CTSO or involved in a work-based learning program. For those teachers, seminar four provided opportunities for them to collaborate with other cohort classmates about the programs. There was little in-depth discussion from the participants about seminars one and three, outside of a few general comments. The reason for this is unclear, but it could be related to the timing of the seminars or what the participants interviewed deemed as desirable and applicable to their needs.

Through the course of the individual interviews, the participants did not offer the researcher any indication that they were disappointed with the EBL coursework in preparing them to teach in a secondary CTE environment. The general perspective expressed by each of the participants was that the EBL professional development created a sense of reaffirmation about the techniques and strategies they were already practicing in their classroom during their first year of teaching. Although the participants felt reassured in their teaching practices, the researcher did identify subtle comments from the participants that suggested they needed more support and concrete strategies earlier. Some of the statements included references such as “I had already reached out to other teachers,” “I’ve learned that you better figure it out, because nobody’s going to come in and do it for you,” “I want more information,” and “I went and found it myself.”

The EBL teachers interviewed conveyed a sense of determination and confidence to succeed when they discussed their transition to teaching. Each participant sought out the opportunity to become a teacher after having prior life and career experiences, and their willfulness to overcome challenges was apparent. The characteristics displayed by the EBL teachers may have been learned through their work in industry and the possible outcomes
resulting in not being successful. A person without prior experiences and the knowledge gained from them may struggle to transition to teaching through the EBL “boot camp” model. This level of self-motivation and problem solving could be viewed as a strength of the EBL teachers and the structure of the EBL “boot camp” seminar sequencing which provides full immersion of the teachers into the classroom during year one.

The literature on situated learning theory points out that learning and cognitive development will occur if a person’s experiences help them to overcome a challenge (Vincini, 2003). The EBL teachers must overcome the challenges they experience within their classrooms each day with minimal instantaneous support. Full immersion in a classroom environment from year one allows them to develop responses and recall appropriate situations during their seminar experiences. Without the firsthand experience to develop their understanding of the intricacies of a classroom, EBL teachers may not have the ability to apply their seminar learning.

Waiting until year two to provide pedagogy support could also be viewed as a weakness in the EBL professional development. The literature indicates that the amount of pedagogical training and preparation a new teacher received, significantly reduces the attrition rate of new teachers after their first year (Ingersoll et al., 2014). Without further research to identify the causes of the EBL teachers no longer teaching in KUSD or RUSD, it cannot be stated with any confidence that the lack of EBL coursework in year one led to their leaving. Additionally, during their first year of teaching, each participant completed required district and building level professional development which may need to be examined deeper for effectiveness in providing support to new teachers.

The second research question sought to better understand the institutional supports outside of the EBL “boot camp” that the teachers participated in, which aided their transition into
teaching secondary CTE. The main focal points of this research question aimed at the teachers’ mentoring experiences and their participation in professional development activities. The literature indicates that mentoring in the workplace with an experienced teacher increases the likelihood of alternatively certified teacher success (Bottoms et al., 2013; Bowling & Ball, 2018; Walsh & Jacobs, 2007; Woods, 2016). All five participants participated in their district’s required mentoring program during their beginning years of teaching. Three participants shared that their mentor had a positive influence on their transition into the classroom, while the other two expressed neutral opinions on the experience.

The EBL “boot camp” model does not provide teachers an opportunity for student teaching which is a common practice of traditional certification pathways and alternative certification pathways such as the Alternative Careers in Teaching Program (University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, 2019) and the Project Teaching Program (EduCATE-WI Education Programs, 2020). Without student teaching and the opportunity to work in direct contact with a cooperating teacher, the EBL teachers may rely more on their mentors and other support systems in their buildings. In addition to their mentor, all five participants discussed seeking out their building’s instructional coaches on various occasions when they needed help. Interestingly, the two participants who expressed neutral feelings during discussions about their mentoring experience were also two who provided adamant recommendations for moving the EBL professional development up to occur during year one of teaching. In these cases, it appeared to the researcher that the teachers viewed the EBL “boot camp” professional development as a more valuable induction experience than the mentoring program. As the literature indicated, an induction support program may lead to lower turnover rates for both alternatively and traditionally certified teachers (Redding & Smith, 2016). The absence of a strong mentoring
induction program may have led the teachers to seek support from other sources such as the EBL program, which did not occur until their second year and may have caused them to suggest moving the coursework up.

The second research question also sought to better understand the different professional development activities that EBL teachers participated in that aided their transition into the classroom. The study found that all five participants had engaged in multiple professional development activities with the most common being state association conferences and district provided curriculum development. These findings align with the literature in that professional development opportunities are valuable in alternative certification programs (Bottoms et al., 2013; Bowling & Ball, 2018; Walsh & Jacobs, 2007; Woods, 2016). Similarly, the literature suggested that not only alternatively certified teachers, but traditionally certified teachers also benefit from pedagogical professional development (Bowen, 2013). This finding was confirmed by the study, in that none of the participants were required to attend professional development, outside of the EBL “boot camp,” solely based on their alternative certification status or deficiencies in their abilities in the classroom as identified by their administration. This supports the researcher’s notion that the EBL “boot camp” was successful in preparing industry professionals to teach secondary CTE.

For the teachers, the ability to collaborate with peers during professional development activities was most beneficial. By meeting with their peers and exchanging ideas, they were able to develop an invaluable support network of contact resources. The CTE classroom is a unique environment with both similarities and differences to a general education classroom. However, the challenges faced in a CTE classroom may be unknown to those without first-hand experience in this setting. Having a support network of individuals who have experienced similar challenges
and experiences aided the teachers in succeeding in the classroom. The EBL “boot camp” cohort model also aided in providing EBL teachers an opportunity to collaborate. Rather than individualized and independent learning where teachers would be required to have complete self-reliance, they had the ability to interact amongst others with common experiences. The cohort model is supported by Lave and Wenger’s (1991; as cited in Utley, 2006) discussion of situated learning and one’s ability to observe and share with peers.

The third research question sought to garner the perceptions of EBL teachers toward continuing to teach secondary CTE. At the time of the study, the participants were entering their second full year of teaching since completing the EBL “boot camp.” They were asked to discuss how their perception of teaching had changed since completing the EBL “boot camp” and having taught for four years. Four of the five participants stated their perception of teaching had changed minimally over that time period. This finding was not surprising to the researcher due to all participants identifying they had had a significant amount of experience working with secondary age students through substitute teaching or prior employment.

While a multitude of factors may influence a teacher’s decision to continue teaching, the literature suggests attrition is linked to historical, environmental, and external factors (Brownell & Smith, 1993). The compensation of EBL teachers was one environmental factor a few participants suggested needed to be reevaluated due to the level of content knowledge they bring to the classroom. The compensation model of EBL teachers was outside the scope of this study, but further investigation into the topic may be warranted. The study found that the majority of the participants had a criterion for potentially leaving teaching, such as age or financial stability affording them to not work, but provided little acknowledgment to the researcher that they had intentions of leaving the classroom before they reached retirement age. The participants’ level of
satisfaction with their transition into the secondary CTE classroom was enlightening. Their continuation in the classroom may be linked to their self-driven attitude to succeed, much like their determination to seek out support during their first year of teaching in response to overcome challenges.

Conclusions

This study sought to better understand the perception of KUSD and RUSD EBL teachers toward the “boot camp” professional development in helping them meet the expectations and responsibilities for teachers in their districts, and its impact on their continuing to teach. The EBL “boot camp” alternative certification pathway, along with continued institutional supports, is an effective combination in developing preparedness in industry professionals transitioning into secondary CTE teachers. The expedited timeline of the seminars delivered efficient curriculum topics which led to industry professionals successfully transitioning into teachers. In turn, this reduced the number of vacant secondary CTE positions caused by the teacher shortage. As teachers, the EBL “boot camp” participants sought out opportunities to professionally grow their skills above the requirements of the EBL program and their school district; thus, increasing their ability to offer their students the most viable and comprehensive CTE education.

The study revealed positive mentoring and induction experiences for EBL teachers influenced their perception of the EBL “boot camp” professional development. All of the teachers viewed the EBL professional development content as reaffirming their actions in the classroom. However, those who lacked a desirable mentoring experience perceived it as being timed incorrectly due to a lack of support during year one. This finding showed that the EBL “boot camp” and mentoring programs are each a valued and needed component to the success of
a teacher. If one area of support is lacking, teachers are forced to concede or seek out other means to overcome the challenges.

The current timing of the EBL professional development supports the needs of EBL teachers as long as an effective mentoring induction program is experienced. By waiting until year two to provide teachers with the “boot camp” professional development, teachers are able to draw on their experiences from year one to solidify their learning in the seminars. Drawing on their prior experiences and having a basis for their learning in the professional development are supported by the situated learning theory. Without waiting until year two, teachers may lack the prior knowledge or experiences obtained in the classroom to make clear connections to the seminar content.

The “boot camp” content in seminar two provided EBL teachers knowledge related to instructional planning, CTE methods, and formative assessment, and was most effective in meeting the needs of the teachers. Pedagogy and professional responsibilities were two of the areas the participants felt the least prepared for when they started teaching. At the early stage of their careers, the EBL teachers found this seminar content most beneficial in connecting the various components of daily teaching and developing a beginning understanding of the entire educational process. As more teaching experience and comfort presenting daily materials are gained, the influence of the other seminars may increase and they will recognize the entire cycle of education from lesson development, delivery, assessment, and reflection.

The ability to collaborate with peers was one of the most frequently cited benefits of all of the supports offered to EBL teachers. Whether the interactions were with their EBL cohort, peers at state conferences, or during district offered curriculum development, they greatly benefitted from being able to learn and share with others who had experiences similar to
theirs. Although their continued level of collaboration may have been limited, they developed a network of resources by which they are capable of reaching out to during times of need.

Prior life experiences and personality traits play a significant role in shaping the teachers’ transition into secondary CTE teaching and their perception of continued teaching. The study found that although some teachers did not have the mentoring experience they desired or the lack of compensation for EBL teachers bringing years of professional experience into the classroom, they all planned to continue teaching. Prior life and career experiences gave teachers a preliminary perspective of what to expect from their career change, in combination with their personality and self-driven attitude, it drove them to succeed regardless of less than adequate mentor support.

**Recommendations**

The following recommendations are a result of the findings of this study.

1. Further research is needed on the mentoring and induction programs of KUSD and RUSD, and how mentors are matched with new teachers. The findings of this study showed the influence of a positive mentoring experience on a new EBL CTE teacher and also revealed that those lacking the valuable experience were left searching for more support from the EBL “boot camp.”

2. Additional research is needed on a larger sampling of the EBL participants who may not have as substantial experience working with secondary age students prior to participating in the EBL “boot camp.” These prior experiences by the participants may have created a natural advantage in their ability to teach and manage student behavior versus a participant with no prior experiences with secondary age students.
3. Additional research is needed on the compensation model for EBL teachers. The study found that although EBL teachers did not say they planned to leave education due to the lack of higher compensation, a general consensus was established that the compensation should reflect the years of content experience they bring to the classroom.

4. This study could be replicated on other EBL cohorts to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of the “boot camp” professional development has on teachers as modifications to the program are implemented. The professional growth of an individual is a unique and personal experience, and additional studies may provide a broader perspective of the program’s impact.

5. Coordinate the EBL “boot camp” professional development seminars to align with the mentoring and induction activates required of teachers in KUSD and RUSD, rather than two separate entities and requirements for teachers. Increased coordination and communication between the EBL seminar instructors, and school district personnel may reduce the likelihood of conflicting practices as found in the study.

6. Clarification needs to be provided to the EBL participants related to the status of their teacher license at the completion of the program. The study found that there is uncertainty as to expectations or requirements for maintaining their license.
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Appendix A

Interview Script

Hello,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research study about your perception as one of first experience-based licensure cohort participants toward the EBL coursework and its influence on your decision to continue teaching. Your experience participating in the EBL program will provide insight for my study. The results of the study may be used in future longitudinal studies and provide recommendations for future “boot camp” program modifications.

Participation in this study presents minimal risk to you. Your personal information including your name and employer will remain confidential and a descriptor name will be assigned to your data. You are not required to answer any questions if you choose.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary and will take approximately 45 minutes. You may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences to you. You have the right to stop the interview at any time. Should you choose to participate and later wish to withdraw from the study, all data associated with your interview will be removed from the study and destroyed.

I will be reading you some open-ended questions about your experiences transitioning into a secondary CTE teacher. The interview will be recorded to allow for multiple reviews and analysis.

Do you consent to participate in this research study entitled, *Perceptions of Industry Professionals Completing the Experience-Based Licensure “Boot Camp” Toward Continuing Teaching as Secondary Career and Technical Educators*?

Thank you, and I will now begin.

**EBL Educator Interview Questions**

1. Briefly explain to me your transition into the teaching profession and why you chose to become a teacher.

2. Describe for me your first year of teaching.

3. What responsibilities did you feel the most prepared for when you began teaching?

4. What responsibilities did you feel the least prepared for when you began teaching?

5. How did the EBL coursework best prepare you for the classroom?

6. What EBL coursework do you continue to utilize in your classroom?

7. What are your continuing interactions with your mentor(s) and EBL cohort classmates?
a. How have they influenced your teaching?

8. Outside of the EBL “boot camp,” what professional development activities have you participated in since becoming a teacher?
   a. Do these activities coincide with the EBL coursework?
   b. Were these activities assigned to you or chosen by you?

9. Who do you seek out when you have questions or ideas?

10. Has your perception of teaching changed since completing the EBL program and having taught for four years?

11. Will you pursue additional coursework to obtain a Tier 3 lifetime license or advanced degree? Why/why not?

12. What do you see influencing you and your decision to continue to teach?

**Closing Script**

Thank you again for participating in this research study. If I have any further questions or need clarification about a response, I will contact you again. In the next 2-3 days, you will be receiving an electronic copy of the interview transcript along with my analysis for accuracy verification; a response is only needed if there are any discrepancies. If you do not have any questions for me, thank you for your time and have a great rest of your day.
Appendix B

Signed Consent Form

UW-Stout Signed Consent Statement for Research Involving Human Subjects

Consent to Participate In UW-Stout Approved Research

Project Title: Perceptions of Industry Professionals Completing the Experience-Based Licensure “Boot Camp” Toward Continuing Teaching as Secondary Career and Technical Educators.

Description: The purpose of this research is to examine the perceptions of Kenosha Unified School District and Racine Unified School District experience-based licensure (EBL) educators toward the EBL “boot camp” professional development in helping you meet the expectations and responsibilities set by your school district for educators and its impact on you continuing to teach secondary career and technical education (CTE). You will be a part of a semi-structured recorded interview about the EBL coursework and supports that have impacted your transition into teaching and the influences on your decision to continue teaching. Please feel free to ask the researcher any questions that you may have regarding this study.

Risks: Your participation in this study presents minimal risk to you. Some questions may provoke personal responses caused by life events outside of the educational setting. You are not required to answer any questions if you choose.

Benefits: Data from this study may benefit the researcher in understanding the supports and influences impacting an EBL educator in continuing to teach CTE. The results may provide recommendations for “boot camp” program modifications to aid long-term teaching success of CTE EBL educators.

Confidentiality: Your identity, including your name and employer, will remain confidential and will not be published in this study. Each participant will be assigned a descriptor name that will be associated with all data collected during the interview process. The descriptor name key and data collected will remain secured in separate locations. Written data collected from the interviews including fieldnotes will be secured in a personal safe and all digital files will be secured on the researcher’s password protected computer. Your name may potentially be used during the interview process in interactions with the researcher that could identify you by name when the audio recordings are sent to the professional transcription service. In these cases, the transcript will be edited to remove your name and replaced with the assigned descriptor. All efforts will be made not to address you by name during the interview process. One year following the conclusion of the study, all digital files will permanently be deleted, and fieldnotes shredded.
Future Use: The results of this study, in combination with others, may contribute to longitudinal studies examining other EBL cohorts being implemented. All personal identifiers will be removed from any data that is collected and will not be shared in future research.

Time Commitment: The interview will be scheduled to take approximately 45 minutes.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate without any adverse consequences to you. You have the right to stop the interview at any time. Should you choose to participate and later wish to withdraw from the study, all data associated with your interview will be removed from the study and destroyed.

IRB Approval: This study has been reviewed and approved by The University of Wisconsin-Stout's Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has determined that this study meets the ethical obligations required by federal law and University policies. If you have questions or concerns regarding this study, please contact the Investigator or Advisor. If you have any questions, concerns, or reports regarding your rights as a research subject, please contact the IRB Administrator.

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Statement of Consent:
By signing this form, you agree that you have read and understand the above information and willingly choose to participate in the research study entitled, Perceptions of Industry Professionals Completing the Experience-Based Licensure “Boot Camp” Toward Continuing Teaching as Secondary Career and Technical Educators

___________________________
Printed Name

___________________________
Signature Date