Standard 14: Student Teaching

What consumers need to know about teacher preparation

To learn more about how programs are scored on this standard, including how individual indicators are satisfied, please see the scoring methodology.

For examples of model materials on this standard, please see the resources section.

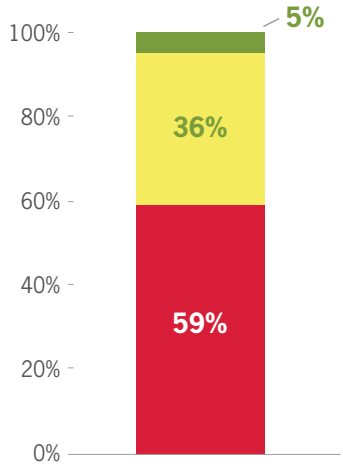
Background

Teachers make an estimated 1,200 instructional decisions each day, which helps to explain why an apprenticeship is essential to success as a novice teacher. Student teaching, which is generally a semester-long apprenticeship in a PK-12 school, allows candidates to build on their coursework by learning from a "pro" how to effectively deliver instruction.

This standard examines the frequency and spacing of observations by programs' supervisors, the programs' role in the selection of cooperating teachers, and the criteria that programs establish for cooperating teachers. This year, the standard was adjusted to give partial credit to programs where supervisors observe teacher candidates four times (five or more observations are required for full credit), and to explore whether programs screen potential cooperating teachers to determine if they are skilled mentors and teachers.

Overview

Distribution of scores on Std. 14: Student Teaching
(N=1,796 elementary, secondary and special education programs)



● or ◕
Student teachers are ensured of receiving strong support from program staff and cooperating teachers.

◑
Student teachers are ensured of receiving some support from program staff and cooperating teachers.

◔ or ○ (zero)
Student teachers are not ensured of support from program staff and cooperating teachers.

Sample for this standard

875 elementary, 833 secondary and 88 special education programs are scored on the Student Teaching Standard. This represents an increase of 216 elementary programs and 214 secondary programs and a decrease of one special education program from the 2013 edition of the Review. The standard was evaluated for every program in the Review that responded to our request for information, or for which sufficient information could be obtained, by February 2014.[1]

Approximately 200 of the programs rated in the 2013 edition of the Review supplied us with updated student teaching documents for this edition, and the new material is reflected in the findings. Please see the main body of the report for a discussion of our new findings for these programs. Our findings for the sample as a whole are comparable to our findings in Teacher Prep Review 2013. Any changes are due to changes in our scoring system.

What are common reasons that programs do not meet or only partly meet the Student Teaching Standard?

- *The program does not require that its university supervisors[2] provide frequent, evenly spaced, written feedback to the student teacher based on observations.* In many cases, university supervisors exercise fairly broad discretion about the number of observations they will conduct, the schedule with which they will observe student teachers and/or the manner in which feedback will be provided. In other cases, the requirements that are established are inadequate, for example only two or three observations are required. A small minority of programs rely exclusively on the cooperating teacher or other school personnel to conduct observations.
- *The program makes few demands on school districts regarding the characteristics of cooperating teachers.* While internal documents (such as guidance handbooks designed for teacher candidates who are about to become student teachers) may tout the exceptional characteristics of cooperating teachers, in most cases, programs' communications with districts simply ask that teachers who are appropriately certified and have three or more years of experience be selected to serve as cooperating teachers.
- *The program does not play an active role in selecting cooperating teachers.* By "active role" we mean that the program has the capacity to make an informed choice on selection of a teacher nominated by a school district because it collects substantive information on the qualifications of *each* prospective cooperating teacher. While many programs indicate that they "work cooperatively" with school districts to match student teachers with cooperating teachers, this usually refers only to having a cordial relationship in which the programs formally or informally communicate their need for cooperating teachers and in response receive names of those selected by district personnel.

1 This cutoff was necessary to allow sufficient time for processing and scoring materials already received.

2 The "university supervisor" is the IHE-employed individual charged with periodically visiting the student teacher, observing the student teacher's instruction and evaluating the student teacher in collaboration with the cooperating teacher. All but a few IHEs employ such individuals, and some IHEs have their own full-time faculty serve in this capacity.

Indicator-Level Findings

Probably because programs at most institutions of higher education (IHEs) share the same student teaching policies at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, distributions of scores across each of the types of programs evaluated do not differ significantly and are not reported separately.

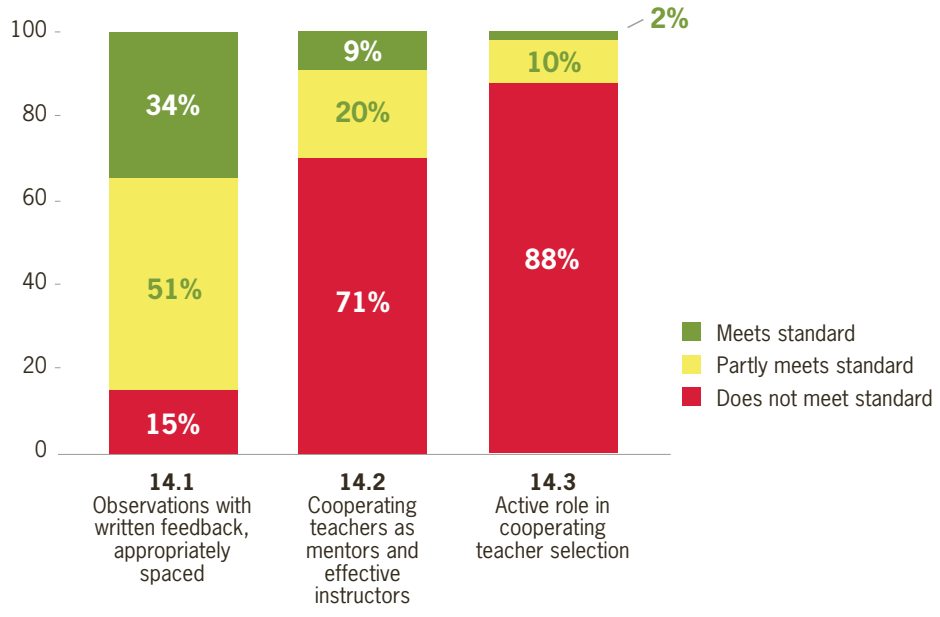
The Student Teaching Standard is one of three standards in which indicators can be partially met.[3]

- The first indicator separately addresses the number of observations with written feedback conducted by university supervisors and the spacing of observations. For the portion of the indicator that is related to the number of observations, partial credit is given for four observations and full credit for five or more observations.[4]
- The second indicator looks at the program's communications with partner school districts to examine the criteria established by the program for the selection of cooperating teachers. We note if programs convey that a cooperating teacher must be a capable adult mentor, an effective instructor as demonstrated by a positive effect on student learning, or both. Because elements similar to indicator 14.2 have been incorporated into indicator 14.3, we report our findings for indicator 14.2 but do not include them in our overall score for this standard.
- Evaluation of the third indicator first assesses the degree to which the program plays an active role in selecting the cooperating teacher. If the program is found to satisfy that portion of the indicator, additional credit may be awarded if the substantive information used by the IHE in selecting cooperating teachers addresses mentorship and instructional skills as defined in Standard 14.2.

For a small number of programs, missing data prevents us from evaluating one or two indicators, but an overall score can be determined because even if all the indicators in question were met, the program would not receive a higher overall score. Such programs are included in the *Review*, but their unscorable indicators are not counted in the findings presented here.

Program performance on each of the three indicators is shown in the graphic below and discussed more fully in the text that follows:

Program performance on the three Student Teaching Standard indicators



3 Partial credit can also be awarded in evaluation of Indicator 12.3 in the Assessment and Data Standard, as well as in evaluation of Indicator 10.2 in the Classroom Management Standard.

4 See the rationale for an explanation of the research supporting five observations.

No indicator in the Student Teaching Standard is fully satisfied by more than a minority of programs, and the number that satisfies the third indicator in full or in part is particularly small. For the first indicator, more programs partially meet the indicator by mandating that observations be spaced at regular intervals rather than by requiring four or more observations with written feedback. With regard to the second indicator, more programs required mentorship skill than instructional excellence. Programs that earned partial credit on the third indicator collected some information on the skills of potential cooperating teachers, but generally did not request specific information on the candidates' mentorship or instructional skills.

Observations with written feedback, appropriately spaced

The feedback received during student teaching plays an important role in preparing future teachers for the classroom. As shown above, about one-third of programs fully satisfy the indicator by requiring that university supervisors observe student teachers at least five times at appropriately spaced intervals, and give written feedback based on those observations.

When the requirements of this indicator are examined separately, forty percent of programs require five or more observations, with an additional 32 percent requiring four observations. Twenty-eight percent of programs require three observations or fewer, or leave the number of observations to the university supervisor's discretion. Sixty-nine percent of programs mandate that observations be evenly spaced, while 31 percent of programs leave the number and timing of observations up to the supervisor.

✔+ The **University of Maryland – Baltimore County** requires that "University supervisors will conduct five formal observations and complete four formative and one summative" observation forms. A schedule of observations is specified in the handbook.

Wayne State College requires that "[C]ollege supervisors will conduct a minimum of five instructional observations spaced over the full semester" using an evaluation form.

Cooperating teachers as mentors and effective instructors

Cooperating teachers should model outstanding teaching and be capable of providing guidance and support for the student teachers they mentor. Nearly all of the programs evaluated communicate some criteria for the selection of cooperating teachers to the school district personnel who are involved in selecting them, but those criteria are usually focused on the teachers' years of experience and/or area of certification. Few programs specifically mandate that their cooperating teachers excel as both mentors and instructors: Although 27 percent of programs require that cooperating teachers be good mentors or receive mentorship training, only 10 percent specify that cooperating teachers be effective instructors, as measured by student achievement, and even fewer programs (nine percent) insist on both.

Instead, principals are often asked to nominate "master" teachers, without a clear explanation of what this means. In addition, many programs simply state cooperating teachers' responsibilities — for example, "providing feedback to mentees" — instead of specifying minimum requirements such that cooperating teachers have demonstrated mentorship skill or have taken mentorship training before student teachers are placed in their classrooms.

✔+ **Creighton University** (NE) requires that each student teacher is placed in an accredited school with a cooperating teacher who has three years of experience, "a positive impact on student learning" and "the capacity to mentor an adult."

Active role in cooperating teacher selection

To ensure that their teacher candidates have the best possible placements, programs should play an active role in selecting cooperating teachers. However, only 12 percent of programs do so.

Most programs describe their selection process as "collaborative," but the overwhelming majority effectively give full responsibility for the selection of cooperating teachers to school district personnel. These programs may specify minimum criteria for cooperating teachers but accept nearly any teacher nominated by a principal. Such programs may feel that they have screened cooperating teachers adequately because they refuse to place student teachers with returning cooperating teachers who have been unsuccessful in past years. However, such a policy does little to help those student teachers who happen to be placed with unscreened, first-time cooperating teachers who turn out to be ineffective. At best, the student teacher might be moved to a new classroom after a half semester and forced to pick up what they can in a truncated time frame; at worst, they never make the gains possible from a student teaching placement and possibly decide that teaching is a bad professional fit.

An "active role" in the selection of cooperating teachers *does not* mean that programs choose cooperating teachers on their own. It *does* require that they collect information (beyond years of experience or area of certification) that reveals potential cooperating teachers' abilities and that gives program staff the capacity to choose among nominees based on relevant skills. As evidenced by programs that do so, this can be done in a cooperative manner — for example, by requesting that principals comment on the skills of teachers they nominate. While this indicator can be partially satisfied by the collection of information on any aspect of potential cooperating teachers' skills, full involvement in the selection of cooperating teachers requires that programs obtain proof of cooperating teachers' mentorship abilities and instructional strength (as measured by student achievement).

✔+ **Northwestern State University of Louisiana**'s cooperating teacher recommendation form asks principals to comment on how nominees meet criteria such as "Master Teacher" "Positive impact on student learning" and "Capacity to mentor an adult."

The **University of Houston** asks prospective cooperating teachers to fill out an application form in which they answer questions such as "What do you believe is your role as a mentor?" and "How do you meet the diverse needs of the students in your classroom?"

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