



A Closer Look at Student Teaching

Undergraduate Secondary Programs

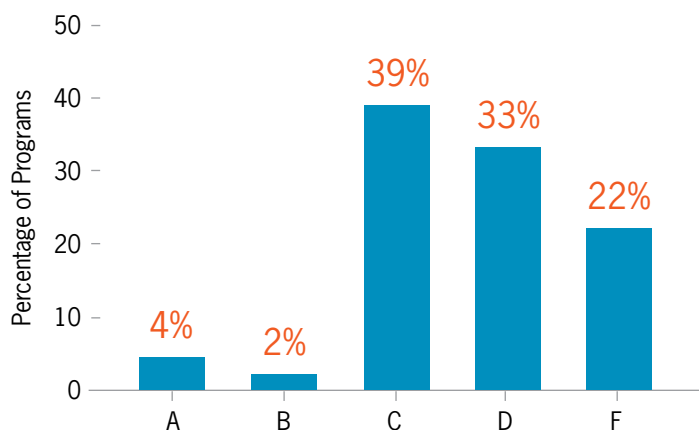
KEY FINDINGS: Programs leave too much of student teaching to chance. Only six percent of programs incorporate two essential elements that contribute to an effective student teaching experience: providing frequent feedback to student teachers and evaluating the quality of the cooperating teachers who open their classrooms to student teachers. A quarter of programs fail to take either of these basic steps.

Why teacher prep programs should provide strong student teaching experiences

Student teaching serves as a capstone experience for nearly 200,000 teacher candidates each year. At its best, student teaching allows candidates to build on their coursework by learning how to deliver instruction effectively from a “pro” and provides valuable feedback to aspiring teachers. Programs that earn an A are those that take an active role in identifying qualified cooperating teachers (the teacher of record in the classroom) and require program supervisors to provide student teachers with frequent observations incorporating documented feedback, two actions shown by research to increase the quality of the student teaching experience.¹

How many programs cover the basics of student teaching?

(N=692 undergraduate secondary programs)



Only six percent of programs earn grades of “A” or “B,” signifying that these programs make an effort to match their student teachers with strong cooperating teachers and that they provide an acceptable frequency of feedback to their student teachers. Most programs earn lower grades because they do not play an active role in confirming the skills of potential cooperating teachers, an element of this standard that is heavily weighted because the cooperating teacher plays such an important role in student teaching.

A closer look at the components of a high-quality student teaching experience

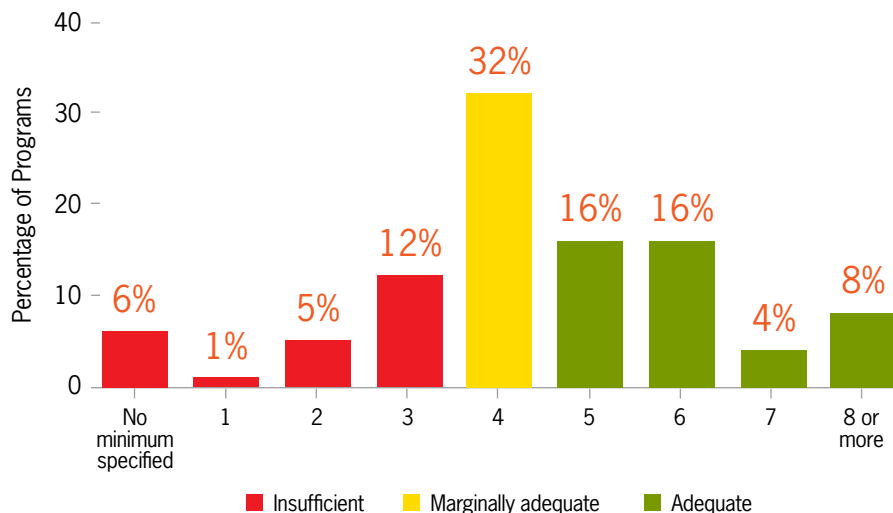
Frequent observations by a university supervisor

During this culminating training experience, representatives from the teacher prep program should regularly observe student teachers. Observations provide opportunities for a program supervisor to evaluate a student teacher’s mastery of essential teaching practices and to provide ongoing feedback so that the student teacher continues to improve. Research finds that

¹ Boyd, D., Grossman, P., Lankford, H., Loeb, S., & Wyckoff, J. (2009). Teacher Preparation and Student Achievement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 30(4), 319-343. This study shows that it is beneficial for student teachers to be observed five or more times by their supervisors. However, programs can earn an “A” if they require four or five observations.

when student teachers are observed at least five times by their supervisors over the course of the student teaching placement, they are more effective when they have classrooms of their own. While feedback from cooperating teachers is also extremely valuable, there is no research of comparable strength to determine how much cooperating teacher feedback is needed, so we only focus on supervisor feedback.

How many observations with documented feedback do programs require?

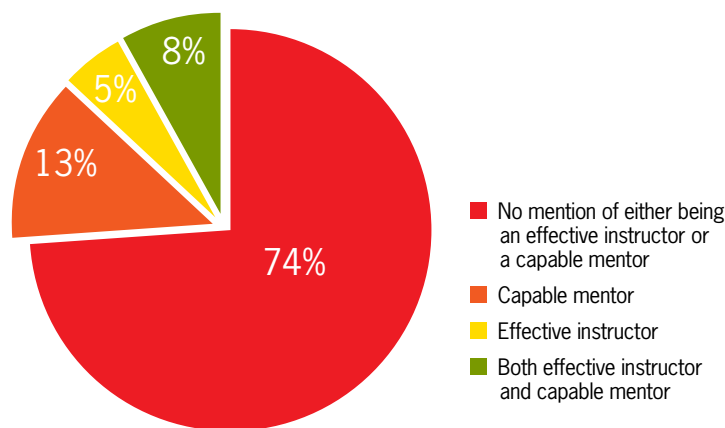


Slightly more than three quarters of programs (76 percent) require that university supervisors observe student teachers at least four times.²

Pairing student teachers with great cooperating teachers

During student teaching, the cooperating teacher plays a pivotal role. The cooperating teacher should be a model of effective teaching practices and be able to offer the student teacher high-quality feedback and guidance. To ensure that the cooperating teacher is up to this challenge, teacher prep programs should convey clearly that a cooperating teacher should be an effective instructor (as measured by evidence of student learning³) and a capable mentor of adults.

How many programs communicate that cooperating teachers should be effective instructors and capable mentors? (N=619 programs⁴)



2 The “no minimum specified” category includes programs that do not set a minimum number of observations and programs that do not require that student teachers be provided with documented feedback after observations.

3 Positive impact on student learning may be determined by a number of means, including — but not restricted to — standardized test scores. For example, teacher-written tests or portfolios of student work would be acceptable.

4 These data are based on the subset of 619 programs for which we could clearly identify whether or not the program communicated these expectations.

There is some evidence that state regulations influence requirements that programs set for their cooperating teachers: All but one of the states with the highest proportion of programs requiring cooperating teachers to have strong mentorship skills had state regulations with this requirement. However, even in states with such requirements, only about 57 percent of programs explicitly require that cooperating teachers must be good mentors, indicating that many programs ignore this state regulation.

Beyond communicating expectations about the qualities cooperating teachers should have, teacher prep programs should play an active role in screening cooperating teachers to verify that they meet the program's criteria.⁵ Research has shown that participation of programs in the selection of cooperating teachers results in a better experience for student teachers.

However, in most cases, programs likely accept almost any cooperating teacher suggested by a school district, without knowing much about that person. Only about eight percent of programs collect any meaningful information on each cooperating teachers' skills, including about one percent that screen cooperating teachers for both their mentorship and instructional skills.⁶ These percentages have not changed substantially since we last examined this area in 2014.

Programs that screen cooperating teachers for both mentorship and instructional skill:

Arizona State University
Northwestern State University of Louisiana
CUNY – Lehman College
Ohio Wesleyan University
Wright State University (OH)

Comparison with other categories of programs and with previous years

The findings discussed here are nearly identical to those we [reported](#) for undergraduate elementary programs in the fall of 2016. The similarity is unsurprising because many institutions use the same methods to recruit cooperating teachers for multiple types of teacher candidates, and have the same policies on observations for elementary and secondary teacher candidates.

The findings for this standard have not changed substantially since we last looked at student teaching in 2014.⁷ Looking only at the 502 programs we were able to evaluate in both the *2014 Teacher Prep Review* and the current *Teacher Prep Review*, over a quarter of programs — 27 percent — changed the frequency of feedback they offered their student teachers, as compared with two years ago. However, these programs were almost evenly split between programs that increased the amount of feedback and those that decreased it, resulting in almost no net effect.

- 5 Programs that take an “active role” have the capacity to make an informed choice about whether to accept a cooperating teacher nominated by a school district, as indicated by whether the program collects meaningful 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.
- 6 Meaningful information is not restricted to information about a teacher’s instructional and mentorship skills. For example, a principal might be asked to comment on a teacher’s classroom management or communication skills. However, information on the individual’s skills as a teacher, beyond number of years of experience or area of certification, must be obtained.
- 7 Scoring was formerly conducted on a three-point scale, but was converted to a five-point scale for the current edition of the *Teacher Prep Review* to capture more nuanced information.

Methodology in brief

We review a variety of materials used during student teaching including handbooks and observation forms, as well as communications between prep programs and school districts. We look to see that a supervisor from the prep program is required to observe the student teacher and give documented feedback at least four or five times. We also review whether the program ensures that the teachers in whose classrooms student teachers work are demonstrably effective teachers and are skilled adult mentors.

To learn more about our evaluation, please see the methodology section of our [Standard Book](#) for the Student Teaching standard. For examples of model [materials](#) on this standard, please see the “What You Can Do on Student Teaching” section on the “Standards & Methods” page.

Understanding program grades for Student Teaching

- A** There are multiple ways to earn an A. The most common is:
 - Program collects meaningful information on cooperating teachers’ skills, including determining whether they are effective teachers and/or capable mentors, and requires that student teachers receive at least four or five observations from their supervisors with documented feedback.
- B** There are multiple ways to earn a B. The most common is:
 - Program collects meaningful information on cooperating teachers’ skills but does not determine whether they are effective teachers and capable mentors, and requires that student teachers receive at least four or five observations from their supervisors with documented feedback.
- C** There are multiple ways to earn a C. The most common is:
 - Program collects meaningful information on cooperating teachers’ skills but does not determine whether they are effective teachers and capable mentors, and does not require that student teachers receive at least four or five observations from their supervisors with feedback.
- D** Program does not collect meaningful information on cooperating teachers’ skills, but requires that student teachers receive at least four or five observations from their supervisors with feedback.
- F** Program neither collects meaningful information on cooperating teachers’ skills nor requires that student teachers receive at least four or five observations from their supervisors with feedback.



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