



# A Closer Look at Student Teaching

## Undergraduate Elementary Programs

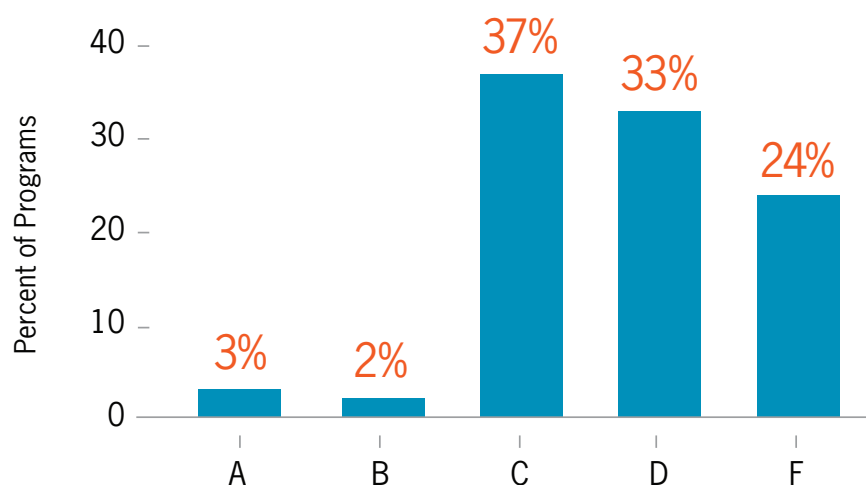
**KEY FINDINGS:** Only five percent of the 851 programs reviewed incorporate all of the elements of a quality program into their student teaching experience. For example, only a small fraction of programs (seven percent) make any attempt to evaluate the qualifications of their cooperating teachers.

### 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 from a “pro” how to deliver instruction effectively and provides valuable feedback to aspiring teachers. Programs that earn an A are those that seek out strong cooperating teachers and require program supervisors to provide student teachers with five or more observations incorporating documented feedback, the minimum shown by research to be effective.<sup>1</sup>

#### How many programs cover the basics of student teaching?

(N=851 undergraduate elementary programs)



Only five 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. This result has not changed substantially since we last looked at student teaching in 2014.<sup>2</sup>

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.

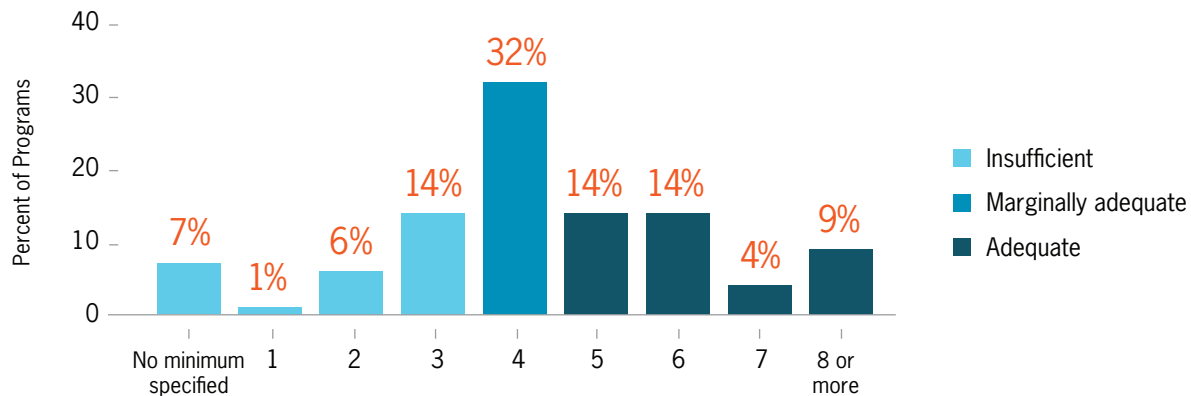
2 Scoring was formerly conducted on a three-point scale, but was converted to a five-point scale for the 2016 *Teacher Prep Review* to capture more nuanced information. Numbers do not sum to 100 percent due to rounding.

## 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 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?



Almost three quarters of programs (72 percent) require that university supervisors observe student teachers at least four times.<sup>3</sup> Looking only at the 646 programs we were able to evaluate in both TPR 2014 and TPR 2016, over a quarter of programs—28 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.

### Pairing student teachers with great cooperating teachers

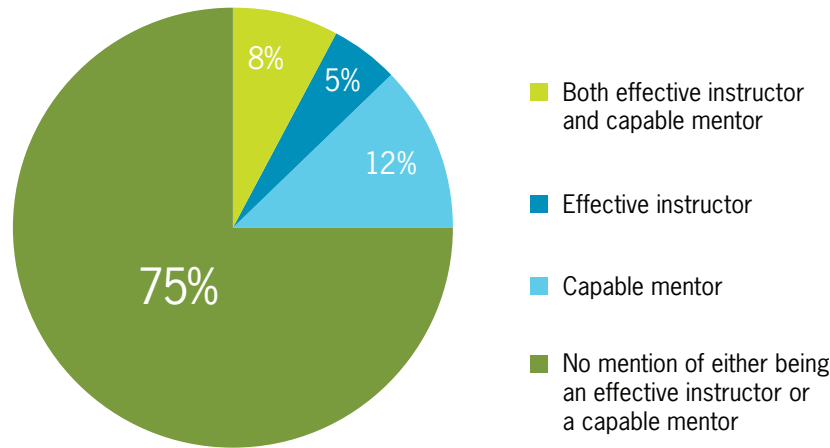
During student teaching, the cooperating teacher (the teacher of record in the classroom) plays a pivotal role. The cooperating teacher should be a model of effective teaching practices and be able to offer the student teacher high-quality feedback and guidance. To ensure that the cooperating teacher 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 learning<sup>4</sup>) and a capable mentor of adults.

3 When programs do not require any observations with documented feedback, they are included in the “no minimum specified” category.

4 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.

## How many programs communicate that cooperating teachers should be effective instructors and capable mentors?

(N=760 programs)<sup>5</sup>



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 58 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.<sup>6</sup> In most cases, programs likely accept almost any cooperating teacher suggested by a school district, without knowing much about that person. Only about 7 percent of programs collect any meaningful information on each cooperating teachers' skills, and only about 1 percent screen cooperating teachers for both their mentorship and instructional skills.<sup>7</sup> These percentages have not changed substantially since we last examined this area in 2014.

### 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.

Click [here](#) to read more.

For examples of model materials on this standard, please see the [resources](#) section.

- 5 These data are based on the subset of 760 programs for which we could clearly identify whether or not the program communicated these expectations.
- 6 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.
- 7 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.

## 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 are:
- 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.
  - Program collects meaningful information on cooperating teachers' skills, including determining whether they are effective teachers and/or capable mentors, but does not require 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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