

# CONFIDENCE & CAPABILITY

## Insights from Year 2 of the Common Indicators System Network

Deans for Impact's Common Indicators System (CIS) Network is a national effort to gather evidence of future teachers' knowledge and skill, and programs' performance using common measures across a broad range of educator-preparation programs. Now in its third year, the Network collects information on more than 8,000 teacher-candidates in 20 programs across 12 states.

Participating programs elicit information on a variety of dimensions of preparedness, such as teacher-candidates' classroom confidence, whether perceptions about their practice are supported by observations, and if candidates and graduates from similar programs have similar strengths and struggles. Collecting and analyzing this relevant data goes a long way toward ensuring that participating programs produce graduates who are as capable as they are confident in their teaching abilities, and that they can accurately assess and improve their own instruction.

Recent headlines are filled with concern over whether the US education system is stagnating, and that students are not being challenged academically. While our experience at Deans for Impact suggests the reality is more complex, data from our CIS effort points to one potential problem: **a striking disconnect between the perceived skills and actual practices of future teachers.**

## WHAT WE INVESTIGATED

In 2019, Deans for Impact released *Learning Together Through Evidence*, our initial insights from data collected on 4,526 teacher-candidates across 12 institutions in the 2017-2018 academic year. Our 2018-2019 sample grew to 5,172 candidates across 13 institutions, including roughly 1,300 candidates with data in both years, creating our first longitudinal sample. Our Year 2 analysis builds upon the initial findings and uses that evidence to expand our understanding of teacher-candidate preparedness.<sup>1</sup>



On the whole, we found remarkably consistent results across both years. This is cause for both hope and concern. The consistency suggests that the CIS indicators are measuring relevant constructs, which increases our confidence in the value of these data for understanding teachers' preparedness. However, the results themselves raise questions about the instructional preparedness of beginning teachers.

## WHAT WE'RE LEARNING



### Confident teachers rate their programs highly.

On average, program graduates who rate their preparation experience more highly are also more confident in their ability to deliver instruction while in the program. Employers assessing these graduates agree: graduates who rate their program more highly also tend to be rated more highly by their principals. And candidates *do* seem to improve during their time in the program: candidates feel more effective – and appear to teach more effectively – between the beginning and end of their culminating clinical experience.



### But confidence does not correspond to capability.

There is a gap between candidates' perceived beliefs and their actual instructional practice. Within our sample, *feeling* good about a particular aspect of one's instructional practice doesn't systematically relate to *being* good at that practice.<sup>2</sup> Likewise, increased self-confidence on a particular aspect of instruction doesn't match the assessment of expert observers in that area.



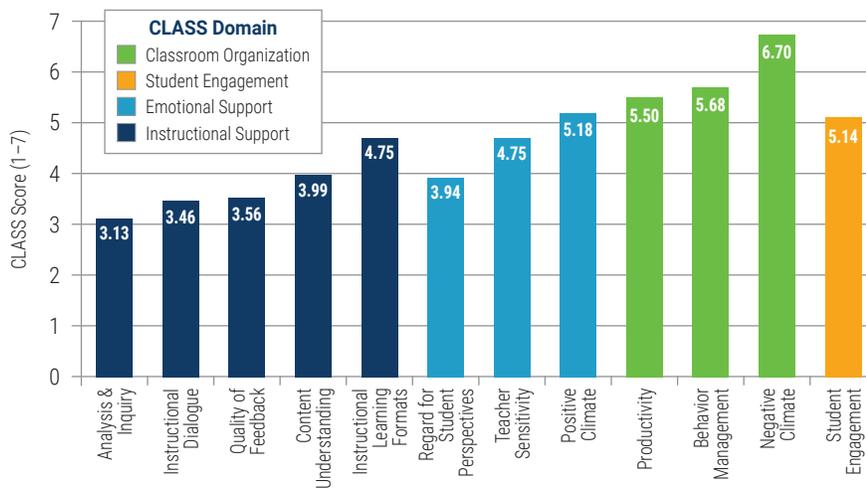
### Capability is weakest in key areas of instruction.

Across both years, future teachers' skills were weakest in three areas of instructional practice – analysis and inquiry, quality of feedback, and instructional dialogue. These are core elements of rigorous instruction and essential for soliciting deeper student learning. It is also not surprising to see gaps in these areas: they are among the most complex skills in teaching.

<sup>1</sup> As in our first year report, these insights are drawn primarily from the subset of programs in the network that collect evidence using the Teaching Beliefs and Mindsets Survey and CLASS observation tool, both of which are administered at the beginning and end of the culminating clinical experience in their respective programs.

<sup>2</sup> Pearson's correlation coefficients between candidate self-efficacy and CLASS domains are small to negligible, and none are statistically significant. This aligns with recent research that suggests that self-efficacy better predicts instructional practices for inservice teachers than for preservice teachers. See Zee, M., & Koomen, H. M. (2016).

## Average CLASS Observation Scores in Year 2



**Note:** Results represent a sample of 460 teacher-candidates. Data was collected at the beginning and end of a candidate's clinical experience. Results represent averages at the end of clinical experience.

## WHY IT MATTERS

These findings suggest an action gap, where perceived beliefs are not translating to practice. Feeling confident in one's teaching abilities is important, particularly as one enters a job as complex and demanding as that of a first-year teacher. But confidence should not be confused with capability.

In recent years, states and accreditation bodies have moved to require collection and analysis of data on aspiring and beginning teachers' perceptions – via dispositional surveys, beginning teacher surveys, and employer surveys. At Deans for Impact, we believe that such perception data represents a piece of the puzzle.<sup>3</sup> Yet, if confidence does not correspond to capability, preparation programs should focus their attention on measures of future teachers' actual knowledge and instructional skill, not just their perceptions of skill.

## WHAT COMES NEXT

In 2020, the CIS Advisory Board will continue to evolve the indicators used by participating programs. This will include modifications to existing measures and the introduction of new measures of future teachers' actual knowledge and skill. Participating programs are deeply committed to drawing upon these insights to improve the preparation of beginning teachers – and continuing to track indicators.

While the results described in this brief are specific to the Network, we believe they reflect challenges that are common to most educator-preparation programs and offer vital insights about opportunities for instructional improvement across the nation.



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### Analysis & Inquiry

emphasizes the facilitation of higher order thinking through analysis, hypothesizing, and brainstorming; opportunities for novel application through rigorous and open-ended tasks; and encouragement of metacognition through teacher modeling and student self-reflection.

### Instructional Dialogue

captures purposeful use of content-focused discussion among teachers and students that supports cumulative connections across ideas to deepen understanding, with students taking an active role.

### Quality of Feedback

emphasizes feedback loops between the teacher and students and among students that deepen understanding, scaffolding learning through effective prompts, building on student understanding to clarify thinking, and affirmation to encourage persistence.

<sup>3</sup> Indeed, there is emerging research suggesting modest associations between graduate perception data and other important indicators, including retention. See Bastian, K.C., Sun, M., & Lynn, H. (2019).

## ABOUT THE COMMON INDICATORS SYSTEM

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The Common Indicators System (CIS) Network is a first-of-its-kind data system and national community of educator-preparation programs. The Network supports participating programs in gathering meaningful evidence about their teacher-candidates and graduates and helps them convert that information into programmatic improvements.

In the 2019-2020 academic year, the network is collecting evidence across four indicators of candidate preparation, pre-service perceptions and practice:

- **Student teaching observations** using the CLASS observation rubric developed at the University of Virginia
- **Teacher-candidate perceptions** about their own abilities using a Teaching Beliefs and Mindsets Survey that draws on validated scales of self-efficacy, culturally-responsive teaching practice, and grit
- **Feedback from recent graduates** on their perception of the quality of the program that prepared them, using a survey developed by the University of North Carolina
- **Feedback from employers** on the effectiveness of teachers they've hired, using a survey developed by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

The CIS Network provides ongoing opportunities for members to learn from each other, analyze candidate evidence and lead others in assessing data to improve the instructional preparedness of beginning teachers:

- **Inquiry Institute:** An annual gathering where members collaboratively analyze their data from the past year, learn from other teams, and plan next steps based on what they've learned.
- **Shared Inquiry Tool:** A customized dashboard that enables members to make quick and easy comparisons between a particular program and the network on each CIS indicator.
- **CIS Learning Series:** Semi-monthly virtual opportunities to learn from member programs and how to lead cultures of evidence-informed improvement. Examples include paired consultancy sessions on problems of practice and webinars to help leaders increase data fluency in their programs.

## ABOUT DEANS FOR IMPACT

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Deans for Impact is a national non-profit dedicated to ensuring that every child is taught by a well-prepared teacher. Since 2015, Deans for Impact has worked closely with leaders from educator-preparation programs in over 30 states to transform how they prepare future teachers. In designing network experiences, Deans for Impact aims to create inclusive and collaborative spaces that address participants' real problems of practice, and provide concrete examples while recognizing the importance of local context.