One of the perks of our calling is the opportunity to interact with ITEP couples in your schools and in the Pacific Area Office as you travel through Auckland. This allows us time to learn about and from you; feel of your enthusiasm and goodness; marvel at your work ethic; watch you draw on your training, experience and expertise to build the capacity of others; and see your commitment to serving Jesus Christ by doing everything asked and more, both inside and outside the school setting, to “feed his sheep.” Whenever we are in communication with principals, teachers, BYUH and S&I officials, we are always told how much they value and appreciate ITEP missionaries. You are truly making a difference!

With our visit to Tongatapu and Eua, Tonga last month, we have now spent time in 14 of the 15 Church schools in the Pacific (Koulo remains on our bucket list). It is such a blessing to be in educational settings where the Lord’s spirit is in abundance and where administrators, faculty and staff are dedicated, teachable and genuinely care about students. Church schools provide a marvelous environment for students, and data supports the fact that student learning and achievement continues to improve.

It has been a thrill to watch the growth of the ITEP-TVET program. The Osbornes got us off to a great start by having a positive impact in all six high schools. We now have the Goodlets at Pesega and Vaiola in Samoa, the Meyers at Liahona and Saineha in Tonga, the Collins at Church College of Fiji, and a fourth ITEP-TVET couple will arrive at Moroni in Kiribati the beginning of March. Your mentoring and teaching is certainly blessing the lives of teachers and students.

Much has been accomplished this year. Although there are still a few intensive ITEP courses being taught during the month of December, 2013 has turned out to be a banner year for the number of courses taught—76 and the number of students who have received BYUH credit for courses—556. In addition, missionaries have conducted numerous faculty in-services, observed classes, mentored educators, participated in leadership meetings, and provided expertise and support when requested by principals. ITEP missionaries have helped Church school educators earn 24 ITEP Teaching Certificates, one ITEP Counseling Certificate, and 10 Administrative Certificates.

We have said goodbye to five excellent ITEP missionary couples this year: Osbornes, Szokas, Whiteheads, Budgetts and Spencers. They have made significant contributions and they are missed. Fortunately a number of quality couples have responded to President Monson’s request for senior missionaries. We will be welcoming six new ITEP couples during the months of February through April for assignments at Church College and Primary School in Fiji; Vaiola College in Samoa; Pesega College and Sauniatu Primary in Samoa; Moroni High TVET in Kiribati; Saineha High in Vava’u, Tonga; and five middle schools in Tonga.

Six ITEP Missionaries hand out certificates at the Awards Ceremony at Liahona High School.
Elder and Sister Goodlet
Samoa — Pesega and Vaiola Colleges — TVET

Elder and Sister Goodlet were involved with the Prize Giving and Graduation Ceremonies at both Pesega and Vaiola High Schools at the end of the school year. The ceremonies were formal where they needed to be and then followed by a whole lot of fun culminating in the school proms.

Sister Goodlet has been thrilled to see so many of the students gain a love of sewing and being creative in that field.

Elder Goodlet’s highlight was to be able to teach many of the students to learn how to do electric Arc and Mig welding. He was amazed at how quickly the students learned these manual hand skills and how soon they gained their confidence to do things by themselves. “I just didn’t know how things would turn out and the success of these classes was an answer to my prayers.”

At Vaiola they were honored to be a witness of the official ‘ribbon cutting’ opening ceremony of a concrete stairway constructed by the final year students. The stairway leads up the mountainside to the giant Vaiola sign that is above the high school where the view is spectacular.

Elder and Sister Meyers
Tonga — Liahona and Saineha High Schools - TVET

Elder and Sister Meyers began serving as ITEP-TVET missionaries at Liahona High School on August 5, 2013. Their home is in Rexburg, Idaho, and they have seven children and 27 grandchildren. Sister Meyers is a registered nurse who worked in all areas of nursing, including hospital, doctors’ office, district home health, Medicaid supervising nurse, and a hospice nurse. Elder Meyers has a Masters Degree in Industrial Education and taught cabinetmaking, building construction, woodworking, drafting, computer-aided drafting, robotics and other technical courses at the high school and college level. He was recognized as the National Teacher of the Year by the International Technology Education Association on three separate occasions.

Elder and Sister Collings have provided training to the administration prepare for the start of the 2014 school year. They worked with faculty in updating inventories on the computer, downloading the new Certificate 2 modules from FNU on flash drives for the teachers, and will continue to help teachers and the administration prepare for the start of the 2014 school year.

Elder and Sister Meyers initially spent time becoming acquainted with the TVET programs and building relationships with the administrators and teachers. They took many pictures which were used to assemble a PowerPoint presentation about the TVET programs. It was shown to the entire faculty and then the student body at Liahona High to highlight the curriculum and opportunities associated with TVET. The Meyers have provided training to the Liahona and Saineha TVET teachers on stewardship, maintenance, budgets and 5-year planning. Along with many of the TVET teachers, they helped design and build the back ground sets for the Liahona High “graduation Ball.”

Elder and Sister Collins
LDS Church College of Fiji — TVET

Elder and Sister Collins began serving as ITEP-TVET missionaries at the Church College of Fiji on September 2nd. Their home is in Gilbert, Arizona, and they previously served a mission in the West Indies for 23 months. Sister Collins has a bachelor’s degree in home economics education and has taught English and home economics at the junior high and high school levels. She managed fabric stores and was a Real Estate Broker for her own company. Elder Collins has a BA in industrial arts education and a MA in higher education curriculum, and has taught drafting and mathematics at the college level. He was a commercial construction manager for a company that built warehouses and regional malls, and he owned a construction company that built homes. The Collins are the parents of seven children.

Elder and Sister Collins “love the atmosphere of the Church College of Fiji. We have a competent and cooperative faculty and administration and the students are wonderful — so pleasant to be around!” In addition to developing rapport with faculty, staff and the administration, they have spent time nurturing the relationship with the TVET Department of the Ministry of Education and with Fiji National University (FNU). They have worked with faculty in updating inventories on the computer, downloaded the new Certificate 2 modules from FNU on flash drives for the teachers, and will continue to help teachers and the administration prepare for the start of the 2014 school year.
Jack Taleni, principal of Vaiola, Samoa; Fehi Fifita, principal of Liahona High, Tonga; and, Bruce Yerman, Director of Pacific Church Schools spent a week at BYU-Hawaii during the month of November at the invitation of President Wheelwright. The School of Education hosted us in meetings with many departments at the University. We were able to tell the story of Church Schools and learn how our schools can better prepare students for University expectations. We met with President Wheelwright five different times in four days. He and Sister Wheelwright hosted two meetings with Island students in their home where we spoke of making plans for the future and acting upon dreams. Highlights of the visit included meeting with individual students; meeting with the CSTS teachers who are finishing their class work and preparing to return home; visiting with members of the School of Education; meeting professors around the campus who have a desire to serve and help Island students; and experiencing President and Sister Wheelwright’s love and dedication for the Pacific. BYUH faculty were most supportive of our meetings and messages. We believe that this will lead to improved communication between Church schools and the university, and will result in greater opportunities for Island students.

Fita’ila Malimali recently received his BS degree in Elementary Education from BYUH. Fita’ila began taking BYUH classes in 1997. He spent many long hours away from his wife and family of 8 children (soon to be 9) studying, writing, reading, and viewing on-line class presentations. During this time, he never had the opportunity to attend BYUH on campus through the CSTS program because of his large family. But this never deterred him from continuing his goal of earning a degree. The entire Saineha faculty supported him in this endeavor. When the announcement of his graduation was presented in the August faculty meeting, everyone cheered and applauded him. He is a hard worker and now is looking into continuing his education by applying for the master’s program at USP. We are glad to have helped Fita’ila through this process by offering additional classes he needed over and above the required ITEP courses.

Six teachers at Saineha High School completed the required course work to receive their ITEP Teaching Certificate. They have taken all of the course work while we have been here. We are excited to have had the opportunity of being their instructors and helping them achieve this goal.
Blessings and Opportunities of an ITEP Mission
Elder and Sister Spencer – Samoa

Blessing: This form of missionary work is, in fact, work! We paddled pretty hard at times to stay up with all the preparation. We received many blessings while doing the work of preparation and delivery.

Blessing: Teaching the content and principles of education and being able to relate them to the gospel is such a treat! It strengthens and clarifies the threads of truth that run through both.

Blessing: Our lives have been forever enriched by our association with the Young Single Adult group in our Mo-tootua Ward. We taught the YSA class on Sundays (the only piece of church we understood for 18 months!), and participated in all of their activities. It has been a treasure. We love these young men and women.

Opportunity: We taught 12 different courses, some more than once.

Opportunity: No matter how much time you spend with SIOP and other educational models at home, so many of the principles have to be looked at through a slightly different lens here. It is partly because the teachers, also, are English language learners. It makes you reach down pretty deep and be very clear about the PRINCIPLE rather than simply the procedure or practice.

Opportunity: It has been a great opportunity to see the comprehensive work of the church in the islands—in addition to the education we have worked with, the proselyting efforts and all the work of the Presiding Bishop’s Office—the scope of the total effort the church invests is mind-boggling.

Blessing: When time passes and memories drift into the distance, we will not forget wonderful people who have blessed our lives during this experience: other senior missionaries, school people, students, and ward members. We express deep gratitude to them and to our Heavenly Father for letting us be a part of their lives for a brief moment.

Blessing: It is hard to find the words that express the depth and richness of the learning that has come from seeing the power of the doctrines of the kingdom affecting lives so different than our own—and yet so alike in our Heavenly Father’s eyes. Living among another people in a different culture has been an amazing blessing.
The Three Most Important Words— I Trust You

Elder and Sister Szoka—Liahona High School—Tonga

Our mission has ended but the memories will last forever. To close our service we would like to share one final story. During our time as ITEP Missionaries we taught a course in Effective Teaching. During one class there was a discussion on making students feel safe in the classroom. A story was shared by one of the teachers during that class about a student in her homeroom. Kili has a delightful relationship with her students. She is definitely the boss of her classroom, but her students look forward to time in her room. Her homeroom students begin the day with a scripture, a hymn, and a prayer. As Kili watched through the beginning months of the school year she noted that this particular student, who is not LDS, had become comfortable with the that routine. Kili began asking the student to participate in the devotional. He accepted, and contributed well to the good feelings in class.

Early in the year the student had missed three days of school. When he returned, he explained that he had been in jail. He had been waiting for a bus to school, and some boys from another school started teasing the Liahona boys, and the teasing turned to bullying, and the bullying resulted in a fight. Even though he had been on the sidelines, he had been taken in by the police and kept overnight.

When he was released, he walked to his home, only to find his clothing in a pile outside the front door. His mother, talking to him through a closed front door, told him she didn’t want him at home any more, because he would be a bad influence on his younger brother.

The student found another place to stay, and continued to come to school. After a few weeks, he asked Kili for help. “I trust you,” he told her. “I just called to tell you I love you and I miss you.” He hung up the phone softly—there had been no response on the other end of the line. Kili assured him that she would continue to support him, and promised that she would help him find a way to make things better. He left her classroom encouraged by her words and actions.

Students who feel safe in Kili’s room know that she will do everything in her power to keep them safe, physically, intellectually, and emotionally. What does that say about effective teaching? What can I do for one student today, for one person, to make them feel safe, to make them tell me, “I trust you?” I think those are the three most powerful words a teacher can ever hear.

Sister Johnson spent the year teaching the SIOP course at the five Tonga middle schools. As the teachers implemented the SIOP features, she observed them transforming their teaching, having more fun, and discovering that their students were learning more. At the end of the course, teachers were required to create a 3-day lesson plan using all 30 SIOP features. They were also asked to write a final Lesson Plan Description so Sister Johnson could evaluate their understanding of the process. At the end of the Lesson Plan Description, teachers were asked to reflect on “what I learned” and “how this experience will help me teach in the future.” Some of the teacher reflections:

“I am a better teacher today. I feel confident and competent. I have learned so much and it makes me want to improve more.”

“I marvel at how I can manage my students focus from the beginning to the end because they really comprehend the content.”

“I have learned that if I apply SIOP in everyday teaching, teaching will be fun, and learning will always take place.”

“It was tough work making sure to include all 8 components and 30 features in a 3 day lesson plan. But it was all worth it because there was High Student Engagement and I learned that the only reason my students act out is because they are not fully engaged. I salute SIOP with all the many things that I have learned for which I am sure is the best investment that I have made for my teaching career.”
We finished our missionary service in Fiji on the 4th of November, 2013, and are grateful to the wonderful teachers and leaders and members of the church we have met here. They have welcomed and loved and supported our service. We pray that we have had some impact in building capacity in the teaching of students and that this will translate into great learning in the lives of these children of God.

Elder and Sister Whitehead

"It was an amazing experience to teach and learn with the teachers at both the LDS Church College and LDS Primary School."

Tipo Solomone, principal of LDS Church College of Fiji, and Mahendra Prasad thank Elder and Sister Whitehead for their service and present each of them with a salusalu (wreath) as they bid them farewell.

In addition to teaching a number of ITEP courses, Sister Rasmussen has conducted reading timings with most of the Form 3-6 students. She found the majority to be very fluent English readers. However, many need to improve their comprehension, so that has been a focus at teacher in-services. She is also spending weekly sessions training the English Department on instructing, modeling and mentoring the writing challenge.

Elder Rasmussen is gaining a reputation as a fix-it man on the Island: clocks, DVD players, rice cookers, bicycles, and maintenance issues in missionary flats. He has also given presentations on electrical and air conditioning maintenance, basic car maintenance, water filter maintenance, welding, and safety tips for driving on the one Kiribati road.

Some of their personal and missionary highlights the past few months include: traveling to North Tarawa by boat to administer intake tests to 23 potential students; speaking at the seminary graduation; participating (with other teachers) in a dance at the Moroni High graduation; helping prepare and serve meals at the Mission Zone conference; supporting and assisting the Eita 2nd Ward’s bishopric and auxiliary leadership in multiple ways; and attending monthly baptisms of Moroni High students.

For a week in July, the USS Pearl Harbor was in Kiribati to provide a medical clinic for the citizens. Instructions were given about the care of animals, diabetes, and dental and eye care. The Rasmussens were able to accompany USS Pearl Harbor crew on a visit to the Dai Nippon Primary School where they handed out hygiene kits to the students. “After putting together infant and hygiene kits ourselves for the Humanitarian Center in the States, it was a joy to be able to pass them on to needy children and families here in Kiribati.” Moroni High hosted a cultural event for many of the crew members with lots of song, dancing and food.
How do you put into words the feelings of your heart at the end of a mission? How do you explain all that you have learned and experienced in words? Serving a mission in Vaiola, Savaii is like being placed on sacred ground. As you drive up the palm tree lined path, you know that it is a special place for there is a spirit there that permeates the whole campus. We are humbled to have been a part of the lives of such wonderful teachers and students. They welcomed us into their world and trusted us to share what we have learned over the years as educators. They were like sponges and it seemed like we couldn’t give them enough. We taught ten classes over the course of our mission and were able to help twelve teachers earn an ITEP teaching certificate and four earn their administrator certificate. This was made possible because of the dedicated previous ITEP missionaries that helped prepare our students for the last classes they needed. It also meant teaching every single day after school and sometimes both of us teaching a different class at the same time. The ITEP Certificates are important but watching the teachers use the strategies that they learned in our classes and rode the ferry between Upolo and Savaii too many times to count. We truly were very busy missionaries and enjoyed every minute of the experience.

We say good-bye to Savaii at the end of November but we take with us friendships that will last forever. The unwavering faith of the Samoan people has strengthened our testimony of the truthfulness of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They have taught us to trust in the Lord and to face each day with a grateful heart. They have given us so much more than we have shared with them. We leave humbled to have been entrusted to serve and love the Samoan people. As we pull out of the chapel parking lot every Sunday we were met with a long flow of Saints, from the Taupoelele Ward, walking down the road to attend church. The picture of the women and girls dressed in bright colored dresses, and the men and boys in their white shirts, ties, and lava lavas has been permanently burned into our souls. Saints from such humble circumstances coming to church dressed in their Sunday best to worship our Lord and Savior. We can see the Lord’s hand in the education of these great students and teachers. We will be forever grateful to our Father in Heaven for this great opportunity.
Dear ITEP Missionaries—Aloha,

On behalf BYU-Hawaii School of Education, I extend a warm greeting to you and wish you a wonderful Christmas and New Year. All of you are away from home and family this Christmas, but you are also on the Lord’s errand and surrounded by grateful people whose lives are changing because of you. Thank you for your efforts.

I have been at BYU-Hawaii for one semester now. Wow! What I have noticed is that the ITEP program is running like a well-oiled machine, teaching and serving—apparently nonstop judging by the emails. I wonder when you actually sleep.

I love the Pacific Islands, as I’m sure you do. My life has revolved around Western Samoa as a child (I was baptized in Saunitu River when my Dad and Mom were mission president), Hawaii as a youth in elementary school, and beautiful Kiribati where we lived for three years while teaching at Moroni High School. And, oh, my wife, Meere, is from Kiribati, and two of my children, Birema who is currently serving a mission in Los Angeles, and Lyle who is attending college, were both born (Nawewere ‘General’ Hospital) in Kiribati. My other children are: Tauea, who thankfully is waiting for us in the Spirit World, Terence who is in the US Navy stationed in Guam, Kalou who is married and living in Australia, and our baby, Sami (15 years old) is our only child at home.

After meeting with Elder and Sister Budgett, who just completed their mission in Vaiola, on the island of Savaii, I have had some ideas, which I will share at a later time, and which I hope will further the program. If any of you have ideas to help, or suggestions for me, I am open to them.

Since the coconut tree is the tree of life, I have a few suggestions for New Year’s resolution 1) In Kiribati, eat some raw fish marinated in coconut cream with look of joy. 2) In Samoa, smile with your mouth full of palusami cooked in coconut cream. 3) In Tonga, grab some lupulu cooked the authentic way, (you guessed it - in coconut cream. 4) In Fiji, rustle up some kasava; you will be glad you did!

On behalf of our crew at BYU-Hawaii, thank you. We sincerely appreciate your efforts. May the Lord bless you at this time.

Sincerely, Jon Shute, BYU-Hawaii, ITEP Director