Our initial orientation to ITEP began about four years ago in a conversation with Gary Carlston. Desiring to serve a mission together, we set a goal to serve an ITEP mission six years later when we were both retired. Elder Jacobsen retired at the end of June, 2011. In October we learned that Elder and Sister Ronnenkamp would complete their service in September of 2012. We made it a matter of prayer and were prompted to submit papers requesting to serve as ITEP Area Coordinators even though Sister Jacobsen needed two additional years to qualify for retirement. We were humbled and thrilled to receive our call in March.

We entered the Provo MTC on August 6th and our training ended on August 15th. We weren’t scheduled to fly to BYU-Hawaii until August 18th, so we were able to attend the ITEP missionary reunion in Logan on the 17th. This was a great affair because we were able to meet and converse with about 25 former ITEP couples who had served in either BYU-Hawaii, the Pacific Area office in New Zealand, or in the Church schools in Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa and Tonga. We knew about half the folks from former work associations in Idaho and Utah. Also in attendance were Dean John Bailey from BYU-Hawaii (BYUH) and Scott Wilde, Assistant Administrator for Seminaries and Institutes over the Pacific.

We were able to accomplish a lot during our time at BYUH. Significant time was spent with Dean John Bailey of the College of Human Development (the Education Department is in this College). John was the major impetus in the organization of the ITEP program, and he has been the only constant as missionaries and Seminary and Institute leaders have come and gone. BYUH has a huge financial and manpower commitment to the program, and that is largely attributed to John’s strong advocacy. We had individual meetings with President Steven Wheelwright, Vice President Max Checkets, Vice President Debbie Hippolite-Wright, and faculty/staff from the following departments: Admissions, Registrar, Academic Advising and Counseling, Technology and online education, Finance, and Testing. We also visited an Academic Council meeting (the Deans), met with all Education faculty members, and attended three of their classes where we met a number of education students. The faculty does an excellent job of teaching and preparing future educators. We often sat with students in the cafeteria, and we had the opportunity to converse with some who had graduated from Church high schools in the South Pacific, so we got a sense of how well the Church schools are preparing students for college.

The Pacific Area Seminary and Institute (S & I) office is staffed with hard-working and competent individuals who genuinely want young people to have opportunities to develop their talents, live righteously and prepare for eternal life. We have loved learning from them and feeling of their spirit and goodness.

The Ronnenkamps did an excellent job of serving as the ITEP Area Coordinators and they left things in great shape for us. Using the ITEP Handbook that they assembled, they trained and helped us feel the Lord’s hand in this work.

We have enjoyed working, associating and communicating with the ITEP missionaries. They are energetic, competent and caring couples who are loved by educators and students. It is very apparent that the senior missionaries are significant contributors to school improvement.

ITEP is truly an inspired program! Through the collaborative efforts of BYUH, S & I and the missionary couples, teachers, counselors and administrators in the Church schools are better trained and more effective in raising student achievement and helping young people prepare for eternal life.
Welcome to Elder and Sister Fellowes

Elder and Sister Fellowes will arrive in Tonga on December 11th to serve as our second ITEP TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) missionary couple. The Fellowes met at a dancing school, were sealed in the New Zealand Temple, and have been married for 56 years. They have five children, 14 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Their home is in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia.

Elder Fellowes has a Graduate Diploma in Education Administration. He has taught TVET classes, has worked as a building contractor, and has expertise in building management, carpentry, plumbing, painting, and building maintenance.

Sister Fellowes has served as Primary President, Relief Society President and Family History Advisor. Elder Fellowes has served as a counselor in a Stake Presidency, Bishop, High Counselor, Area Family History Advisor, President of Seventy and Ward Mission Leader. This will be their second mission together, having previously served for two years in the Brisbane Australia Mission.

The Fellowes enter the Auckland MTC on November 29th for a week of “Preach My Gospel” training, and then spend three days at the Pacific Area Office for CES, Church Schools and ITEP training. John Millar will provide TVET training for them in Tonga beginning December 17th.

Welcome to Elder and Sister Johnson

Elder and Sister Johnson arrived in Tonga November 15th to work with educators and students in five middle schools: Eua, Havelu, Lia-hona, Koulo and Pakilau. They have been married 41 years and are the parents of three daughters and two sons who live in Switzerland, England, California and Utah. They have five grandchildren who love to visit them at their home in Woodland Hills, Utah.

Sister Johnson has a BS in Elementary Education and a MS in Education. She was a K-6 teacher for 22 years in California and Arizona, taught education courses at the University of Arizona, and worked four years as a reading specialist for the Arizona Department of Education. Previous Church service includes Relief Society, Young Women and Primary Presidencies and teacher, ward music chair, stake missionary, and early-morning seminary teacher.

Elder Johnson has a BS in Economics and a MS in Public Administration. He worked in human resources as a civilian for the Department of the Army for over 41 years in California and Arizona, worked for the Department of Defense Dependents School System in Germany, and taught management and human resources courses for Western International University. Previous Church service includes Bishop, Branch President, Stake High Council, Stake Executive Secretary, High Priest Group Leader, Elders Quorum President, Young Men’s President, Stake Sunday School Counselor, Stake Missionary and Teacher.

The Johnsons stated that they “are delighted to be called to serve as educators in Tonga and are ready to humbly and diligently fulfill all responsibilities which will be given to them in this beautiful land with wonderful people.”
In October Sister Jacobsen and I were able to visit Elder and Sister Budgett and Vaiola College on the Island of Savai’i. Having flown into the Island of Upolu, we needed to take a ferry to and from Savai’i. Apolima Strait is the body of water between the two Islands, and this is the crossing that President Packer referred to in his October 2012 Conference talk titled, “Wherever our members and missionaries may go, our message is one of faith and hope in the Savior Jesus Christ.” Fortunately the two crossings we made were in a bigger boat and better weather.

While at Vaiola we had the privilege of attending the Devotional Assembly by the Year 13 students. The students were responsible for the entire hour-plus program, and every member of the class participated with the talks, prayers, music and/or assembling the video clip. Beautiful and uplifting program! It was evident that the students have been well-prepared academically and spiritually, and they have developed strong leadership and communication skills. Given their preparation, maturity and testimony, many will respond to President Monson’s announcement of lowering the missionary eligibility age by submitting their applications soon.

Elder and Sister Budgett actively participate in all activities at both the Primary School and the College. Sister Budgett works on a daily basis with primary teachers modeling and instructing on the new basal reader. She has provided numerous in-services, including on the hierarchy of reading instruction and on fluency strategies. Elder Budgett has also provided in-services on SIOP and student engagement. They do an excellent job of team-teaching ITEP courses and staff in-services. Vaiola teachers recognize their expertise, and they often come to them for assistance in improving their teaching.

Elder and Sister Forsyth are the only senior missionaries on the Island of Vava’u, but they have 28 Elder and Sister missionaries who they love and treat like their kids. They have helped the zone leaders deliver the Elders/Sisters monthly allowances and reported that “It was humbling to see their living quarters and yet their enthusiasm for the gospel.” They had an opportunity to speak in sacrament meeting and used some Tongan in reciting scriptures and bearing their testimonies. “It was a humbling experience to be speaking to another culture, but knowing we are all brothers and sisters. The next day a teacher stopped by our office and told us how thankful she was that we had the courage to speak Tongan. She said she has wanted to bear her testimony in English but couldn’t find the courage. After seeing us try, she thinks she will be able to do it. Her kids also were impressed and decided to try harder to learn English.” The Forsyths have been busy preparing to teach ITEP courses which will commence after the conclusion of the school year in November.

They have found that the slowness and unreliability of the internet on Vava’u is challenging, and teachers who are trying to complete BYUH on-line courses to obtain a Bachelors Degree are very frustrated. They have spent many late nights and Saturdays helping a teacher with his on-line English 314 course.
Fiji College and Primary School  

Elder and Sister Whitehead are engaged and excited about their call to work with educators and students in Fiji. They reported:

“We have been teaching the Special Education in the General Classroom (SPED 200) course at the primary school with some amazing results. We have about 17-23 teachers routinely show up, most of whom either don’t need the credit or have taken it previously. We chose to focus on a very small suggestion in the text about Positive Behavior Support (PBS). Our grandchildren had this program in their school in North Carolina so we knew something about it.

When we showed them some information about the program they and Principal Qaqa became very excited.

The primary teachers and the vice principal in particular really got on the band wagon and immediately began to prepare to teach and implement this program. Sister Mereisi Talemaitoga printed booklets of the slide show presented by the Area, taught all her teachers, organized a committee to do visual aids, and they full presented the program on the first day of the third term. They laminated posters with cute bees to be visual reminders of the 6 B’s. Posters were up in every classroom explaining the areas of focus and every teacher explained what was happening and what would be expected.

The classes were divided into groups to attend assemblies where the principal and vice principal explained and modeled PBS for teachers and students. They and we feel that this is truly an inspired program that will bless the lives of the students and teachers and bring wonderful results both in behavior change and academic success to the schools of the South Pacific.”

Congratulations to Selina Boila

2012 Fiji Children’s Award Recipient

Congratulations to Fiji Church College student Selina Boila on winning the Fiji Children’s Award for 2012. This Award is given to children who overcome difficult situations in their lives. Vice Principal Salote Maiwiriwiri nominated Selina for this prestigious honor after learning that the young lady had been spending much of her free time selling flowers and raising money to support her handicapped father and a younger brother.

The Award ceremony takes place at the home of the Honourable President of Fiji, His Excellency Ratu Epeli Nailatikau on 30 November, 2012. In addition, award recipients and a chaperone have a full itinerary of food, activities, transportation and accommodation from 3:00 p.m. on 29 November until after breakfast on 2 December.

This is a wonderful blessing for Selina and we are grateful to Sister Maiwiriwiri for her compassion, efforts and advocacy which resulted in this award.
Recently, all church employees in Kiribati got together for a special function. This was to honor Elder and Sister Ogborn (humanitarian missionaries), Elder and Sister Thorne (ITEP teachers), welcome Elder and Sister Youngberg (replacements for the Ogborns), welcome Dr Chisholm and his dental team-Fehi, Hisa and her husband Jarod (who served his mission in Kiribati), and also welcome Elder and Sister Wayas (serving in the Marshall Islands) but who came to see the Kiribati part of the Mission.

It was a fun night with all Church employees (S&I teachers and staff and Service Center staff) coming together with their spouses to put on a Cultural show for the guests, feasting and just having fun. The previous one and a half weeks was full of getting together to practice the dances, songs and it was a good way of being united and getting to know each other better. Church employees in Kiribati have a Social Committee made up of four members from the Service Center and four members from S&I. This committee would meet and organize activities for all church employees to get together and learn from each other. Every Friday afternoon, there would be physical exercise and fun games, such as volleyball, etc.

Every quarter there would be a social activity and Service Center and S&I would take turns hosting it. Last quarter Service Center hosted it and all church employees did tie-dying as spouses and then there was aerobics. The first quarter social activity was hosted by S&I and all gathered at Moroni High School Sandwatch beach, a beach that had been designated to the school to look after. These social activities have brought all church employees together and they have given all a desire to work together and be more united.

Marshall Islands Mission President Shaw represented the feelings of educators and students at Moroni High in Kiribati, when he stated that “The Thorne’s have done a wonderful job and we will miss them.”

Elder and Sister Thorne developed a wiki page that has many of the ITEP courses, along with a syllabus, some power point presentations, readings, videos, and other useful information: http://www.moroni-itep.wikispaces.com. Their personal blog site offers a perspective of life in Kiribati: http://www.elderandsisterthorne.blogspot.com. The Church has been in Kiribati for a little over 37 years, and they are in process of capturing some of the stories and history from some of the early converts on the following web site: http://www.kiribati-lds-pioneers.wikispaces.com.

Elder and Sister Thorne stated: “We love the Kiribati people and the Moroni administration, staff and students. It will be difficult to say goodbye, but 10 grandkids will help compensate the ache in our hearts.” We wish the Thornes well, and thank them for their Christ-like service on behalf of the people of Kiribati.
Pesega College and Sauniatu Primary in Samoa

Elder and Sister Spencer

After invitation by the principals, Elder and Sister Spencer conducted four two-hour professional development sessions at Pesega College and Sauniatu Primary. The focus has been on student engagement, including four specific cooperative learning strategies, eight engagement strategies, and some time on formative assessment. Cooperative learning is a great antidote to the I-talk-you-listen method of instruction so common in the Islands. Discussions are also taking place about the classroom environment—using the wall space for review of critical objectives, word study, and evidence of management. Another area of professional development with teachers at Sauniatu is instruction in basic phonics.

Teachers have reported that they are trying some new things, and that the students like them and are more engaged in the learning process. The teachers willingly attend the professional development sessions and express gratitude for the instruction and support. Two different teachers stated that, after eight or ten years of talking about SIOP, they now finally understand what a language objective is all about.

Elder and Sister Spencer have coached and mentored principals on how to visit classrooms and give positive, but specific and constructive, feedback regarding instruction. Monthly two-hour professional development sessions will continue in 2013 where the focus will be on the SIOP framework, with an emphasis on strengthening the teaching of English in all subject areas.

The Spencer’s related the following story: “A first year teacher came to us this past week and told us he had been contemplating quitting. He had had no teacher training of any kind, just a degree in English. After our first professional development session he came and said that we had been sent to Samoa just for him, to save him as a teacher. He went on to tell us which of the things we taught he had tried in his classroom, and how well they went for him. He feels more control and more success.”

Liahona High School in Tonga

Increasing capacity, one teacher at a time, has been Elder and Sister Szoka’s mantra the past few months. The small cohort of teachers working on ITEP classes has struggled to master a few concepts, but have found that application of two particular concepts have significantly improved their students’ performance: (1) formative assessment and (2) teaching rules and expectations in the classroom.

The process of formative assessment has been confusing for teachers because there are mid-term exams labeled “Formative Assessments” in most classes at Liahona. But teachers are making progress in understanding that they need to adjust instruction after every measure of assessment along the way to an exam, so they can coach students to success.

Following are comments made by teachers during reflections of lessons observed by Elder Szoka:

“What I was able to find out in today’s class was to make sure that everyone participates, and to create lessons/activities that cater to different learning styles/intelligences. I must remember to be a teacher who is always on my feet, together with the students. Mixing together in the same learning space of the students will make it easier for me to keep students on task and motivated to do their work.”

“Formative assessment becomes a wake-up call for teachers and for students, and helps teachers recognize students ‘true colors,’ what they really need to know, and what you need to re-teach. Classroom debates can be used as formative assessment, since students really give out what they understand, and give you a better chance to know what you need to teach.”

“I know that formative assessment is critical to student success. I can help my students focus on a certain topic, and students know what they are expected to learn. After a quiz I take the questions and use them to plan my next lesson. I may not need to take a lot of time—just a reminder or two. But then I need to make sure there are activities that can make the points clear, and not spend the whole class just talking to students.”

“As a newly hired teacher this year, I was confused with many things in the classroom. I was worried about how to get the students to listen to me, and what I would teach them. I had no idea where to begin. My wife, who has taken other ITEP classes, helped me put up classroom rules, procedures and consequences. I wondered how they would help, but I have found that these rules and procedures make me feel strong and fair towards my students. I have been able to manage behaviors in the classroom because I explained and discussed the rules and procedures frequently (especially during the first few weeks of school, but even after that) until they fully understood them.”
Our weeks seem to be filled with routines that are never really routine. Each day is a new adventure and generally filled with new opportunities and challenges. We are ever prayerful that we are doing the right and needed things. We know there is a great difference between staying busy and being effective. We feel we are in a hurry since our time is limited. Those who live here don’t seem to feel the same urgency. The tasks we are focused on will still be here tomorrow and so will they. This is teaching us another form of “enduring to the end”. We do understand that the TVET initiative will take time to develop and to be implemented. So our desire is to do as much as we can to assist them, in order that they can focus on the classroom and workshop instruction to impact the lives of our students.

In September we spent a week at Vaiola, preparing for the refurbishing project scheduled in January. We were able to take most of the small hand and power tools with us. We also took 6 new sewing machines and some of the better sewing machines that had been replaced at Pesega, with us. When we first visited the FTT program at Vaiola, there were only two working sewing machines. When we left this time, there were 13 working sewing machines. After visiting with Jack Taleni, Principal, he set up two hour visits for us to meet with 5 of the teachers. This gave us a great opportunity to share the TVET message with these teachers and begin developing the vision of creating expanded career opportunities for our students. We installed shadow boards to display and help manage the tools and began the process of releasing the tools to the programs. An important part of this process is to insure that the teachers understand they need to be accountable and responsible to care for and maintain these great training resources.

That month at Pesega we built and installed cabinets to store the sixteen working sewing machines, 20 bolts of fabric, and a 10 foot counter with underneath storage for fabric painting supplies and templates. After months of coordination with our FM group we have received several hand power tools and equipment items that were not working when we arrived. Many of them are back and in working condition. Both our woodworking and automotive mechanics programs are much better off than they were a few months ago. For this we thank the FM group for the wonderful support they have given. They have repaired electrical wiring concerns, hauled truck loads of trash, arranged for the pickup and repair of equipment and continue to stand ready to help out as the needs arise.

We continued our visits with our educational partners to develop some alignment between our programs. One of the most critical partnerships we are trying to develop is with NUS (National University of Samoa). They are friendly and courteous but are not interested in initiating any changes at this time. We feel that these partnerships will develop with time.

As a result our visits, we found that the TVET programs at the University are also in somewhat of a disarray. They are having a hard time staffing their programs with qualified instructors and many of the instructors are currently engaged in training away from the campus. One of those who left unexpectedly in the middle of the semester was the Technical Drawing instructor. In our conversations Sister Osborne mentioned that she knew someone who could help out and it only took a moment for the Dean, Eseta Hope, to accept our offer to help for a few weeks. So we are now, not just teaching our teachers, but teaching an Advanced Technical Drawing class to students on the NUS campus. It is fun to be in the classroom and working with these young people. In the end however, it is our hope that we can build a relationship of trust that will foster better relations and that will open the doors of opportunities for the students enrolled in our LDS school.

Our major focus in October has been working with instructors in the development of equipment and tool management system. We are attempting to work that in, while continuing our ongoing participation in Leadership meetings, supporting the Form 7 initiatives, and the development of the associated technical and vocational classes to support student training and advancement. We have participated in two or three firesides each week, to promote our LDS schools and the need for developing career skills through participation in Technical and Vocational programs. The importance of parents becoming involved in the SSEOP process was stressed.

We have spent a good deal of time working with Leo Leauanae, Principal of the Church College of Pesega, discussing and developing options to include TVET courses as part of the new Form 7 program that will begin next year. After our ongoing discussion for the last few months, we feel there are now opportunities and options for our Form 7 students. We were sent to teach, but it feels like we are the ones doing the learning. We have met so many great people and feel a part of the educational process here in Samoa.
T'was an ITEP Christmas

By Bruce Yerman

T'was an ITEP Christmas and across the Pacific
The young-at-heart Missionaries were feeling jolly and terrific
The sun was out and the temperature near thirty degrees
That's not Fahrenheit but Celsius, which is hot if you please

Sweat formed on their foreheads and dropped with a trickle
Reminding them of home, just a warm runny ice-cycle
And the Christmas tree scent was replaced instead
With a lovely green coconut palm all shiny and decorated

These couples are superheroes with all the right clothes
Wearing white shirts and dresses instead of capes and red pantyhose
“On Jacobsens, Szokas, Spencers, Fellowes, and Thornes”
“Go Whiteheads, Forsyths, and Budgetts, Johnsons, and Osbornes”

You are making great waves across this educational ocean
We teach better in the classroom the things like perpetual motion
You have shared your experiences, your service and kind love
Because of you, it is Christmas every day – you’re a blessing from above!

On behalf of the Area Office, the principals, teachers, staff and students across the Pacific, we thank you and wish you a “cool” holiday. We are blessed because of your Christ-like service and dedication. Your work bears witness of our Heavenly Father and his Son (1 Cor. 12:3). Your teaching inspires us and lifts us temporally and spiritually. We are edified because of you and with you (1 Cor. 14:12).

Merry Christmas!