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— Stephanie Kamai, Ed. D., *Assistant Specialist and Field Experience Coordinator, University of Hawaii*

Integrating the *PPAT*® Assessment into EPP planning fosters collegial conversation about program quality.

At the University of Hawaii—West Oahu, planning for the *PPAT*® assessment is fostering collegial conversation about nearly every aspect of the school of education's teacher preparation program. “The *PPAT* has brought us out of our own specializations,” said Assistant Specialist and Field Experience Coordinator Stephanie Kamai, Ed. D., who was tasked with leading the university's implementation of the *PPAT* assessment. “It brought us a little more out of our silos to say, Okay, what are we all doing? Because this is coming. We might not have done that if we didn't have the *PPAT*,” she said.

For years, EPP faculty have worked hard to meaningfully embed a university-wide, learner-centered, indigenous-serving focus into the teacher preparation program. “We try to maintain a focus that is true to the culture of Hawaii,” Kamai said. Consequently, it was important that use of the *PPAT* assessment didn't disrupt that focus. “I needed time to see how the two could blend together, because we couldn't just throw away everything we were doing. I needed time to understand what kind of marriage this was going to be.”

In support of this thoughtful approach to implementing the *PPAT* assessment, the powers that be gave EPP faculty the time they needed, “which has helped quite a bit,” she said. “It gave us time to really talk about what our students are doing when they come to student teaching. For us in education it's about: How do we instill in our students the different issues that are out there in our schools? As teachers, how do we prepare our students to teach, embrace, and motivate these youngsters who

come from a history of challenges?” Now it would be about preparing teacher candidates to complete the *PPAT* assessment successfully while maintaining that focus.

Using insights gained by evaluating candidate responses as a *PPAT* rater, Kamai began to realize that, while the *PPAT* assessment is administered during the clinical experience, “it really isn't about the work that's done in one course. It's about what happens over the course of the program. When you look at the *PPAT* in its entirety from Tasks 1 to 4, you get the sense that it's about good teaching. You get the sense that it's about the cyclical nature of teaching: You're planning, you're assessing, you're designing your lessons.”

And so she began the slow, purposeful work of reaching out to all of the stakeholders that support the university's teacher candidates in becoming good teachers, with a goal of working collaboratively to determine how to integrate the *PPAT* assessment into the program. Here are some of the conversations that are helping the performance-based test find a home in West Oahu.



Initial Conversations with Colleagues about the *PPAT*® Assessment

After participating in a *PPAT* pilot, Kamai shared candidates' Task 1 responses with her colleagues and said, "Can we read these together? I like doing that kind of work but that's not always valued at a university." They started by looking at what each of them does in their courses that might help with a part of Task 1. "That was just the beginning, and it's certainly not enough, but it brought a good response and I was appreciative of that."



Initial Conversations with Cooperating Schools about *PPAT*® Video Permissions

"When the cooperating schools in West Oahu were first approached about the need for candidates to film their teaching for purposes of the *PPAT* assessment, the university hit its first real stumbling block," Kamai recalled. Local K-12 principals cooperate with as many as six different teacher preparation programs to provide a field experience, and reconciling videotaping permission forms that varied with each performance assessment in use was the straw that broke the camel's back. "Building principals were beside themselves, asking, How am I going to do this?" Kamai said, "especially since the same EPPs also want local schools to complete diverse forms that indicate how their programs are doing for purposes of accreditation reports." To ease the burden on local schools, EPPs took this challenge to the state level.



Conversations at the State Level about *PPAT*® Video Permissions

An existing state-level advisory group called the Teacher Education Coordinating Committee — comprised of representatives from the Hawaii Dept. of Education, the Hawaii Teacher's Standards Board, and all of Hawaii's EPPs — helped solve the video permissions issue facing cooperating schools. To get around EPP use of different performance assessments, and thus differing permission forms, they revised the state-sanctioned form for obtaining permissions from K-12 parents to accommodate all programs. "With the Department of Education sitting there and hearing from us, we were able to get the release completed" Kamai said. "It's been this council that's been able to get that kind of work done."



Deeper Conversations with Local Stakeholders about the *PPAT*® Assessment

Kamai began sharing information about the *PPAT* assessment with local stakeholders at meetings of an existing organization created for accreditation purposes, which was made up of EPP faculty, cooperating K-12 principals, mentor-teachers, and alumni. "This group was the perfect place to let stakeholders know about the impending implementation," she said. In addition, she developed a course for mentor-teachers in partnership with the Hawaii teacher's union; in exchange for participation, mentor-teachers receive union credits they can apply to movement on their school's salary guide. "That's another way that I'm sharing *PPAT* information," she said. She also provides news about the *PPAT* assessment during orientations she holds for mentor-teachers. And she has added the *PPAT* assessment to program materials that describe the EPP's different field experiences. "We talk about it more and more in our conversations," she said.



Collegial Conversations about Writing Skills and the *PPAT*® Assessment

One takeaway from Kamai's experience as a PPAT rater was her understanding of the role of writing skill in teacher reflection and planning. "Our students need to be able to articulate these responses," she said. She and her colleagues met to examine what their teacher candidates do in each course to sharpen those skills. "At one meeting, I referenced directly the parts [of the PPAT handbook] that talk about different kinds of writing. I tried to bring that up to the top." Realizing that candidates need additional practice before the clinical experience, she instituted a required action research project to give them that practice. Her goal is that when candidates take the PPAT assessment, this kind of writing will be second nature to them. "I think we're all aware that our students need help in writing a little more professionally," she said. "Collegially, in different ways, we're all working in that direction."



Conversations with Candidates and Colleagues about *PPAT*® Task 1

To familiarize teacher candidates with the demands of PPAT Task 1, Kamai introduces the PPAT glossary and other ancillary PPAT materials during the student teaching seminar, and has candidates search for resources that are available to district teachers to help students learn, which is part of PPAT Task 1. "I'm testing out the resources that ETS has to see how this will work," she said. Now that Task 1 has been a part of the course for a few semesters, she knows Task 1 makes sense: "They have to know about their community before they can begin to be effective in their classrooms." Another instructor introduces candidates to the Task 1 student interest inventory very early in the program, and conversations during meetings have helped her colleagues begin to see ways they can teach candidates about school resources before the field experience. "By creating this scaffolding," she said, "candidates should be ready, when they arrive in her seminar, to talk about how this knowledge can be used when planning lessons. To tie that information to instructional strategies, and why they're using them, takes a little more work," she said. "But when they get to student teaching they've got a lot more experience under their belts, so they should be able to make those connections to student learning. The goal is to have them reflect on why it's so important."



Stakeholder Conversations about *PPAT*® Task 2

Kamai believes the data-driven decision-making focus of PPAT Task 2 is "an area that we need to work on a little more." Through an existing local organization made up of EPP faculty, cooperating K-12 principals, mentor-teachers, and alumni, cooperating principals have expressed that data-teaming is a very strong focus in their schools. "That's an area that we have to focus on." With additional scaffolding in place, she wants candidates to arrive at the student teaching seminar ready to point to data they've collected, as well as able to explain how they're using it to inform their lessons. "At this level, they should be talking about that."



Collegial Conversations about *PPAT*® Tasks 3 and 4

Kamai and her colleagues continue to talk about candidate readiness for PPAT Tasks 3 and 4, which involve lesson planning and implementation. As key demonstrations of candidate capacity for work in the field, the conversation brushes up against larger issues of qualification, graduation, and licensure. Currently, Kamai uses a multipart in-house lesson-planning exercise that comes close to PPAT Task 3 during the student teaching seminar. To get a sense of how her teacher candidates would perform on the PPAT version, she asked her colleagues to compare candidate responses on the in-house activity with anonymous responses in the PPAT Library of Examples. "We really have to think about how this performance assessment is going to qualify our students to graduate from the program and be licensed," she said. Kamai wants the quality of candidate responses on the in-house activity to be similar to the quality of the PPAT examples when the program starts using PPAT Task 3. But additional questions remain, like how should grades Kamai gives for the student teaching seminar relate to candidates' PPAT scores? "We really have to have that conversation," she said, "but first, we have to be really clear on what stakes are involved with PPAT."



Collegial Conversations about Educational Technology and PPAT® Videos

Discussions with colleagues about how well-prepared candidates are to incorporate technology into their lessons, as Task 3 requires, leaves Kamai confident that this is an area in which the program excels. “We have an instructor who even had a class for in-service teachers come and learn about how to use technology with their students, so I think we’re okay in that area.” However, the same collegial conversations revealed that candidates need help with the process of videotaping themselves while teaching. “We were just talking about this right before the semester ended,” she said. “We realized that student teachers are not as comfortable as we’d like for them to be with videotaping a lesson they teach. The professor who teaches educational technology will focus on getting students more prepared.” As a result of the EPP’s collaborative planning, “many of us are going to incorporate videotaping in our classes. Faculty are teaching candidates to analyze videos of teaching using a protocol they can later apply to their own teaching; and the program is amassing a library of teacher candidate videos for use as teaching tools. We’re beginning to really speak to the value of this and why it’s so important,” Kamai said.

Conversations with Candidates and Colleagues about the PPAT® PGP

Kamai is also looking for ways to incorporate the PPAT Professional Growth Plan (PGP) into the program’s existing framework. “It’s good that we have this time because the goal is that reflection piece. That’s the part that we need to focus on. I think we’re all saying, We have them reflect, but I don’t know. I don’t really know what that means in everyone’s courses.” She expects conversations with candidates and colleagues will provide direction. “My focus is, How can I marry that with another assignment that’s already in there?” she said. Since her students create an electronic portfolio during the student teaching seminar, she’s considering having them complete the PGP based on that work. “They should be able to speak fairly fluently to that.”



EPP Snapshot



UNIVERSITY of HAWAII¹
WEST O’AHU

- Small, learner-centered, indigenous-serving program
- Graduates about 26 students from the teacher-education program per year
- Offers undergraduate degrees in elementary, middle-level, and secondary education, plus dual licensure in special education
- Unique social justice focus supported by 40 required hours of service learning
- Accredited by NCATE (2013-20)
- Pre-service performance assessment required by Hawaii Teacher Standards Board

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