edTPA scores rising high
ETSU teacher candidates prepared for success.

Strong trend lines are emerging across the board in ETSU teacher candidate edTPA scores, and that’s good news for candidate skills and for job placement after graduation.

While CUAI teacher candidates must take one or more assessments in the national Praxis series, the edTPA is rapidly becoming a new national benchmark as well. Launched in 2013 to replace the Teacher Performance Assessment, edTPA is a performance-based, subject-specific assessment already used by more than 600 teacher preparation programs in 30 states and is poised to become the de-facto nationwide standard. Many states, including Tennessee, either require edTPA for licensure or will require it in the near future.

And while teacher preparation programs in some states have struggled with fulfilling the test requirements, ETSU student scores have continued to rise over the past three years.

In 2016, for example, mean elementary math scores for ETSU students were higher than both the state and national means.

“We’re really proud of our students’ success with the edTPA,” CUAI Professor Dr. Rhona Hurwitz notes. “Those scores reflect a curriculum that’s always been aligned with advanced national standards. Our only change has been to revise our language slightly so that students immediately recognize test concepts.”

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Passion pays
Deep desire to teach earns scholarship for ETSU teacher candidate.

Congratulations to ETSU senior Tara Hamlin, recently selected as one of only eight Tennessee university students awarded the Knoxville Retired Teachers Association’s $1,000 Scholarship.

An English major minoring in secondary education, Hamlin is currently completing her CUAI clinical residency at University School in Johnson City. Her dedication to teaching led her to quit her job to focus exclusively on her residency. This passion shined through in her required essay about her desire to teach, a major factor in the award.

“I’m so thankful,” she said, noting the support she’s enjoyed from Terryl Rock in CUAI and Dr. Scott Honeycutt of the ETSU English Department.

A first generation college student, Hamlin hopes to find a permanent placement at University School when she graduates in Spring 2017.

Fall into Best Practices
Broader perspectives, deeper learning.

Adding technology in its third successful funding cycle, innovative $1.69 million research initiative supports college- and career-readiness through the integration of science learning and literacy.

What students are able to see depends on their perspective. So could merging diverse perspectives help students see and understand more? That was the vital question that Dr. Chich-Che Tai and Dr. Karin Keith set out to answer in an innovative research initiative supporting college- and career-readiness:

How does cross-discipline instruction benefit and enrich each subject discipline? And, specifically, how does integration of science learning with literacy in grades 6 through 12 impact college- and career-readiness?

These questions are critical, since only 20% of Tennessee high school graduates meet ACT college-readiness benchmarks in all four areas of English, reading, math and science. Moreover, in a fast-moving global economy, both STEM learning and the ability to assimilate information are now essential for career-readiness.

And now, an encouraging picture is emerging as the initiative enters its third funding cycle, with grants totaling $650,000 awarded by the Math and Science Partnership Grant Program and the Tennessee Department of Education, USD.

“We’re seeing teachers begin to ask critical questions and to think in new ways,” notes Tai. “And quantitative results point to improved pedagogy.”

Principal Investigators (PIs) for the research initiative include Tai, the Assistant Director of the ETSU Center of Excellence for Math and Science Education and CUAI Associate Professor of Science Education; Keith, CUAI Department Chair and Associate Professor of Language Arts; and Steve Starns of the Hawkins County School System, which serves as the physical administrator for the project.

A total of ten school districts in the nine-county First Tennessee region are participating, with the collaborative input of six area industries.

2016-2017 projects include Integrating Science Learning with Literacy using Informational and Fictional Texts in grades 6 through 12 and Science Literacy in Education through Project-Based Learning.

“Integrating both nonfictional and fictional texts is an excellent way to leverage children’s love of story in service of deeper learning,” notes Keith.

In 2017-2018 the initiative integrates technology as a third subject area, and will expand to grades 3 through 12 with web-based learning and on-site technology projects made possible through hardware such as Go-Pro cameras and the input of the Tennessee Online Public School headquartered in Bristol.

The initiative’s key program component, professional development (PD) for science and literacy teachers for grades 6 through 12, this year involved 110 teachers and included cross-disciplinary methods and activities as well as sessions with representatives from regional industries sharing requirements for labor force knowledge and skills.

At left: Participants in the 2016 Summer PD, which included science, ELA and technology components as well as collaboration in science/ELA best practices, innovation in the classroom and a STEM professional panel.
Key collaborations

Multiple partnerships essential to Math and Science Initiative’s innovation and success.

In addition to the integration of subject areas, the Initiative also supports career preparation through the input of area industry.

Industry partners include: Eastman Chemical Corp., Cooper Standard Automotive, Domtar, Nuclear Fuel Services, Wellmont Health System, and ZF TRW Automotive.

School partnerships include: Hawkins County, Bristol City, Carter County, Elizabethton City, Greene County, Kingsport City, Unicoi County and Washington County.

Project co-PIs include: Waylon Seaton, Reba Bailey, CUAI Assistant Professor Renee Moran, CUAI Assistant Professor Laura Robertson and CUAI Assistant Professor Huili Hong.

Collaboration extends beyond the summer PDs, as lesson plans created during the session are also being shared through the Creative Commons so that teachers and students across the state of Tennessee and nationally can benefit.

“Wonderful class,” one participant noted. “I want more! Collaboration is great, and I would like to continue this for many more years to come.”

Crunching STEM

At the Brown Bag Research Luncheon, CUAI graduate students present findings and experiences of the Mid-Atlantic Science Teacher Education Conference.

Veggies with plenty of STEM: There was lots to digest at the recent brown bag luncheon hosted by CUAI graduates to report on their participation in a recent science education conference. Held in Gatlinburg in late September, the Association of Science Teacher Education (ASTE) conference hosted science researchers and teachers from all over the nation, presenting to attendees from ASTE’s Mid-Atlantic region, which includes seven states and the District of Columbia.

In addition to attending the conference, the students, working under Dr. Aimee Govett’s direction, helped plan, host and facilitate conference proceedings.

Graduate students who took part in the conference and luncheon included Andy Baker, Jessie Crowe, Rachel Denney, Ashlynne Fezzell, Daniel Noel, Susan Olmsted, Katie Weinman, Elizabeth Williams, and Rawan Yousseff.

Methods to their Madness

The science of bubbles explored in an Inquiry Lab of Science Methods.

Above: Teachers engage in laboratory work in the summer PD.
Leading the field
From setting standards to selecting award-winning literature, CUAI faculty set the pace in national leadership.

CUAI

LEADERSHIP PORTFOLIO

Assistant Professor, Graduate Coordinator Curriculum & Instruction
Deborah Parrott, M.L.S
Secretary, 2016, ESLS (Educators of School Librarians Section) of the American Association of School Librarians, a division of the American Library Association.
Member, 2016-2017, YALSA Popular Paperbacks Award Committee (Young Adult Library Services Association), a division of the American Library Association.

Professor, Graduate Coordinator Curriculum & Instruction
Dr. Lee Daniels
Member at Large, Teacher Education Division, Association for Educational Communications and Technology

Assistant Professor, Coordinator of Teacher Education Honors Program and ESL Endorsement
Dr. Huili Hong
Associate Chair, National Council of Teachers of English Assembly on Research (NCTEAR);
Director, Language Collaborative of National Council of Teachers of English; Member of TN State Reading Association Diversity Committee.

Assistant Professor, Curriculum & Instruction
Renee Critcher Lyons
Member, ALEX Award Committee, 2017-18, the literary award given by YALSA (Young Adult Library Services Association), a division of the American Library Association.

edTPA scores rising high
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Developed by Stanford University in cooperation with the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education and Pearson Education, the edTPA diverges from traditional testing with its rigorous performance component.

“The concept behind the edTPA is that students show the ability to translate their academic knowledge into effective classroom instruction,” explains faculty member Terryl Rock, CUAI Clinical Instructor for secondary education. To that end, the edTPA is not a written test; instead, students submit a variety of materials: lesson plans, videos of their classroom instruction (in real classrooms with real students), exemplar student work, and reflections of possible improvements.

“It’s really an intense process,” explains former student Ali Gorzka, who took a series of four Praxis tests in addition to the edTPA before her graduation in 2016. “I was glad I had the right preparation and support.”

After her graduation, Gorzka was hired as a teacher at Lakeridge Elementary in Johnson City, the same school where she completed her clinical residency. For students seeking employment outside the state, the edTPA adds a crucial credential.

“Our teacher candidates graduate from this program ready for anything, anywhere,” Rock points out. “The edTPA simply provides more objective evidence of that fact.”