

Director's Report to CBS

11 June 2021

Celebration of the Academic Year

Colleagues, we know it has been a year of challenges – a full academic year of offering remote or mostly remote instruction in the middle of a pandemic. This is a time to celebrate accomplishments, acknowledge hardships, and reflect on changes for the coming year. I encourage everyone to lean into student success stories – high school graduation, I-BEST completion, and transitions into college pathways, as well as all the important relationship and community building that takes in your classrooms. Our system level metrics don't reference the importance of those bonds, yet we know those bonds are the critical elements for our students as they gain skills and confidence and identify a path forward. Take time to celebrate and renew yourself as summer approaches!

Highlighting Student Success

On June 24 I will present our yearly report to the State Board. Program challenges will be manifest in the enrollment data. I want to make sure the board knows the good work your programs have done this past year. Please send to me student success stories (obtain written consent from the students) and stories of innovative program changes. Let's make sure your programs get kudos for the amazing equity work you've done to help students succeed!

A Statement on Leading with Racial Equity

A good friend and mentor of mine recently pointed out to me that “people are good at getting the easy stuff done. That's why there usually isn't a bunch of easy stuff left for people to work on. It's usually only the difficult stuff left to do.”

This statement renews my vigor on leading with racial equity. It's difficult stuff. We make mistakes, or we aren't sure of what to “do,” or we feel critical toward someone else's efforts or definitions or statements. Some of us with the privilege to shy away from it may wish to retreat to our comfort zones when the going gets tough. But the time is now to do this difficult work so that someday it may become easy, and the time is now for those of us with privilege to support and lighten the load for those who have always had to carry it. It's a joy to see CBS and BEdA continue to partner in doing this work together!

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Professional Development

If innovative programming is the educational structure we put in place for our students to reach their goals, then professional development is how we ensure that program faculty and staff have the tools necessary to be successful within those structures. To that end, I would like to highlight some upcoming professional development aligned to our racial equity goals. Two of our key upcoming projects include:

- Decolonizing ELA – This faculty-led project seeks to analyze English Language Acquisition from a post-colonialist lens and draws on the work of [Dr. Suhanthie Motha](#), with the goal of increasing leadership capacity across the system for departmental, institutional, and system reform. Monica Wilson will lead this project.

- High School Plus Roundtable (June 29-July 1) – This year’s roundtable, led by MarcusAntonio Gunn, will feature [Dr. Rich Milner](#) delivering a keynote presentation on analyzing and using data from a race equity perspective in curriculum, policy, and programming planning. There is much system interest in this roundtable and we are inviting stakeholders across the agency to participate.

I-BEST @ Work

We continue to have funds to support I-BEST @ Work pilots in a range of sectors. As employment opportunities begin to open in your service districts, this may be an opportunity to connect with employers on incumbent worker education and training. Please contact Will Durden or Jodi Ruback for more information (we will prioritize CBOs for funding!)

CASAS Testing

There are a range of reactions as we transition back to the CASAS testing required of our programs. Some adapted quite well to other forms of placement and do not relish the return, and some are grappling with continued suspended operations at the campus or institutional level. Others welcome the structure and logic model that testing provides.

As we return to our required testing policies, I would like to remind you of some of the inroads we have made regarding CASAS testing for this coming academic year:

- We have reduced the testing requirement to the bare minimum of testing in one subject area.
- We have added new types of gains for I-BEST and workplace literacy students, removing the need to post-test for these students.
- High School + credit option students do not need to pre-test at all.
- We have opened remote testing as an option.

In addition, we have made a whole host of other changes to improve and ease the administrative burdens related to attendance and intake. Many thanks go to Scott Toscano, Troy Goracke, and Jodi Ruback for their collective work in this arena!

Here to Serve

As always, I am available anytime you need information, have a question, or would like to provide input on how we are doing. Please email me at wdurden@sbctc.edu. I look forward to hearing from you.