Good afternoon CBS Colleagues,

Here we are with another year almost gone by – and what a year it has been! I want to thank you all for your innovative spirit and for serving our students with pride. You are an outstanding group of educational leaders and I draw inspiration from you and your dedication to equity. There is truly no mission area greater than BEdA!

As classes wrap up for the year and folks turn their attention to holiday plans, family, and friends, I wanted to reach out with some updates on happenings at the state office. There are several projects in process that will come to fruition in the first half of 2024. We encourage you to share with relevant partners at your institutions.

As an FYI, I will be out of the office December 18th – January 3rd. But if something comes up that needs my attention, please don’t hesitate to reach out!

## **Ability to Benefit New Regulations**

The Department of Education is proposing a modification to some of the rules for Ability to Benefit. Most of them don’t impact us as a state, but one does. As outlined in an email on November 30th, beginning in July 2024 the Department of Education will require colleges to submit documentation demonstrating that Ability to Benefit is being used in Eligible Career Pathway Programs (ECPP.) Only one pathway needs to be submitted, along with an attestation that all pathways where ATB is offered meet the same standard.

We believe colleges currently offering Ability to Benefit will be able to meet this documentation requirement. For example, approved I-BEST programs that are faithful in practice to their applications should meet these requirements.

Soon, the feds will open a public comment to allow us to propose what we think the documentation requirement should look like for verifying that career pathways are eligible for ATB. That will be our opportunity to weigh in on the process. We are monitoring this and will give word when the comment period opens. From there, we will continue to monitor and provide guidance. Should we need to offer a webinar or pull folks together to go through requirements and processes together we will be happy to do so.

While this is a new administrative burden, I believe it is a positive one for the growth of ATB. One of the concerns we have heard many times over the years from colleges is “how do we know our career pathways are truly eligible career pathway programs for Ability to Benefit?” This process will settle that question and give institutions confidence that they are offering ATB appropriately. And, thankfully, only one pathway must be approved. This should help colleges expand ATB confidently and with less worry.

## **Biennial Conference: Literacy and Justice for All**

Our first in-person state conference since 2018 will take place July 23-25 at the Three Rivers Convention Center in Kennewick! It will be so good to all be together as a state system of adult education professionals.

The conference centers on the idea that adult education is social justice. As reflected in our joint vision statement, we see our work as advancing racial and economic justice. We know literacy opens the doors of self-awareness, self-advocacy, and self-efficacy for the individuals and families who participate in our programs, with implications that extend beyond academic success and into the community and the workplace. Even as Adult Basic Education and English Language Acquisition students need to be centered in the work of Guided Pathways and equity-focused pathway and programming development in general, we need to continually center within our world those students who have not traditionally had equal access

to, and equal success in, our programs.

To home in our vision, we have organized the conference into eight inter-related strands:

1. Accessibility, Digital Literacy & Equity
2. Corrections Education
3. Equity & Belonging
4. Culturally Responsive Curriculum Design and Assessment
5. BEdA Data Mining
6. Guided Pathways
7. Navigation & Student Support
8. Equitable Math Pathways and Practices

Unlike in years past, participants will not be required to sign up exclusively for one strand.

Stay tuned in the first part of the year for further announcements and information related to the conference.

## **BEdA Bridge Module Release**

The BEdA Bridge Modules have been developed by expert BEdA faculty across the state for use with students enrolled in BEdA programming. The intent of the Bridge Modules is to provide students transitioning into higher levels of ABE/ELA with opportunities to further develop the skills that they will need when they make the transition from BEdA programming to their selected College and Career Pathway.

Like I-DEA, these modules were designed using the flipped classroom format.  However, they are only geared towards 10 hours of instruction a week (5 online and 5 face to face). The online content was developed in Canvas and the instructional materials and handouts were developed in Google to ensure that they can be easily accessed by students and faculty.

These modules are open educational resources and are designed for use with students enrolled in both ABE and ELL programming. Faculty can teach the modules as-is or borrow portions to incorporate into their own curriculum. Below you will find a list of some ways in which these modules can be used:

* In combination with other instructional content
* To extend instruction to upper-level ELA students who have already completed I-DEA or other level 1-3 ESL coursework.
* With IELCE-funded students who are transitioning into I-BEST

Please be on the lookout for an email with information regarding a webinar on January 19th previewing these modules and providing information on how and where to access the modules.

## **BEdA Grading Basis Enhancement Request**

We are currently consulting with both the State Board of Education and registrars in our system on the design of how we address upgrades to the BEdA Grading Basis and the creation of a high school transcript. We may need to pull together a task force of folks from both BEdA and college registrars to vet proposed solutions and will be in touch as soon as we have an outline of what those solutions could look like.

## **CASAS Intake Screening Process & Next Steps**

We have heard loud and clear that the new CASAS STEPS series does not adequately serve students who are learning the very beginning building blocks of the English language. As a first step to addressing this concern, we worked with CASAS to provide an Intake Screening Process to use along with the new STEPS series to clarify protocol. This information was sent out to CBS on December 4th.

Our next step is to see if there is a test out there that helps us fill the gap. We are looking at the BEST Plus 3.0 assessment. Preliminary reports from other states and providers suggest to us that it may be a more appropriate tool for our beginning English students.

Finally, OCTAE is currently examining research-based proposals for establishing criteria to measure incremental gain within an EFL, using NRS-approved assessments, and to consider other possible options for achieving a measurable skill gain. We have signaled to OCTAE that we support their examination of any proposals for incremental gain within an EFL.

## **Digital Equity Planning**

The Digital Equity & BEAD Planning process for Washington is wrapping up.  The Washington State Broadband Office (WSBO) within the Washington State Department of Commerce will be submitting revised plans based on public comments received to NTIA on or before the end of December 2023.

WSBO believes that BEAD funding, which is earmarked solely for broadband expansion and access, will begin flowing into Washington sometime during the 2nd quarter of 2024. While there is no timeline yet for the Digital Equity Capacity Building and Digital Equity Competitive Grant Programs, we anticipate that Notices of Funding Opportunities (NOFOs) will be rolled out mid-2024.

SBCTC is tracking the Digital Equity Capacity Building and Digital Equity Competitive Grant Programs and intends to submit applications for both of these opportunities once they are available.

## **New Data System Training and Onboarding**

We have wrapped up the initial contract negotiation with LiteracyPro Systems for our new LACES data system and are making progress on the statement of work. Early in the new year the data configuration process will start. We plan to ask for participation from the system during the configuration process. We’ll start by asking the same folks who helped draft requirements and loop in others as needed. That’s also a time we’ll be able to put together a training plan.

We anticipate that we will convert to the new data system in concert with the end of winter quarter 2024 (late March/early April.)

## **Testing Exemption for I-BEST, All IET, and Workplace Literacy Programs**

You received an email on December 12th outlining the new testing exemption for I-BEST, all IET, and employer-based (workplace literacy) programs. (On a personal note, I have to say in nearly ten years at the state office that may have been the most satisfying email I have ever sent.)

We look forward to learning from providers who adopt the exemption. I believe this will help us move closer to our state goal of having I-BEST in every area of study at the colleges. I think it has great potential to help CBOs build IETs with local training providers, and I am excited to see employer partnerships grow now that we don’t have to build standardized assessments into these customized programs.

## **Upcoming Professional Development (All Dates 2024)**

We have lots of good training and professional development leading up to the conference! Here is a reminder of what is coming in the first half of 2024:

* 1.8-2.16 I-BEST Team Teacher Training (Asynchronous)
* 1.15-3.10 Leading with Racial Equity in Basic Education for Adults (Synchronous)
* 1.19 BEdA Bridge Module Release (Webinar; Zoom)
* 1.29-2.9 Beyond Accommodations (Synchronous)
* 2.23 Building BEdA Math Pathways (In-person; Green River)
* 3.1 Teaching Skills That Matter (In-Person; Big Bend Community College)
* 3.14 I-BEST Team Teacher Training (In-person; TBD)
* 4.8-19 Beyond Accommodations (Synchronous)
* 5.17 BEdA Math Pathway Overview (In-Person; Bates)