



New Jersey Department of Education

The Amistad Commission

FY14 DIRECTOR'S REPORT

**Annual Report
to
New Jersey Senate and Assembly
and
The Legislative Black Caucus**

Submitted by: Stephanie James Wilson, Executive Director

June 30, 2015

FY15 Overview

Accomplishments, Status and Financials

The New Jersey Amistad Commission was legislated in 2002 by Assembly bill A1301, introduced by Assemblymen William D. Payne and Craig Stanley. The Amistad Commission has been diligently striving to fulfill the directives of the Amistad legislation within these austere budget times with notable accomplishments.

The legislated mandate requires that all New Jersey schools incorporate African- American history into their K-12 Social Studies curriculum. This legislation also created the Amistad Commission, a 23 member body charged with ensuring that African American's historical content, contribution and experiences are intrinsically taught in the state's classrooms on a daily basis and fully infused and intertwined throughout all district curriculums, classroom lessons, primary sources, testing, and presentations. Over the last several years we have become a national model for the revision of Social Studies education in this country. New Jersey was first in the nation to pass this legislation and has served to instruct other states through the process of creating curriculum resources, implementation plans, and training materials in fulfillment of the new statewide mandates for Social Studies.

This state level Commission charged with the surveying, design, promotion and the implementation of public educational awareness programs in New Jersey concerned with the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in our country, and the contributions of African- Americans in building our country; has matured in focus and in the reconstruction of K-12 Social Studies education within our state and across the country in numerous ways:

Inclusion on Social Studies Content Standards Team -

- In 2008, 2012, and 2014, members of the Board of Amistad Commissioner's curriculum team and the Executive Director served as a member of the Social Studies Standards Task Force in the NJ Department of Education – tasked to rewrite and revise the Social Studies content standards for instruction for all teachers in New Jersey that included the recommendations of the Amistad Commission for compliance of this instructional and resource infusion mandate. Statewide compliance to these new standards and their respective cumulative progress indicators (CPI's) was in the 2012-2014 school term.
- The Executive Director has been an on-going contributor for the Division of Teaching and Learning as they have been reviewing the Social Studies standards for revisions and the ELA curriculum for the Common Core standards alignments for the new K-12. The Social Studies standards and current common core alignments already mandatorily adopted in all districts during the 2014-2015 school term.

National Model for Infused Curriculum Resource Development for Social Studies -

- Became the first in the nation to undertake the development of a comprehensive historically inclusive web-based curriculum for New Jersey Educators in response to the public's appeal for a model curriculum that fully illuminates the legislated Social Studies course of study. The curriculum chronicles the K-12 Social Studies curriculum for the state, inclusive of African-American influence, history, and accomplishments. With thirteen (13) units of study, divided by time periods as specified in the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards for Social Studies, our curriculum includes sample PARCC assessments, historical overviews, lesson plans, PowerPoints, biographies, interactive maps, timelines, primary source documents, videos, audios, and music, and classroom activities for students in each respective grade. All of these elements will be laid out in a consistent, user-friendly format. The online curriculum resource provides for New Jersey's districts United States History course and content pacing, lesson plan templates, sample lesson plans, and rubrics for replication.
- The 2014 Amistad Curriculum website completion allowed for major design update and mandatory alignments for the current common core directives; in addition to a significant amount of new content for English/ Language Arts teachers designed around the Common Core State Standards. New features will include the ability for teachers to create student accounts and classes, a text-to-speech capability to assist struggling readers, and content level correlations with both Common Core and N.J. content standards. The activities and resources should be used in all Social Studies classes, as well as interdisciplinary courses, elementary, middle school and high school, which can include American History courses, Language Arts courses, Art courses, Music courses, etc., in all 500 plus NJ school districts. This comprehensive password-protected web resource is available to every teacher in New Jersey, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week free of charge. The updated site debuted during the 2014-2015 school year and training sessions on the site have been commencing throughout the state with districts, schools or cohorts of Educators that have made requests of the office. The address for the Amistad web-based curriculum site is: www.NJAmistadCurriculum.org
- The Amistad Commission released in May 2010 a collaborative curriculum resource guide for educators in partnership with the Holocaust Commission on the subject of "Genocide" across history. This topical curriculum resource is a collection of articles, lesson plans and activities that can be used K-12 within the Humanities. It fulfills several content standards and CPI's for Social Studies instruction and can be used for compliances with both the Holocaust mandate and the Amistad mandate (Economics, World and US history, as well as Civics).

Complementary Curriculum Audits and District level Assistance in Accordance to the Mandate-

- Meeting and reviewing with Executive and District Superintendents on the mandated directives for social Studies instruction implementation of Social Studies curriculum directives and the development of curriculum resources for over 500 NJ school districts.

Professional Development for Educators across NJ-

- Organized and facilitated teacher training as well as administrative trainings on the new Social Studies curriculum requisites and the new available resources, including the Amistad web-based curriculum resource, for compliance under the revised Social studies standards and the cumulative progress indicators put forth by the New Jersey standards that are in compliance with this mandate.
- In support of the curriculum prototype release in 2009, the Amistad Commission began an extensive professional development curriculum training module for New Jersey teachers and school district curriculum specialists within their respective districts in September 2009. The Commission has been all over the state facilitating professional development training with the Executive Superintendents, District Superintendents, Principals, District Curriculum Leads, and the Teachers. To date we have facilitated over **250 trainings** and have trained more than 4,000 NJ teachers, and administrators throughout the state. Trainings will continue until we reach all 600 plus New Jersey school districts. In partnership with the presentation of the new Social Studies web-based curriculum resource, these trainings also highlight utilization of the new Social Studies standards, the new directives for Social Studies instruction under this mandate and the importance of the integration of 21st Century technologies within classroom instruction.
- The Amistad Commission successfully executed two Summer Institutes- the inaugural institute at Rowan University and the eighth annual Curriculum Institute for Teachers in August 2014 on the campus of Montclair State University; both of those institutes are the flagship activity for the Commission. The Institutes are residential programs designed for elementary and secondary social studies teachers, supervisors and administrators to learn additional methodological techniques in teaching American history, seamlessly infused with African-American content. This consortium gives Educators access to prominent historians and scholars from various higher education institutions throughout the country. Participants explore the Common Core standards, the PARCC assessment requirements for students, lesson ideas, and professional development methodologies used in the Amistad K-12 state wide curriculum; as well as study texts, topics, and ideas central to elementary and secondary social studies and English/Language Arts education. The Focus for last summer was on the Commemoration and school segregation as it is

effectuated in various American communities with consideration of race and religion. The **50th Anniversary of the Brown vs. Board of Education** decision was the central theme.

- Two Summer Institutes will commence in the summer of 2015; (**July 27-29, 2015** and **August 4-6, 2015**). The central focus for this year's institutes will be "Jim Crow-Up North" – a case study of Northern segregation policies and the African American experience in two New Jersey towns - Atlantic City and Montclair, NJ. We also plan to commemorate the **50th Anniversary of the Voting Rights Act**
 - a) the inaugural institute at Stockton University in Galloway Township;
and
 - b) the ninth annual Institute at Montclair State University.
- Central focus for the Summer Institute is an extensive tutorial with the Amistad web-based curriculum in relations to the Common Core standards adoption and the onset of the PARCC assessments. With the onset of the highly anticipated curriculum release, the Commission recognized the necessity to expand its Summer Institute opportunities for Educators to provide extensive training opportunities for the multitude of district curriculum specialists and classroom teachers that will require training for statewide compliance with the Amistad legislation and with the shift to the common core.
- The Summer Institutes have historically provided the extensive training, content knowledge of current scholarship in American History with an understanding of the significant contributions of African-Americans and teaching methodology necessary for our participants to turn –key the experience into subsequent district trainings and curriculum revisions throughout the state the next school year. Applications for participation are available on the Amistad website.

Public Programming and Memorializations on the Contributions of African Americans -

- **National Presentations** - The Amistad Commissioners have made several presentations throughout the country in regards to our implementation plans, curriculum resource materials, signature teaching strategies, and training modules.
 - The Commission has historically presented an education session every year at the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation Convention in Washington, D.C. for the legislators and constituents across the country.
 - The Commission has also done presentations at the United Nations in New York and is the national role model for other states implementing their own Amistad Commission.

- Within the last few years, our Commission has done presentations to the New York Amistad Commission; as well as
- the Illinois Amistad Commission, both headed by the Secretary of State in their respective states. We have taken the lead as the flagship state for operationalizing this educational policy initiative.
- Over the course of the last year, the Amistad Commission has become a community partner with the United Nations - UNESCO **Remember Slavery** project- and have co-sponsored or organized several events to mark the 20th anniversary of the *UNESCO Slave Route Project* centered on developing and sharing techniques to teach NJ/NY Metro parents, community and students about slavery. The Amistad Commission has partnered and collaborated with UNESCO and area colleges on various panels, the creation and the distribution of curriculum materials.
- **Teaching History through film-** collaborations and partnerships with Movie Studios & representatives - The Amistad Commission has been the host of several major motion pictures and independent films that focus on topics in the African diaspora. The Commission co-sponsored free private screenings for Educators with curriculum materials, panel discussion & Q&A
 - **12 Years a Slave** - curriculum guide and free movie offer for all New Jersey teachers
 - **Belle** – curriculum guide and free movie offer for classroom libraries for all New Jersey teachers
 - **Tula, The Revolt** –free screening and panel discussion with Danny Glover
 - **SELMA** - in partnership with the United Nations, free movie screenings, free curriculum guide and a free copy of the film video for the every school libraries for all New Jersey teachers, as well as panel discussion with Secretary General of the United Nations Ban Ki-Moon and Ava DuVernay, **SELMA's** director.
- For the past **10 years**, the Amistad Commission has partnered with the Department of Education and the Malcolm Bernard Historically Black College and Universities College Fair of New Jersey in planning and orchestrating the New Jersey Rising Scholars Recognition Program and Trenton College Fair every November. This annual program is the third Sunday in November, and honors the academic excellence achieved by high school seniors throughout the state who are interested in attending a historically black college or university (HBCU). The Department of Education in collaboration with the Amistad Commission and the Malcolm Bernard HBCU College Fair of New Jersey recognizes more than **75 students** as Rising Scholars annually. The recognition program is highly competitive. NJ Rising Scholars are eligible to receive the HBCU Rising Scholars Fund book scholarship contingent upon their enrollment in an HBCU.

- The Amistad Commission has also co-sponsored a myriad of events, programs, and conferences this fiscal year alone with many organizations: including national and state organizations and non-profit institutions such as the

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Congressional Black Caucus in Washington D.C, | • Holocaust Commission, |
| • NAACP, | • Housing Authority, |
| • National Urban League, | • Interstate Realty, |
| • NJ Black Issues Conference, | • Juvenile Justice Center, |
| • NJEA, | • Essex County College, |
| • National Council for Social Studies and NJ Council for Social Studies, | • Malcolm Bernard HBCU College Fair of NJ, |
| • NJ Department of Education, t | • Montclair State University, |
| • Association of Black Educators, | • Rowan University |
| • Newark Black Film Festival, | • Rutgers University, |
| • New Jersey Historical Society, | • Stockton University and |
| • African American Museum in Philadelphia, | • Drew University. |

Fiscal Concerns:

- As a state agency we are in full recognition of the realities of our financial times, and we are all competing for limited monies; our mission and mandate as an educational policy commission that effectuates the universal K-12 learning of all the students of New Jersey necessitates our ability to maintain the depth and breadth of our portfolio of curriculum trainings, professional development opportunities for Educators, and ancillary programs, as they were mandated in our charter.
- The Commission historic yearly battle for a budget allocation has already ushered us into the reality of trimming the fat and while creatively finding ways to still deliver the level of services that our constituents have come to expect from us. We are operationalizing a legal mandate- and must have adequate resources to do so the upcoming fiscal year. We have been in flux in regards to our funding since 2009 when we were redlined from the State budget and then zeroed out from the Secretary of State's budget.
- In the interim we had our carry over monies absorbed by a newly created umbrella division called the Division of Programs at the New Jersey Department of State; moved to the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) with **zero funds** and **one** staff person when we were eliminated from State; and even during our current tenure at NJDOE, the Commission has yet to be given a specified budget line item or specific allocation at the NJDOE. The Amistad Commission annually is left at the mercy of the leftover available funds that are found within the Department budget at their discretion as to the amount of monies allocated to the Commission.

- We are "in but not of" the Department of Education. According to our Commission by-laws, our budget is set before and adopted by our Board of Commissioners. Historically this budget amount was then incorporated into the State budget proposed to the Governor. In 2009 and 2011 we were redlined out of that budget and our monies had to be found within the current department we were housed within – which is currently the New Jersey Department of Education- we have encountered in certain budget years the availability of full funding to support our initiatives as set forth by the Board of Commissioners.
- The FY 2016 budget adopted by the Amistad Board of Commissioners on June 6, 2015 at our commission meeting was for **\$565,485.13** so that it can be put forth to NJDOE.

It is the Commission's humble request that the operating and programming budget of **\$565,485.13.00** (inclusive of salaries) for the Amistad Commission be upheld and supported by this body so we might continue this much needed work in **FY16**.

The Amistad Commission can be reached at 609-984-6428(office)
Stephanie James Wilson Cell- 856-952-5658
amistad@doe.state.nj.us