



**State of New Jersey
Department of Education
Amistad Commission**

June 23, 2011

**Chris Christie
Governor**

To: Members of the Assembly Budget Committee
RE: New Jersey Amistad Commission, Department of Education

Amistad Commissioners

Lt. Gov. Kim Guadagno,
Secretary of State

Christopher Cerf, Acting
Commissioner of Education

Robert Altenkirch
Patricia Atkins
Patricia Crumlin Kempton
Hon. Sandra Cunningham
Hon. Linda Greenstein
James Harris
Frankie Hutton, PhD
Lillie Johnson Edwards,
PhD
Hon. Thomas Kean, Jr.
Sandra Lewis, PhD
Miriam Martin
Julia Miller, PhD
Julane Miller Armbrister
Gabriella Morris
C. J. Payne, Author
of Amistad Law
Rachel Pereira, PhD,
Hon. Scott T. Rumana
Kathy Sumter
Oadline Truitt
Hon. Cleopatra G. Tucker

Stephanie James Wilson,
Executive Director

Dept. of Education
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Greetings Legislator,

On Wednesday, June 22, 2011, the Board of Commissioners for the New Jersey Amistad Commission met for its quarterly public meeting at the Leroy Smith Public Safety Building in Newark, New Jersey. The agenda for this meeting included a thorough discussion of budgetary funding for the Amistad Commission for FY12. The Amistad Commission submitted a request to the Dept. of Education for a budget appropriation of \$270,000 to continue mandated operations in FY12.

No funding request has been made to the legislature for this budget line item to date. Lack of operational and programmatic monies in the proposed FY12 budget would end the Amistad Commission's implementation of the mandated K-12 Social Studies standards, the development of curricular tools and lessons plans consistent with the Amistad mandate for K-12 Social Studies teachers, and the professional development trainings to teach these curriculum materials. Needless to say, this is cause for concern, and we are imploring you for your assistance to have this rectified in the FY12 budget.

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 instruction.

As I am sure you are aware; the Amistad Commission was legislated in 2002 by Assembly bill A1301. This law requires that all New Jersey schools incorporate African- American history into their K-12 Social Studies curriculum. This law also created the Amistad Commission, a 23-member body charged with ensuring that African Americans' historical content, contributions and experiences are fully infused into the K-12 Social Studies curricula; including curriculum benchmarks and mapping, classroom lessons and activities, homework assignments, textbooks and other in class materials, as well as assessment of student learning, primary sources, school-wide presentations.

Our work as a Commission is to facilitate systematic changes in the K-12 Social Studies curriculum in numerous ways:

- development of the new K-12 Social Studies standards which must be adopted in all districts by Fall 2011
- development of curriculum resources for all New Jersey public, private, and parochial school
- meeting regularly with Executive and District Superintendents, Principals and Teachers to ensure implementation of the mandated directives
- Organize and facilitate Teacher and Administrator trainings on the new Social Studies curriculum requirements and the new resources, including the Amistad web-based curriculum resource.

To: Amistad Commissioners
From: Stephanie James Wilson
Date: October 29, 2011
RE: Amistad Commissioner status report and talking points for November 1, 2011
mtg. with Acting Commissioner Cerf

Hello Commissioners -

Hope this memorandum finds you well, I just wanted to give you an update of the status of the Amistad Commission and the outcomes and resolutions of several outstanding issues. Here is a list of the logistical action items that the Amistad Commission needs to accomplish with the assistance of other offices of DOE. Also, per request I am providing talking points of some key issues that need the attention of the Acting Commissioner of Education.

In advance of our meeting, I thought it might help if we had a conference call with the small group that will be meeting with Commissioner Cerf for Monday afternoon for any questions or clarifications for our meeting Tuesday. The conference call is scheduled for Monday, October 31, 2011 at 4:00 pm. If you are unable to make the call, email me your questions or concerns and I will share it with the group.

Call in telephone number: 609-826-3600

Bridge number: 8269203

Password Number: 512609

When: October 31, 2011

Time: 4-4:30 PM

Please see the following talking points and updates:

FY12 and FY13 Budget -

The Amistad Commission's respectfully requested that \$270,000 be availed to them for FY12; it was submitted in the budget by Senator Ruiz. This budget amount was prepared with consideration of the State's financial realities and prioritizes the Commission's activities for FY12 that are necessary to continue to operationalize this legislated mandate uninterrupted. I have supplied you with our budget summary for FY12 which includes salaries, programming, and curriculum development. This budget amount was requested in the FY12 budget and was unfortunately redlined in the final budget commencing July 1, 2011. DOE has made sure that monies have been availed to support and undergurge all operational and programmatic needs of the Commission so far this fiscal year, but we have no allocated monies, nor are we listed on DOE budget with a special purpose account. Funds to support our program have been pulled from several revenues streams throughout the agency; we are no longer placed in the division of Academic Standards, via the recent DOE internal reorganization, we are now placed within the Division of Special Services, with Special Education, School Services, and the Holocaust Commission. This move has made it more difficult for our budget because the monies within the division of Special Services are generally earmarked for initiatives that do not resemble our mission and cannot be utilized.

In meeting with Dave Hespe, Chief of Staff and Dave Corso, Chief Financial Officer, it was decided that the proposed course of action for FY13 would be for the Amistad Commission to

request an addendum of an internal DOE "special purpose account", like the Holocaust Commission, whereas DOE can place designated FY13 Amistad Commission operational and programmatic funds, so regardless of our division, we might have monies to operate.

In addition, the approved FY12 budget included a salary increase for the Executive Director, for alignment with comparative NJDOE job title and job duties to a salary within the DOE Director salary ranges. The salary increase process for the Executive Director position, to be in alignment with the DOE salary ranges, began under Acting commissioner Hendricks and has yet to take effect, and paperwork has been stalled since the departure of Acting Commissioner Rochelle Hendricks in July 2011. Dave Hespe and Dave Corso have promised to look into the delay of the salary increase. Assistance with finalizing this salary increase would be appreciated.

Legislation updates for our completion of our transfer to DOE :

On April 9, 2010, the New Jersey Amistad Commission began the process of a move to the Department of Education via an inter-agency transfer. This transfer has been signed via a Memorandum of Understanding between the former Commissioner of Education and the Lt. Governor as of August 2010. In June 2010 the State Board of Education adopted the Amistad Commission as an entity within the Department of Education under the Division of Academic Standards and placed them on the organizational chart. Without legislative action or budgetary addendums to the Memorandum of Understanding, the Dept. of Education was not able to open or operate accounts for the Commission, budgetary appropriation request had to come through the Dept. of State or the Senate or Assembly budget committee, and any checks and/or monies the Amistad Commission received had to be sent back to the Dept. of State for deposit into the account of their newly formed Office of Programs; per FY11 budget language. We did not have any budget appropriation request, nor any budget appropriation monies for FY11. We have already discussed the redlining of the budget appropriation request for FY12, so we currently do not have any monies for FY12. **In June 2011, Governor Christie officially placed the Amistad Commission in the Department of Education through his reorganization plans. In September 2011 Legislation was introduced in committee and cosponsored by Senators Theresa Ruiz and Sandra Cunningham which will:**

- Shift the Co -Chairpersonship to the Secretary of Higher Education and the Commissioner of Education as opposed to the Secretary of State and the Commissioner of Education as stipulated in the original legislation.
- Placement of Amistad Commission "in but not of" Dept. of Education with our budget coming from **within** the Department of Education.

This legislation is still in committee, I will keep you abreast of any developments.

Curriculum Revision to the Amistad Social Studies Web-based curriculum resource for teachers:

- The RFP requisite for the web-based curriculum development contract award was based on the 2004 Social Studies standards, which were being utilized in April 2009 when we started the development of the web-based curriculum. The Department of Education has since

revised the Social Studies standards and adopted the utilization of the Common Core Standards. The Amistad Commission's development of the web based resource as well as the proposed modifications to this web-based resource is necessary for the alignment of the statewide mandate for Social Studies with the new standards, as dictated by the legislation.

- The submission of an addendum to contract Dept. of Treasury #73949 to the AIHE is needed. The utilization of this web-based resource, created under contract #73949, is central to the mandated statewide adoption and compliance of the Social Studies directives under the Amistad legislation that must be adopted by all public, private, and parochial school districts in New Jersey.
- In addition, it was determined in preliminary conversation with Dave Corso at the Dept. of Education that the necessary curriculum revisions and articulations for Social Studies compliance prior to Sept. 2012 could be done under a rider to our contract with AIHE. A meeting has been scheduled for November 3rd, 2011 with Dave Corso, Dave Joye, Jack Morticha, and Stephanie Wilson to decide the revenue stream to be utilized for the revisions (IDEA monies were preliminarily identified) and the best course of action for revising and opening back up contract # 73949 to make the changes. **We would like to proceed with AIHE throughout Spring 2012 to facilitate the updates and addendums to our web-based curriculum.**

These curriculum updates are mandatory for compliance with the newly adopted Social Studies standards will cost an estimated \$29,000 - \$35,000.00 - this sum was included and approved by the Amistad Board of Commissioners within our FY12 operating budget.

Staff Resources and Division Placement within DOE:

DOE org chart –

<http://www.state.nj.us/education/genfo/overview/>

- The work of the Amistad Commission has been done singlehandedly by one individual, the Executive Director for almost four years, we have made great strides, but the realization of the vastness of our task for statewide implementation means that we do need technological and human resources available to us that can facilitate our effective coverage of the more than 600 school districts in the state that must come under compliance; and that need training and curriculum revision assistance. The Amistad Commission created and requested a human resource plan that would allow statewide coverage via the hiring of two Educational Specialist, which would divide the state, and a Administrative Assistant, which would assist the Executive Director in her duties operationalizing the statewide legal mandate. This has never materialized. Prior to our move to DOE, the Amistad Commission did have a Curriculum Training Consultant that was on contract. Optimally the Amistad Commission would like the ability to hire additional staffers for the office, human resources for this mandate are needed for implementation immediately and consistently. **Our FY12 budget, approved by the Board of Commissioners includes the rehiring of our Curriculum consultant/ professional development trainer Candace Pryor Brown for the sum of \$29,000.00 for a educational consulting contract. We are requesting that contract commence Dec. 2011-June 2012, for the sum of \$15,000.00 so that she might to come on board and do Amistad Commission in -district trainings on the**

curriculum resource and the Social Studies standards with school districts in Northern New Jersey. The monies for this budget expenditure must be identified within DOE for the contract, and the contract must be created with the assistance of the Executive Director. In meeting with Dave Corso, it was proposed that pending proper approvals, this contract can be in place by mid- November 2011.

- In addition, our move to DOE has been pleasurable yet we have operated in some instances in isolation and at times in-silo and would like to be more cohesively included with Curriculum and Standards trainings for districts/ professional development initiatives for school leadership ; most especially as it relates to the shift to the common core standards. **Our recent placement during reorganization under Special Services has come with some hesitation and some additional disconnections as to our place within the discussion of the newly adopted requisites for the Common Core standards/ Social Studies standards adoptions. It is my hope that we can solidify our working relationship with Academic Standards and do some cohesive professional development initiatives both within the Department of Education and in partnership throughout the state's school districts.** The aim is for the work of the Amistad Commission to not be thought of as an ancillary and marginal requisite for our state's classroom, or for that matter within the auspicious of DOE. Even more troubling is that so many departments even within DOE are unaware of our existence, nor have any firsthand knowledge of what we do, or the resources we have created for the state's education community.
- We belong in Academic Standards and no reason has been given for our move on the org chart, our move out of Academic Standards has once again placed us in the precarious position of falling outside of the curriculum initiatives taking place daily within DOE, as well as outside of the purview of district curriculum shifts. **The alignments on the Social Studies standards currently do not yet link to our web-based curriculum resource and we still appear to be an ancillary area of curriculum adoptions.** For example, it should be noted that when the Southern Poverty Law Center last month did a report card on statewide curriculum and teaching of the Civil Rights era, New Jersey scored a F. I was asked by DOE public information office to respond to reporters and a justification to the Southern Poverty Center; to discuss the Amistad law and the extensive resources that the web-based curriculum provided to our teachers. The comment that was made in response from the Southern Poverty Law Center was that the web based curriculum resource is a wealth of information, but appears outside of the Social Studies curriculum publicized by New Jersey.
Report:
<http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/publications/teaching-the-movement>

Article:
www.philly.com/philly/education/20111004_Pennsylvania_and_New_Jersey_get_low_grades_on_teaching_about_civil_rights.html
- The work that we have done as a Commission needs a recommitment from DOE and needs to be intricately aligned with every aspect of curriculum development for Social Studies, and our state's Education Administrators, Teachers, and district curriculum developers should think of us as synonymous.

- A meeting has been set up for Monday, October 31, 2011, with Dave Hespe, Stephanie Wilson, Dave Corso, Barabra Gantworth, Division Director for Special Services, and the new Chief Academic Officer to re-introduce the work of the Amistad Commission and to see how we might proceed in more closely aligning ourselves to the priorities and the activities of the work of the office of Academic Standards. We would love to be moved back into the Division of Academic Standards, and that would have to be submitted by the Acting Commissioner to the State Board of Education for approval. In addition, we are asking for assistance with publicity and support within DOE, so that we can more intricately be involved in the workings of the overall department.

Compliance to the Mandate throughout the State -

- The Amistad bill was passed in August 2002, we have made great strides in the last 9 years, yet there is a significant level of frustration from the Board of Commissioners in relation to the pockets of school districts officials and teachers that: have no knowledge that this is a legal mandate for curriculum inclusions; have received no direction for its implementation within their districts; and are unaware of the resources and trainings that are available to their teachers through the Amistad Commission. We have significantly blanketed a large percentage of the state's districts in our training activities and in the usage and utilization of the web resource, yet there is much work to still be done.
- **Lack of human resources have limited our ability to properly evaluate the extend in which this mandate is being operationalized within the classroom, the effectiveness of the trainings on extending teacher's knowledge of the content, and/or the evidences of the curriculum inclusions on student's achievement and diversified content knowledge.** This legal mandate touches the classrooms of all K-12 students in the subject area of Social Studies, yet it is still select districts that include it in their curriculum plans; many teachers still lack understanding of the idea of a inclusive curriculum that does not focus on specific units of study but transforms 190 days worth of instruction; few principals understand to look for it during their classroom observations, and the resources used in our classrooms are not always reflective of an overall commitment to the quest for diversity and content knowledge expansions, not in isolated pockets but throughout the state.
- The desire for NJ to lead the way in deconstructing and reconceptualizing how we have taught Social Studies spurred the exigency of this law. We are leading the way for other states and have become a nationwide model, yet many of our own school districts are in need of prompting from DOE for adoption and commitment to this mandate. **A public service announcement and directive from the Commissioner of Education and the Department of Education would be extremely helpful in the statewide implementation and compliance to this mandate.** In addition, the Amistad mandate, its trainings and resource availability needs to be layered into the various communications and district oversight activities DOE performs daily (for example Kappa reviews, QSAC, in-district DOE Educational Specialist placements etc). The urging of DOE to operationalize a department wide adoption of the Amistad mandate is needed to expedite statewide compliance.

I thank you for taking the time to be attentive to the needs of the Amistad Commission. I hope

these talking points are helpful. we will meet with Commissioner Cerf on Tuesday, November 1st, 2011 at 9:00 at One Gateway Center in Newark. If you have any questions, clarifications, or concerns please let me know. I can be reached on my cell anytime - 856-952-5654. **I look forward to speaking with you on our conference call on the 31st of October at 4pm.**

In the service of our kids,

Stephanie