

Governor Phil Murphy

# During Black History Month, Governor Murphy Announces Expansion of AP African American Studies in New Jersey

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**NEWARK** – Governor Phil Murphy today announced the expansion of Advanced Placement (AP) African American Studies classes in New Jersey during a visit to Science Park High School with Newark Mayor Ras J. Baraka during Black History Month. The AP African American Studies class, which is currently in its first stage of a two-year pilot program across the country, will be taught in 26 New Jersey high schools during the 2023-2024 academic year. Currently, the class is offered in one New Jersey school out of 60 nationwide. Today's announcement underscores the Governor's commitment to leading the nation in public education while promoting access to educational opportunities that offer students a strong foundation for future success.

Governor Murphy and Mayor Baraka were also joined by the Acting Commissioner of Education Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan and the Superintendent of Newark Public Schools Roger León while visiting an African American History class taught by Mr. Alnazir Blackman, who will teach AP African American Studies at Science Park High School in the next academic year.

"The expansion of AP African American Studies in New Jersey will grant our students the opportunity to learn about the innumerable ways in which Black Americans have shaped and strengthened our country," said **Governor Phil Murphy**. "As governors like Florida's Ron DeSantis prioritize political culture wars ahead of academic success, New Jersey will proudly teach our kids that Black History is American History. While the DeSantis Administration stated that AP African American Studies 'significantly lacks educational value', New Jersey will stand on the side of teaching our full history. We will set an example for the nation by demonstrating to our future leaders that our country is the greatest in the world because it is a work in progress, a promise, and an ideal we strive to achieve."

"African American history has been enshrined in our statewide social studies standards since the 1990s, and subsequently codified in law with the passage of the 2002 Amistad legislation that requires New Jersey schools to incorporate African American history into social studies curriculum," said **Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan, Acting Commissioner of Education**. "In New Jersey, we strive to fearlessly and honestly provide our students with the richest and most expansive instruction possible – one reason our public schools consistently rank among the best in the nation. Recognition of New Jersey high schools that have implemented Advanced Placement African American Studies is an additional milestone in our journey in providing robust resources and education excellence in African American studies."

The school visit today also highlighted Newark School District's continued leadership with respect to expanding African American History education. Since 2020, the district developed and launched new curriculum including units of study for K-11 that focus on Black History. In the 2023-2024 academic year, 6 schools in Newark will offer the AP African American Studies class.

"In order to truly understand the complexities of our nation, students must be able to learn about all the facets of American History," said **Mayor Ras Baraka**. "The study of African-American History is integral in a child's educational upbringing as it ensures that they learn a complete picture of what makes America, America. This country cannot afford to teach a revisionist history because doing so will only ensure that we repeat the mistakes of the past. With the passage of the Amistad Bill, New Jersey students are taught a complete and inclusive history. We hope that states across the country will not only enact similar legislation but provide funding to expand history curriculums in a meaningful way."

"In Newark, our African American History curriculum provides students the opportunity to explore primary and secondary sources that help students understand the history, contributions, talents, triumphs, and continuing challenges of African Americans," said **Newark Public Schools Superintendent Roger León**. "The study of African American History, as a discrete field, is important to gaining a deeper, fuller understanding of United States History. We look forward to expanding student opportunities for rigorous learning with the addition of AP African American History and AP Seminar with African Diaspora Content offerings to our students."

"It is an honor to teach AP African American History as it represents an opportunity to provide our students with deep, engaging exploration and discussion of our experiences in the United States of America," said **Mr. Alnazir Blackman**. "I am certain the ancestors would be pleased to know that we have come to a place in our journey worthy of an AP course."

"Unlike what Florida's Governor and other anti-Black history Governors across the country, Governor Murphy is prioritizing the truth," said **Rev. Dr. Charles F. Boyer, Founding Director of Salvation and Social Justice**. "Black history is American history and when we don't tell the whole story not only do we further marginalize and oppress a whole portion of Americans, but we also lie to ourselves and are doomed to make the same deadly mistakes. We applaud the Governor and look forward to this being coupled with a commitment from every school district to prioritize the Amistad law."

"As the new Executive Director of the Amistad Commission, I am very excited about Governor Murphy's expansion of Advance Placement (AP) courses on African American Studies in New Jersey high schools," said **Patrick Lamy, Executive Director of the Amistad Commission**. "This initiative is well aligned with the Amistad Commission's mission to infuse Africans and African Americans in the narrative of American and world history. This is a major step for the state of New Jersey and for the students we serve."

"Black history is a crucial element of world history. Teaching black history year-round helps to create unity and promote togetherness by eliminating the divisive ideologies that are present between racial groups in America," said **Richard T. Smith, President, NAACP New Jersey State Conference**. "Teaching black history supports the narrative that black Americans are valued in American culture and teaches individuals to respect black Americans. Black history must be taught year-round, and not just during Black History Month, in order to encourage all races to accept black citizenship and embrace it with open arms. The expansion of Advance Placement (AP) African American Studies classes in New Jersey's high schools is imperative and is sure to continue to promote and educate our student scholars on the black stories and black history that has shaped America into what it is today. The NAACP New Jersey State Conference is in full support of this expansion and we encourage all students to take advantage of the educational opportunities and we challenge educational leaders in other states to incorporate black history into their curricula as well".

"I'm proud that New Jersey is once again taking the lead on ensuring that all students have access to a broad, inclusive and honest curriculum," said **NJEA President Sean M. Spiller**. "We are seeing a troubling trend across the nation. In too many places, adults are attempting to limit students' opportunities to learn and narrow the perspectives they are exposed to. That is antithetical to the purpose of public education. We have long stood for honesty in education through our ongoing support of the Holocaust Curriculum and the Amistad Curriculum as well as the inclusion of instruction about the contributions of women, people with disabilities and LGBTQ+ people throughout all subjects and grade levels. We will continue to advocate for teaching our students the truth in New Jersey, even when the truth is uncomfortable for some people."

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