



New Jersey Department of Education

The Amistad Commission

FY13 DIRECTOR'S REPORT

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

Submitted by: Stephanie James Wilson, Executive Director

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FY13 Overview

Accomplishments, Status and Financials

With projections for FY14 and FY15

The New Jersey Amistad Commission, legislated in 2002 by Assembly bill A1301 (Public Law 2002, Chapter 75), introduced by Assemblymen William D. Payne and Craig Stanley. The Amistad Commission has diligently strived to fulfill the mandates 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 This legislation also created the Amistad Commission, a 23 member body charged with ensuring that African American's historical content, contribution and experiences are intrinsically taught in the state's classroom on a daily basis and fully infused and intertwined throughout all district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 is a member of the current review team for the new K-12 Social Studies standards and common core alignments which were mandatorily adopted in all districts during the 2014-2015 school term.

National Model for Infused Curriculum Resource Development in Social Studies

- The Amistad Commission 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.

There are thirteen (13) units of study, divided by time periods, as specified in the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards (NJCCCS) for Social Studies. The Amistad curriculum includes sample Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (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 are designed to 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 a major design update in addition to a significant amount of new content for English/ Language Arts teachers designed around the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). 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 NJ 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 600 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 will be debuted in June 2014. The address for the Amistad web-based curriculum site is: www.NJAmistadCurriculum.com

- 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 may be used to comply with the Holocaust and Amistad mandates as well as with Economics, World and US history, and Civics.

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

- Meeting and advising Executive County and District Superintendents on the mandated directives for social Studies instruction implementation of Social Studies curriculum directives and the development of curriculum resources for the 600 plus NJ school districts and Charter Schools.

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 districts curriculum specialist within their respective districts in September 2009. The Commission has been all over the state facilitating professional development training with the Executive County 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 21 Century technologies within classroom instruction.
- The Amistad Commission successfully executed its seventh annual Curriculum Institute for Teachers in August 2014 on the campus of Montclair State University; this is a residential program 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.

- Last summer, the central focus for the Summer Institute was 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 has 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.
- For the past 9 years, the Amistad Commission has partnered with NJDOE 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 program the third Sunday in November, honors the academic excellence achieved by high school seniors throughout the state who are interested in attending a Historically Black College or Universities (HBCU). NJDOE in collaboration with the Amistad Commission and the Malcolm Bernard HBCU College Fair of New Jersey recognizes up to **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, the NAACP, the National Urban League, The NJ Black Issues Conference, the NJEA, the National Council for Social Studies and the NJ Council for Social Studies, the NJ Department of Education, the Association of Black Educators, the Newark Black Film Festival, the New Jersey Historical Society, the African American Museum in Philadelphia, the Holocaust Commission, the Housing Authority, Interstate Realty, Juvenile Justice Center, Essex County College, Malcolm Bernard HBCU College Fair of NJ, Montclair State University, Rutgers University, and 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 a 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 Department of State; moved to the Department of Education with zero funds and one staff person when we were eliminated from the Department of State; and even during our current tenure at the Department of Education, have yet to be given a specified budget line item or specific allocation at the Department of Education. The Amistad Commission annually is left at the mercy of the leftover available funds that can be cobbled together out of the Department of Education budget.
- We are "in but not of" the Department of Education. Our budget is set before and adopted by our Board of Commissioners. Historically, this budget amount was 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 in which we were housed-with subsequent issue as to the availability of funds to support our initiatives.

- The proposed FY 2015 budget will be introduced to the Amistad Board of Commissioners on April 15, 2014 at our commission meeting for adoption so that it can be put forth to the Department of Education.

It is the Commission's humble request that the operating and programming budget (inclusive of salaries) for the Amistad Commission be upheld and supported by this body so we might continue this much needed work in FY15.

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