



Amistad Collaborative Progress Report:

Requirement, Relevance, Responsibility and the Road Ahead

“Inclusive, good-quality education is a foundation for dynamic and equitable societies.”
 —Desmond Tutu

Requirement

The Amistad Bill (A1301), which became law in 2002, calls on New Jersey schools to incorporate African and African American history into their social studies curriculum. Since 2002, the Elizabeth Public Schools (EPS) has developed, revised, and executed curricula in Social Studies and Language Arts that demonstrates that Africans and African Americans have played and continue to play a foundational role in the establishment, growth, and expansion of the United States.

In response to the community’s November 2019 Amistad Forum (Forum), and conversations with Forum conveners and board commissioners, in December 2019, EPS became a member of the Amistad Collaborative based in Elizabeth. The purpose of the Amistad Collaborative is to ensure EPS achieves the learning goals set forth by the New Jersey legislature in the Amistad Bill.

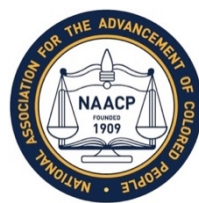
Committed to achieving the purpose of the Amistad Collaborative, in January 2020, EPS entered into an agreement with consultant, Dr. Davida Lindsay-Harewood of DLH Enterprises. As a curriculum consultant, Dr. Lindsay-Harewood is tasked with evaluating EPS’ implementation of the Amistad mandate, and recommending revisions and enhancements designed to increase achievement of Amistad-related initiatives.

Relevance

African American history is American history. Relegating Africans and African Americans to the margins of history limits and distorts our students’ education and their understanding of themselves and their society.

The Honorable William Payne, the sponsor of A130, is noted for making the following profound and relevant observation, “The ignorance of each other’s backgrounds, etc., is really at the base of the [racism] problem. So education will resolve this, I believe.” Thus, the Amistad legislative mandate seeks to redress distortions and omissions of African and African American history, to ensure the educational excellence that accompanies an inclusive curriculum.

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Elizabeth Branch



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Responsibility

The Amistad Bill requires EPS to incorporate African and African American into their social studies curriculum. However, the Amistad Collaborative recognizes the need and value of the village working together. And as a result, the Amistad Collaborative is comprised of community partners and other stakeholders committed to ensuring EPS' implementation of the Amistad mandate.

Therefore, recognizing that as of 2019 – 2020, there is evidence of compliance with the Amistad legislative mandate in EPS' Social Studies and Language Arts courses analyzed by Dr. Lindsay-Harewood, the village is encouraged to assist with the Amistad Collaborative's Road Ahead initiatives.

Road Ahead

Enhance the curriculum across all grade levels. The Amistad Collaborative is particularly interested in replicating the curriculum and practices of the district's 7th grade social studies curriculum, which stood out as an exemplar during Dr. Lindsay-Harewood's initial evaluation.

Dr. Lindsay-Harewood will conduct classroom evaluations that were preempted due to the transition to remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

EPS will establish goals and allocate additional resources for professional development for its teachers and administrators. This will also entail the use of the New Jersey Amistad Commission's resources and professional development institutes.

EPS will include the Amistad mandate in teacher observations and/or lesson plan checks.

Increase public and district awareness of EPS's implementation of the Amistad mandate by hosting events, workshops, and programs.

2002

Amistad Bill Enacted

2002 – 2020

Elizabeth Public Schools Has Executed Curricula In Compliance With Amistad

December 2019

Elizabeth Public Schools Joined Community-based Amistad Collaborative

January 2020

Elizabeth Public Schools Enters Into Agreement With Consultant To Evaluate Its Implementation of the Amistad Mandate

July 2020

Amistad Collaborative Reviews The Consultant's Initial Report And Commits To The Road Ahead