



JUNE 2021

# Amistad Collaborative Progress Report:

Requirement, Relevance, Responsibility, the Road Ahead, and Reflections

*"Inclusive, good-quality education is a foundation for dynamic and equitable societies."*

—Desmond Tutu

## Requirement

On January 7, 2021, Governor Phil Murphy signed legislation strengthening the state's mandate that African American history be infused into New Jersey School curricula throughout the year. Governor Murphy's action strengthens the Amistad Bill (A1301), which became law in 2002. This new bill (A3601) sponsored by assemblypersons, including Assemblywoman Annette Quijano requires curriculums to include instruction infused through all courses.

As a result of the Elizabeth Public Schools (EPS) ongoing strategic plan and active participation in the Amistad Collaborative based in Elizabeth, EPS is poised to fulfill the requirements of the new legislation. Since January 2020, EPS has been working with consultant, Dr. Davida Lindsay-Harewood of DLH Enterprises, to increase achievement of Amistad-related initiatives.

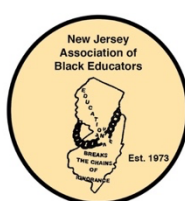
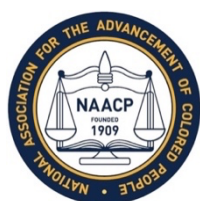
During the 2020 – 2021 school year, EPS's curriculum writing team created 30 new Amistad-inspired lesson plans for grades K – 12. In addition, Dr. Lindsay-Harewood created 5 training and professional development videos for EPS teachers and administrators. The training videos have proven to be effective, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic that has limited in-person training and observations.

## 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 co-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." Now more than ever, it is imperative that students are exposed to and engage the full breadth and depth of African American history. And it is imperative that the "whole story" of history is taught to correct false stories and to tell untold stories. If African American history and the "whole story" of American history is not taught in school, EPS and schools will help to sustain and expand the rationalization and perpetuation of racism, exclusion, marginalization, and more.

*"The purpose of the Amistad Collaborative is to ensure EPS achieves the learning goals... in the Amistad Bill."*





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## Responsibility

The Amistad Bill requires EPS to incorporate African and African American history into their 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's implementation of the Amistad mandate.

During the 2021 – 2022 school year, Dr. Lindsay-Harewood will continue to work with EPS to develop curriculum and workshops that will help teachers provide instruction required by the Amistad mandate. And the village is encouraged to play an integral role in ensuring EPS is fulfilling the Amistad mandate. **Therefore, parents and guardians should be asking their children, "what they are learning in school?" Moreover, the village is encouraged to assist and participate in the Amistad Collaborative's initiatives.**

## Road Ahead

In December 2021, Dr. Lindsay-Harewood will conduct classroom observations that were preempted due to the transition to remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Amistad Collaborative will host a community forum in the fall of 2021, to update the community on EPS's Amistad initiatives and engage in a conversation about the Road Ahead.

EPS will evaluate its use of the Amistad mandate in teacher observations and/or lesson plan checks.

## Reflections

Reflections are an integral part of the learning and developmental process. Reflections encourage our community to develop the habit of analyzing our actions, initiatives, and events. Written reflections from teachers, administrators, and students allow the community to reflect on our developmental process. Thus, providing an opportunity to identify areas of improvement and track whether the progress being made is effective or not.

"The Amistad Curriculum Development Project has made considerable progress toward a deeper infusion of African & African American topics. Dr. Davida Lindsay-Harewood has been our committed guide, as we selected historical content from throughout the African diaspora with a laser-like focus on profiles of distinction and contributions to our shared story. Our committee has developed lessons, hosted forums, and modeled the inclusion of diverse perspectives. Therefore, it wouldn't come as a surprise to find students spending a September morning evaluating the parallels between Martin Luther the Reformer and Martin Luther King, Jr."

**Rahshen Barber, Social Studies Teacher, School No. 9**



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## Reflections

"The Amistad Curriculum Development Project was both captivating and educational. We engaged in meaningful conversations, planning, and revisions on how to enhance the African American experience throughout our curriculums for elementary and high school students. One of our main goals was to create lessons that can be infused throughout our different curriculums and lessons all year not only during the month of February."

**Dr. Michelle Panichi, Social Studies Teacher, Admiral William F. Halsey Health and Public Safety Academy**

"As I reflect on my work with the Elizabeth Public Schools, I am mindful of the power of committed leadership. From Superintendent Olga Hugelmeyer and her "Amistad Team" directed by Aaron Goldblatt through my interactions with educators from primary to secondary schools, I have been met with a willingness to implement the Amistad legislative mandate. Throughout the curriculum writing process, there has been an ongoing commitment to the goal of increasing student knowledge of the diversity of the African American experience within American history. Members were open to direction, exploration, and increasing their knowledge of the African American experience during the process. The work of the team was made less arduous by the understanding that we were doing vital work. Each member brought to the project their unique lesson ideas to increase the infusion of African Americans into the classrooms. There was no need to first gain understanding and commitment to the goals of the Amistad law. Team members started

and concluded this project from the professional position that inclusive teaching is good teaching. The lessons created are evidence that when teachers have leadership, opportunity, and support they can infuse African Americans into lessons that will engage students."

**Dr. Davida Lindsay-Harewood  
DLH Enterprises**

### 2002

Amistad Bill enacted

### 2002 – 2021

EPS has executed curricula in compliance with Amistad mandate

### December 2019

EPS joined community-based Amistad Collaborative

### January 2020

EPS 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

### December 2020

Marked one year anniversary of EPS participation in the Amistad Collaborative

The Collaborative reviews EPS's progress

### January 2021

Governor Murphy signs bill strengthening Amistad Commission and Amistad mandate

### May 2021

The Centennial Commemoration "1921 Tulsa Race Massacre In Tulsa, OK"  
Webinar featuring livestream speech from Tulsa by Rev. Dr. Robert R. A. Turner sponsored by the Amistad Collaborative