New Jersey Department of State

The Amistad Commission

FY2008

SY2007-08 STATUS UPDATE

REPORT
to
Amistad Commissioners

Submitted by: Stephanie James Wilson, Acting Executive Director

September 20, 2007
TO: Amistad Commissioners

FROM: Stephanie James Wilson, Acting Executive Director

Date: September 20, 2007

RE: Status Report on the Development of the Amistad Curriculum

The Amistad Commission

Curriculum Development Activities
July-September 2007

July 30, 2007 - August 3, 2007, the Amistad Commission was in-residence at Montclair State University for the Amistad Curriculum Consortium. In attendance the Commission selected an industrious gathering of Curriculum Specialists and Educators from throughout the state that will author lesson plans based on primary research and content acquired during this one week residency consortium. These lessons will be the framework for the development of our curriculum and further our objective and mission of creating and distributing the first edition of the Amistad Curriculum guide for K-12 to all school districts by September 2008.

At the completion of the week the Consortium participants authored over 200 lessons each utilizing the framework of our newly created Curriculum template. Working closely with Dr. John Dougherty, Social Studies Coordinator in the Division of Academic Standards in the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE), and the moral support of Iman AQuddus, director of the Office of Legislative Services in the NJDOE and the enthusiastic endorsement of Dr. Bill Librera, Commissioner of NJDOE, as well I was able to create an Amistad lesson plan template with full African American infusion plans for instruction. These lesson plans are the rubric for the full seamless integration of African American content into the Social Studies course for grades K-12.

Because of the structure of the newly developed curriculum template that was utilized this summer at the Consortium, we have forced the authors to think concretely about:
1. New Jersey Standard that they will follow when writing the lesson
2. Era of History covered (which aligned with the standards) as well as an area that requires a written overview of the major points of the historical period.
3. African American history component for infusion which is contextualized within the era of history covered by the lesson and must be blended for the holistic presentation to the student as mandated via the Amistad legislation.
4. An infusion plan which gives specific direction to the teacher
5. Teaching strategies
6. Assessment tools
7. Identification of the Big Ideas for Understanding in alignment with the essential questions component of the updates Social Studies mandates to be outlined by NJDOE by September 2008
8. Resources for teachers and students.

In an overarching way, this formula seems to create a rubric that limits the author’s ability to extract African American content from the historical discussion, thereby creating a separate African American studies course. The identification of an infusion plan allows us to direct the teacher on the suggested methodology for seamless integration of African American content, concept, and position into lessons that would be currently deemed “standards” Social Studies or Civics rather than framing an African American Studies course. Specifically, using these lessons will probably require the Amistad Commission Curriculum committee along with our editors to continue to re-conceptualize and extend the rewriting of history within these lessons to include much more of the state History and Social Studies content standards. Our finished product should be a curriculum that is the merging of two products: an African American studies curriculum and the previously utilized and monochromatic U.S. history curriculum.
Our desired outcome is that any gaps in content coverage for the curriculum will be filled during the Curriculum consortium. Our Consortium faculty were specifically instructed to review the content areas previously covered as well as the ten areas of American history that are mandatory within a curriculum (Standards 6.4, C-L).

Consortium Faculty lecturers included leading scholars in History and African American Studies. The following is a list of faculty lecturers:

- Dr. Sandra Collins, Montclair State University
- Dr. Gloria Dickerson, College of New Jersey
- Dr. Manning Marable, Columbia University
- Dr. Colin Palmer, Princeton University
- Dr. Stacey Patton, CUNY
- Dr. Adrienne Petty, Swarthmore University
- Dr. Patricia Reid Merritt, Stockton College
- Dr. Jeff Strickland, Montclair State University
- Dr. Weldon Williams, CUNY
- Dr. Leslie Wilson, Montclair State University

In addition, we have:

- **fifty (50)** Curriculum Specialists and Educators that were in attendance at the Curriculum Consortium; evenly distributed among elementary, middle, and secondary education;
- whose days were spent in **five (5) hours** of lecture followed by **(3) mandatory hours** of lesson plans writing; with
- our faculty available to our scholar-educators or consortium fellows throughout the day; and with
- each Fellow required to prepare a minimum of 10 lesson plans.
The following is a list of Fellows as well as their assigned lectures, the lessons they authored reflect the historical era and scholarship of their lectures they attended. The selection of the period of history and group assignments was strategically decided based on grade demographics of the Educators, areas of interest and experience:

1. **July 31, 2007 - Making of the Modern World and the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade**
2. **August 1st, 2007 - Colonial America**
3. **August 2nd, 2007 - Revolutionary Era and New Nation**

**Group Members:**
Sarah Pretty - elementary  
James Sanders - elementary  
Rosalind Adair - elementary  
Diane Swainson - elementary  
Tanya Caesar Waller - middle school  
Melanie Alston - middle school  
Eva Maria Jennings - middle school  
Vincent Stallings - middle school  
Anita Champagne - high school  
L'Mani Vinney - high school  
Steffany Baptiste - high school  
Deborah Dixon - high school  
Angela Gyuro - middle school  

Allison Bugge - middle school  
Terrilisa Bauknight - Harmon - high school  
Simonetta Erb - high school  
Diane Scimeca - high school  
Claudette Louis - high school  
Angela Newton - high school  
Victoria Scarpa - high school  
Pat Atkins - Editor  
Maritz a Williams - high school  
Adrian Bickham - high school  
John Severs - high school

1. **July 31, 2007 - Antebellum America**
2. **August 1st, 2007 - Modern America (1877-1945)**
3. **August 2nd, 2007 - Contemporary America (1945-Present)**

**Group Members:**
Catherine Wishart - elementary  
Dr. Martin Dickerson - middle school  
Sharon Troutman - elementary  
Janene Onyango - elementary  
Cynthia Harris – Frederick – middle school  
Wanda Smith – middle school  
Joshua Rosenbaum – middle school  
Deitra Smith – middle school  
Dr. Richlyn Goddard – high school, post secondary  
Valerie Butler – high school  

Diane Allen – high school  
Sharonda Allen – high school  
Miriam Martin – high school  
Linda Somers - elementary  
Lenore Hall - elementary  
Edward Newton – middle school  
Bobby Akbar – elementary  
Juanda Marie Gikandi – high school  
James Cook – high school
Post Curriculum Consortium Activities

- The activities include a preliminary review of the lessons submitted by the Curriculum Fellows by closely assessing the submitted Amistad lesson plan for alignment to the template to determine how fully the plan infuses African American history and to determine if the lesson fits within the parameters of the desired objective of a Social Studies curriculum.

- In addition, lesson plans were reviewed to determine whether they filled the gaps in the content areas previously covered during previous Summer Institutes as well as the aforementioned mandatory ten areas of American history NJCCCS Social Studies Standards, 6.4, C- L.

- Fellows were required to submit their lessons electronically by August 17, 2007. The submitted lessons were catalogued by name, grade level and historical era and African American topic for infusion.

- Subsequently, a comprehensive reference guide is to be created for quick reference of available lessons we now have on file. The idea is to use a sample of the K-12 lessons to create packets to distribute to school districts and other organizations unsure of how to infuse African American history into their curriculum. In addition, the lessons may be used to train give educators how-tos in integrating African American history into Social Studies during the Commissions district/school workshops or professional development in-service offerings.

Moreover, the lessons provide a concrete status of implementation to create a timeline for full curriculum infusion as well as help guide the Commission planning its annual summer curriculum development institutes as it relates to era, theme, content and subject matter.
Proposed Next Steps for Amistad Curriculum Development

The road from the theoretical framework for the Amistad law to the methodology for infusion to the creation of the product, has been long for all those involved. The following will illustrate a series of quick actions that must be taken within the next six(6) months in order to have the first edition of our curriculum ready for wide spread distribution in the Fall of 2008 to all of the school districts in New Jersey.

Strategic Plan

1. A framing out and clear identification by the internal Amistad Commission Curriculum committee of the areas of history, topics, subjects, documentation that would be the framework of the Amistad curriculum. Although the Social Studies standards identify targets and areas for inclusion; our commission has never clearly articulated our framework for this curriculum, rather we have built a curriculum based on the lessons we have collected. The creation of our curriculum framework will serve as an outline for all other development activities.

2. The re-formation of the Curriculum committee which would include several of the Curriculum writers and classroom practitioners from the Consortium, our Editors, scholars, and the Commission Curriculum committee for the ongoing oversight of the editing, restructuring and substantiating the creation of the lesson plans that serve as the first edition of the curriculum.

This will be an active committee. In addition, the primary and secondary sources utilized must be provided to each teacher. My plan for this group would include a reiterating of the Amistad mandate, a discussion of the common pitfalls for the lesson plans we have received, a review of the template, and overview and identification of historical eras to be covered within the curriculum and lesson plan assignments with a timeline of when we expect deliverables back to our office. I would like to reconvene this group once a month with assignments to be handing back in and handed out until we have a completed project. First meeting date - Saturday, October 20th, 2007 at 11:00 am.
3. Prototyping of Amistad Curriculum - testing plan of action includes the creation of two continuous units for curriculum prototyping in the months of January/April in three separate school districts throughout the state. The testable lessons will come with the accompanying primary and secondary sources. Upon the identification of those schools we are going to utilize we will invite the classroom teacher, the administrator, and the supervisor to do a focus group on December 18, 2007.

This focus group will determine classroom style, content knowledge of the teacher, classroom demographics, what areas the teacher has taught, how long the teacher has taught, the school’s policy on lesson plan submission by teachers and a copy of the school/district curriculum if any. We will not review the lessons or the lesson plan template or methodology for the dissemination of the knowledge at the first focus group. Curriculum Evaluators will be given a rubric for the Curriculum that they will utilize during the testing period that will identify the usability of the curriculum and whether the operationalization of the lesson results in the desired outcome for the students. There will be a variety of assessment tools that will need to be utilized at the completion of the first cycle of testing.

Prior to the second set of prototyping in April, a self-reporting survey will be distributed to our teachers that will determine what they are teaching, any shifts in classroom style or any additional resources and/or influences that have been made available to the students. Our second set of lesson plans will then be distributed to the Educators which will be taught verbatim as a cohesive unit.

In early May, we will bring the teachers back together after our second school visit. After we have completed the evaluation and ask specified questions of them in regards to: the outcome of knowledge acquisition by their students, the ability of the Curriculum, the primary and secondary sources, the results of a unit test as well as their opinions of the user-friendliness of the lesson plan template if this curriculum was delivered “cold” to a classroom teacher.

In moving forward with the Curriculum, this information gathered at these focus groups insures that we are attuned and aligned with the delivery of lessons required by the Amistad mandate and will be rolled into the work done by the Curriculum committee. During the late spring and throughout the summer the first draft of the curriculum will be completed for distribution.