



AMISTAD COMMISSION MEETING

September 27, 2024

1:00PM - 3:00PM

Teams Meeting

Chair, Dr. Lillie Edwards

- I. **Public Session: Call to Order – (2 Minutes)**
- II. **Pledge of Allegiance (1 Minute)**
- III. **Actions Items: (25 Minutes)**
 - A. Approval of Draft Minutes from the June 14th Meeting – **Attachment II-A**
 - B. Strategic Planning Preliminary Approval – **Attachment II-B and B-1**
 - C. Budget FY 25 Approval – **Attachment III-C**
 - D. MOA with NJ National History Day - **Attachment III-D**
- IV. **Executive Director Report (25 Minutes) – Attachment IV**
 - A. Summer Institute 2024 Update and Plans for 2025 and 2026
 - B. Exemplary Award Process - Winners for 2024
 - C. Proposed Bill Payne Exemplary Administrator Award
 - D. NJEA Update
 - E. Status of New Website Development
 - F. MOA with NJ National History Day
 - G. State-Wide 2024 Survey of New Jersey Educators Results
 - H. Amistad Commission Student Leadership Council
 - I. NJ African American History Competition for 4th and 5th Graders
- V. **Open Public Comments and Remarks: General Public (10 minutes)**
- VI. **Adjournment**



Amistad Commission Quarterly Meeting Minutes

June 14, 2024

Commissioners

Patricia Atkins, Lavonne Bebler-Johnson, Lillie Johnson (Chair), Rosie Grant, Danielle Jones, Antwan McClellan; Tom Puryear, Jason Redd; Joyce Ship-Freeman (Vice Chair); Kamari Scott (Singleton).

Amistad Staff

Patrick Lamy, Trevor K. Melton

DOE/AG Staff

Amna Toor, Kerlyn Espinal

Public

Members of the general Public (6 Guests)

Meeting Called to Order

Chair Edwards began the meeting officially at 1:14 pm, with anticipation of the presence of a quorum during the meeting. It was decided that it was appropriate to conduct the meeting by taking official votes on voting items.

Chair Edwards thanked all participants for joining the meeting of the Amistad Commission and read the statement pertaining to the public session of the Commission meeting to ensure compliance with the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act. The Open Public Meetings Act was enacted to ensure the right of the public to have advance notice of and to attend the meetings of public bodies at which any business affecting their interest is discussed or acted upon in accordance with the provisions of this act. The Amistad Commission has posted notice of this meeting to be published by having the date and time in place thereof posted in the Department of Education, Secretary of State's Office. The notice was also given to the State House Press Corps and the Governor's Office.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Edwards began the meeting with the reading of the Pledge of Allegiance and asked all participants to participate.

Approval of Draft Minutes from the March 22, 2024, Commission Meeting

The minutes were initially not voted until a quorum was reached later during the meeting prior to public comments. There was a vote to approve the minutes from the March 22, 2024 meeting of the Commission. There were 11 in favor. Motioned by Commissioner Atkins, seconded by Kamari Scott.

Status of the Strategic Plan for The Commission

Dr. Edwards provided an overview of the strategic plan and noted that the Strategic Planning created a mission statement, vision statement and a list of core values that were validated and voted on by this body. There are six strategic priorities in the strategic plan. Each of those priorities has three to six goals, and I would like us to be aware that some of those goals we have already met or have already started working on, although the strategic plan has not yet been finalized. The phase we're in now is in fact creating a final document that can be shared with our strategic advisory group, stakeholders and partners. Dr. Lamy shared with this Commission and then shared with the public. I believe this strategic plan will inform the public, specifically, what the commission's goals are moving forward.

Additionally, the plan of the commission to implement and execute this work in service to educators and young scholars of New Jersey. The plan will also outline the work and how it will benefit the educational excellence of our students. Soon, we will finalize the final design of the plan. The other important piece I wanted to share with you is that as the strategic plan goals are completed and launched, this body will receive both quarterly updates within the executive director's report, as well as an annual report on the strategic plan itself.

Executive Director Report

The Amistad Office team is excited to start planning for the 2024/2025 academic year. This fall will mark the Executive Director's second full academic school year with the Commission. In September 2023, the Amistad Office established the following top priorities for academic year 2023-2024.

1. Launch and begin implementation of a successful strategic plan
2. Introduce the academic year Continuing Institute Professional Development Program for Teachers
3. Begin planning for the trip to Western Africa
4. Create an assessment plan for the Commission with a State-Wide Survey
5. Increase district and teacher participation in Amistad activities

We are happy to report that we have accomplished all the goals listed above. We have established a Strategic Planning Council and developed a new strategic plan that will be launched in the fall of 2024. We established the first professional development series during the 2023/2024 school year, as a continuation of the 2023 Summer Institute that engaged 40 teachers in 8 professional development sessions. We created a travel agenda/itinerary for the trip to Ghana, Africa and received confirmation from NJEA to fund the first visit in August 2025. The Amistad Office launched the first state-wide survey on May 14, 2024, as a critical assessment initiative in connection with the strategic plan. A clear example of increasing district participation in Amistad related activities is the highest registration of educators in the 2024 Summer Institute (300 individuals). Our office must also note that our partnership with I-Hearts has provided over 100,000 communications with educators and citizens of New Jersey to raise awareness about the work of the commission. For the first time in the Commission's history, all 21 counties in New Jersey are connected to the Commission.

Exemplary Award Process

We are in the process of reviewing three submissions for the 2024 Exemplary Award. Our office received endorsement from the Governor's Office to continue with the same Selection Committee as in 2023. Our staff screened all the applicants to assure that they met the prescribed requirements based on the legislation. We received a total of 3 submissions. There was one from K-8 grade levels and two submissions from 9-12. Based on the legislation, the Award Selection Committee must select two teachers to receive the Amistad Commission Exemplary Award: One teacher representing grades K-8 and one teacher representing grades 9-12. Each award recipient will receive \$2,500 in recognition of his or her extraordinary contributions. In addition, the recipient's school district will receive \$2,500. The funds are for the districts to create a plan to implement the Amistad Law. We will announce the winners at the closing dinner for the 2024 Summer Institute on August 1, 2024 at our closing ceremony.

Summer Institute 2024 and 2025

We are happy to report exceeding 300 participants for the 2024 Curriculum Summer Institute. The program design is still in draft form but will be finalized within the next two weeks. We are confirmed for the 2025 Summer Institute at Stockton University's Atlantic City Campus. The dates are August 4th-7th, 2025. We are in the process of securing a location for 2026. We are also exploring the possibility of a hotel and conference center in the north region of New Jersey for 2026. The tentative dates for 2026 Curriculum Summer Institute are August 3rd – August 6th.

Status of New Website Development

The Amistad Commission is in the process of developing a new Curriculum Support Website. We have contracted Dana Communication for a period of three years to manage the entire project. This is a major financial investment by the Commission and a critical component of the new strategic plan. Dana Communications will do an initial overview of the new content of the new website at the Summer Institute. We are anticipating an official launch at the NJEA Conference in November 2024.

Student Advisory Group

The intent of the Student Advisory Committee is to recognize and acknowledge student leadership and the value of students' voices in their education. The Amistad Commission would like to specifically hear what students across New Jersey are thinking about the implementation of the Amistad Legislation in their classrooms. Specifically, providing instruction for students on the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country, and the contributions of African Americans to our society as codified in Public Law 2004, Chapter 75). The Commission is inviting all New Jersey (districts, schools, charters, and renaissances) to submit a student nominee representing their building on the Amistad Commission's Student Advisory Committee.

We have created a process for students **in 9-12 grade, currently**, attending a (districts, schools, charters, and renaissances) and are members of the student government in their respective district, charter/renaissance school, to be eligible to be selected. Students will be nominated by their respective schools. We anticipate launching this new initiative

in fall 2024. This is also a component of the new Strategic Plan that focuses on more direct engagement with New Jersey students.

Status of NJEA Collaboration and Travel to Ghana

NJEA has approved the release of the funds for travel to Ghana. Although we are very excited to have finally reached this point, there are some concerns about the timing to effectively plan this trip this August. We communicated with our State-wide Lesson Planning Committee of Teachers (28 K-12 educators representing 16 counties of New Jersey) for input and feedback regarding planning for the trip for August 2024 or December 2024. The final decision was to plan the trip for August 2025. This decision was based on the following issues.

1. We are less than two months away from the intended travel dates (8/8/24-8/20/24).
2. There are no other possible dates to consider this calendar year.
3. Teachers would have to pay their \$1500-\$2000 contributions for this trip within the next two weeks and this presented a hardship.
4. The Commission was unable to announce this trip or promote it until this point.
5. The other variables are time to secure visas; expediting a selection process for participants that should be handled carefully; coordination of flights and hotels at this late date; and surprising our partners in Africa with last minute planning for this important experience.

Update on Search for New Fulltime Personnel

The Amistad Office is finalizing the intake process for applications for the two new full-time employees. The Selection Committee developed the interview process and questions. We anticipate finalizing the search process in August with a projected start date in September or October 2024. We are also advertising interns' positions to assist the office in 2024/25 school year.

Questions Regarding the Executive Director's Report

There was a question on considering prioritizing participation of new teachers in the summer institute. Although that was not the practice this year, over 60 percent of the registered participants are first-time attendees.

Open Public Comments and Remarks: General Public

Dr. Edwards welcomes comments and questions from the general public. The first set of questions were from Ms. Kina Dordoni, an East Orange resident and educator in New Jersey. She inquired about interviewing the staff at the Amistad Office in support of her doctoral program. The Staff agreed to assist. She also inquired about more opportunities to become involved with the Commission and was provided with way to access more information about PDs and other activities of the Commission. She noted a need to connect with the Black Education Center in NYC as an extension of the work of the Commission.

Mr. James Harris, Former President of NJ Black Educators Associated inquired about the impact of Artificial Intelligence on the work of the Commission. It was noted that should be an area of focus over the next five years as we think strategically about the future of the Commission. Mr. Harris inquired about the budget and was provided with an update that there was a request for an increase without final approval as of date of the meeting. The third item was the excess number of summer institute participants and whether or not we were giving priority to a first-time participant. That was not considered this year but could be considered onward. Mr. Harris made a final comment about the importance of the bylaws and Board member participation.

Dr. Nedd Johnson New Jersey Department of Education, State Board Member, greeted the group and shared comments of encouragement to continue to do great work on behalf of the children in the state of New Jersey. So, this is a passion and interest of mine, both our research and personal as well as educational, career wise and have my full support and cooperation. The Commission thanked Dr. Johnson for attending the meeting.

Dr. Edward closed the public comments section by showing appreciation for having all of the guests on the call and for the work that they do to support an inclusive curriculum for our children. She welcomed their questions and comments and noted to be in touch directly with Doctor Lamy as well as Mr. Melton for ways in which they can continue to contribute to this work as charged upon by this body.

Executive Session

The Commission to a motion to move to executive session to discuss confidential matters between the Commission and the Attorney General's Office. There was a second motion to exit the Executive Session.

Adjournment : The Meeting adjourned at 2: 37pm.

Attachment III-B

2024 Amistad Commission State-Wide Survey

Preliminary Summary

As of 9/18/24

Background of Participants

As part of the Amistad Commission's strategic plan, the state-wide survey was conducted in the spring of 2024 to identify the critical issues that were relevant to support and substantiate the strategic priorities identified by the strategic planning council. The following is a preliminary summary of the results of the survey.

Participants' Background

The survey was completed by 390 New Jersey educators, the composition of the group included 70% women, 26% men and 4% who elected not to respond to the question regarding gender. The responders' ethnic background was 57% white; 27% Black/African descent; 8% Hispanic/Latino; and 6% elected not to respond.

Roles within Districts

The state-wide survey also attempted to identify what roles educators played within their respective school districts. 23% identified as high school teachers; 13% as middle school teachers; 15% as K-5 teachers; 22% identified as district level leaders; and 10% identified as other: and 8% as some type of school administrator.

Length of Time as Educators

The question was raised on how long these educators have been in their current role in their schools. A large majority of the educators were in their roles for 13 or more years at 32%; 34% were in their roles from 1 to 3 years; and 21% for 4-8 years and 11% were in the roles for 9 to 12 years. In terms of subject areas, teachers were primarily trained in , 36% were in social studies and 17% in language arts.

County Representation

A large majority of the teachers who participated in the survey were from Essex County, representing 16%; and Monmouth, Middlesex, and Camden at 8% each. All other groups were below 8%. All counties were represented in the survey results.

School Districts

There was great representation from most regions of the state of New Jersey with 150 school districts represented. The schools range from the very north region of New Jersey through the very southern parts of the state.

General Survey Questions

The New Jersey Amistad Commission statewide survey was divided into three critical components. The first component of the survey assessed to what degree educators throughout the state of New Jersey were aware of the Amistad law. The second component of the survey focused on professional development in relation to the Amistad Law. The third component of the survey focused on how districts have implemented the Amistad Law.

Awareness of the Amistad Law

The first part of the survey inquired about level of awareness of the Amistad Law. About 83% of the respondents indicated that they were aware of the Amistad Law and had read it. 17% were unaware.

Source of Information About the Amistad Law

58% of the educators reported that the information regarding the Amistad Law was received from their school. When asked for the specific source (person/office), a large number of educators received information regarding the Amistad Law from their supervisor (25%) or directly from the Amistad Office (22%).

Mode of Communication About the Amistad Law

Over the past ten years, most of the educators received information via email and social media, representing 57% of the group.

Awareness of Curriculum Mandate

83% of the educators reported that they were notified on at least one occasion that their subject area curriculum must infuse the narrative of African Americans and the contributions of African Americans to US and world history.

Material from Teachers Union

The respondents were asked whether or not they received information from their teachers' unions. 45% reported that they received material from their teachers' union about the Amistad Law.

Professional Development

Attending Professional Development in Relation to Amistad Law

The respondents were asked about professional development sessions attended in relation to the Amistad Law. 51% never attended any professional development related to the Amistad Law. 39% attended 1-3 sessions; 5% 4-8 sessions; and 3% attended 9 or more sessions.

Attendance at the Summer Institute

The group was asked about attending at least one Summer Institute over the past ten years. 79% have not attended a summer institute. 11% attended 1-2 institutes; 5% attended 3-4; 3% attended 5 or more institutes.

District Notification About PD Related to the Amistad Law

When asked whether or not educators were notified by their districts about events sponsored by the Amistad Commission, 55% reported that they received information from their district while 45% reported not having received any information.

Importance of PD Related to the Law

The educators were asked whether or not attending professional development for Amistad related events was important, 87% reported that they felt that these events would be important and serve as a resource for their work in a classroom.

Use of Amistad Curriculum Website

The respondents were asked about the use of the Amistad Curriculum Website over the past ten years. 62% of the educators reported that over the past 10 years they've used the Amistad Curriculum Website as a resource.

Use of Books and Other Resources

54% of the educators reported that they used books, materials and other resources provided by the Amistad Commission over the past 10 years. 46% have not used these resources.

Attending Events Organized by the Commission

32% of the educators attended at least one event organized by the Amistad Commission over the past 10 years. 68% have not attended any events.

Implementing the Amistad Law

Ability to Implement the Law

A large majority of the teachers in social studies (91%), language arts (82%); and visual and performing arts (71%) reported that they were aware of how to infuse the Amistad Law in their curriculum within their respective subject areas. The results for science (62%) and math (53%) areas were lower.

Frequent Implementation of the Amistad Law Occurs

When asked how frequently African American history is included in instruction in their respective schools, 26% reported weekly, 19% Monthly; 12% daily; 13% quarterly; 11% yearly and 15% other/NA.

February Focused Implementation

There was a question which focused on whether or not African American history was only prioritized during the month of February. 61% of the group reported that the focus on February only was not occurring in their respective districts. 31% report it that African American History is only introduced during the month of February. 9% elected not to respond.

Ability to Share Examples of Implementation

The educators were asked about their ability to share specific examples of how their schools have implemented the Amistad Law. 61% reported that they can share at least three examples while 39% reported that they were unable to.

Comments on Providing Better Support for NJ Educators

"Professional Development for Librarians to share with their schools. "

"There is a lot of information online regarding this. It would be helpful to have a simplified teacher friendly version with grade appropriate ideas."

"I hope to attend the summer institute this year. "

"The Commission can include a note that school libraries and librarians can be a reliable source for resources. "

"Show us exactly where to include it in each subject and course"

"I may be unaware of them but more virtual PD with more frequency during the year. "

"More information and PD regarding the mandate"

"NJ Association of School Librarians would be a great resource for supporting the Amistad mandate."

"I don't know"

"Nothing right now"

"NA"

"Not sure"

"Send more resources"

"More contemporary figures"
"Provide grade level materials to use"
"Workshops"
"Continue to provide digital professional development opportunities"
"Continue to provide digital resources and professional development opportunities"
"I have no idea. Give us information?"
"Provide additional resources and speakers"
"Provide us grade level specific examples"
"PD"
"Continue sending resources for districts to use to meet the mandate, as well as ideas for how the mandate can be fulfilled."
"N/A"
"self-guided professional development"
"n/a"
"n/a"
"Continue to send professional development opportunities which are rich in resources and application. Teachers are always looking to learn about different figures and contributions that they can align with their curriculum. A list of age-appropriate literature is also helpful to have!"
"Send informational emails with links"
"Provide resources to all grade levels."
"Continue to vary locations of offerings and time of year."
"Email in September with information"
"Encourage districts to actively communicate resources, materials, and PD opportunities."
"Not needed"
"Raise awareness of the Commission, and make it more widely known how the Commission can supplement/support the curriculum."
"Not sure. "
"Notification of events hosted by Amistad commission and more provision of professional development in this area. "
"More teacher resources would be nice"
"Continue to provide resources, lessons, and professional development. Free speakers/presentations for school wide assemblies and professional development that district could access for staff and students."
"Continue sharing resources and opportunities for professional development. Provide grants for teacher-based projects. "
"NA"
"Directly email school districts about opportunities for professional growth, not solely relying on information being disseminated by district leadership. "
"I feel comfortable meeting the mandate and appreciate the resources developed/shared. "
"Continue to communicate with resources and conference"
"N/A"
"Share specific grade level resources. The Amistad website can be hard to navigate."
"N/A"
"Ensure that there is a wealth of age appropriate and discipline appropriate materials available."
"It IS DOING WELL NOW"
"Share high quality materials that are accessible to all grade levels. Work with state organizations to share quality materials and resources. "
"More emailed communication "
"Offer more resources and PD for all teachers."
"Provide PD sessions specific to the Amistad curriculum"
"N/A"
"Continue to send resources and announcements on professional development opportunities. "
"Provide opportunities for PD"
"Providing materials"
"NA"
"na"
"Continue to share information."
"Review the information to ensure that it is current"
"Need more access to information"
"Provide emails, PDs, and opportunities for continued growth in understanding and implementing materials related to the Amistad Law."
"The teachers would like to attend professional development related to the mandate, but they often cannot attend during the school day; can additional workshops be offered on weekends or in the evening?"
"Sharing specific lessons aligned to the NJSL for every grade level."
"Sharing materials freely and openly"
"Some of the Amistad resource links are dead or unavailable. Making the resources part of a searchable/filterable database would be ideal."
"Offer more workshops"
"N/A / idk"
"Provide ready to use lessons on the website with resources "

"The resources shared are perfect."

"Update the resources and provide more suggestions for explicit teaching opportunities that are organic so teachers can naturally integrate the topics into their plans."

"Continue to share resources "

"Nothing at this time"

"The Commission could provide some initial introduction to the program."

"I will re-register for the information, however if there can be information included within the NJDOE Monthly Teacher Newsletter it would go a long way. "

"Provide ways for K-5 to integrate appropriately"

"Provide resources for each unit of study of the social studies standards, and other subjects where the opportunity is present, to infuse diversity-based activities. "

"Direct outreach from commission representatives to school districts offering in-service sessions, virtual trainings, and/or resources that can be tailored and adapted to local contexts (including local NJ African American histories) could be helpful. "

"Age-appropriate materials would be greatly appreciated. I teach Bilingual Kindergarten, and it is difficult to teach them regarding Amistad when they don't know any English and their Spanish is deplorable also."

"Continue to provide resources that teachers can integrate into their lessons."

"Regular emails or content specific updates would be useful. "

"I need to explore more about this on my own. "



Executive Director Report **September 27, 2024**

The Amistad Office team is excited to start the 2024-2025 academic year. The Commission accomplished all of its goals in the 2023-2024 academic year, and we look forward to a more successful 2024-2025 school year. We are still wrapping up a few items from the 2024 Summer Institute. Below are few updates since the last meeting of the Commission on June 14, 2024.

Summer Institute 2024 Recap

The office had 319 educators registered, an additional 159 administrators/supervisors and school board members for the administrator's session. The daily in-person attendance average 70-100 participants with an additional 150 online for teachers, and 65 administrators and school board members. Highlights were the sessions and the locations, conversations, applicability of material. Lowlights – no shows in person took up important spaces that others wanted. The individuals who completed the evaluation reported high praised for the presenters, information, and organization of the event. The Office will develop a plan to address the “no show” issue in the future.

2023-2024 Exemplary Award Winners

Our office received endorsement from the Governor's Office to continue with the same Selection Committee as in 2022-2023 academic year. Our staff screened all the applicants to assure that they met the prescribed requirements based on the legislation. The 2024 winners for the K-8 Award were Lauren Ferguson, School 21, Elizabeth City School District; and Robert Fenster, Hillsborough High School.

Proposed Bill Payne Exemplary Administrator Award

The Amistad Commission recognized the exceptional work of the teachers who have been recognized over the past two years from varying district would not be possible without the support of local Boards of Education and the leadership of their superintendent. Therefore, in June of 2024, the Amistad Office established the Exemplary Amistad Administrator of the Year Award. Dr. Johnson Superintendent of Hoboken School District was the first to be recognized. Dr. Johnson presented her blueprint to implement the Amistad Law in the Hoboken School District at the summer institute. The session included district administrators, supervisors, and school board members. The session received high praise. We are proposing to rename this award the William Payne Exemplary Administrator of the Year Award. The Amistad Office created a new selection process for nominations.

NJEA Update

Commission staff continue the efforts to secure funding from the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) to facilitate travel to Africa in August 2025.

Status of New Website Development

The Amistad Office has been meeting on a regular basis with Dana Communications to construct a new website. Dana Communications facilitated a presentation at the 2024 Summer Institute. The presentation was followed by a questionnaire for summer institute participants to gather specific information on what teachers needed from the new website. That information was shared with Dana Communications as they continue their work on the site. We are anticipating a soft launch at the NJEA Conference on November 7th and 8th, 2024. The commissioners will have a presentation by DANA Communications at the December 2024 meeting. The Amistad Commission's Curriculum Website is scheduled to launch in January 2025.

MOA with NJ National History Day

The Amistad Office received a signed MOA to secure our partnership with New Jersey National History Day. We received approval from the Attorney General's Office to sign the agreement after endorsement by the Board. The intent of this agreement was to extend our student engagement efforts as proposed in the new strategic plan.

State-Wide 2024 Survey of New Jersey Educators Results

We had a total of 377 educators complete the survey. The majority of individuals who completed the survey were white (57%), women (70%); and were primarily teaching in Social Studies, and language arts. Most indicated that they needed additional resources and professional development activities for teachers, as well as more information sharing from the Amistad Commission. A summary of results is available.

Amistad Commission Student Leadership Council

The office is currently taking applications for students interested in servicing on a Student Advisory Committee for the Amistad Commission. The purpose of the committee is to recognize and acknowledge student leadership and the value of students' voices in their education. The Amistad Commission would like to specifically hear what students across New Jersey think about the implementation of the Amistad Legislation in their classrooms. Specifically, providing instruction for students on the African slave trade, slavery in America, the vestiges of slavery in this country, and the contributions of African Americans to our society as codified in Public Law 2004, Chapter 75) The Commission invited all New Jersey (districts, schools, charters, and renaissances) to submit a student nominee to be involved in the Amistad Commission's Student Advisory Committee.

New Jersey Amistad Commission's African American History Day Competition for 4th and 5th Graders

The purpose of this contest is to develop elementary students' historian skills as they connect to New Jersey's African American History. Additionally, this will serve to prepare New Jersey's elementary students for the National History Day Competitions while engaging in the implementation of the New Jersey Amistad Legislation. The goal of this contest is to align the learning journey of students with the New Jersey Social Studies Standards while learning about New Jersey's African Americans contributions. Students will use the information to construct student projects, while empowering students to successfully develop confidence, pride, research, writing, public speaking, and critical thinking skills. Additionally, the program will encourage educators to explore a new avenue to meet the mandate of the Amistad Legislation. The contest will have the following categories: Exhibit Poster, Essay (Paper), and Performance (poetry, dance, singing, skit, or play). Students will be permitted to enter as a solo participant or in groups of two to four maximum. Each project will require a research paper of a minimum of 100 words, maximum of 300, listing all research, including interviews or other resources. There will be two regional locations, **Rowan University** in the southern part of the state. Students from the following counties will present at Rowan University. **(Atlantic, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Burlington, Gloucester, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean, Salem). Rowan University's Date is February 15, 2025, with a snow date of March 1, 2025. William Paterson University** will host the northern part of the state. Students from the following counties will present at William Paterson. **(Bergen, Essex, Hunterdon, Hudson, Morris, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex, Union, Warren.) William Paterson University's Date will be February 8, 2025, with a snow date of February 22, 2025. This initiative is another intentional program based on the Commission's renewed focus on student engagement.**