



COMMISSION MEETING

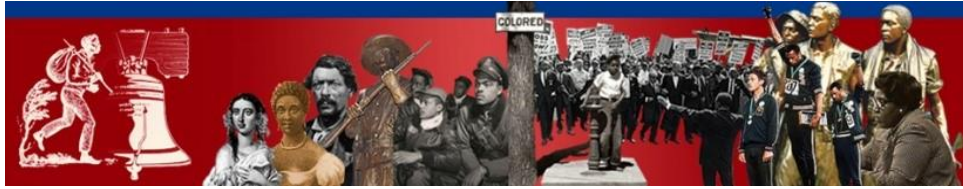
Agenda

**Friday
December 13, 2024**

1:00 PM

Teams Meeting

- I. **Public Session: Call to Order – (2 Minutes)**
- II. **Pledge of Allegiance (1 Minute)**
- III. **Presentation by Dana Communications: Amistad Curriculum Support Website (25 Minutes)**
- IV. **Actions Items: (20 Minutes)**
 - A. Approval of Draft Minutes from the September 27th Meeting – **Attachment III-A**
 - B. Strategic Planning Adoption
 - C. Approval of Meeting Dates for Calendar Year 2025
(Calendar Year 2025: Virtual: January 24, March 21, June 20, September 26, December 19)
Note: Executive Committee meets two weeks prior to Commission Meeting date
- V. **Budget Update for Fiscal year 2026 – Rosie Grant**
- VI. **Executive Director Report (15 Minutes)**
 - D. Summer Institute 2025 Overview and Registration Process
 - E. 2024 NJEA Convention Update
 - F. NCSS 2024 Convention
 - G. New Curriculum Support Website Launch
 - H. Staffing Plan Update
 - I. Partnerships and Collaborations
- VII. **Open Public Comments and Remarks: General Public (10 minutes)**
- VIII. **Adjournment**



Amistad Commission Quarterly Meeting Minutes
September 27, 2024

Commissioners

Patricia Atkins, Lavonne Bebler-Johnson, Rosie Grant, Danielle Jones; Antwan McClellan; Tom Puryear, Jason Redd; Joyce Ship-Freeman (Vice Chair); Fatima Heward; Andrea Roseborough-Eberhard; Senator Singleton; (Kemani Scott) Nyeema Watson.

Amistad Staff

Patrick Lamy, Trevor K. Melton

DOE/AG Staff

Francesco Ferrantelli, Kerlyn Espinal

Public

Members of the general Public (6 Guests)

Meeting Called to Order

Vice Chair Ship-Freeman began the meeting officially at 1:09 pm with confirmation of a quorum and roll call.

Vice Chair Ship-Freeman thanked all participants for joining the meeting of the Amistad Commission and referenced the statement pertaining to the public session of the Commission meeting to ensure compliance with the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act.

Pledge of Allegiance

Vice Chair Ship-Freeman began the meeting with the reading of the Pledge of Allegiance and asked all participants to participate.

Approval of Draft Minutes from the June 14, 2024, Commission Meeting

The minutes we reviewed and there was a vote to approve the minutes from the June 14, 2024 meeting of the Commission. There was a motion to approve the minutes pending edits and corrections. The Commissioners all voted in favor. Motioned by Commissioner Bebler-Johnson, seconded by Grant.

Strategic Planning Preliminary Approval

There was a brief discussion regarding the Strategic Plan and the number of edits that were made within the past twenty-four hours. It was decided that this item should be moved to the December meeting of the Commission. There was a motion by Rosie Grant, seconded by Lavonne Bebler-Johnson and a vote to defer the agenda item to December. The motion was carried via unanimous vote. There was a comprehensive review of the survey data via presentation by the Executive Director. The State-Wide Survey was a strategic initiative to gather information prior to the launch of the new Strategic Plan.

Budget FY 25 Approval

Commissioner Rosie Grant provided a comprehensive report on the budget process. Commissioner Grant indicated that she is presenting the budget for approval on behalf of the Finance Committee of the Board. She reported that the proposed budget represents a reallocation of funds that reflects the current appropriation from the State of New Jersey. The proposal reflects a total of **\$1,010,000**. The Commission did not receive the increase that was requested for FY 25.

The first section reflects the approved total budget for the current staff with a +6% COLA. The +6% for fiscal year 25 reflects a year -to-year adjustment. The 6% increase will be applied to all employees, with exception of a 9% increase to reflect the promotion of one employee. The total allocation for staffing was

\$471,991. The next section reflects a reallocation of previously approved salary lines from February 2019. The Executive Director developed a new staffing plan to ensure greater presence of Amistad personnel statewide. We are finalizing the hiring of two new positions and three Interns. The budgeted positions include 3 Education Planner/Regional Coordinators (FT), 3 Interns hired on a 24-month basis. The plan is to have a total of six Regional Coordinators in fiscal year 26. The total allocation for new staffing is \$248,009. The next section reflects expenses for office operations including furniture, supplies, travel, and events. This section also reflects expenses to host a new curriculum website, continuation of the digital communication plan to engage NJ residents, teachers, and administrators state-wide, and the administrative fee to the Department of Education. The total allocation in this section is \$110,000. The Programming Section presents a new initiative to create an Amistad History Day Competition among the school districts as additional outreach to districts and increase engagement with students and teachers. This also includes cost for a new lesson planning committee, a new partnership with National History Day, and a New Jersey public school annual African American history project competition. The allocation in this section totals \$85,000. The next sections reflect the allocations for the Summer Institute and the related eight online in-service training programs. The total allocation in this area is \$95,000. There was a motion to approve the budget by Tom Puryear, seconded by Lavonne Bebler-Johnson. There were 11 in favor and 2 abstentions.

MOA with NJ National History Day

Dr. Lamy and Trevor Melton provided an overview of the MOA between the Commission and NJ National History Day. There has been an unofficial partnership with NJ National History Day for several years. The purpose and intent of the MOA is to broaden the Commission's state-wide outreach to students and educators in NJ. There was a motion to approve the MOA and authorize the Executive Director to sign the agreement. There was a motion by Lavonne Bebler-Johnson, seconded by Nyeema Watson. All Commissioner voted yes.

Executive Director's Report

The Amistad Office team shared excitement about the beginning of 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 a few updates from the last meeting of the Commission on June 14, 2024.

1. 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.

2. 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.

3. 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. The Board recommended that the award be named the “William Payne Amistad Exemplary Administrator of the Year Award.

4. **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.

5. **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.

6. **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.

7. **State-Wide 2024 Survey of New Jersey Educators Results**

As of the date of the meeting, there were over 700 complete surveys. 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 was attached to the agenda and presented a component of the Strategic Plan update.

8. **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.

9. **NJ 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.

Open Public Comments and Remarks: General Public

There was a six-part question from guest James Harris. He inquired about the budget; creating Amistad Centers at higher education institutions; certifying teachers to teach the Amistad Curriculum; Getting more news coverage for the work of the Commission; and presentations at the NJEA Convention. All questions were addressed. There was a follow up about the Bylaws which are scheduled for revision in October.

There was a question from Guest Joyce Mollineaux regarding the survey and access to broader community which was addressed by the Executive Director.

A question was raised by guest Shae inquiring on district interface with schools and strategies used by the Commission to communicate information about the Amistad Commission. Several approaches were mentioned including NJEA, School Boards, and County Superintendents.

Adjournment

There was a motion to adjourn the meeting. The motion was made by Lavonne Bebler-Johnson and seconded by Andrea Roseborough-Eberhard. The meeting adjourned at 2: 55pm.