



## **Social Studies Department**

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### **The Amistad Commission:**

Ensures that the Department of Education and public schools of New Jersey implement materials and texts which integrate the history and contributions of Africans and African-Americans into the social studies curriculum.

### **What we do in Princeton Public Schools:**

#### **1) To infuse the history of Africans and African-Americans into the social studies curriculum in order to provide an accurate, complete and inclusive history.**

In the Princeton Public Schools Social Studies Curriculum, African-Americans and African history is woven in such a way to ensure that the achievements, perspectives, and history, both past and present, help students understand and appreciate the history and contributions of Africans and African-Americans.

At the elementary level, students focus on learning about Africans and African-Americans mainly through the use of literature, both fiction and nonfiction, including biographies, historical fiction, and a multitude of multimedia and sources, such as primary and secondary sources. The books help students to reflect on their own the cultural, societal, and historical differences of and to appreciate and grow their own self-esteem. Students engage with these texts in their Social Studies and Language Arts curriculums, which are interconnected in these grade areas. They read these texts through teacher-led group read alouds, as well as through book clubs, groups, and through passion reads. We continue to update and expand our school and classroom library base for children to engage in these topics. Below are sample books that may be in the schools, among many others,

Coleman, Evelyn To Be a Drum 2004

Howard, Elizabeth Fitzgerald Aunt Flossie's Hats (And Crab Cakes Later) 2001

Deedy, Cameran 14 Cows for America, 2016

Kimmel, Eric A. Anansi and the Moss-Covered Rock 1990

Adler, David A. A Picture Book of Jackie Robinson 1997

Adler, David A. A Picture Book of Frederick Douglass 1995

King, Martin Luther I Have a Dream 2007

Cunnane, Kelly For You Are a Kenyan Child 2006

McDermott, Gerald Anansi the Spider 1987

Stroud, Bettye The Patchwork Path: A Quilt Map to Freedom 2007

McDonough, Yona Zeldis Who Was Louis Armstrong? 2004

Winter, Jeanette Follow the Drinking Gourd 1992

Somervill, Barbara A. *Amistad Mutiny: Fighting for Freedom* 2005  
Walter, Mildred Pitts *Justin and the Best Biscuits in the World* 1990  
Weatherford, Carole *Boston Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom* 2006  
Curtis, Christopher Paul *The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963* 2000  
Homan, Lynn M. And Reilly, Thomas *Tuskegee Airmen Story* 2002  
Medina, Tony *Love to Langston* 2006  
Schroeder, Alan *Satchmo's Blues* 1999  
Schroeder, Alan *Booker T. Washington* 2005

In addition to the literature, students engage in the source Amistad material through their exploration of the expanding Horizons curriculum, as well as local Princeton, New Jersey, and United States history. The students understand the concepts and ideals of similarities and differences; focus on responsive classroom teaching and empathy teaching and mapping so that children, from a young age, appreciate and respect those from all races, ethnicities, and backgrounds. In K-5, students and teachers engage with materials from Teaching Tolerance and NJ Amistad Digital Curriculum. In Grade 3, students investigate Princeton History and specifically focus their attention to the contributions of prominent African Americans, such as Albert Hinds, in the greater Princeton Community. They also focus on race relations and school segregation and look at the issue from the perspectives of those who lived through it and those who helped to erase it. In Grade 4, the students focus on New Jersey History and the Regions of the United States. The focus is on the history of New Jersey, with specific units dedicated to the Africans, Native Americans, and other Immigrants who came to New Jersey, both voluntarily and involuntarily. When the students learn about the regions of the United States, cross connections are made to music, literature, and the arts when looking at the North East and the South East; in particular, students learn about Segregation, the Great Migration, Jazz, and the Harlem Renaissance. As students enter 5th grade, the focus turns to United States history, from the exploration of the US to Reconstruction. All throughout the grade, the students tackle the question of what it means to be an American and they use literature and historical events, such as the Triangle Trade, the Atlantic Slave Trade, Crispus Attucks, the start of historical racism and slavery, the Underground Railroad, the Civil War and Reconstruction. They focus on equipping students to make relevant connections in the lives of Africans and African Americans by also focusing on the present day issues using modern resources such as Princeton Choose.

The work of the Middle School focuses on Ancient History, World Cultures, and Civics/Government. The students learn about African History and Culture through the exploration of ancient Civilizations such as Nubia, Kush, Ghana, Mali and Songhai. They focus on the contributions of Africans to the world in both 6th and 7th grade. In Grade 8, the students focus on the Civic aspect of Social Studies through the lens of Modern America. The students learn about the Civil Rights Movement, desegregation of schools, and the power of African Americans in modern America. Among the more noteworthy collections at PPS is The Amistad Collection, begun by Escher in 2007 after she won the New Jersey Amistad Award, which enabled her to transform an old storage closet at the middle school into a repository of visual art, films and other items celebrating the achievements of African Americans throughout history. The students in middle school are also exposed to award winning exhibitions focusing on the Civil Rights Movement, the Civil War and important African Americans in History.

At Princeton High School, our United States History I and II courses both involve a heavy integration of African-American history and culture throughout the curriculum -- examining the challenges and obstacles faced by African Americans, the myriad of artistic, literary, cultural, and technological contributions of African Americans, and the profound ways in which America has long failed in living up to its lofty Enlightenment ideals. Our curriculum includes (but is not limited to) the following topics:

- the kingdoms and culture of West Africa on the eve of Columbus' voyage in 1492 -- along with contrasting those values and traditions with those of the Native Americans and white Europeans
- the introduction of slavery into Jamestown in 1619 and the ways in which the institution of slavery and its culture manifest itself in the various English colonies
- the ways in which the slavery question affected the development of the United States in its infancy, including the relevant debates at the Constitutional Convention
- the abolitionist movement in the early to mid 19th century -- including Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman
- slave rebellions
- the impact of cotton on the development of slavery in the early to mid 19th century
- the key events that led to the U.S. Civil War (the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the *Dred Scott v. Sanford* decision, John Brown's raid on Harpers Ferry, the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and Lincoln's election in 1860)
- the nature, importance, and limitations of the Emancipation Proclamation
- Reconstruction, the Civil War Amendments, and the election of 1876
- the Jim Crow era
- *Plessy v. Ferguson*
- Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Dubois, and Ida B. Wells
- the KKK in the 19th century and its revival in the 1920s
- the changing roles and experiences of African-Americans in the United States during both World Wars and the Great Depression
- *Brown vs. the Board of Education*
- the Civil Rights era (including Rosa Parks, SNCC, Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, the Freedom Rides, the Sit-Ins, racial tensions over the Vietnam War, and the 1968 Summer Olympics)
- African American cultural, athletic, literary, and political icons of the 20th and 21st centuries (including Mohammed Ali, Jackie Robinson, Marcus Garvey, Louis Armstrong, Toni Morrison, A. Philip Randolph, Oprah Winfrey, Jesse Jackson, Louis Farrakhan, and Al Sharpton)
- affirmative action
- Barack Obama's election

Our World History course is much more global in a macro sense, but this curriculum does also focus on West African societies, patterns and themes of race relations and tensions, and the ways in which the African American experience contrasts with other marginalized groups in various countries and cultures.

We also offer a popular Accelerated Sociology course that deals extensively with issues of race in American society for 6-8 weeks, and these students focus on a host of issues that deal with race both directly and tangentially -- including: affirmative action,

inequities in the criminal justice system, urban and rural poverty, the Confederate flag, disparate educational opportunities, and the nature of athletics in the United States.

While precise reading lists vary by teacher, the following supplementary texts are widely used at Princeton High School:

- *Savage Inequalities* by Jonathan Kozol
- *Letter From A Birmingham Jail* by Martin Luther King, Jr.
- excerpts from Malcolm X's *The Ballot or the Bullet*
- excerpts from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*
- slave narratives
- the Emancipation Proclamation
- South Carolina's Ordinance of Secession and the Confederate Constitution
- excerpts from Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Dubois
- excerpts from narratives about African American share croppers
- excerpts from the U.S. Senate debates in the late 1850s
- Barack Obama's inauguration speech from 2008

Other resources include:

- the acclaimed documentary series *Eyes on the Prize*
- Ken Burns' award-winning series *The Civil War*
- Ken Burns' award-winning series *Baseball*
- select episodes from PBS Frontline
- the motion picture *Glory*
- the motion picture *Mississippi Burning*

**2) To ensure that New Jersey teachers are equipped to effectively teach the revised social studies core curriculum content standards.**

The mission of the Princeton Public School Social Studies Department is to develop creativity, collaboration, and independent thinking among students through inquiry, research, and analysis, thereby equipping empowered and empathetic local, national, and global citizens.

To do this, our teachers and students:

Analyze primary and secondary sources for content, audience, point of view, and affect.

Link social studies (i.e., history, geography, sociology, law, politics, economics, and psychology) to other disciplines (e.g., art, music, literature, world language, science, technology) to develop and appreciate an understanding of the variety of human experience and the diversity of our world.

Understand the reciprocal relationship between geography and human behavior and articulate how each affects the other.

Value and analyze historical perspective as a human construction of past events.

Master technology as a tool for collecting, organizing, analyzing, and communicating information.

Demonstrate creativity, collaboration, and independent thinking by identifying and addressing societal challenges through individual and group effort.

Understand, comprehend, and critically think about how past events influence the present.

All teachers can use the Amistad Room Resources and all teachers and students have access to literature, primary sources, and documents that access information about African American and African history, culture, and contributions.

Our curriculum is written from the NJ SLS Social Studies Standards and the units are created through using the Understanding By Framework. Supervisors come into classrooms to ensure that consistency, accuracy, and dialogue take place to ensure the Amistad Commission's goals into the curriculum and instruction.

Some of the key recommendations from the Social Studies Program Review that touch on the Amistad Commission:

- Continue to work with Reading and Writing workshop model in elementary schools to tie in fiction and nonfiction works of Social Studies and to address the needs of presenting diverse works of literature to a diverse group of students.
- Multiple Perspectives and materials need to continue to be presented to students to allow them to have a full, informed sense of history and humanity. Pilot

- materials, such as Social Studies and History ALIVE!, as well as Princeton Choose classroom index, to allow students to understand multiple perspectives.
- Continued training for discussions about sensitive topics, such as race, diversity, sexuality, equity, religion, etc. to help teach, instruct, and address students of all backgrounds and perspectives (2016 and beyond)
  - Our high school teachers attended an in-service workshop with Dr. Alison Isenberg, history professor at Princeton University, who shared some of her current research on Princeton and Trenton during the Civil Rights era and worked with our teachers on the use of primary sources and fictional texts as a vehicle for more engaged pedagogy that moves away from being overly reliant on a textbook. She is currently working with various people at the university to arrange times for our high school and middle school teachers to facilitate opportunities for us to utilize the vast data bases and other resources at Princeton University for our own research -- particularly on issues related to racial history and culture in the town and the region.
  - Several of our high school teachers are working with Dr. Marni Sandweiss at Princeton University to pilot a series of lessons based on primary sources related to slavery in Princeton -- everything from diary entries to courtroom records to legal documents. Our teachers have been experimenting with infusing these slavery documents in their lessons in United States History I, and we will be providing opportunities in the spring for them to share their ideas with each other.

**3) To create and coordinate workshops, seminars, institutes, memorials and events which raise public awareness about the importance of the history of African-Americans to the growth and development of American society in global context. Americans and the descendants of the African Diaspora.**

All information disseminated by the Mercer County Superintendent Office is shared with all staff at all schools where and when appropriate, such as the 2016 Amistad Commission Summer Institute for Teachers. Teachers are also invited to attend seminars and workshops that are put on annually by the Princeton University Department of African American Studies. They are also invited to attend workshops as Racial Dialogue and Culture that are put forth by the Princeton Public Library.

The teachers are also engaged in learning about Princeton Choose, which focuses on modern day issues of diversity and race and how these stories can help when discussing the development of the American Society in a global context with the history of African Americans as a crucial part.

Teachers are currently engaged in the revision of the Social Studies curriculum and the whole program has undergone an extensive Program Review. The Social Studies Program will also be undergoing an extensive Tri-States Consortium Visit during the 2017-2018 school year.

As part of this revision framework, our high school teachers have created a new elective course entitled "Contemporary Crises and Current Events" that will certainly involve a focus on issues of racial equality and tension in American society. Though we have not written the formal curriculum yet, that emphasis will certainly be a key part of the curriculum. We have also met with the student leaders of our chapter of MSAN (the Minority Student Achievement Network) to assist them as they work to develop their own new course proposal for the following year -- a class that is tentatively titled "Racial Literacy and Injustice" so we will be working throughout the next year on this initiative.

In addition, one key component of the curriculum that they envision will involve some type of individual and student activism so that the course is not merely "passive" in conveying information but rather more transformative in encouraging active citizenship.