

Pleasantville Public Schools

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Dear Parents/Guardians and families of Pleasantville,

We are very proud to announce the Pleasantville School District is implementing a district-wide initiative to ensure that all of our students are taught inclusive and accurate historical content by infusing Amistad, Holocaust, Latino/Hispanic Heritage (AMHOTINO) into all subject areas. As part of our continuing effort to promote tolerance and diversity, the Curriculum and Instruction Department, led by our Assistant Superintendent Dr. Christiana Otuwa and Tamar LaSure-Owens, our district AMHOTINO Coordinator, will ensure that all our students are prepared to be active and informed citizens that will fight racism and hatred whenever and wherever it happens.

In 1926, Carter G. Woodson, who was known as “the Father of Black History” launched “Negro History Week” to encourage the study of African American history and celebrate the accomplishments of African Americans. His vision was to have African American history fully integrated in American history curriculum of elementary, secondary, and postsecondary schools. Two laws in New Jersey support this initiative. The Amistad Law, N.J.S.A. 18A 52:16A-88, and the Holocaust Law, N.J.S.A. 18A:35-28, require schools to incorporate information regarding the contributions of African-Americans and Native Americans to our country, and to provide instruction on the Holocaust and genocides in an appropriate place in the curriculum of elementary and secondary school students.

To give our students a fighting chance of living in a more equitable society, we must change the way we teach them. By creating a stronger and more inclusive historical content of Native Americans, African Americans and Hispanic Americans, a richer and more accurate picture of American history can emerge. When students learn these lessons at school, they go home and share what they learn with their parents. Conversations about race are important because things cannot change and improve without conversations.

When students learn that African Americans and people of color have contributed positively to society, education, science, art, law and medicine; it gives them an appreciation for African Americans and people of color currently living in the United States. Learning the history and contributions of African Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanic Americans is good for all students. Holocaust Education initiatives on the elementary level is all about teaching tolerance, respect and caring. Such teachings help end racism and fight xenophobic views.

When students have the opportunity to see themselves in what they are studying, they feel valued, appreciated and safe. We must remember that African American history is not all about slavery, but that slavery had a profound impact and reach that continues today. We must teach students about the enormous impact of slavery on the history of North America and South America, from its very beginnings.

This district-wide initiative will provide the support needed by our classroom teachers in providing our children with an exemplary educational experience that not only imparts knowledge, but also teaches them to think critically and never to stop asking “Why?” This curriculum will teach our students how to be good citizens who care for family, community, nation, and connections to all humanity of whatever gender, nationality, religion, or ethnicity.

We are excited and proud to offer this to our students! Stay safe and have a great school year!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "N. Chestnut-Lee", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr. Natakia Chestnut-Lee, Superintendent

**cc: Dr. Christiana Otuwa
Daile White, Business Administrator**