

Philadelphia's African-American History Mandate: A Timeline

1954	U.S. Supreme Court unanimously rules in <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> that segregation in public schools is unconstitutional.
1955	Murder of 14-year-old Emmett Till and arrest of Rosa Parks launch the Civil Rights Movement. Community forum on desegregating Girard Collect held.
1960	Nonviolent student protests and sit-ins begin in the South. Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) founded.
1963	Martin Luther King writes <i>Letter from Birmingham Jail</i> (asserting a moral duty to defy unjust laws) and leads March on Washington. Seven-month mass picketing campaign at Girard College led by Cecil B. Moore; Martin Luther King joins picket line.
1964	Civil Rights Act signed by President Lyndon Johnson prohibiting discrimination and granting power to enforce desegregation.
1965	Malcolm X assassinated. Executive Order 11246 passed to enforce affirmative action. Watts riots break out.
1966	Black Panther Party for Self Defense founded.
1967	Urban rebellions erupt in Detroit and Newark. First Annual National Black Power Conference held in Newark, New Jersey. Martin Luther King Jr. launches Poor People's Campaign to attract federal attention towards eradicating poverty. Over 3,500 Philadelphia students walk out , protest at the Board of Education demanding African-American history in schools, right to wear African garb, and renaming of several schools for Black leaders. Police Commissioner Frank Rizzo instigates beating and arrest of students.
1968	Martin Luther King Jr. assassinated. Philadelphia hosts national Black Power Conference. School District mandates infusion of African American history into curriculum. Ad Hoc Committee for the Infusion of African and Afro-American Heritage created by the District.
1969	Directive announces that "the policy of the School District of Philadelphia requires every school to provide a well-rounded program of African and Afro-American history and culture for every child as an integral part of his total school experience." Nine-point plan for implementation includes staff development, curriculum reform, courses for parents, and production of instructional materials.

	District creates curriculum specialist position in African and Afro-American Studies. A District instructional aid, <i>The Black Experience in America</i> , states, “A history of Africa must start with Egypt, although a few years ago many historians would have defined Egypt as part of the Middle East.”
1970	Philadelphia hosts the Black Panther Convention at Church of the Advocate. African-American Resource Center created to provide District support to teachers and schools and ensure that African and African American history are embedded in curriculum.
1971	Frank Rizzo elected Mayor; stalls infusion of African American Studies in curriculum by forcing resignation of Superintendent Mark Shedd.
1980s	In this decade, Reagan administration cuts social programs, reverses desegregation and affirmative action programs. Black political leadership emerges in Philadelphia with Wilson Goode becoming city’s first Black mayor, Constance Clayton the first Black school superintendent, and Willie Williams the first Black police commissioner.
1994	District passes Policy 102, designed “to foster knowledge about and respect for those of all races, ethnic groups, social classes, genders, religions, disabilities, and sexual orientations.” However, African and African American studies are still marginalized in the K-12 curriculum. Commonwealth Court Judge Doris Smith rules District is failing to provide equal educational opportunities, appoints expert task force, orders District to present improvement plan.
1995	The District pilots <i>Culture Connection</i> , interaction cable television classroom with instruction on topics of African and African American history.
2002	CEO Paul Vallas and School Reform Commissioner Sandra Dungee Glenn meet with community advocates to address lack of implementation of African and African American studies. District creates committess to strengthen curriculum and develop proposal for a mandatory course.
2003	<i>Culture Connection</i> , District’s cable program supporting African and African American history, stops airing. African American Studies program staff is down to one, and Resource Center is closed. African and African Descent Curriculum and Instruction Reform Committee (AACIRC) and other groups stage commemorative protest criticizing District’s failure to integrate African American studies into curriculum and calling for more African American teachers.
2004	District develops African and African-American studies curriculum in modules, with Edward Robinson crafting the K-5 module.
2005	February 16, 2005: School District of Philadelphia passes resolution mandating African and African American history for high school students beginning with class of 2009. Three-part resolution also calls for infusion of multicultural issues across all subjects and implementation of strategies that decrease the achievement gap. March 2005: District pilots African history course in three high schools (Strawberry Mansion, William Penn and Bartram). September 2005: Almost 5,000 students enroll in new District African American history course