

Executive Summary

Rhode Island's *Social Studies Standards (2023)* (hereafter, *Standards*) fails to achieve the fundamental goal of American social studies education. The *Standards* does not teach our children what freedom is, nor where America's ideas of freedom come from in the long history of Western civilization, nor how our ancestors achieved their freedom, nor how our laws, republican institutions, and limitation of the scope of government preserve our freedom, nor what they need to do to preserve their country's liberty.

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), enabled by misguided legislation and a secretive bureaucratic process, has produced a document that is bloated, vague, riddled with errors, distortions, and absences, and animated by a radical identity-politics ideology (sometimes known as Critical Race Theory) that permeates the *Standards* with hostility to groups such as whites, men, and Christians—and, above all, with hostility to America. Social studies instruction should teach students to appreciate America's original and ongoing fight for freedom; the *Standards* teaches them to hate America because it has not yet achieved the nightmare of equity.

The *Standards* is neither by the people of Rhode Island, nor of the people of Rhode Island—but it nevertheless will be imposed on the people of Rhode Island.

Rhode Island will suffer many different ways from these *Standards*. Of course they will have an immediate and harmful effect on classroom social studies instruction, by forcing school districts and teachers to adapt their curriculum to these standards. They also will distort textbook creation and professional development, since these too will have to meet these *Standards'* requirements.

In the long run, Rhode Island will suffer most because its children will have been educated to hate their country. But the *Standards* will be quite effective in the short run in degrading every aspect of Rhode Island's K-12 social studies instruction.

The *Standards* will be so destructive in good measure because Rhode Island's government recently passed several laws that give the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) the power to impose academic standards, with no possibility of check by elected officials or of opt-out by local school districts. Rhode Island's citizenry has no means to curb the worst

instincts of its education bureaucrats. Rhode Island's misguided process for adopting academic standards greenlighted RIDE personnel's radical enthusiasms.

This report outlines both how RIDE produced these *Standards* and the substantive result. The *Standards* were produced by undemocratic means, drafted in an unreadable format, suffused in radical jargon, and teach a tattered caricature of history and civics, which will produce students who are taught not to be patriotic about their country rather than self-reliant citizens who love it.

Rhode Island's citizens and policymakers can only secure accurate, professional social studies standards if they fix the adoption process and the substance of Rhode Island's social studies instruction. Rhode Island should model new standards on *American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards*, adapted to fit Rhode Island. New statutes also should include increased public review and comment in the standards adoption process, increased power for the public and elected officials to veto the RIDE bureaucracy, and a guarantee to school districts that they can opt out from RIDE standards.

Rhode Island's citizens deserve excellent social studies standards. Rhode Island citizens and policymakers should work at once to make all the statutory and administrative changes necessary to make sure that RIDE crafts proper social studies standards for their children—standards that educate Rhode Island's children to know and to love their American birthright of liberty.