

WHY MAJOR CHANGES ARE NEEDED AT THE RI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



TOP-10 FAILURES OF COMMISSIONER ANGELICA INFANTE-GREEN & RIDE

Background: Under the deficient leadership of its commissioner, **Angelica Infante-Green**, the **Rhode Island Department of Education** deserves an “F” for failing to implement successful educational reforms while student achievement continues to plummet across the state, as evidenced by the October release of RI’s dismal *RICAS* scores.

Infante-Green’s tenure, which began in 2019, coincides with passage and enactment of a controversial bill (S0863) that took away local school district control and granted RIDE with the authority to develop and mandate curricula standards and guidelines in critical core subjects for all school districts in the Ocean State.¹

In 2019, following the release of a report by the prestigious *John Hopkins Institute for Education Policy*, which categorized the Providence school district as “utterly dysfunctional,”² The Wall Street Journal weighed in by referring to the situation as “an education horror show.”³

Also in November of 2019, RIDE took over management control of Providence’s failing public School District. However, after four years under Infante-Green’s supervision, students in Rhode Island’s capital city continue to chronically suffer from failed achievement levels.

As will be detailed in this report, Infante-Green and RIDE empowered with this curricula and oversight authority in 2019 have since proven to be wholly ineffective, irresponsible, and unworthy of this unabridged power to influence the education of our state’s children.

As a result, student achievement and public confidence in our state’s educational system have further deteriorated.

Social Engineering. Socialism? RIDE has made it their business to impose Infante-Green’s left-leaning moral and political beliefs upon students via adherence to the “social justice” agenda of Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI).

¹ <https://status.rilegislature.gov/>

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<https://hub.jhu.edu/2019/07/11/hopkins-institute-education-policy-providence/>

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<https://www.golocalprov.com/news/wall-street-journal-calls-providence-an-education-horror-show>

The extremism of Infante-Green might have been anticipated when in 2019 during an interview on the *State Of the State* public access television show, she refused to answer the question posed to her - “*Do you believe in Socialism?*” Instead of responding “no,” her non-response of “*Wow ... that’s a ... yeah ...*” - appears to have been quite revealing.⁴

Failing Student Achievement and Radicalized Curricula: The bottom line is that RIDE has squandered the high levels of overall per-pupil funding by state and local taxpayers.

Instead of focusing on the objective teaching of traditional core subjects to improve student outcomes, Infante-Green has re-prioritized education in the Ocean State to advance a highly subjective social equity and political agenda.

Radical Race and Gender Theory Obsession: As just one example of RIDE’s radicalized curricula agenda, it can be argued that far too many policies, curricula decisions, and guidelines put forth by RIDE are made by looking through the lens of serving so-called oppressed identity politics groups, such as underprivileged students and those with dysphoria about their sexuality or gender.

Even professional development programs for teachers are divided into ‘white’ and ‘non-white’ affinity groups.

Often left-out are students from traditional families or with conventional belief systems and those who excel academically, regardless of race or ethnicity.

Community Divisiveness: RIDE’s centrally planned, one-size-fits-all, and controversial curricula directives have not only been insufficient to improve student outcomes, but have also been central in fomenting divisions in local school districts between parents and education officials.

Indeed, Infante-Green’s misguided strategy of secretly transforming public education away from traditional teachings, and instead towards a radical progressive approach, has also resulted in frequent infringements on parental rights, eschewing hundreds of years of cultural norms.

⁴ [9-9-19 Renovation of Rhode Island Education in State of the State RI on Vimeo](#)

Conclusion: Clearly, both the 2019 hiring of Infante-Green and the enactment of the statute that empowered RIDE with curricula authority have been abject failures.

Rhode Island's education system has been systematically designed to confuse and demoralize students about their country, God, their core values, their fellow students, themselves, and their families. As a result, mental health problems are on the rise.

Under the misguided influence of RIDE, the positive and noble pursuit of ambition and student achievement has been supplanted by compliant education officials and replaced with the negative and directionless polemics of political activism.

New leadership, with repealed curricula authority, is clearly required at RIDE.

RIDE's Top-10 Failures and Controversies

Over the past four years, families, students, faculty, and staff have become increasingly disheartened and angered at the over-politicization of our Ocean State's schools ... with many choosing to flee the system.

Major areas of concern that have not been addressed, some even created, by the failed policies at RIDE include such obvious problems (*the four top-of which are described in more detail in the next section*) as:

1. **Failing test scores** continue to disappoint and raise alarms
2. **Radicalized and politicized curricula** content imposed on young students that comports with Marxist critical race and gender theories
3. **Infringements on parental rights** and family privacy including an agenda to "emancipate" students from their parents
4. Exacerbating the **mental health crisis** by making schools 'unsafe spaces' for most students
5. **Mishandling of Covid pandemic.** RIDE approved lockdowns, remote learning, and masking policies have led to devastating long-term negative impacts on student achievement
6. Alarming levels of **student absenteeism**, which has nearly doubled in Providence during Infante-Green's tenure⁵
7. Increasing and problematic **teacher attrition**⁶
8. **Graduation rate racial disparities**⁷ remain far too high
9. **Public accusations of corruption and calls for Justice Department investigations** by Providence School Board members into a \$72 million contract assigned to be managed by a convicted felon⁸
10. In seeking to keep its agenda hidden from parents and the public, RIDE's secrecy has led to lawsuits and complaints over **violations of state public records laws** (APRA) and **Open Meetings Act**⁹

⁵ <https://www.golocalprov.com/news/ris-chronic-student-absenteeism-nearly-doubled-in-four-years>

⁶ <https://turnto10.com/news/crisis-in-the-classroom/rhode-island-schools-face-teacher-shortage-early-retirements-resignations-public-warwick-positions-vacancies-demand-education-psychologists>

⁷ https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/graduation_disparity/RI

⁸ <https://www.golocalprov.com/news/providence-school-board-members-call-for-investigation-into-72m-contract-an>

⁹ Ibid

A closer look at four of these disqualifying headlines reveals that even more deeply profound problems are occurring under Infante-Green's watch:

1. Failing Test Scores: Even while local and state per-pupil spending has soared in recent years, well above national averages, student achievement continues to fail. And, unlike many other states, test scores have not returned to their pre-pandemic levels.

- **RICAS** test results, **statewide** in 2023, showed¹⁰:
 - English scores dropped a whopping 14% since 2019, especially among elementary students, with fewer than one-in-three students meeting the standard
 - Math scores have also dropped since 2019, with only 29.6% of students meeting or exceeding standard achievement levels
 - Achievement gaps between white and minority students remained unacceptably high, the latter cohort often being merely half as proficient
- **RICAS** test results in **Providence** schools demonstrated an even more alarming lack of achievement, showing¹¹:
 - Only 13% proficiency in math and just 15.1% in English
- **Central Falls is even worse!** Another Ocean State school district under the purview of RIDE and Infante-Green, Central Falls, showed results that were not only the worst in the state but so poor, that they are almost incomprehensible:
 - Only **one-in-twenty** students tested proficient in math, while a mere 7% of students displayed English proficiency¹²
- On the 2022 *National Assessment of Educational Proficiency (NAEP)* otherwise known as **The Nation's Report Card**, Rhode Island students also suffered precipitous declines as compared to 2019: ¹³

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<https://www.providencejournal.com/story/news/education/2023/10/18/ricas-scores-2022-2023-what-they-show/71214612007/>

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<https://www.providencejournal.com/story/news/education/2023/10/18/rhode-island-ricas-scores-for-2023-school-district-results-look-up-standardized-test/71220100007/>

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<https://turnto10.com/politics/10-news-conference/central-falls-rhode-island-mayor-maria-rivera-ricas-standardized-test-results-schools-education-community-policing-train-station-october-20-2023>

¹³

https://www.nationsreportcard.gov/profiles/stateprofile/overview/RI?cti=PgTab_OT&chort=1&sub=MAT&sj=RI&fs=Grade&st=MN&year=2022R3&sg=Gender%3A%20Male%20vs.%20Female&sgv=Difference&ts=Single%20Year&tss=2022R3&sfj=NP

- Grade-4 and Grade-8 Math scores declined statewide, and were below national averages
- Grade-4 and Grade-8 Reading scores also declined statewide, but were slightly above national averages

2. Radicalized and Secret School Curricula: Instead pursuing a traditional “content-based” curricula strategy, an objective method of teaching factual material, RIDE has adopted a more subjective and controversial approach, often referred to as “concept-based” pedagogy. In Rhode Island’s case, the Socialist worldview of Infante-Green and her “America as oppressors” point-of-view is persistently woven through almost all RIDE-recommended instructional content.

The Marxification of Education in RI: On RIDE’s own website, the prominent Marxist **Paulo Freire** is prominently quoted.¹⁴ Freire’s “critical pedagogy,” whose theoretical roots are derived directly from Marxism, seeks to indoctrinate students to become critical agents of social change.

The three-letter acronyms that represent the many of these subjective and extremist educational philosophies endorsed or mandated by RIDE and Infante-Green (**SEL, DEI, CRT, CSE, et al.**) also have publicly been likened to Marxist philosophies by many advocacy organizations and parent groups across Rhode Island; groups that have been formed to counter what our Center regularly refers to as the “*RI Department of Indoctrination.*”

As encouraged by RIDE and as recommended by their own DEI sub-committees, local town and city school committees across the Ocean States have approved the spending of hundreds of thousands of dollars to teach racially discriminatory content ... usually without parental knowledge and with virtually no public transparency.

The justification of **teaching racism** against those with “white privilege,” as a response to bogus DEI subcommittee reports of found racism against minorities ... is based on the false notion that most all individual and collective actions in America are driven by racial bias against minorities - by so-called “white supremacists,” both historically and currently - is a world-view that has been adopted by RIDE and that has permeated most local school districts.

Social Studies Students and Teachers Taken for a RIDE. In developing and adopting its recently approved social studies standards, RIDE was cheered - for finally following the controversial “**1619 Project**” tenets - by a woke member of the Rhode Island Board Of Education.

¹⁴ <https://ride.ri.gov/students-families/multilingual-learners-mlls>

In 2023, following a secretive, unaccountable, and politicized process, RIDE implemented its “social studies standards” – mandated curricula that are to be taught to every public-school student in Rhode Island. These standards, which were criticized in a 52-page report issued by our Center and the Civics Alliance, are focused on teaching radical political activism instead of verifiable American and world history.

There were an alarming number of disconcerting findings from this **Taken for a RIDE** report,¹⁵ which specified biased standards that RIDE seeks to force school districts to impose upon students and teachers in its social studies curricula. In addition to dozens of factually-incorrect historical assertions, some of these misguided standards, among the “worst in the nation” according to the National Association of Scholars involve false narratives that:

- Adopt the tenets of Marxist “Critical Race Theories”
- Teach “children to hate their country” and fail to provide a “coherent presentation of the ideals and institutions of liberty, including religious freedom”
- America was founded on the principle of “oppression” as opposed to America’s true birthright of “freedom”
- Are hostile to groups such as whites, men, Christians, and America itself
- Advance the Marxist theory of “equity”
- Distort textbook creation and professional development

Blames America for the Holocaust: In its October 5, 2023 Social Studies Newsletter, RIDE promoted a lesson plan that advanced the theory that America was partially responsible for Hitler’s Holocaust against European Jews.¹⁶

Sexually Explicit Content: Because of RIDE’s **Comprehensive Sex Education (CSE)** agenda to expose young children to concepts and imagery that are age-inappropriate, not only are parents infuriated, but children are overwhelmed and confused about concepts and emotions that they do not have the capacity or maturity to process.

As opposed to the traditional high school teaching of “biological sex,” RIDE’s recommended “pleasure-based” sex ed curriculum beginning at very young grades has been repeatedly exposed as not only being inappropriate for any level of K-12 education, but has been categorized as immoral, perverted, and a further infringement on parental discretion.

Most Rhode Islanders are now familiar with the disgusting and explicit graphic imagery and written descriptions of young

¹⁵ [Taken-for-a-RIDE-1.pdf \(rifreedom.org\)](https://taken-for-a-ride-1.pdf)

¹⁶

<https://icontact-archive.com/archive?c=1656468&f=17248&s=20144&m=228645&t=115f97511399beb6d9e89bfef3c9df76e70b5791db0b5eaf7f2f53056590d7e8b>

boys performing oral or anal sex with peers or even with young men.

Condom Hunt? To help implement RIDE’s CSE agenda, educators have been encouraged to adopt the controversial and explicit “HealthSmart” curriculum. One lesson plan exposed in March of 2023 on the Center’s *In The Dugout with Mike Stenhouse* video podcast, is where students actually are sent off to conduct a “**condom scavenger hunt**” ... with their findings about condom features and pricings compared to those of other students.

Many controversial and illicit lesson plans like this are encouraged to be “consumables” ... in that they are documented on paper and reviewed only in class, so that they later can be easily destroyed and kept away from the eyes of parents.

Propagandizing the Transgender Movement: State and local education officials, in concert with teachers, are using classrooms to spread misinformation and to promote the emotional manipulation and physical mutilation of children under the banner of “gender-affirming care.”

The reality is that there is no such thing as a transgender child; both because it is not biologically possible and because no K-12 student has the mental or emotional capacity to properly deal with any feelings of gender dysphoria they may temporarily be experiencing – whether coerced or not.

While many medical associations have become compromised to the point of supporting the false scientific veneer of such ‘transition therapies,’ any credible medical professional knows that these “gender-denying” procedures are likely to lead to lifelong mental and physical health problems.

Lawyers from RIDE have gone so far - on record – as to seek to scare school committees against implementing **parental notification** policies, citing RIDE’s guidance on the issue, as if it carried the force of law and threatening lawsuits against school districts if students’ presumed rights to privacy are violated.

RIDE and commissioner Angelica Infante-Green have clearly bought into the false notion, as explained by Christopher Rufo, that traditional views on gender and sexuality are a ‘negative social construct’ used by white males to advance their heterosexual power structure and to oppress non-binary populations. The promotion of transgenderism is seen by radical activists as the most effective way to deconstruct this hegemonic oppression of the “hetero-normativity” system and to abolish the distinctions between man and woman.¹⁷

¹⁷ Christopher F. Rufo, from his Oct. 16, 2023 subscriber email, “Inside the Transgender Empire”

Rufo further argues that educators who hold such delusions see trans-people as the vanguard of the new ruling class, as Marxists themselves speak of the construction of a “new socialist man” to lead in the fight to abolish capitalism.

The transgender movement is clearly a political issue yet RIDE continues to propagandize it as a necessary component of K-12 education.

3. Infringement on Parental Rights & Family Privacy: As is happening in other states, RIDE, at the direction of its commissioner, Angelica Infante-Green, has been working largely under the radar to encroach upon parents’ sole domain to instill their personal code of morals upon their children.

Whether it’s social issues like climate change and LGBTQ+ matters or whether it’s parental notification issues when it comes to medical procedures and psychological counseling, RIDE is seeking to exclude parents from making these highly personal and potential life-altering decisions.

- In school policy debates that are raging throughout school districts across Rhode Island, RIDE’s guidelines suggest that **parents should not be notified** if their child expresses gender dysphoria or seeks to transition away from their true birth sex
- RIDE is openly planning to tear apart families by converting school buildings into “campuses” offering twenty-four hour service centers for students they have temporarily or permanently “emancipated” from their own parents.

Intrusive Surveys: Further via adoption of RIDE’s **Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)** recommendations across almost every school district in the state, invasive and intrusive student surveys persistently are utilized to seek private information about students and their families.

Such information can be utilized to position parents as the enemy of students’ best interests, with the school environment, conversely, positioned as their preferred “safe space.”

Emancipation of Students. In 2021, RIDE and the RI Department of Health established school-based Covid-19 vaccination centers where minors aged 16 and over were to be considered “emancipated” from their parents, and could opt to be administered the dangerous “shots-in-the-arm” without parental consent.

At a broader level, School-Based Health Centers (SBHC’s described in the next section) are already being deployed.

Student Housing Alert? Even more alarming is language from RIDE’s website and from local education plans, suggesting that “student housing” and “24-hour service centers” on “school campuses” will soon be developed to shelter and provide for students who have been coerced to emancipate themselves from their families and homes.

4. IRONY of the Burgeoning Mental Health Crisis Among

Students: In recent years, youth and psychology experts have raised persistent and loud concerns about the alarming rise of mental health issues among young people.

Surely, the pandemic lockdowns, social media pressures, and other societal influences have contributed to this growing problem.

Yet, even while educators and politicians are scrambling for solutions, they fail to look into the mirror to understand one of the major root causes of this issue among our youth.

One of the great ironies about RIDE’s failures under Infante-Green has do with the dubious theory that if one child might be saved by transforming classrooms and schools into “safe space” for students who choose to pursue alternative lifestyles, then the controversial emphasis on the teaching of non-conventional and controversial subject matters, they argue, can be justified.

The refrain ... “if just one student can be saved by creating an environment in schools that affirms their beliefs, then it would all be worth it.”

The problem is that this approach of appeasing the few ... has led to serious and harmful impacts on the many.

Rhode Island’s education system has been purposefully transformed to cater to if not celebrate alternative and often false and dangerous theories on life. When constantly inundated with these negative and profound views ... which younger students do not have the life experience or emotional capacity to properly process ... instability in their overall mental health is a predictable outcome.

Indeed, the sad truth is that Rhode Island schools have become an “unsafe space” for far too many students. Confusion, if not a sense of derision, in the day-day teaching about their country, their fellow students, themselves, and their families ... can only demoralize young people and weaken their mental health.

School-Based Health Centers Will Make Matters Worse: Even more tragic is that RIDE is prescribing more of the same as the solution. In seeking to address its own self-abetted mental health crisis among K-12 students, RIDE and RIDOH are

implementing taxpayer funded, school-based health centers across the state. ¹⁸

There can be little doubt that the services offered at these centers will support RIDE’s social-engineering agenda: It is a misguided notion to believe that more exposure to the same, confusing and controversial concepts being pushed by RIDE might somehow alleviate students’ emotional trauma.

The great irony, of course, is that many student emotional health issues are likely being exacerbated, if not caused, by these very same false and destructive narratives forced upon children in the classroom.

Parental Notification? In offering “behavioral” and other health services, the RIDOH website clearly states that certain counseling and other medical care will be offered “confidentially and without parental consent.” Parents are to be included as part of counseling only “whenever appropriate.”

Solutions: Go Local

In addition to installing a new Commissioner of Education and leadership team at RIDE and in addition to repealing the 2019 law that empowered RIDE to impose curricula standards mandates upon every school district and student ... it will also be necessary for local education officials to take bold action.

Given Rhode Island’s diverse melting pot of cultures and society mores, it is not possible for any single approach to be universally acceptable when seeking to address such subjective and personal issues as morality, race, and sexuality.

These sensitive moral issues are best left to parents and families to address and should not be allowed under the purview of woke public educators.

When curricula guidelines and other education issues must be addressed, such decisions should be made at the local level by locally elected and appointed officials, in concert with local parents, families, and the larger local community ... and with full transparency and accountability to the public.

So long as the ineffective and controversial curricula guidelines described in this report remain the rule at RIDE, and until Rhode Island’s education system becomes fully reformed to put traditional student achievement first rather than prioritizing adults and agendas of politicized special interest groups... Ocean State students will continue to suffer academically and emotionally.

¹⁸ [School-Based Health Centers: Department of Health \(ri.gov\)](https://www.health.ri.gov/school-based-health-centers)

Families Are Trapped: Largely restricted to attending schools as dictated by their zip code, most families do not have the resources to pick-up and move to a school district that provides better schools. Nor do most families have the resources to afford private school tuition or have the capacity to homeschool. Students from these families are unfortunately trapped in underperforming school systems.

Therefore, the Rhode Island Center for Freedom & Prosperity recommends that local school districts should customize and adopt their own '**school choice**' ordinances providing some level of local public funding to follow students to a private or homeschool of their family's choice.

Taxpayers do not care how – or which schools – educate their community's children; they only care that those children **are** properly educated and prepared for college or a life and career after high school.

No student can afford to wait for the 5-10 years for RIDE's vague promises of educational reform to take effect.

Educational Freedom Now! Without providing families with the escape hatch of educational freedom and school choice, no student should be forcibly subjected to the divisive, un-American, and political propaganda that is currently being advanced and mandated by RIDE and its commissioner, Angelica Infante-Green.

ENDNOTES & CITATIONS:

¹ <https://status.rilegislature.gov/>

² <https://hub.jhu.edu/2019/07/11/hopkins-institute-education-policy-providence/>

³ <https://www.golocalprov.com/news/wall-street-journal-calls-providence-an-education-horror-show>

⁴ [9-9-19 Renovation of Rhode Island Education in State of the State RI on Vimeo](#)

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⁷ https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/graduation_disparity/RI

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¹⁴ <https://ride.ri.gov/students-families/multilingual-learners-mlls>

¹⁵ [Taken-for-a-RIDE-1.pdf \(rifreedom.org\)](#)

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¹⁷ Christopher F. Rufo, from his Oct. 16, 2023 subscriber email, “Inside the Transgender Empire”

¹⁸ [School-Based Health Centers: Department of Health \(ri.gov\)](#)