



Written by [Dr. Duke Pesta](#) on February 3, 2017

## **FreedomProject Academy: Accomplishments, Ambitions, and Opportunities**

*Dr. Duke Pesta is academic director at FreedomProject Academy, a classical school that offers online classes real time (not recorded lessons) for Kindergarten through high school.*



At FreedomProject Academy, we have one abiding mission: to change culture and restore the nation through classical education, to impart Judeo-Christian values to our students, and to prepare the next generation of patriot leaders who are equipped to promote, defend, and advance the causes of liberty and civic responsibility across America. The purpose of a classical education is to train the mind to approach all subjects rationally and judiciously, and to recognize the value of reason, not as the only way of arriving at truth, but as one part of a complex human organism that includes body and soul, each of which has its own contributions to make in the development of the person.

We reject the contemporary idea that reason alone is sufficient for human progress and fulfillment. If that were true, courses in mathematics and science might constitute the entire curriculum. Rather, we believe that subjects such as Latin and logic — as well as course work in the Bible, great books, economics, and the humanities — contribute to forming the well-rounded individual, conversant in a wide variety of areas and able to properly distinguish those disciplines fit for the mind, those fit for the soul, and those fit for the body, and how to integrate them. In other words, one important aim of classical education is to educate a generation of young men and women who are able to balance the practical demands of the material world with the ethical requirements of right living and moral development.

FPA is reaching young people and their families at unprecedented levels by offering online classes in real time, with live teachers and student interaction, not simply recorded lessons. The 2016-17 school year is our most successful year to date, with over 700 students enrolled, from kindergarten through high school. We have students in all 50 states and more than a dozen foreign countries, and our program has become a welcome option for missionaries and the families of military personnel stationed overseas. Our global influence includes students in countries such as Canada, Barbados, Italy, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Ireland, Nigeria, and South Africa. Our media, original programming, and scholastic materials were accessed by millions of students and viewers, and for the



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first time we provided diplomas for the initial wave of students who spent all four years of high school with FPA. We currently have close to 300 students on track to receive diplomas — our highest number ever — reflecting 35-percent growth from one year ago. Diplomas granted to the previous senior class are also 38-percent higher than the year preceding.



These classically educated young people are now enrolling in colleges and universities, accepting internships, and entering the workforce. They are prepared to compete at a very high level, bolstered by an education big on civics, economics, writing, and math. The 2017-2018 academic year will see the impact of FPA expand even further. As they have for each of the last five years, new student enrollments are set to grow significantly. More parents are entrusting their students to us at younger ages, and as a result these kids are much more likely to remain with FPA for the long haul.

As part of our broader educational outreach, FPA offers free placement exams in math and writing — whether families decide to use our program or not — and this service is a tremendous source of recruitment, as well as a wake-up call for many parents. We find that students who come to us from the public schools are on average two years behind where they should be for their grade level. With every passing year, public school kids lag further behind FPA students. We test many more students every year than actually enroll with us. Even though some families do not choose FPA as the immediate answer, they finally understand in concrete terms the failure of the public schools. Besides the many parents who choose us, some opt to homeschool or put their kids into private Christian schools. Another encouraging sign: Many kids who take our placement exams end up joining FPA after spending a few years in private schools, where parents become frustrated with the cost of tuition and the imposition of public school programs such as Common Core in the classroom. FPA offered a whopping 401 placement exams in 2016 alone. Our middle- and high-school courses are also filled to the highest capacity in FPA history, and we have experienced our highest retention rate ever from last year's student body.

FreedomProject Media continues to produce national award-winning video projects that deliver education, information, and inspiration to audiences of all ages. Our live programming, educational media, and short weekly videos focus on topics impacting education and the welfare of our nation. For the third consecutive year, we were voted the Top Online School Website by Homeschool.com, a tremendous honor that spotlights our stellar media crew. Our expanding media footprint and positive reviews have made FPA a national brand. For the first time, current FPA families referred the majority of our beginning students to us. Customer satisfaction and academic rigor are driving these increased numbers. We also witnessed a 900-percent increase since last year in the number of information packets sent out to families, and for the first time we ran out of program guides before enrollment closed. In 2015, for instance, we sent out 161 program guides. In 2016 we sent out more than 1,500 program guides. We are on pace to shatter that record in early 2017. Furthermore, FPA's reputation as a national leader in online K-12 education has provided a platform for us to offer national leadership in the fight against Common Core standards and the federalization of education. To date, we have delivered over 550 anti-Common Core talks in 46 states, and have participated in over 2,500 radio, TV, and Skype interviews, reaching in total over three million listeners during the last five years. Our work was acknowledged on national television by Britt Hume at Fox News, and we have been featured in



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segments on Glenn Beck's TheBlaze television network.

FPA is also partnering with private schools, homeschooling co-ops, and churches, beaming our teachers and curriculum into their local communities and affording families a quality education in safe spaces outside of our compromised public school campuses. FreedomProject Partnership teams up with churches and private schools to stream Judeo-Christian classes into brick-and-mortar classrooms across the country. This allows for the rapid expansion of faith-based schools across the nation as FPA provides all class instruction, assignments, tests, and grading needed to help schools stay on budget. What better way to restore American values than to bring the worlds of faith and education together again? Our partnership program makes it possible for every church facility in the country to host their own school — allowing clergy members and pastors to incorporate Bible study into the day's academic lessons.

In order to push back against the (illegal) federalization of education and the implementation of Common Core, FPA is in the process of creating our own proprietary curriculum. Our educational textbooks are being developed 100-percent free of state and national education mandates and ideological spin. Our traditional, common-sense K-12 math curriculum is being written over the next few years and will be available for families across the country. Following math in short order will come textbooks for English and history.

The impact of FPA has resonated well beyond the ability of numbers and statistics to measure. The calls and emails from satisfied parents attest not just to the quality of our program, but also to the success of our focus on character development and moral improvement. FPA kids are economically literate, schooled in the Constitution and founding documents. We are creating morally responsible, civic-minded thinkers, and we're doing it without the help of the federal government. I am excited to share the following testimonials and family success stories with you.

We start with Jim Sargent, also known as "Grandpa in Charge!" Recent changes in public school education — including everything from Common Core to mindless standardized tests — began to raise doubts in the mind of concerned grandpa Jim Sargent, who wondered out loud if there might not be a better educational alternative for grandkids Alex and Diego. After seeing our ads for FreedomProject Academy on Glenn Beck's site, TheBlaze, Jim called for more information about our school. Jim loved the concept, but worried if his two shy grandsons could make the transition to online schooling. A victim of the recent California construction industry bust, Jim also had reservations about the potential costs of a quality private education.

Complicating matters, an FPA placement test determined that at least one grandson was a year behind his grade level in terms of academics. After talking to FPA administrators, Jim did a double take when he found out that we are the most inexpensive and comprehensive education available, one that still offers a host of hands-on opportunities for his grandkids. One year after enrolling, the boys have come out of their shells, engaging in class with other children their ages and blossoming as students. Both boys are energetic athletes competing in soccer, basketball, and swimming, and the family is delighted that FPA's innovative class structure — which combines the best aspects of homeschool freedom and classroom rigor — allows the boys to shine both in the classroom and the sports arena. The boys enjoy school now, and Grandpa has the satisfaction of knowing he is providing them a safe, family-monitored environment as they prepare for college and career success. Jim is so thrilled with the results he even invites other concerned parents over to see what his grandsons are doing, to help spread the word about FPA.

For John and Sandy Scheid, FPA is a genuine blessing. After three years going solo, the veteran



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homeschoolers decided to try FPA for students Michelle (grade 6) and Michael (grade 4). The Scheids felt especially called to homeschooling as a way to oversee the children's moral and civic development. After trying Catholic school for Michelle, the Scheids experimented with a hybrid homeschool program: two days of instruction at the co-op and three days at home. While enjoying the experience, two years of 45 minute drives back and forth to school became taxing. It was then that John saw an ad for FreedomProject Academy in *Old Schoolhouse Magazine*, and the rest — as they say — is history. FPA seemed just what the doctor ordered for Michelle and Michael: a seriously faith-based education emphasizing classical learning and heavy on the Constitution and founding documents.

Putting their house on the market, the Scheids found a cozy 10-acre lot where they could build a home and have more space for a garden and some farm animals. A few days after selling, news came that baby number five was on the way. The hitch? It would be almost two months before they could occupy their new house. Checking in to a hotel, the Scheids soldiered on, enduring weak and unpredictable Internet connections as their kids learned at FPA. Complications with the pregnancy forced the children to move in with relations, and delays in construction put off the date when the family could be reunited in their new home.

Meanwhile, the baby was born early, requiring a lengthy hospital stay for mom. Needless to say, keeping up with classes and homework was a challenge. John dreaded each call to FPA, worried that external problems would compromise the kids' education. But the Student Development team rolled up their sleeves and worked with the Scheids every step of the way, and teachers responded to the unusual situation with grace and understanding. For the Scheids, a key benefit of FPA is that the children have classmates from all over the country. They have made new friends in many states and enjoy being exposed to different perspectives. They are also grateful about how FPA staff and teachers worked with them during what seemed at times an impossible year. John observes a huge difference in the children's grades now that the chaos has passed. Working with FPA has provided a spiritual partnership and genuine teamwork to help the kids keep growing and learning.

For Michael and Anna Doering, the Mission is the thing! The Doerings are church planters for Baptist International Missions, Inc., where they work to establish new churches overseas. They spent eight years working in a closed country before beginning a new chapter in the Dominican Republic, all the while raising a young family that includes Emily (grade 10), Andrew (grade 5) and Brett (grade 3). To say the least, providing the children a high-quality education under such challenging circumstances is difficult on a good day, and homeschooling the only viable option. When Emily was ready for kindergarten, the Doerings decided to try a complete pre-packaged homeschool curriculum. As many others have found, such processed, canned lessons didn't work well for their family. So, for first grade, they enrolled Emily in a private school that many of the other mission children attended. But by the time Brett was ready for school, they realized they couldn't afford to send all three to private school.

Michael first found out about FPA through a Web search. The only drawback in their mind was making the leap to something brand-new. They signed up for classes and gave it a try. Early on there were hiccups and adjustments to be made. But the accessibility and diligence of FPA staff provided speedy remedies, and all issues were addressed promptly. For the Doerings, the biggest pluses for their children are live classes and actual, real-time teachers (not recordings). No more streaming pre-recorded lessons and then hoping the teacher would get back with answers to questions. Another blessing was realized this last year, when the family returned to the United States to update supporting churches on their progress. Because of the unique FPA online class structure, their kids are able to



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continue their studies without missing a beat.

What do the Doerings like best about FPA? It has to be the live interaction with the teachers and other students. Emily especially likes making friends in class and being able to stay in touch via social media. While visiting a supporting church last fall, a mother and daughter approached the family. The daughter asked, “Are you Emily Doering?” It turns out the two girls were classmates meeting for the first time in person. FPA works well for the Doerings because Michael and Anna have confidence that their children are getting a great education. This security allows them greater confidence to focus on their ministry. FPA is happy to serve the Doerings and other full-time ministry families, even as these families serve others as God has called them to do.

Welcome to the computer age Mr. and Mrs. Schiel! Bob and Lila Schiel are raising their two boys in northern Michigan, not far from the Mackinaw Bridge, near Burt Lake. On the farm they have cattle and train the horses, offering riding and roping lessons. After morning chores, Bob goes to work at UPS, driving the transfer route from northern Michigan to Grand Rapids and back, five nights a week. On top of all this, he is a working farrier, trimming and shoeing around 600 horses per year. How does a family like this find time to home-school?

Bob is originally from California, and Lila hails from Missouri. They met in Michigan, where they married and began to raise their family. Soon sons Nathan and John arrived. For the Schiels, day care was not an option. As Nathan became school age, the family considered the possibility of homeschooling. Although confident training horses, Lila wasn’t sure about taking charge of the kids’ education. Fortunately, the Schiels knew two local families who homeschooled. Bob really liked how polite, kind, and well socialized these children appeared to be. Bob and Lila did a little research and located a great Catholic homeschool curriculum. With their busy schedule, they were finally able to balance school, family, and work. But as the health of Lila’s parents began to decline, schedules and availability became an issue once again.

As the boys approached high-school age, mom and dad worried about whether or not they could continue homeschooling. As they considered their options, they discovered their local Catholic school had decided to align with Common Core standards. Meanwhile, friends of the Schiels had recently been to hear FPA speak on the dangers of Common Core, where they learned about FreedomProject Academy, a Common Core-free, online classical school rooted firmly in Judeo-Christian values. Even though the Schiels were not “computer people,” and the family did not own a computer, Bobbi, Student Development Assistant at FPA, worked diligently to help the family obtain and correctly utilize the proper technology. Using an iPad that someone had given him three months prior, Bob officially registered Nathan and John. At this point they had about three weeks to get up to speed before the start of classes.

A friend, who gave the Schiels two older-model MacBooks he was not using, helped educate Bob in technology. Bob is very thankful our Student Development team made it possible for them to get through those early weeks of school. The family remain active horse enthusiasts, hosting events on their farm and traveling to California for roping competitions. FPA allows them the flexibility and freedom to access course work anytime, anywhere.

Even we could not envision the ability of our school to positively impact the lives of children such as Sydney Cravens of Ponder, Texas, who suffers from spinal muscular atrophy (SMA). Doctors told Sydney’s parents that she would not live beyond age two, but they underestimated the heart of this survivor, who just turned 14 and is currently a 7th-grade student at FPA. Despite her disease, which



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keeps her mostly bedridden and severely limits her ability to move, Sydney is now reading classic literature, learning Latin, and studying the history of ancient Greece along with classmates all across the country.

In many ways, Sydney is just like other girls her age. She loves her pets, her family, chatting with her girlfriends, and playing computer games. Sydney has a younger brother, Scott, who also attends FPA. Because she spends so much time in bed, her computer monitor hovers above her on an adjustable arm, and she uses a device called a SmartNav to control her computer with very small movements of her head. She wears a reflective sticker on her forehead and the camera tracks the micro-movements of the sticker, which acts as her mouse. From her work station, Sydney completes all of her classes and her homework, plays online games with her friends, sets up Skype chats with other girls, and explores the world through the Web.

Mrs. Cravens is delighted at the ways FPA helps Sydney live a normal life: “FPA gives her the equivalent of driving to school, going into a classroom, and sitting there with a live teacher; but it also provides us the benefit of having her home, with all of her medical equipment. With FreedomProject Academy she is able to have a more normal experience than in a brick and mortar school — she could never raise her hand, ask questions, and so on, so it’s a really nice way for her to participate in class.”

These true-life stories are a testament to the need for real, workable educational alternatives. There are so many different kinds of educational need, and so many creative ways to fix America’s broken education system. At the core of it all is serious classwork in real subject areas, free from spin and devoted to critical thinking. FreedomProject Academy meets these needs and does so in the safe confines of the child’s home environment.

We ask for your help and involvement. Please help spread the word about FPA. Consider recommending us to family and friends. We are happy to provide you with information and program guides. Beyond that, we are always in need of and grateful for your tax-deductible contributions. These funds are critical for keeping costs low, for offering tuition assistance to needy families, and for accessing the technology systems that make our school function. Donations in any amount are deeply appreciated and contribute immensely to the mission work of our academy.

With your prayers, your recommendations, and your donations, we can continue to expand, continue to impact, and continue to transform the way America educates our children. Together we can empower parents, protect children, and preserve and strengthen our Constitutional Republic. All political, cultural, and legal remedies for our current problems are inevitably rendered moot if succeeding generations fail to recognize, respect, and revitalize the ideals and institutions that made America great. It is these ideals and institutions that [FreedomProject Academy](#) serves in bringing the best possible education to our kids and grandkids.

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