

**Preparing Kids for a Hostile  
Academic World**  
**An Interview with Dr. Duke Pesta**  
*C2C Podcast Episode #13*



Jody: Jody: Jenni, you and I both have adult children who have faced some intense challenges on college campuses and in the world. A large part of our society is very hostile to many of the founding principles of this country and especially to the Christian values that we raised our kids with. In today's episode, we're going to discuss this with someone who has his finger on the pulse of what is happening and is not at all afraid to talk about it, and we're going to ask him about how we as homeschool parents can prepare our kids to face this hostility and even make a change for the better.

Jenni: Well, I'm really excited, Jody, to introduce our guest today. Dr. Duke Pesta is the director of Freedom Project Academy, host of the Dr. Duke Show podcast and a tenured professor of English at the university of Wisconsin in Oshkosh. He has been active in educational reform and was instrumental in developing and implementing an elective Bible course that is currently available for public high school students in Texas. Yay! Dr. Pesta is one of America's foremost authorities on the dangers of common core and the federal takeover of education having delivered, catch this, over 700 talks in 46 States.

Jody: Wow.

Jenni: He hosts his own very popular weekly program about education, the Dr. Duke Show, which covers educational issues from preschool through graduate school. And you can find that on [drdukeshow.com](http://drdukeshow.com). We'll also put, um, all of his links in our show notes. And his work is available at [freedomproject.com](http://freedomproject.com) and ready? We'll put it in the notes in case you miss this, [fpeusa.org](http://fpeusa.org). Welcome, Dr. Duke, we are so, so grateful to have you here.

Duke Pesta: Well, thanks for having me. I really appreciate it and I'm looking forward to our chat.

Jenni: Okay, so let's jump right in. Share with us some of the more difficult things that our kids are experiencing or will experience on today's college campuses and even out in the workforce.

Duke Pesta: Well, I mean, the universities, much like common core, has done to the high schools and middle schools, actually. But the universities have really succumbed entirely to social justice, philosophy and ideology. They have, um, decided the universities that, uh, molding children, molding young men and women into good little progressive voters, materialist, secularist, collectivists, quasi-socialists. This is the primary objective of many on-college campuses, pretty much the entirety of the

humanities, the educational programs, the social sciences have been completely overrun with this kind of education where actually knowing things and understanding things and critical thinking are subordinated to the political imperatives of radical left-wing professors. And so, what they're going to get on college campus is bullied, they're going to get, uh, even if they don't understand it, sometimes, the kids are going to be moved left simply because all of the assumptions of the classroom are left. All of the assumptions and structures of the university are left-wing. And even if you have a professor who's not overtly pushing politics, the structure of the university and the structure of many classes, again, particularly in the social sciences and the humanities and education, the arts are all geared so dramatically to leftist ways of understanding. Again, atheist, materialist, secularist and socialist that the classrooms flow that way. Again, even if you don't have a professor who's over it, but many of them are and many of them are going to demand a certain acquiescence from kids to ideas and arguments that favor progressive causes. And they try to instill in students a genuine hostility of conservative ideas, traditional Christian ideas. These things bother them immensely. And so these biases get passed on to these kids and they oftentimes graduate college, now, kn

owing a lot less than college graduates used to know, a lot less than college graduates should know. And they make up for that lack of knowledge with a doubling down of radical political ideas.

Jody: Wow.

Jenni: Okay, so, as I'm hearing this, my heart is starting to race a little bit and all I can think is what is this going to mean for our country's future? If these- If this is the bulk of the minds that are being produced for our workforce and for our arts and entertainment and for our education system going forward and our government and all of the different spheres that influence a society's thought process, if this is what our country is producing, what does our future look like?

Duke Pesta: Well, I think you've already seen the future and it's ugly. I mean, there's a reason why something, like in a recent survey, 54% of college-aged kids preferred socialism to free markets, capitalism, uh, without even really being able to define socialism. We also- I saw another really scary, uh, survey that was done, I forget who did it, but it suggested that more college-aged kids believe in astrology. Than and tarot cards and astral sides, more of our young college-age children- Kids believe in a cult, things like astrology than believe in God. And so, you can sort of see where this is coming. They- Dependency on government, they've bought- They've swallowed hook, line and sinker, the idea that human beings are destroying the planet and not just human beings, but Western human beings, the same contempt they have for Western civilization. They don't have, per se, India and China, who are even bigger polluters in some sense than we are, that kind of multi-cultural garbage. They hate the founding fathers. They don't like the constitution. Again, all of these really pronounced political positions they have. You ever sit down and you've seen these late-night comedians and these activists who go to campuses and stick microphones under the mouths of students, uh, college kids and try to

define freedom- Free markets? “Tell me- Give me a definition of social,” and they can't do it. These kids have highly politicized attitudes, but they can't explain them. Which is the indoctrination- That is clearly the indoctrination we talk about here. Much of the progressiveness of these kids- And I see it at my university students, too. My primary job, you know, I mean, you had a long list of things that I do, but my primary job is a university professor. I've seen these kids, they are really high on politics and ideology and really, really low on base knowledge.

Jenni: Wow. Okay. So, um, again I'm thinking- My heart's racing and I'm thinking, can we turn back the tide? I mean, is there anything that we, as parents, can do, especially homeschool parents, that can turn back the tide?

Duke Pesta: There's no way you're going to fix these universities in the same way that now you can't fix the public schools. We had warned a lot- Over the last seven years, we've been warning, warning, warning and a lot of people have, that once this goes federal, once things like, uh, common core and common core emanated out of “no child left behind” with Bush. And before that you had “goals 2,000” with Clinton. This is a clearly bipartisan problem of both political parties recognizing the power that comes from controlling education. So, now we've reached the point where the feds pretty much do control education. You've got the ESSA act that was passed in 2015 by Republicans, which for the first time in American history, really does seed fundamental control of education to the federal government. Very unconstitutional, by the way. So, for moms and dads who are in the public schools, there's no way to fix this. And homeschooling is the answer. Get out of the public schools. You're not also gonna fix the universities because, you know, I live in a state where we had governor Scott Walker for eight years and Walker is considered one of the more conservative governors in Wisconsin. And then we have a Republican assembly, a Republican senate, a Republican supreme court. And for 10 years we've been screaming, screaming, screaming, “Stop giving all the money to universities, like the university of Wisconsin at Madison!” All they're doing with the money is they're indoctrinating kids, they're bullying them, they're implementing more diversity requirements. But every year, all the Republicans just give them more and more money. And so, uh, the legislatures have decided they're not going to, uh, even Republican legislatures, have decided they are not going to punish universities for their one-sided political worldviews. And so, uh, there's no way to fix it. I would argue for many homeschool moms and dads there are smart ways to handle college. Number one, most homeschool- many homeschool kids don't need college and they don't need it right away. No kid- I tell people this constantly, maybe this is a good place to start. No kid needs college at 17. No high school senior graduating from high school needs to go to college right away. I really strongly urge parents to have those kids stay home for a couple of years. Let them work, let them try things, let them intern, let them save some money. You know, let them live at home and save some money so that at 19 and 20, in a few years, if they think they have to go back to college, they'll be a little older, they'll be a little wiser, they'll have lot more experience with real life in the work scenario and they also won't have to get in debt for it. And so that's the first thing. I mean, I would trust a 20-year-old who has some work

experience and some money in the bank, I would trust that 20-year-old to better fend off rabid left-wing professors than some 17-year-old right fresh out of high school.

Jenni: Yeah. Okay. And what about the ones who are going to college? Where do they go? I mean, do we put them in that- In that environment of the socialist indoctrination cesspool?

Duke Pesta: The reality is that it depends on what they want to do with their lives. If they want to be doctors or lawyers, they're kind of have to get accredited. And unfortunately, one of the great tragedies of American education is that the only place you can get accredited to do a lot of jobs in this culture is in these ridiculous schools of education on college campuses, which are all radical-leftist organizations. So, uh, but again, if, you know, my kid wants to be a lawyer, let's just say. I homeschool him and I'd- Rather than send him off to college at 17, he's worked for two years, he has, you know, worked in a law office, he's volunteered, he saved up a little money. Then the other thing that I would say is don't send them right away to the big campuses. Don't send them to the university of Wisconsin. Do your first two years as an associates degree at a community college. But community colleges are taught by professors too, and most of those professors are as liberal as the other professors. The difference is that there are no dorms on the community college campuses. Nobody lives there. You go to school, you take your classes, you come home or better yet you could take some of those classes online. And what you're able to do then- And it's a lot less expensive at the community colleges. So let's say a kid graduates at 17, you're done with homeschooling him at 17, he doesn't even think about college until he's 19 for two years, he is interning, he is saving some money, he's working part-time, then at age 19 or 20 he decides, "I really need to be a lawyer. I've got some money to pay for this." Well, what you do first is have them do his first two years of gen-ed courses at the community college and inevitably he'll be able to live at home when he does that, he can continue to work and save more money so that by the time he's 21 or 22 and he's got his two-year associates degree, now he needs to go to the big university to get his rest of his degree so he can go to law school. He'll be older, he'll be wiser, he'll have job experience, he'll have money saved and the odds are good once he gets to the big campus. If he doesn't have to take any of the junk classes and sociology of the humanities that are really the dangerous ones, he can go right into his pre-law courses, you have a better chance of him getting through, unscathed. So, you can't completely avoid college if, again, your kids want to be accredited in certain things, but there are smart ways to put it off and delay it and get around it until they absolutely have to go and when they do go, then they- I find this to be the case. Those kids that have had to work for a couple years, they don't get suckered into the socialism on college campuses. The ones who get suckered in are the ones who don't know what it's like to earn a paycheck that the ones who don't get to see how much money the government's already taking out of your paycheck, the ones who haven't had to deal with customers or the public or bosses, those are the ones. The ones that go right from your homeschool left into the universities, those are the ones who are gobbled up, because they have no experience outside of that realm to contrast it to.

Jenni: Are there any conservative campuses out there?

Duke Pesta: You know, in terms of public schools, the only one I could recommend is Hillsdale. There's nothing else. If there were more Hillsdale-s, we'd know about them. And it's a dangerous and it's a depressing reality that as far as public colleges go, they're all pretty bad. They're all predicated on progressive values. All of them, even the community colleges, overwhelmingly, are that way. Hillsdale is unique in that it is a private university, more or less public, and it is really committed to going the other way. There are some good, uh, Christian colleges, Catholic colleges. Very few, but there are some that you could go to and get a very traditional religious education. Places like Ave Maria, here, if you're a Catholic in Florida, uh, places like that. Uh, Thomas Moore University or the university of Dallas, to some degree, is a public school and that has a relatively conservative curriculum. But outside of those, some of the religious schools, uh, no. The answer is no. There's no real safe place. Some places are worse than others. I would argue that, um, if you're living in a state like Wisconsin or Texas, the university of Texas at Austin or the university of Wisconsin at Madison, the big state flagship schools are going to be much worse, oftentimes, than the little branch campuses, right? The university of Texas at Waco for instance, uh, might not be quite as bad as UT Austin, but there's no avoiding it. And, uh, so, and even the religious schools, and as you guys know, you know, Notre Dame is a disgrace. Uh, it's a Catholic flagship school, but it's worldview and it's student-body and it's, um, educational policies the way it administers the school's incredibly secular progressive. The same can be said of Baylor. The great- What used to be the great Baptist school, has succumb to much of this political correctness. I've even heard, and this is anecdotal, students and faculty complaining about Liberty university. That Liberty university, which you would think would be a conserv- Solidly conservative Christian school, uh, has become less so over the years.

Jenni: Oh, it's heartbreaking.

Jody: So one of the things I noticed, my son actually is a lawyer. And, um, we- He went to undergrad, he lived- Because we live in Florida, we live very close to USF. So, he was able to live at home. He didn't want to live on campus, 'cause he wasn't the partier, he was good little Christian boy and he drove back and forth to campus through his bachelor degree. Then he went off to law school. What I caught was that those professors, starting at USF, the message he got was that they are so wise and so educated that other people, like myself, don't compare. And because we don't compare, we don't understand the nuances of what's really happening- You know, we're kind of ignorant, right?

Jenni: They really don't focus on constitution. That was one thing we learned.

Jody: No, it was bad.

Duke Pesta: You ladies, you are exactly right. The allure of the PhD- Which is why I tell you- Which is why I- My advice is don't send kids- The younger the kid, the more they are suckered by that. These professors all have PhDs. They're all practicing lawyers or they've...

Jody: They're judges.

Duke Pesta: ...cases for the Supreme court. Yeah. And so consequently, everybody else's stupid by comparison.

Jenni & Jody: Right.

Duke Pesta: That's the power of the universities.

Jody: Yes.

Jenni: Yeah.

Duke Pesta: The power of universities, is kids get seduced by the titles. Look, I've got a PhD and two master's degrees. I can tell you they don't mean much. It's not that complicated. If you spend enough money at a university, they'll give you a master's degree sooner or later, even if you're not very good at it. And same thing with a PhD, if you spend six or eight years doggedly pursuing a PhD, even if you don't have a lot of talent, they will- Sooner or later they're going to give you one. It doesn't mean anything. This credentialism is meaningless and yet, especially if you homeschool, I mean when you homeschool, it's just mom and dad and you always- You've always been mom and dad, right?

Jody: Yeah.

Jenni: Right.

Duke Pesta: And so, by the time the kid is 17 or 18, he's almost a little embarrassed by mom and dad, right? That's normal. I mean, this is not necessarily anything evil, kids get to that point when, you know- With the world they know seems a little backward and parochial because the big world that faces them. Then they set foot on college campuses and they're surrounded by thousands of kids, most of them who were educated in the public schools. Most of whom party and they're Libertine and they don't take their school seriously and they have already been indoctrinated and had tremendously liberal attitudes. You said one thing else I should point out and I think they want to underscore it. You were smart keeping your kids out of the dorms. Moms and dads think that the worst place on a college campus is the classroom. No way. The professors are liberal and many of them are bullies, but people are watching what the professors are saying. We've seen many videos, right? Kids taking their cell phones into class and recording what the professor said and then that video makes national news. Professors have to be a little bit careful in the classroom. You know where no one's watching? No one's paying any attention to what goes on in the dorms. The dorms are the single most ideologically dangerous place for your kids on campuses. There are- There is no political oversight that the entire ethos of dorm life, now, is to radicalize and turn your kids into social-justice warriors and that's where they get lost. They're in class eight to ten hours a week. They're at those dorms all the time, getting constantly maneuvered and pushed less.

Jody: Wow.

Jenni: Wow. Okay. So what are w- As we're bringing our kids up through middle and high school, what are some of the things we should be focusing on to really undergird them and help them once they do face these things out, even in college- Even in the regular working world?

Duke Pesta: If I have one criticism of homeschool, uh, and it's only a small one, but it's an important one, it's we shield our kids from the worst aspects of culture, but we don't tell them how to argue against them. We think that by teaching kids in a Christian way and giving them a solid education and morality and virtue, we think that's enough. It's not enough. When your kids go to campus, as your son probably found out, he's going to hear arguments, really complicated, really rational arguments, why his entire worldview is garbage. And we, as homeschool moms, have not exposed them to those arguments, because we wanted to shield them. And by not exposing them to those arguments, our kids don't have any way to answer them. No one's ever taught them how to rebut those kinds of arguments and so they very easily succumb to them, right? Mom never told me that and because Mom never told me that, these- This PhD has to know more than Mom does. I think one thing that homeschool moms must begin to do is implement a system of what I would call apologetics, right? We think about apologetics. Christian apologetics is the science of learning how to argue rationally on behalf of Christian faith. We have to engage in what I would call homeschool apologetics. Can our kids- Are we giving our kids the arguments and the knowledge to refute progressivism? Are we giving them arguments that they can refute or arguments that they can put up against what they're going to hear in college? If we're doing that, then the kids will have a better fighting chance.

Jody: So the question I did not prepare my son for, and it is still a debate in my household with him, is about Le- Uh, league RI...

Jenni: Legislating morality.

Jody: Legislating morality. That is the big one. And I- That one never came up until way later. And because of that, it is still the debate.

Jenni: Between you and your son.

Jody: Yes. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Duke Pesta: So, basically he's arguing that we should use the power of government to enforce certain worldviews.

Jody: The opposite.

Jenni: He's saying you can't do that. He's bought into the ideology that you can't legislate morality. And no matter how much we say legislation is exactly that, it doesn't land.

Jody: He's a strong Christian. I'm not defaming him here. This is just something that, it's like the heated debate, you know what I'm saying?

Duke Pesta: And the problem with his argument, of course, is that that's exactly what the left is.

Jody: Exactly! Exactly my point!

Duke Pesta: We now have a situation, if you don't want your little girls to share bathrooms with adult men, you're the problem, right? The laws are being used to punish you. If you don't want to let your 14-year-old son transition to a girl, a court's going to tell you "take the kid away and give those kids a hormone therapy". So, I- you know, I get that. So, on the one hand, you know, morality only applies to Christianity, right? When it comes to Christian worldview, we can't- And I get that. I mean he's- And he's half right. You know, we do live in the United States of America. We are not- While religion is protected, we are not nom- We are not specifically a government run by Christians. And so legislating Christian belief or Christian worship isn't gonna fly. I get that. Even though our institutions and our philosophy has all been Christian since the founding, but what he d- But what the problem is, is that it's the flip side of that coin, which the- Because God isn't involved on the left, somehow it's not religious, right?

Jody: Right.

Duke Pesta: So they're doing the same thing with their politics, which has- They elevate to a religion, which they elevate to a moral code. And that gets put in. And so the tragedy of you- I think your son's argument is, if that it is bad for Christians to legislate Christian orthodoxy. Why is it okay for secular progressives who are as rabid and as zealous as any Christian I've ever met? Why is it okay to legislate their moral apparel?

Jody: Right. Right.

Jenni: Yeah, that's a great question. Tell us about the Freedom Project Academy and why you founded it.

Duke Pesta: Well, you know, as a professor, I noticed that these kids were coming to me now dumber and dumber because of things like common core. And they were also coming to me much more arrogant and politicized. I knew that by the time they get to the university, they're already, most of them, it's intellectually a lost cause.

Jody: Wow.

Duke Pesta: So, had to try to get involved with education at lower levels. So Freedom Project Academy is a complete online homeschool for moms. It's an aid, really, to homeschool. We have classes from kindergarten all the way through high school. We could do an entire year's worth of schooling, all of requisite classes or sometimes a homeschool mom, you know, is comfortable teaching everything, except maybe chemistry to her sophomore in high school. So we can do individual classes or full classes. And what do we do is we bring a Christian worldview and a classical education through the computer, live teachers who do all the assigning and grading. Live teachers teach your kids in real time. So we create virtual classrooms that very much mimic the public school

classrooms. Every classroom has dozens of kids in it from all over the country and they can talk to each other. They become friends with each other. The teacher can call on them. They- It's interactive. So for those moms who want the homeschooling but either think they can't do it all or can't do some of it, we can fill that gap with real teachers with the correct worldview. And we also can provide homeschool kids with classmates. Classmates that become pen pals, that become lifelong friends in other parts of the country. They'll go through school together, we're fully accredited and our kids are graduating and going on to good colleges.

Jenni: So, is it sort of an a la cart system? You can pick and choose which classes you want to take?

Duke Pesta: Sure, yeah. It depends. If you want a diploma from Freedom Project, if you want a diploma, which we can give, then obviously, as a diploma granting school, there are certain subjects you have to take in certain things. Other than that though, it's completely a la cart. Definitely it's got a lot of moms who have kids in the public schools and uh, they are just astonished by how bad that teaching of American history is. So those kids will go to public school, you know, six hours a day and then they'll come home and a couple of nights a week, they'll sit and watch one of our history classes just so they're getting the other side of things.

Jody: That's awesome!

Duke Pesta: So, for those who aren't interested in the full diploma, like you said, I think that's a good way to phrase it. It's a-la-cart. If you're a mom who loves teaching books and reading in history, but you know, you're a little bit shaky on calculus or geometry, uh, some of those moms will teach all the other subjects and then let the kids take advanced math with us. Or we can offer- We offer classes in high school like physics and uh, astronomy and we offer, um, advanced biology, things that might be a little accelerated for the average homeschool. Mom or dad, we can fill that gap as well.

Jenni: That's so cool. I'm really excited- We asked you that. This is news to us, too. Is there any hope- Before we sign off, is there any hope that you can offer the listeners? Because we've given them some really heavy things to ponder and consider.

Duke Pesta: Well, the hope is in the fact that this is America and we still have the right to educate our kids, we never should have seated that right. The idea- One of the reasons we're in this mess is because we decided, 150 years ago, that maybe strangers with degrees from universities know better than we do. That maybe some public institutions can better teach our kids than we can. And that's the lie we all bought. So the hope is, uh, in finding ways to take control of our kids' education, and that means homeschooling. That means finding a good private school, if that's the way to go. But that means even if you keep your kids in public schools, are you, every night, sitting down with those kids and finding out what they've learned and giving them the other side of the story? You'll be shocked. If you spend an hour a night with your kids, just asking them, "Now, tell me directly, what did you learn today? Tell me

what you learned in your history class.”, you will be mortified. And if you have to keep them in the public schools for some reason, take a little time and say, “Okay, all right, I know what your teacher just taught you about the history of America. I know what your teacher just told you about the history of George Washington, but let's go online and look at some other things,” right? And that's the responsibility we- It's a biblical responsibility, number one, and it's also a common sense responsibility. Both through our Bible and through our own common sense. We are the ones who should be educating our kids, and I get that we can't all do it all. We all don't know how to do every aspect of it, but we should be in charge of it. We should not send our kids to public schools and then just assume that the public school teachers are doing everything right. We have to be involved in that education. We have to see what they're bringing home. We have to ask them about the test they're taking. We have to correct the record when they're getting secular garbage that we know is not true.

Jenni: Yeah and I think moms and dads need to understand that no matter who you choose to partner with to bring it about, ultimately you're the director of your child's education. You may, in a sense, hire a subcontractor to help you with math or maybe, even, you partner with an entire school system to help supplement their education. But ultimately, we are the directors of their education. We decide what they learn and what they don't learn. And I think if more parents understood that, we would probably be in a better position.

Duke Pesta: Yes, and I love what you said: Subcontractors. You send your kids to public schools, that means you're still the boss, but the public schools are not the bosses. The teachers and the principals don't get to determine when they teach y- When they're going to teach your kids about transgender-ism. But that's what the public schools are doing now. The public schools have decided they are the parents and you are in the way. They're going to teach your kids about sex, about sexuality, about gender, about politics on their terms and when they want to. And they really don't care what you think.

Jenni: So, moms and dads, if you're listening, you're probably a homeschooler. But if you know someone who is not homeschooling and they're being bullied by their school system, remind them that they are really the boss and they can fire that school and then they can go hire another one if they need to. But it doesn't have to be the one that's trying to bully them. Dr. Duke, this was amazing. We are empowered. We feel- We're a little worried. If we're being honest, we're a little concerned here, but now we really know how to pray and hopefully people listening are going to feel empowered to start really arming their children with a strong rhetorical ability to be able to answer these professors, the ability to defend their faith, but also defend our country and its founding principles. And so, um, tell us once again where people can find you.

Duke Pesta: Well, the most easy way to find me as at the website, it's [fpeusa.org](http://fpeusa.org). One thing that I would really urge your audience to do, if they're interested, is we do a show: The Dr. Duke Show. It's a podcast like yours. And it is the only podcast I know of, uh, that deals with

education every single week from kindergarten all the way through college. And it puts the news in front of you. It tells you what's going on and explains the situation in America today. And, uh, so if you're interested in this kind of stuff and you want to know what's happening, uh, just follow the Dr. Duke show podcast. It's absolutely free.

Jenni: And it's so much fun. I've been listening to it and it's like candy for the homeschool parent. I mean, you just- There's so much great information on it. You're very engaging and fun to listen to. Thank you so much, Doctor Duke. We really appreciate you and God bless you and all that you're doing.

Duke Pesta: Thanks ladies. Keep up the good work.

New Speaker: Thanks, ladies. Keep up the good work.

