

Paul Runko Jr.

Paul Runko, Jr. is Senior Director of K-12 Initiatives at Defending Education, where he leads national efforts to support parents, grandparents, and concerned citizens in advancing academic excellence and political-neutrality reforms in America's schools.

In his current role, Runko develops and executes strategic initiatives addressing key issues in K-12 education policy, including curriculum transparency, parental rights, and ensuring civil rights. He works closely with families, grassroots organizations, and state and local stakeholders to elevate concerns and translate them into actionable solutions. His work also includes influencing Defending Education's K-12 research, communications, and advocacy efforts designed to educate education stakeholders and help them positively transform schools for our nation's children.

Runko joined Defending Education in 2021 and has held multiple leadership roles within the organization, including Director of Strategic Initiatives and Digital Communications Manager. During his tenure, he has helped expand the organization's national footprint and strengthen its engagement with parents and policymakers navigating complex education policy challenges.

Prior to his work in education policy, Runko held leadership and project management roles at the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), where he managed cross-functional teams and industry partnerships through SCADpro, the university's collaborative innovation studio. His experience coordinating large-scale projects and stakeholder engagement informs his current work bridging policy, communications, and implementation in the K-12 space.

Runko began his career in media production in New York, where he developed expertise in communications, messaging, and audience engagement—skills he now applies to advancing public understanding of education policy issues.

He holds a Bachelor of Science degree from Full Sail University.