

## Episode 410: Ask Andrew Anything Transcript

**Julie Walker:** Hello, and welcome to the Arts of Language Podcast with Andrew Pudewa, founder of the Institute for Excellence in Writing or as many like to say, “IEW.” My name is Julie Walker, and I’m honored to serve Andrew and IEW as the chief marketing officer. Our goal is to equip teachers and teaching parents with methods and materials, which will aid them in training their students to become confident and competent communicators and thinkers.

**Julie Walker:** Well, welcome everyone to our Ask Andrew Anything podcast, and welcome to you too, boss.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Yes, yes. I'm feeling scruffy. I couldn't quite get my hair. Normally podcast, we're just in that hole, and there's no video, And there's nothing to think about. But now, I look in the screen, the mirror. I don't like what I see.

**Julie Walker:** Well, so the truth is that Andrew never watches any of his videos.

**Andrew Pudewa:** It's true. I

**Julie Walker:** So, he, sorry, Andrew, we have, we're making you watch one of your videos, but in It was 10 weeks ago when we launched episode 400. This was a big deal. This was a big milestone for us. But what, what I loved about this was having people be able to see us every now and then, right? In real time. And also to be able to have people ask their questions live. And so we thought, you know what, we're going to start doing this every 10 episodes. We are going to do an Ask Andrew Anything Live. Now this, of course, was recorded a few weeks ago, meaning those people that are here live right now, you're seeing this live, but those people that are listening to this when we launch our podcast, well, we're not live anymore. This is a recording. I got the list of questions. You're not allowed to preview the questions. And then Abigail, who helps us do our podcast, told us who. We have two affiliates that are going to ask their questions live. And when she told me who they were, I was like, are you kidding me?

**Andrew Pudewa:** These are your favorite affiliates.

**Julie Walker:** We’re not supposed to have favorites, but you guys are my favorites. I love listening to you. You just have so much energy and so much wisdom. So we're going to let Mandy go first. And Mandy, she is the Homemade Homeschooler. And before you ask your question, Mandy, I want to ask you a question. And that is—why handmade?

**Mandy Maltz:** So I actually used to own a handmade business for about a decade before I went into homeschooling full time. So a lot of my channel used to be about having a handmade business and homeschooling, and I just really like alliteration. So I just put them together, and it just kind of stuck, and I never changed my name.

**Julie Walker:** That's great. And Andrew's favorite decoration, or at least it used to be,

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well, I don't have a favorite decoration.

**Julie Walker:** You totally do.

**Andrew Pudewa:** I may have favorite grandchildren, but I don't have a favorite decoration.

**Julie Walker:** Well, that's great. Okay, Mandy, let's hear your question for Andrew.

**Mandy Maltz:** So I have an 11th grader right now. He'll be a senior in the fall. So I really wanted to ask about college and teens and what do you think would be the best way to prepare our high schoolers either with or without IEW for college?

**Andrew Pudewa:** Homeschool them.

**Mandy Maltz:** Absolutely.

**Andrew Pudewa:** That's really it. I guess I would have to ask you, in what way do you feel as though you are not already prepared? What, in your imagination, what challenge could your son face that he is not yet prepared for?

**Mandy Maltz:** This is my first child who will be graduating from homeschool. So it's a little bit new territory for me, but I have a lot of followers and viewers who are kind of in the same boat, and they're terrified. They're absolutely terrified of the college, the whole thing of applications and writing the essays. And will they actually be prepared for those college writing classes? So I'm just looking for advice to tell them.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well, the most terrifying thing about college right now is the cost and the low quality that most people experience when they go. So, that's what I would be terrified of, not whether your student's going to do well. But to answer your question more specifically, if you've got a student who can read decently well and write decently well and can calculate and has math facts memorized and knows some math, they'll do fine in college. Most people erroneously believe that college is somehow harder than high school. And maybe once upon a time it used to be that way, but almost everyone now will acknowledge the fact that, especially for the first year or two when you're doing the gen ed and the couple years, the classes are the same level of rigor as most people experience in high school. So if you go take chemistry in college, it's the same chemistry that you took in high school if it's a first year chemistry course, the only difference is that it's compressed into one semester rather than being stretched out over two semesters or a school year. So there's really nothing to worry about. I am much more concerned with helping people look at alternatives to the kind of standard, normal go-to-college pathway, because I don't think it's serving very well most families anymore. As I alluded to, the expense is very high. The product seems to be decreasingly of value. More and more employers are looking at the idea of hiring people and training them rather than waiting for them to go learn something and then come back. So certainly, you look at certain fields, medicine, engineering, maybe law, but there are so many ways that kids can not go that traditional route, still get an accredited degree. and have a much better experience. I have that talk, Hacking High School.

**Julie Walker:** We actually did a two-part podcast.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Yeah. And, and so my advice is start doing college classes as soon as you're 15 or 16. Bank up a year or two worth of credits. And then when you quote, "finish

high school,” you've got a year or two of college way cheaper than you're ever going to get any other way. The credits are transferable, and you can go in as an upperclassman or with a year or two behind your belt and get into the study of something that you may want to major in and not piddle around with gen. ed. stuff in the college environment. So it's a money saving, it's a time saving, and of course for a homeschool kid to start college at sixteen, that's a tremendous boost. It's like, wow, I'm growing up, I'm in the real world, which is the way sixteen year olds should feel about their life.

There are a few organizations that I think are doing a particularly good job of facilitating this. One is called Unbound. Their website is [beunbound.us](http://beunbound.us). And it is the best program I have seen anywhere to build virtual community, to get kids doing college-level work, to involve them. And it's very distinctly kind of a mentorship, a Christian environment where the kids are in a cohort, they're communicating with each other regularly, taking the classes, doing the work, banking the credits. And I really, really love this organization, and if it had been around when my couple youngest kids were that age, I would definitely have tried to do that.

Another organization we have a relationship with is Christian Halls International. [ChristianHalls.org](http://ChristianHalls.org) is their website. And that's, rather than a virtual community, it's about actually establishing a community of students who want to do, together, distance learning from an accredited institution, and they've got dozens of schools that are kind of on their menu in terms of accredited institutions offering classes so the kids can get together in a small group, sign up for one or more classes individually, but get together once or twice a week, do the reading, talk about the content, watch the video if there is one, write their papers, and bounce ideas off each other and have kind of a tutorial experience. Of course, probably needs an adult to mentor the process, but the adult doesn't have to know everything about the subject being studied. And again, if you're talking English 101, 102, English Lit, Western Civ, Basic Biology, College Algebra, these are things that an adult can probably, if you're a little rusty, just learn right along with the students and do that together.

So those are the two options that I like for doing it together. And then there's lots of people who are kind of doing it independently, signing up. Most of these schools, they really like homeschool dual enrollment kids because number one, they're good students. They know how to read, write, and do math. So that puts them in the upper half of the typical students they get. And if you get a year's worth of credits from Liberty or more, and then you decide where do you want to go to school to finish your degree, you may be very inclined to go to that school that you already have a relationship with. So it's really, as I see it, it's a win-win-win situation.

So the short version is just stop high school now, start college, do it while you're home, look at the options, choose a good one, and give it a shot. You've got absolutely nothing to lose. And then, the last really good thing is if you have a year of college credits, and you did that in a dual enrollment situation, when you go to apply for a residential program, they're not really going to care about your high school transcript, your SAT score so much, because you've already got a year's worth of transferable college credits.

You're a known quantity. And I would say the average 16 year old high school kid can read and write and do math better than the average 18 or 19 year old public high school graduate. So, some things to think about and pass on, and we'll put the link to the podcast, “Hacking High School.” It was a conference talk I did last year. And we revisited that, and we should probably make a recording at some point.

**Julie Walker:** We should do that. Sounds great. Thank you, Mandy. Great questions.

**Mandy Maltz:** Thank you so much.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Thanks for joining us today.

**Mandy Maltz:** Thanks for having me.

**Julie Walker:** All right. Mrs. Brown. My goodness. Mrs. Brown. She has a channel that's called Write with Mrs. Brown. And do you know what she teaches?

**Andrew Pudewa:** I'm guessing IEW writing?

**Julie Walker:** She does. She does. So why don't you unmute, Alicia Brown, and ask Andrew your question?

**Alicia Brown:** Hello, Andrew. Thank you so much for having me. On behalf of all my parents and students, we absolutely love you, and we just want to thank you for all that you've done for us through what you produced through IEW. My question today is, if you were to identify the single most vital lesson for students and parents in your book, *However Imperfectly*, what would it be? And what aspects make it particularly significant?

**Andrew Pudewa:** Okay, well that's really, an extremely hard question to answer on the spot. Have you read the book? What do you think? What, what would you say?

**Alicia Brown:** Oh gosh, for me, I think the “Four Deadly Errors of Teaching Writing” is super vital. A, because I've made all four errors before reading the book. So that stands out to me the most because I think that's what happens early on before we understand how to really help our students become excellent communicators and writers.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Yes. And I wish that every parent and every teacher who's teaching writing would listen to that talk or read that article. And as we do, contemplate how does this apply in my situation, and how could I do better? I always tease people at the beginning of the talk and say some people feel guilty after hearing this, like, oh no, I did all these things to my children. And it's not about that, it's about how do we get better? So I like that the longest essay in the book is the titled essay, “However Imperfectly,” and there are seven lessons that I enumerate, things I've learned in more than 30 years of teaching. And I think maybe the most important one varies according to who's listening or reading. But, the one I start with, I think, perhaps, is the most generally applicable one to especially new homeschooling parents, and that is, it's really hard not to do to your children what was done to you. Right? I mean, when we come into teaching, whether we're teaching our kids or other people's kids or both, the greatest influence on the way we teach is our experience of having been taught. And it's very hard to be able to step back objectively and say, “Well, that's what was done to me, but is that even really a good thing? Could I do something differently? And if I were, then why and what would I do differently?” And so that I think is the hardest thing is, “I went to a school, and it had all these desks lined up and we raised our hand, had permission to speak and we followed this curriculum and everybody had to stay on the same page of the math textbook and we had recess.” And a lot of moms kind of say, “Okay, we'll homeschool.” And then they end up trying to recreate in their home, the very institution they're trying to escape. So that's definitely something worth contemplating. And I always point people toward John Taylor Gatto. Have you read any of Gatto, his book, *Dumbing Us Down, : The Hidden*

*Curriculum of Compulsory Education*, or his larger book, *An Underground History of American Education*? Those books are really powerful because they kind of smash the mold for you a little bit. And say, hey, wow, okay, I don't have to hold this shape and do this this way because this is the way I was originally shaped. I can rebuild something differently. And then they come out looking for people like you or us or you know others that have a little more mileage and can say, "Okay, so what did you do differently? And how did that work out for you?" That fear of Not doing what the institutions have convinced us all has to be done. That's got to be kind of the first thing to go. And then after that you can look at all sorts of other lessons in the book. But how can people get our book if they don't have it?

**Julie Walker:** Well, link in the show notes. You can purchase it, or you can get it free if you are a Premium Member. We provide a hard copy book that you will even autograph. That's a great question, and I just want to kind of piggyback on that because I believe that even in those institutions, we are seeing, at least in our little corner of the world, a change because our fastest growing area at IEW is our Schools Division. And more and more schools are saying, hey, we don't want to teach writing the way we were taught. We need something new and fresh and different that's actually going to work.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And, and those schools span every demographic, oddly, one of our longest and most consistent customers is the Chicago Public School District, but it's the special ed people there. They locked on to the power of structure and style, and they keep resupplying themselves every year. And then on the other hand, we see all of these classical-style charter schools popping up all over the place. And they're looking at writing as being really a core way to help their students learn everything better.

**Julie Walker:** Ironically it's the classical schools that, you know what I mean? It's like, this is how we were taught, but yet if you go back even further and how writing was taught, that's more in line of what we are doing.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well, we are products, victims maybe, of the 60s, 70s, and 80s. And that was a time when you saw a lot of this emphasis on creativity and spontaneity and just writing should be about expressing yourself and discovering who you are. And then the kids would have to go write essays and there was a huge disconnect between what they had been taught about what writing is, which is do whatever you want, it'll be wonderful. And oh no, now you have to collect up, organize, and present information in a mature, academically acceptable way. I think we're seeing still the hangover of that period of time, but there's definitely more of an awareness that writing is more about expressing ideas than feelings. It's more about collecting up, using well organization than making stuff up. Not that creativity and self expression aren't valid, but it's that case of erring on an extreme to the detriment of the students. And so one of the things I'm sure you love too about the structure and style is that it has both. You get to write the stories, you have to write the reports, you have writing from pictures, you have to do research, you have an opportunity to write about whatever you want, and then you've got to do a formal essay and critique. So the balance that we offer with the structure and style approach I think is just perfect for everybody.

**Julie Walker:** Well, thank you. That was a great question.

**Alicia Brown:** Thank you so much.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And I like your little bookshelf along the side. And you've got our portable walls right there at the top. One of my favorite things ever.

**Julie Walker:** Okay, I have a couple questions from listeners that may be too shy to turn their mics on. So are you ready for that one? Okay, this one is from Leslie. She is asking how to start. We get that question a lot.

**Andrew Pudewa:** How to start?

**Julie Walker:** But let me give you a little bit more background. “We had to pivot from another grammar curriculum to *Fix It Grammar*.”

**Andrew Pudewa:** Oh, okay. Had to...

**Julie Walker:** Yeah, we had to. So I'm

**Andrew Pudewa:** We don't know

**Julie Walker:** We don't know why, but had to.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Had to.

**Julie Walker:** But we're happy for you. And then she says, we are three weeks in and I'm told that it's much better. Yay!

**Andrew Pudewa:** I'm assuming it's the kids that are telling her it's much better. All right.

**Julie Walker:** That said, I'm wondering how to start the IEW writing program next year in sixth grade since we will have finished *Fix It Grammar, Nose Tree* this year for fifth grade. And then she adds what we hear a lot is these special challenges that she's got. Her son has ADHD and is a very reluctant writer. Which package should I get? We're finding that more and more people are discovering who we are and what we do, kind of through the back door, through the *Fix It! Grammar*.

**Andrew Pudewa:** We always want to encourage all parents and teachers to get the full training, to do the Teaching Writing: Structure and Style. And we will have a couple opportunities this summer. One is we'll have a live video virtual course. The other is we have the Great Adventure. And so you can watch that at your own pace at home, and then meet each week if you have any questions. We do a little Facebook live thing, and that way by the end of the summer you've gone through all nine units, you've learned all the style techniques, and hopefully have done most, if not all, of the teacher assignments, the practicum assignments. And to me, that's always the starting point. There may be a few exceptions here and there for various reasons, but that's the ideal. Then you have the choice basically to use one of our video courses, *Structure and Style for Students*. And middle school, the group B, would be fine. Even if you have a child who's got some issues, whether it's ADD or dyslexia or auditory processing of some sort, any of those little impediments, they should be fine with the video. And one of the great things about doing a video course is that you can stop it, talk about it a little bit, you can listen to it again if needed. And it's not like being in a classroom where if you get distracted for two or three minutes, you didn't hear what the teacher said, now you don't know what to do. So the video has, I think, a particularly convenient way of

making all that content available and accessible to everyone in whatever way they might. It's also good because I tell a different joke at the beginning of each of the 24 classes.

Some people may find that they don't want their kids watching the screen. They would rather teach it live, in which case we do have the theme-based writing lesson books. Those are very popular in co-ops or hybrid schools where there's a teacher that's going to do the prep work, be organized. You can choose one of those to suit whether you want history or Narnia or Bible or there's a lot of options, particularly at that level B middle school age. The other option would be to create your own assignments, which is what we teach you to do in the teacher course. Get your own source text, make your own checklist. We have materials to support that. That's often harder just because it takes more prep time.

**Julie Walker:** Especially when you're first getting started.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And homeschool moms are not notably given by the universe large amounts of prep. time.

**Julie Walker:** No, we're not given prep time.

**Andrew Pudewa:** I think we've saved a lot of people by having these materials, but I do think the *Structure and Style for Students* is a very, very good course that kids just... I've had so many kids and parents say he feels like he's just right in the room with you. He's raising his hand, even though you're just on the video, you're not going to call on him. He's laughing at the jokes and answering the questions. So recording it live made a very, I think, engaging experience for students. And in a worst case scenario, if someone says, well, I have this problem, that problem, I'm working full time from home. I just had a baby and there's no way I'm going to watch this teacher course. Well, you could jump in and do just the *Structure and Style for Students* video, but you know, that would not be the best case scenario in my view. You want to add anything to that?

**Julie Walker:** I will just say that specifically you were asking which package, and I think what Andrew is ultimately recommending is *Structure and Style for Students*, year one, level B, and if you get the Premier package, you get the teacher training course. I don't want to say free, because it is a little bit more, but it's

**Andrew Pudewa:** It's bundled together. And you get *Fix It!* with that

**Julie Walker:** and you do get a *Fix It!*

**Andrew Pudewa:** And a Portable Wall.

**Julie Walker:** And a Portable Wall. That's right. So it's a really good value. And then if you really want to pull out all the stops, you can do online classes with a qualified instructor, like our own IEW online instructors or our own Mrs. Brown. So who teaches live online classes with us. Great partner there. All right, I have one more question for you. And then we're out of time.

**Andrew Pudewa:** We're out of time. Already. Wow. Okay.

**Julie Walker:** So Gabrielle has a son. Who will be in ninth grade. She puts that in quotes. Because he's 14, by definition,

**Andrew Pudewa:** That was what, I mean, if someone says. My child is in ninth grade. I canceled the ninth grade idea. And then I imagine a 14 year old.

**Julie Walker:** Yeah, there you go, there you go, 14 years old. He's got cognitive struggles and always has since he was very young. He has absolutely no confidence in his writing skills or even answering any questions. Can I use the Structure and Style program at the high school level for him? I think she's thinking *Structure and Style for Students*. Or would you suggest moving down a level? And then, here's the kicker, and this almost goes back to Mandy's question, also if I had to level down, would that still count as high school credit? Thank you for your help.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Yes. Well, it's always better to err on the side of a little easier, right? So Especially with grade 9, that's your first year of high school, whatever, you can always go down, remove, and it's usually just the reading level of the source text, so it's just a little bit easier, the ideas a little bit simpler, not quite as many complex things tied in, and the checklists go a little bit slower, but I mean, we teach the same thing to everybody, and so I would teach it. I would think for this child, as described, the level B,

**Julie Walker:** Year 1 Level B again.

**Andrew Pudewa:** is going to be the best option. And then follow the guidelines that we give to everyone, which is just be there, do it together, help as much as needed. Low confidence is generally the result of having felt in the past, "I'm not good at this and I don't know what to do." So the way to overcome that and restore confidence is to do it together. And then you start knowing what to do and then gradually there is more confidence. In terms of high school credit, my basic opinion here is yes, you definitely can count it for high school credit because, well, we have some universities that are counting our 1C as a full year of College level, university level grammar and composition. So, I guess that means then our B would be fine at high school. But the honest truth is this. High school credit doesn't really mean any particular level of rigor because it's just so different. Especially if you're getting into the special ed world of schools. They're just counting time. That's what they're counting. So you can teach whatever you need to teach, hopefully, at or as close to the point of need as you can teach it, and then just put it on a transcript and call it whatever you did. I mean, honestly, you could sit around and just talk for an hour and call it English. You could read historical fiction and call it literature or history or both. You could work in a garden and call it botany. So the idea of numbers and letters on a transcript is really very, very subjective, very, very artificial. There is not anywhere an absolute as to what something must be. And, if you're operating by state standards, they are sufficiently vague as to be convenient for any homeschooler. You can pretty much do anything and say, yep, we did that,

**Julie Walker:** But I do want to caution you, Gabrielle, that you are not hearing Andrew is saying it doesn't matter what you do. I think what he's saying is our 1B course, you are absolutely going to learn to write. You are absolutely going to get a lot out of it that will help you be successful wherever you go.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And if you need to do it together, just do it together. I also feel prompted for some reason to suggest that even though this child is older, you try to incorporate maybe



10 to 15 minutes of copying every day. And you can copy poems, you could copy short stories, you could copy literature, you could copy scripture. You can copy whatever you want, but there's something about just the act of putting words on paper by hand and doing a little bit every day, week after week, month after month, that possibly more than anything else builds confidence and stamina. And when you have attention issues, copying by hand is one of the best ways to try and lengthen attention time. So kind of like just kind of like exercise. If you want to get stronger, you got to do some stuff that may seem less complex than what you could do, but by doing it, you get stronger. And then when you try to do what you want to do, you can do it more easily.

**Julie Walker:** I agree.

**Andrew Pudewa:** That's it.

**Julie Walker:** Time's up.

**Andrew Pudewa:** hard to believe. Well, thanks to everyone who joined in, our live questioners.

**Julie Walker:** It was a delight to have Mandy and Mrs. Brown here. I keep calling you Mrs. Brown, of course, because that's the name of your channel.

**Andrew Pudewa:** But she has a beautiful first name, Alicia. I just love that name. It's my second favorite girl's name. Do you know my favorite girl's name? Allegra, from the Longfellow poem.

**Julie Walker:** Oh, right. It's random things you find out about Andrew Pudewa in these podcasts. None of your children are named neither Alicia

**Andrew Pudewa:** Don't have any, I'm trying to get grandchildren named Allegra. I told a thousand bucks if you'll name one of these kids Allegra, no, but it's from the poem, The Children's Hour. "From my study, I see in the lamplight descending the broad hall stair, grave Alice and laughing Allegra and Edith. A whisper, and then a silence. Yet I know by their merry eyes they are plotting and planning together to take me by surprise. A sudden, rush from the stairway, a sudden raid from the hall. By three doors left unguarded, they enter my castle wall. They climb up in my turret, or the arms in back of my chair. If I try to escape, they surround me. They seem to be everywhere. They almost devour me with kisses. Their arms about me entwine till I think of the Bishop of Bingen in his mouse tower on the Rhine. Do you think, oh blue eyed banditti, because you have scaled the wall, such an old mustache as I am is not a match for you all? I have you fast in my fortress and will not let you depart, but put you down into the dungeon of the round tower of my heart. That's part of it.

**Julie Walker:** Wow

**Andrew Pudewa:** Do you know the story of the Bishop of Bingen? Yeah, he was this bishop, evidently he was not a good bishop. And he was being really mean to a lot of people and taxing them and forcing them. This is back early-medieval when bishops could do that kind of thing. And they didn't like him, so they managed to imprison him in a tower on the Rhine River. And it is said that he was actually eaten alive by the mice and the rats in the tower, which is a very weird story. I mean, you can go look it up yourself. So, why

Longfellow put these I guess, devour me with kisses, Bishop of Bingen eaten alive by mice and rats. Anyway, I memorized this poem simply so I could recite it at Christmas to my grandchildren.

**Julie Walker:** Oh, that is so sweet. So sweet. Oh, wow. Who knows the things that you learn from Andrew Pudewa? Thank you, Andrew

**Andrew Pudewa:** My pleasure. God bless y'all.

**Julie Walker:** Thanks so much for joining us. If you enjoyed this episode and want to hear more, please subscribe to our podcast in iTunes, Google podcasts, Stitcher, or Spotify. Or just visit us each week at [IEW.com/podcast](http://IEW.com/podcast). Here you can also find show notes and relevant links from today's broadcast. One last thing: would you mind going to iTunes to rate and review our podcast? This really helps other smart, caring listeners like you find us. Thanks so much.