

## Podcast 425: Learning Throughout the Summer

### Episode Transcript

**Andrew Pudewa:** If you take off time from practicing what you can do, you actually can regress a little bit. You can have little holes slip into the memory of things.

**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:** So, Andrew, this is episode 425, and that means we're specifically talking to New Homeschoolers Homeschool 101.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Every episode ending in five is a homeschool-centric episode content.

**Julie Walker:** Exactly. But I just want to kind of qualify this, and we kind of say this every time, but the idea of homeschooling means you've got the kids at home.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And they may go to school, but they're still at home and they can learn stuff at home. And, of course, we are approaching the great, I was gonna say desert, but maybe that's the wrong image. The great expanse of summer vacation.

**Julie Walker:** Yes. And what do you say about summer vacation and the warning that you give to parents and teachers?

**Andrew Pudewa:** I don't know, what do I say?

**Julie Walker:** You say that students, if they are away from any type of learning, their brains will have evaporation.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Oh evaporation. That's because it's hot in most places. And this applies a lot to skills-based learning. And for better or worse, we still have, in most places, summer vacation, this idea that we need a big, long break. Historically, the reasons for it existing were very different than the reasons now, which have more to do with teacher retention, I think.

And there are some schools that actually don't do a big summer break. They have year round school with periodic two-week breaks. I think there's some value to that. And there's a lot of homeschoolers that say, Yeah, we don't really not do school during the summer, but we do do different things, and we spend a lot more time outside, which of course is good.

But there is that problem of skills and evaporation, and this is one of the things that I noticed early on in my violin teaching days. If you take off time from practicing what you can do, you don't even maintain that. You actually can regress a little bit. You can have little holes slip into the memory of things and little habits or carelessnesses slip in.

So not practicing is not a way to continue to improve or even maintain. And that's so clearly evident in music instruction. And you have to work very hard as a music teacher to convince the parents that if you want to get the most out of this—you're putting in a lot of time and

money—you've got to be consistent. You've got to do it every day, all year and don't make exceptions and don't take a month off and hope that it's going to be better a month from now. It will be worse. So knowing that as a violin teacher, I can kind of see how that happens in other of these skills based things that are part of the more academic world.

**Julie Walker:** Sure. So, some skills-based disciplines in the academic world would be...

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well you've got math. It's funny 'cause the math textbook publishing people, they all know that most kids are going to not do any math for a couple months. So they have to put a little review period in the beginning of the sixth grade book. What was the same thing you did at the end of the fifth grade book? Because you forgot some of that stuff. And some math you use. Other math is pretty obscure, and you just don't use it on a daily basis. When was the last time you had to divide fractions?

**Julie Walker:** Yesterday. I was doing a recipe.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Okay, I'll go with that. But I don't know if you actually divided fractions in a mathematical sense.

**Julie Walker:** Well half of a half

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

**Julie Walker:** This is true because when you say I'm... now you're challenging me and you're absolutely right, but you know I'm a writing teacher not a math teacher.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And I used algebra the other day to determine how many items were sold at what price. Not for the business, for a different thing

**Julie Walker:** Yes.

**Andrew Pudewa:** for my daughter.

**Julie Walker:** I was going to say probably for cooking something

**Andrew Pudewa:** No, it was actually for the sale of beef sticks.

**Julie Walker:** Oh, nice. Okay,

**Andrew Pudewa:** But, there is that atrophy that happens. And so it can happen mostly in the skills-based areas, whether that's a physical skill like dancing or martial arts, it can happen in music, certainly, it can happen in math, and I think we can see it happen in the language areas of reading and writing as well.

**Julie Walker:** Exactly. So a little bit of reading, a little bit of writing, a little bit of arithmetic every day during the summer. Not a bad idea.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well, if anything, it's going to make for generally happier children overall. Now, somehow children get the idea of, "oh summer vacation is here, and I don't have to do another math problem for two and a half, three months." That's not going to help them nor is it going to make them happier down line. "Oh, school's over. I don't have to write another sentence. Oh, school's out. I don't have to read a book for three months." And so that's where we, I think we want to work gradually to change the context. For both children who are in

school and children who are homeschooling, but they're kind of following the school year idea of start in August, end in May.

**Julie Walker:** So I asked this question of how to help new homeschoolers with this skill atrophy problem during the summer. I asked the question, I would love your ideas of what we can recommend to new homeschoolers about learning over the summer.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And you asked this to chatGPT, I'm sure?

**Julie Walker:** I did not ask CHAT GPT, I asked our customer service team and many of these are homeschool moms. Experienced homeschool moms, many of these are also..

**Andrew Pudewa:** Homeschool student graduates.

**Julie Walker:** And then we have a third category in this group of classroom teachers who work as educational consultants. So I'm just going to read some of these and you can comment on them. Danielle says that attending county fairs.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Oh, I like that.

**Julie Walker:** And kind of seeing all the 4H displays, maybe actually participating in 4H. I think your kids did 4 H, didn't they? Yep.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Yeah. 4 H was a good experience and the preparation for the county fair—whether it's training your chicken to walk in a straight line or getting your goat or sheep to stand up straight or preparing a speech to give at a 4H presentation.

**Julie Walker:** Yeah, those are really fun to go to. My husband and I love going to the state fair and often love to just peruse the displays that the students have. So Allyson says, make history come alive with state park events, field trips mixed with history lessons. She says in Georgia, we have many Indian Trail of Tears programs.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Yeah, and I would say, You don't have to spend a bunch of time preparing for this kind of thing. In fact if you are going to an historic location, just read the Wikipedia article in the car on the way, and you'll get enough context to make the whole thing more meaningful. Yeah, I found that very true. The more you know about something before you see it, the more interesting it is when you actually do see it. And then the more you want to learn about it.

**Julie Walker:** Well, in a lot of these places, these state parks and museums will have a preparing for your visit type of activities for school students. So that's a great idea. I love that to kind of get them ready. I call it a hook to hang their hat. So when they show up, they go, Oh yeah, I remember reading about this.

Okay. Jessica posted a blog that we'll link in our show notes from our friends at 1000 Hours Outside

**Andrew Pudewa:** Oh Ginny Yurich. She's got a lot of great ideas.

**Julie Walker:** She does, she has a list of ideas on her website, all having to do with getting outdoors. We had her as a guest on our podcast once and she's just a delight.

Terra mentions that she did state history in the summer. Actually Terra's from Oklahoma, she's here locally. And so that's when they did their state history segment. So rather than doing it during the school year, they did it over the summer.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And then you can go out and see various things that are connected with the state history.

**Julie Walker:** Yeah. She visited museums, read books, visited the state Capitol.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Capital buildings of almost every state. The Capitol buildings are quite interesting and some very impressive—the artwork they have there, the plaques on the wall.

**Julie Walker:** Jessica mentions the Read Aloud Revival website and just some books that you can read for summer nature study. So kind of combining that read out loud and get outdoors idea.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well, when you said nature study, it made me think of Moby Dick.

**Julie Walker:** Oh, dear. Yes. Okay. One of the things that Terra also said, so they're having a conversation in this little chat that I posted the question to, Tara said that we didn't want to do school in the summer, so we did more life skills things like arts, crafts, hiking, being able to follow a map, cooking, sewing, these kinds of ideas.

**Andrew Pudewa:** But let's just back up slightly and look at the word school because for most people that means rigorous academics which tire your brain and you don't want to do too much because you'll be too tired and it's something that you get a break from. But what's the actual word school? Where does it come from?

**Julie Walker:** It's from the Latin something. I'm sure you're going to tell us. Oh, Greek. Okay.

**Andrew Pudewa:** “Scole” which means leisure, because in the ancient world, if you weren't working really hard all the time just to survive, you had time, leisure. And with that leisure, you had the luxury, if you will, of study, of learning, of enriching yourself. I wish we could somehow kind of recapture that idea, that summer isn't a time to not do school, it's a time to focus more on how do you use the leisure time that you have when you're not busy slogging through textbooks or whatever you do most of the year.

**Julie Walker:** Yes, exactly, exactly. So Allyson also talked about art camps, like having some type of art camp. That would be falling into the life skills, arts, crafts.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well, are you going to run the art camp or are you going to find one and pay for it?

**Julie Walker:** I think the answer is yes. Katie mentions it could be fun to research your family history, especially for the time period you studied in history that year. So maybe do it on Ancestry.com. Do you know that my great, great, great, great, maybe four greats, maybe five greats, grandfather was in Washington, D. C. the night that Abraham Lincoln was assassinated?

**Andrew Pudewa:** Did you know that my wife's great great great grandfather was named Singer and invented the sewing machine?

**Julie Walker:** Oh my goodness, that's amazing. So he made it into like the Museum of Sewing Machines.

**Andrew Pudewa:** I think so.

**Julie Walker:** Yes. Well, you have to ask me how I know that he was there in Washington, D. C.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Oh, how did you know that?

**Julie Walker:** Because after they took away Abraham Lincoln's body, he wound up with his boots.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Lincoln's boots?

**Julie Walker:** And my dad, yes, my dad actually clomped around the house in Abraham.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Your father had Abraham Lincoln's boots? Now where are they?

**Julie Walker:** Well, they are now in a museum in Boston because my great aunt Ruth donated them. Appropriately.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Yes,

**Julie Walker:** Yeah, where they

**Andrew Pudewa:** It would be selfish to keep Lincoln's boots.

**Julie Walker:** They were huge. Apparently, he was a very tall man and had very big feet and, they were handling the boots with gloves and being very careful, and my dad would laugh because, of course, he clomped around in those boots.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well, it reminds you of the story of Lincoln when he took his shoes and put them in the mud and then put them on sticks and made them walk across the ceiling to, to trick out his, his mother or something?

**Julie Walker:** That's funny. Yes. So I love that idea of studying your family history and genealogy because we've done that as well. One of our young men who works in customer service says, wow, he's impressed with all these ideas. He said, we just did incredible pizza and swam a lot. So I guess they took a true break, which reminds me, though, of what we did.

And the program is still around called Book It. Where you sign up with the library and there's also a link that you can sign up for, and we'll put that link in the show notes. And you keep track of how many books you read. And after you've accomplished so many books, you get a free personal pizza from Pizza Hut.

It's called Book It.

**Andrew Pudewa:** I wish Whole Foods would come up with something like that and give them, I don't know, something better than pizza. A bag of avocados.

**Julie Walker:** Hey, I'm a pizza fan. I'm all about it. In fact, my son who makes pizza, all the way down to the sourdough crust that he grows in his refrigerator and throws it in his outdoor

pizza oven for two minutes. He makes the best pizza. So I would think that maybe it goes back to our Book It days.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well, you could also do a pretty exciting research project on the history of pizza, and the kinds of pizza and the current debates around pizza. And the health range of pizza, and the options for gluten free pizza. This could be a super duper essay or a behemoth essay.

**Julie Walker:** There you go.

**Andrew Pudewa:** I don't know what you would do with it once you wrote it, but it'd be fun to do all the research.

**Julie Walker:** Send it to us. We will publish it as a blog. So I wanted to just go back to the new skill that we were talking about because I thought this was funny. This made me laugh. Gardening in the summer is a great time for learning about growing and harvesting. So that's a skill. And one of our dads in our group was saying, Oh, well, isn't that called *chores*? And it says, well, just depends on what you call it. Maybe *chores* become *life skills* and then they're maybe more inclined to do it.

**Andrew Pudewa:** One family of my grandchildren doesn't really use the word *chores* at all. They use *responsibilities*, which I think is a good approach because that's what kids want,

**Julie Walker:** It's kind of like words, chores. It just sounds burdensome. Responsibilities sound so important. Yeah. Yeah. I really like that. Word choice. Good word choice. Zoo. Going to the zoo. The summer programs that they might have at the zoo. Again, this is someone from the local area. Our Tulsa Zoo has a lot of programs.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And again, I will suggest that if students were to do a little reading or even writing about some of the animals and then go to the zoo, observing the animal would be much more interesting to them. And, zoos have little plaques that tell you stuff, the kids don't necessarily want to sit there and read the plaque. But, the more you know, the more interesting it becomes.

**Julie Walker:** Love it. I think it would be very fun. This was not mentioned in our little conversation, but I think it would be very fun for mom and dad to have a date night and find some park or something and develop a scavenger hunt. And then take the kids later on that week or that summer and see if they can find all the things that mom and dad found while they were doing their scavenger hunt.

**Andrew Pudewa:** You must have like a degree in recreation or something because that never would have occurred to me.

**Julie Walker:** I actually do. And you were, when you were saying that *scole* is Greek for leisure. I'm almost ashamed that I don't know that because Andrew, the school that I graduated was Applied Arts and Sciences from Cal State Long Beach in Southern California, but our department was called Recreation and Leisure Studies. So I should have known that.

**Andrew Pudewa:** It's okay, a lot of people don't know their Greek roots

**Julie Walker:** Exactly. So I love this whole idea of getting out of the house, doing something different.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Unless you live in Phoenix.

**Julie Walker:** True. Well, then you can come to Oklahoma. And look for the penguins. We have penguins all across the city.

**Andrew Pudewa:** We do not have penguins. We have big plastic statues of penguins that are interspersed through the city. It's like a scavenger hunt.

**Julie Walker:** When we were new to Oklahoma, we noticed the penguins and were curious why there were all the penguins in Tulsa. Because Tulsa is not South America or Antarctica. There are no penguins that naturally live here. But it was a fundraiser for the zoo.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Oh, is that what it was?

**Julie Walker:** So they sold them to local businesses and that helped to fund the new Tulsa.

**Andrew Pudewa:** So we have six foot penguins, the center of the universe, the best city park in the country,

**Julie Walker:** This is true.

**Andrew Pudewa:** and IEW.

**Julie Walker:** It's true. All reasons to

**Andrew Pudewa:** more reasons could you have for not escaping Phoenix in the summer and coming to somewhere slightly not as blisteringly hot.

**Julie Walker:** Slightly not as blistering hot. This is true. So well, those are just some ideas. I think overall the goal is to switch it up a little bit, make it more interesting. I'm thinking of your motivation talk, Andrew. I think that some of the things that we talked about in terms of math and writing and reading, making it a contest, making it something that will help the students want to do it where they say, Hey mom, can I do more copy work today? Hey mom, can you help me with those flashcards? I mean, what child would say that? Well, perhaps the one that has parent or teacher listen to a motivation talk.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Yeah, or perhaps the one who never heard the term summer and vacation used together.

**Julie Walker:** It could be. Well hopefully that was helpful, listener. Thank you.

**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.