

Podcast 437: Study Skills Strategies, Part 1

Episode Transcript

Andrew Pudewa: Two parent homes, that is the number one predictor of success in schools. You've got a mom who'll encourage you and a dad who'll challenge you and sometimes vice versa, and without that it's just so much harder.

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 every year, Andrew, in the spring and the summer, you're pretty busy back to back, speaking at conferences.

Andrew Pudewa: Very true. In fact, I barely made it into this room, as you know.

Julie Walker: Yes. I've had the opportunity on occasion to go to a conference or two myself.

Andrew Pudewa: Yes, you have.

Julie Walker: And most recently, I was in Southern California. on Biola University's campus at the CHEA convention. CHEA stands for Christian Home Educators Association of California. And they invited me to speak and do a workshop on writing.No. On speaking. No. On study skills.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, well that's what you wanted to do, because that's your thing.

Julie Walker: I do.

Andrew Pudewa: You've been talking about this for a long time,

Julie Walker: In fact, long before I started working directly with you, I worked for Biola University. So it was very nostalgic for me to go back there and teach in a room that you've taught at before. See, the whole history...

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, yeah, in the business school

Julie Walker: no, it was not that no, not the business building that you have taught there before. You've taught at lots of the different conference rooms at Biola, but this was what used to be called the cafe banquet room, which is right next to the cafeteria. And so I was in there teaching a very surprisingly large group of people, and large only because it was the very last talk of the very last day of a three-day conference, and I thought, well, if two people show up, I'll be happy.

But we had about twenty to thirty people there, many teens, a lot of parents, and so I thought it would be interesting. Perhaps, to our listeners, for me to share some of those tips that I gave those parents on study skills.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, I think you should, although we know that pretty soon study skills will be an obsolete subject because we'll all have neurologic implants, and we won't have to actually remember anything. We'll just have continuous, uninterrupted access to the knowledge of the universe.

Julie Walker: Well, you are very forward thinking, Andrew. I don't think that's any time soon. Well, as I share some of my tips, and I had, I came up with seven strategies. As I share some of these, and To be honest, listener, this is going to take two sessions because, as Andrew often says, before you sell someone something or before you teach someone something, you have to set the stage.

And Andrew, what do you say? What do you call it?

Andrew Pudewa: What I say is it's a hurt and rescue operation. If you want people to listen to you, they have to feel the pain of not knowing what you can offer.

Julie Walker: And that's exactly what I did at the beginning of my talk.

Andrew Pudewa: So what's the pain?

Julie Walker: So the pain is that we have a problem in that teens and many adults have not been taught study skills. And skills, as in fact, I'm just going to pass this ball over to you. Can you talk about the word skills and what that means?

Andrew Pudewa: Well, we often note that skills are things you do, therefore you have to do them in order to learn them, such as playing a musical instrument or a sport or painting or music. You can't just read a book or watch a movie on how to play the piano and then go do it. So there's a process of integrating information and application, and it has to be a tight feedback loop. Without the application, the information is useless and disappears.

Julie Walker: Absolutely. And studying is a skill because you can put the...

Andrew Pudewa: I thought you just stare at something long enough and then you get an A on the test. That doesn't work?

Julie Walker: No, no, it does not. Okay, so let me tell you the problem. The problem is, is that students are not prepared for college. And here is a quote from E-campus News. "One third of instructors reported that all or most of their students struggled due to being unprepared."

Andrew Pudewa: Well, I'm prepared in what way?

Julie Walker: well, studying. They didn't, they were not ready for college.

Out of more than 300 participants, students, educators, families, and employers, the vast majority, 93%, said they didn't think high schools are fully preparing students to succeed in the future. So they're underprepared.

Andrew Pudewa: Okay.

Julie Walker: Why? Is that so? Data from 911 two- and four-year colleges revealed that 96 percent of schools enrolled students who required remediation in the 2014-2015 academic year.

Andrew Pudewa: 96 percent of the schools enrolled students who need remediation?

Julie Walker: 96 percent of the schools enrolled students, right,

Andrew Pudewa: Okay. Well, I mean, that's pretty much all of them.

Julie Walker: And of those schools, 209 of them placed more than half of incoming students in at least one remedial course.

Andrew Pudewa: Okay, so now we're, we're looking at a sizable number, more than half of the students in remedial courses. So, this should, I think, point to what are the high schools doing, for one. But more than that, it's what are people valuing today? And what's the involvement of parents? That's a huge factor in college success and or survival.

So I'm sure there's a lot of variables in the mesh of circumstances, the mix of circumstances. But that is the problem. Too many students unprepared in terms of what? What are they unprepared for? Reading?

Julie Walker: Well, let me finish a few more stats here.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, you have more stats. Okay, roll them.

Julie Walker: Despite taking advanced courses, these are not stats, this is just quotes from the Fordham Institute. We'll put a link in the show notes to some of these so that people won't believe I'm making them up. "Despite taking advanced courses, many students may not sufficiently focus on critical thinking commonly need in college."

So it's that critical thinking skills. There's also the unfortunate possibility that students simply forget what they've learned. "Top universities doubt whether high schools have developed the capacity to train students for college-level writing." Which makes me think of our university ready writing course, which we've developed just for this very reason. "As a result, some have refused to exempt students from entry level writing requirements, even if they've earned top scores in their AP English." So this is a problem that universities are realizing. How do we help students get more prepared? They're just saying, we're not going to allow these students to enroll in our schools.

So that's what we need to be doing is getting them more prepared. So I had, as I said, seven strategies that I shared about how you can help better prepare your students as teachers, or I was mostly talking to groups of parents and teens, as I mentioned, homeschooling parents. But as you say, the more parents are involved in their students, regardless of where they are going to school, who's taking ownership of their education, ultimately parents have the most influence in these students.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah, I saw an interesting statistic. The number one predictor of academic success in schools. Do you know what it is?

Julie Walker: Just because we just talked about it, I'm going to guess parental involvement.

Andrew Pudewa: Two-parent homes.

Julie Walker: Two -arent homes. Interesting.

Andrew Pudewa: Two-parent homes. That is the number one predictor of success in schools. Yeah, you've got a mom who will encourage you and a dad who will challenge you and sometimes vice versa and without that, it's just so much harder, and my heart really goes out to single parents because, how can they keep track of everything and do everything and all that.

All right, so you were successfully making your audience sweat blood, realizing that no one's prepared for the future.

Julie Walker: right.

Andrew Pudewa: And now you have some things you could say.

Julie Walker: So what I shared was this, like I said, seven strategies, and I gave them the suggestion right out of the gate is just kind of what you were talking about. Learning a skill is you need coached practice. And so I introduced them to some mentors. And the mentors in this case were books.

And I said, this is your curriculum. Do a study skills course. Put this on your transcript study skills. It's either can be a one semester course or if you add writing assignments to it, it can be a two semester course, including university ready writing as one of the options. But here are some books that I recommended that go along with the strategies.

Andrew Pudewa: Let me guess one of the books. Covey.

Julie Walker: It's actually Covey and okay. And listener, I just want you to know that Andrew knows how to read upside down, and I have my notes in front of me, and he is looking at my notes.

Andrew Pudewa: no, I would have guessed that even if I hadn't looked at your, at your upside down paper. No, but you, you've talked about this before, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens*.

Julie Walker: Right. And that's written by Stephen Covey's son, Sean Covey. Yeah, and so he basically rips off what his dad said and shares the same strategies. And strategy number one, and I used our fix it grammar model where you fix it, you learn it, you read it, you rewrite it. So this is all "it-s", all right?

So the first thing that students need to do is they need to own it. Own it. And that is the first habit of Stephen Covey's Seven Habits, which is to be proactive.

Andrew Pudewa: I see. So, if you have a biology test coming and you're not interested, but you have to take the test and you really don't know much of it, you own it. What does that look like? Like, how do you decide I'm going to own this?

Julie Walker: You're going to understand that if you don't do well on the test, that's your fault. It is not your teacher's fault. It is not the distractions around you. You are owning your education. You want to be successful, and so you need to, you have to start there. I laugh because Stephen Covey's second principle is "begin with the end in mind." And we're not going to talk about that, but the second principle is to begin, you need to own it before you can actually begin.

So, the first thing is to own it, to be proactive, to know that it is up to you. And Yes, I recommend the book *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, but that is kind of like the overarching book. The book that I'm recommending with the own it is written by Donald Miller called *Hero on a Mission*.

Andrew Pudewa: oh, okay.

Julie Walker: And basically, a hero is like, think of the Lord of the Rings, right?

We all know the story of Lord of the Rings, right? Who is the hero of that story?

Andrew Pudewa: Well, there are a few, but in my view, it's Sam.

Julie Walker: Yes, Sam is actually a good helper to Frodo. It's ultimately

Andrew Pudewa: So I have to say Frodo

Julie Walker: You have to say Frodo because he's the one ultimately given the task of getting rid of, as you say, that blasted ring.

Andrew Pudewa: All right.

Julie Walker: So there's Frodo. He is the hero of the story. He is the hero of his story. And so we all have a story to tell, and we are the hero of that.

Andrew Pudewa: We have to be the hero.

Julie Walker: We have to be the hero of the story. And there are three other... You have characters in the story, there may be more than one of them, but you have the victim. "Woe is me, I can't..." Basically there's no possible redemption. And you don't want to be the victim. You don't want to say, "I can't get past this." You want to look for, not the hero to help you because you're the hero. You don't want to be the victim, but you need help and that help is your guide. In *The Lord of the Rings*, the guide is:

Andrew Pudewa: Well, Gandalf, I would guess is what you're wanting me to say.

Julie Walker: And of course, Sam is definitely part of it because he's the one that encourages Frodo to do the good thing, the right thing.

Andrew Pudewa: So does this book use this *Lord of the Rings*

Julie Walker: It does.

Andrew Pudewa: analogy through?

Julie Walker: Yes, yes. And then the fourth character. So we've already done the hero. That's you. We've already done the victim, which is not you, hopefully not you. However, you can get out of that victim mentality, own your education and get a guide. And that's the third one. And then the fourth one, of course, is what makes every story a real story.

And that's a villain, the bad guy, who's the bad guy in this story. And so who is, who is it that is against you? And maybe it's your laziness. Maybe it's your alter ego that wants to play video games all day.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, man. So you be like the hero, the victim, the villain, the helper, all in one. You can be, like, schizophrenic. Okay.

Julie Walker: The victim is one who feels they have no way out. The villain is the one who makes others feel small. The hero is the one willing to face their challenges and transform. And the guide is the one who helps the hero. So that's the "own it." You want to be the hero of your own story. It is ultimately up to you to be successful in your education.

Andrew Pudewa: And this book is called:

Julie Walker: *Hero on a Mission* by Donald Miller.

Andrew Pudewa: Okay. Well.

Julie Walker: book. And then the next thing is "see it." And this is from Stephen Covey or Sean Covey's book, *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, ...of Highly Effective Teens*. And I talked about the value of writing a vision statement. This is habit number two.

Begin with the end in mind. Where do you want to be? So if you sat down, parent. and said, “Where do you see yourself in 5 years or 10 years? What does that look like?” What's really interesting, and I share this story to that group, is I did an exercise like that envisioning where I would be in 25 years. So when we went way out, like, what do you want your life to be like in 25 years?

Andrew Pudewa: When did you do this?

Julie Walker: It would have been close to 20 years ago. So I'm five years out from that.

Andrew Pudewa: Are you on track? I mean, is your vision panning out? Are things going well in this way?

Julie Walker: Let me just tell you what my vision was at the time. And the interesting thing is I was still working at Biola, and I was in that room when I wrote this vision statement. And here it is. First, I start with the thing that I always tell my kids, and if my kids were in this room, they would say, This is what I wanted.

I want a clean house and well-behaved kids. And when they would ask me, “What do I want for my birthday?” They would say, I would say, I want a clean house and well behaved kids. In fact, my daughter-in-law asked me what my husband wanted for his birthday, because he just had a birthday. And I said, “A clean house and well-behaved kids.”

And she said, “No, that's you.” I said, “Oh, that's right. That's me.” But here's the rest of it, Andrew. And a house big enough. To host my entire family with a swimming pool for my grandkids. So I don't have the swimming pool yet, but I do have a house big enough to host my whole family and a yard big enough to eventually put in that swimming

Andrew Pudewa: Oh. Okay. Well then.

Julie Walker: I've got a few years to get that pool.

Andrew Pudewa: I will say that a pool is a hassle and an expense. But if you have grandchildren, it is totally worth it.

Julie Walker: Totally worth it. Absolutely. And you know what? If that doesn't come to fruition, we'll just go to hotels a lot that have swimming pools as long as they're outdoor pools. So this was my hypothetical vision statement that a teen might have written.

Andrew Pudewa: So you were trying to write it back then as if you were a teen.

Julie Walker: I wrote this in preparation for this talk as if I were a teen. “I want to be living on my own in five years, to be able to support myself, to have a good paying job, to have no debt, to serve God in a great church, and to be prepared to start a family, if that's what I'm called to do. That's a big vision statement.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, I think a lot of people could just use that, not have to think of one themselves. They could just, yep, she did my thinking for me

Julie Walker: There you go, there's your "see it." So think about what you want your future to be.

Andrew Pudewa: I have a really hard time with this, you know.

Julie Walker: I know you do.

Andrew Pudewa: I just do not think five years ahead.

Julie Walker: I know.

Andrew Pudewa: So what do you recommend for someone like me? I mean, I don't, I just don't. I can't. I don't want to. I barely think about next month let alone next year. Five years is fantasy. Ten years doesn't even exist. So what, how would you coach me to become more of a visionary?

Julie Walker: How would I coach you to become more of a visionary?

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah, if I said to you, I just don't think that far ahead, I can't, none of that means anything to me. I'm just trying to make the next right decision.

Julie Walker: Exactly. And I would say making the next right decision. And your right decision, Andrew, is based on what you foresee the future being. So you're going to make decisions not to solve the immediate problem, you're making decisions to solve a future problem. And I know that. You're the pathological pessimist, not really pessimist.

He likes to say realist, but here's my advice, which you've already done. Surround yourself with people who do think ahead.

Andrew Pudewa: Yes, well, that's the trick. I'm just thinking, if I were a student, I don't know how I would do that, begin with the end in mind. I just, I mean, can you succeed without doing that?

Julie Walker: I would say that you need a guide. That's part of that. Own it. If you know that about yourself, if you know that about yourself and you know that you're lazy, I know that about myself. I am lazy. I have tendencies to be lazy. I surround myself with people that compel me to do more. And

Andrew Pudewa: Gosh, if she's lazy, what am I?

Julie Walker: okay,

Andrew Pudewa: I'm a sloth crossed with a snail.

Julie Walker: Stop. That is not true.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, but, I do agree with you that books can be a tremendous aid in helping you get a vision for a direction you want to go. And a lot of young people today may or may not have other human beings that can be as inspiring as a good book. So I always tell young people, there's kind of two groups of friends you can have, living ones and dead ones, right?

And the living ones you can talk to. The dead ones. Well, they can still talk to you through their books, and then of course there's living people who write books too, and they're in a mixed category.

Julie Walker: Yeah. The truth is, Andrew, if you listen to my talk, you would say. She totally stole all of my ideas and just rearranged it.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh no, I, well, I don't claim any ideas. I've never said that was my idea.

Julie Walker: No, but I absolutely borrowed a lot of the content from your talks. And all I need to say is, Andrew, yes, I know you are a funny man, and you're making a joke right now because I know you don't believe that you have vision, but you absolutely do. Every talk that You give from Nurturing Competent Communicators to Preparing for Persecution.

Those are all with a future in mind.

Andrew Pudewa: I guess I can think about other people's future, no problem. Alright, you've got more, more things. You've got more strategies.

Julie Walker: I do. I have the third one, so we have own it, see it, and now budget it.

Andrew Pudewa: But that's more like time than money.

Julie Walker: Yes, it is money, so create a budget, this is what I said, based on your income. Why is this important in the study skills? Because we have two things in life in limited supply. Money and money. We can usually earn back what we've lost with money, but we cannot get back what we lose in time.

And so if you can budget your money, that's a real tangible way to see that your money shouldn't be controlling you. You should be controlling your money. And that's straight Ramsey's strategies. He has a book, *Financial Peace University*. And that's one of the books courses that I recommend all teens take.

Truth be told, my husband and I did not get on the Dave Ramsey bandwagon until our kids were adults. And in fact, we took the course with one of our sons and his wife in our living room. We would meet every week and we would go through a little piece of the course. And last weekend. My husband and I had a budget meeting because that's what Dave Ramsey recommends is a budget meeting.

And it has really transformed how we spend our money. We're much more intentional, and I think by doing that, you can then say, Okay, time can work the same way. I can budget my time to be now more intentional with the time that I have.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, it reminds me of that teaching: your treasure is where your heart is, or your heart is where your treasure is. So how you spend your money and time is going to get you what you really want. A lot of people don't know what they really want,

Julie Walker: Yes.

Andrew Pudewa: and so they don't get it. Or they, they want the wrong thing, and then they wonder, why did I get this bad grade?

What I really wanted was to go on a road trip with my friends this weekend. Learn So,

Julie Walker: Exactly. And did you have the time for that? Did you have the money for that? Dave Ramsey has his baby steps. So the first thing you do is you save \$1,000. Then you pay off your debt. Then you save three to six month expenses. How much are you planning to spend in the next three to six months? That now is your new goal.

Once you've paid off your debt, invest 15%. That's baby step number four. So now 15 percent of your income goes toward retirement. Then you start saving for college. So wow, you're investing before you save for college. How does that work? But he's got reasons for this, but then his baby step six is now pay off your house.

And baby step seven. Which is, build wealth and give. I have a stat for you. This is for teenagers. Every hundred dollars that a teen would have, what do you think their top spending? Number one is food. What is number two? You are absolutely right. In fact, 40 percent of their income is on food and clothing.

Andrew Pudewa: I'm not even reading your paper.

Julie Walker: I know he's not,

Andrew Pudewa: I've lived with teenagers.

Julie Walker: Yes, and there's things like entertainment. There's

Andrew Pudewa: Is that number three? Entertainment?

Julie Walker: yeah, video games. And, yeah.

Andrew Pudewa: Tech plus entertainment. Yeah.

Julie Walker: And then we're going down a little bit, sports, car, they're not spending a lot on a car. Maybe they just don't have a car. I don't know.

Andrew Pudewa: A lot of people don't.

Julie Walker: So the truth about money is that you can often earn back what you spend, but you can never earn back the time wasted.

So that's the budget it principle. And

Andrew Pudewa: So are you recommending Dave Ramsey's course as part of your curriculum for study skills?

Julie Walker: Absolutely

Andrew Pudewa: Wow. This is a pretty exhaustive curriculum.

Julie Walker: Yes, it is. But I have step four, four, five, six, seven that we're gonna have to save for next time.

Andrew Pudewa: Okay, well, so far, this sounds more like a general life skills course than how to remember stuff better and keep your papers organized and turn in things on time and all.

Julie Walker: Yes, and that's coming up

Andrew Pudewa: We're gonna get there.

Julie Walker: I'll just tell you what the next four are so you can have a sneak peek preview. Prioritize. And when we get to prioritize next week, I will ask you to define what priority means because I think you've got a Latin definition. I've heard you, scheduling, coming up with a schedule.

So prioritize it, schedule it, chunk it, and then finally practice it.

Andrew Pudewa: Okay. See you then.

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, Stitcher, or Spotify. Or just visit us each week at 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.