

Podcast 440: Ask Andrew Anything

Episode Transcript

Andrew Pudewa: If you want to have a kind of x-ray vision into the structure of language itself, your time might be better spent doing another foreign language where you're going to be reading and translating.

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 episode 440. This means that since it's on the zeros, we are going to be doing an Ask Andrew Anything.

Andrew Pudewa: In the studio,

Julie Walker: in the studio, so normally we record our podcasts in essentially a closet.

Andrew Pudewa: a fancy closet

Julie Walker: It's a fancy closet with

Andrew Pudewa: packing

Julie Walker: packing blankets.

Andrew Pudewa: and dumb pictures on the wall

Julie Walker: Someday I'm going to fix those pictures and see if you notice, Andrew, because I'm not sure you would even notice I changed them.

Andrew Pudewa: I might not, but today we have the video because this is the 10th.

Julie Walker: Every 10th episode. I've come up with a great idea, I'm not going to tell you what it is yet, for our 500th episode, which won't happen until next year,

Andrew Pudewa: Okay. Well, I don't have to think about it then.

Julie Walker: He doesn't have to think about it now, but I think it's a really good idea. So today we're going to start with a question from one of our affiliates, and then I have a bunch of questions from our listeners who are, some are here, some are not that I'm just going to ask you that you haven't seen.

Andrew Pudewa: That's fine.

Julie Walker: That's good.

Andrew Pudewa: I am ready.

Julie Walker: So Renee, before you jump into your question, I'd love for you to share with our listeners who you are and how you are connected with IEW and do share about your podcast as well.

Renee Cook: I'm Renee Cook, and I am a homeschooling mom. So that's how I'm connected with IEW initially. We love IEW. My kids have done some of the themes. They love the *Structure and Style* videos with the joke. I get told the same joke every year. Then I know what week they're on.

Julie Walker: Nice.

Renee Cook: Yes, but I act like it's new. And so, Then I started a new homeschooling podcast last spring and Andrew was my first guest, which was helpful for my show.

People loved that episode. We had a great conversation.

Julie Walker: The name of your podcast is?

Renee Cook: Oh, Everyday Homeschool.

Julie Walker: with Renee Cook and we'll put a link in the show notes so that you can find it. But yeah, it was really fun, Andrew, to see that you were in the second episode, and you're her very first guest. It kind of reminds me, Renee, did you know that Andrew Pudewa was Sarah Mackenzie's very first guest with Read-Aloud Revival? And I like to think that he had a part in growing that podcast, perhaps.

Andrew Pudewa: I hope

Renee Cook: Oh, I'm sure. Yes. I do think I remember her telling this story. She didn't actually have a podcast. She just said, would you come on my podcast? And then you said yes. And she was like, wow, I better start a podcast.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah, that's the story as I heard it too.

Renee Cook: I like it. I like it.

Julie Walker: So Renee, you have a question today for Andrew.

Renee Cook: I do. Our oldest child is hitting that middle school age, and I can definitely tell things are changing, just developmentally, what she needs and wants, education wise, and so she really wants more variety in her writing opportunities. She loves to read and write. She's a big reader, and she really likes owning her own sort of process on IEW, but she has expressed wanting just more variety. So any outside-the-box resources or opportunities you'd

recommend that we could balance? We want the good foundations with structure and style, but I can tell she wants a little more creative or free writing opportunities too.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, one of the things that I think kids very often can get into, especially if they have memorized some poetry in the past, is getting into writing poetry. And that is a kind of off-checklist type of thing because you're now working within the constraints of the poetic form that you are trying to do.

So haiku, or sonnet, or singing, or any of those, we've done a bit with poetry in various courses over the years. We did have a good chunk of poetry in there, and one of the things that I think is very helpful is to go off checklist, but not completely without some kind of goal or objective or model or pattern.

So, like I said, if you were to challenge her to write a sonnet. There are a lot of constraints that a sonnet requires. You have to have a certain number of lines, you have to have a certain rhythmic pattern, you have to have a certain rhyme scheme, you have to rustle words into that form, but it isn't your typical dress ups, openers, topic-clincher kind of checklist grind. So that would be one area.

Now tell about the poetry in the 3B, because you preview all the courses. I never watch them after I teach them.

Julie Walker: No, Andrew

Andrew Pudewa: forget what we have done, actually.

Julie Walker: Yeah, Andrew actually teaches it. He never, ever, ever watches any of the Structure and Style for Students 3B. Every now and then I show him a little clip just because it's so funny, or he'll come in and he'll be watching me laughing as I'm watching this now for the seventh time.

I'm still laughing. Renee, I love that you said, I laugh at the jokes as if it's the first time. And that's a good mom. That's a good mom.

Andrew Pudewa: If a joke was funny once, it was funny again.

Julie Walker: It was funny, again, I actually, the *Structure and Style for Students* 3B, there's one little clip where Andrew, it's a Unit 5, and he does this goofy thing where he goes, bah! And he yells, and the kids all jump. And I showed that to my grandkids, 7 and 3, and they just said, play it again, play it again! So, they enjoyed it so much, but *Structure and Style for Students: Year 3 Level B*, has four weeks of poetry. And so, we are going a little bit off of the Structure and Style method, but we're employing some of the same ideas. There's still a checklist, because as Andrew said, when you're getting into these poetry forms, it does have some structure to them.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. Another thing that you can do is author imitation. We have some examples of that in the TWSS Unit 7, and it's something we've done in third year courses. But this idea of finding an author that you like, and then trying to write in the style of that author. So now you're not using a checklist per se, but you're trying to figure out, well, what makes Dickens sound like Dickens? What makes Twain sound like Twain? What makes that author sound like that author? And then try to imitate that author. And that of course expands your repertoire of stylistic ideas. And what you find is that then the student will kind of pick and choose from the dress ups, openers, decorations, triples, whatever they've learned in an effort to imitate that author.

So that is a second thing that I recommend. Another thing that's fun for kids is cross genre. So take a story and then write it into a poem or write it into a play. Or take a poem that tells a story, a narrative poem, and write that into prose. And so this kind of going back and forth between dialogue, prose, poetry, it also builds the stylistic muscles, so to speak.

And then you find that some of the techniques you've learned are useful, others are not in that particular setting.

So, those would be some things, and then in terms of, I mean, most kids, when they talk about wanting to be more creative in their writing, they want to write fiction. And we did sell, and it's still available, a book by Lee Roddy, who is a very, very well published, dozens, hundred books, I guess young adult author, he's since passed on. But he has a book called *How to Write a Story*. And that's available still on Amazon. And so you could maybe pick that up there and, and that would be more detail on how to construct a story in terms of developing plot, developing characters, developing setting in a more detailed way than we have in our simple unit three. So, those are some thoughts.

There's a whole world of fan fiction. So, kids I know in high school, they read something, I don't even know because I don't read modern fiction, but they read something that someone wrote and they say, Oh, I want to write something like that author. And then they get into this little network of people who are all trying to write, usually fantasy stuff, like somebody who's doing that today. So those are a few thoughts. I don't know anything else.

Julie Walker: I like, you've identified age 12. So going into that, I want to own my own education, which I love that, Renee. That's going to be a great opportunity for you to stay with the Structure and Style because it provides that foundation, but then let her go off and do some of these other creative things.

I think of my son. Who, you know my son, you don't know that you know my son, but every time your kids put in *Structure and Style for Students*, they are hearing my son play guitar. And so he's a musician. He loves music. And when he was that age, yes, we were doing the piano lessons. We were doing the guitar lessons. He actually just started playing guitar at 12.

And he was very much into composition. And that piece that you're listening to is an original piece. It's a variation of the Spelling Concerto. And he took that piece and modified it for the

Structure and Style for Students. And so that idea of giving him that foundation in music theory, so that he could then literally riff off of that and create his own. And that was not a part of his piano lessons. He just did it on his own. And Renee, we wound up putting his piano in his bedroom because it got to be just a little bit overwhelming for our family to hear him play on the piano. All the time. So, allowing her the freedom to write her book and to encourage that, but it doesn't have to be a part of her curriculum.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. One little warning from experience I've had with kids and other people's kids wanting to write books as teenagers, they will get an idea and they'll get started and they'll, And sometimes it's slow going and they'll work on it for maybe months. And the problem is, is that a 12, 13, 14 year old kid grows a lot. They grow intellectually, they grow emotionally, they're growing up very rapidly. So what can happen is they'll start a book at 13 and by the time they're 14 they don't like the book anymore. Because it seems juvenile, it seems young, it seems not what they're capable of. So they'll trash the whole project and start another book.

And then six months later, they're older and they don't like that, so they'll trash that and start another. Of course, the parents are saying, well, just stick with it. But it's hard because you look at what you did and think, well, that's dumb. I could do better now. And it's easier to trash it and start all over than to try to take that thing and then somehow rewrite it and make it better.

So, that's where peer, online peer groups can be very helpful. We had an episode with Taylor Bennett, who was a published author at 16, I think? And she mentioned in her experience that when she got real serious about writing, Going to a writer's conference was the most helpful thing she did, because she met key people, publishers, got a lot of information, lots of sessions from published authors for, people aspiring to that, and so, maybe not at 12 years old, but maybe in 4 or 5 years if this interest continues, then looking at traveling to a maybe a Christian writers conference or something like that could be very motivating and inspiring.

Renee Cook: That would be so neat. What a good plug for homeschooling in general, right?

Julie Walker: Absolutely. Thank you, Renee.

Andrew Pudewa: Thank you

Julie Walker: We have several other questions.

Andrew Pudewa: Good luck with your fantastic podcast. I hope it grows rapidly.

Renee Cook: Thank you. We actually took the summer off because we found out we were adopting a toddler. So I'm hoping to ramp it back up this fall.

Julie Walker: Great. All right. Here we go. This is from Tanti. She's from Virginia. She wants to know, how does sentence diagramming improve mastery of English and writing?

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah, so sentence diagramming is an older, not really old, but a slightly old way of studying English grammar. And what it encourages is the identification of the elements of the sentences, right? So it's called parsing, P A R S I N G, I believe. And so when you can read a very complex sentence and know what's the subject, what are the dependent clauses, what are the phrases, how does it fit together, you can actually understand what you're reading better. So, the tradition of sentence diagramming actually is more helpful for the comprehension of very complex stuff. It carries over a little bit into composition, but perhaps the more valuable thing is being able to proofread your own writing so that you can write something and then you can look at it, maybe a little more objectively. And of course, you're always asking the question, is this saying what I am trying to say? Is it doing it in not just an accurate, but also a stylish or elegant way? And so the area of developing that, I think, falls more into kind of that proofreading editing zone, which we have designed the *FixIt!* program to be more precise in that way.

I often will point out that if you really do want to understand language at a deep level, if you want to have kind of x-ray vision into the structure of language itself, your time might be better spent doing Latin or another foreign language where you're going to be reading and translating in that language, not just chatting, but studying it in that more academic way. So I think what happened was sentence diagramming came kind of into schools and into curriculum as Latin was phased out.

So if you were to go back 200 years ago, everybody studied Latin. And as Latin became less of a requirement for university admission, less of a thing that was kind of universal, more of an option, the grammar side had to pick up to take up the slack. Now, of course, most schools don't teach either of those things, and there are arguments, I suppose, for and against the teaching of grammar at all. Most people in my world would argue for the teaching of grammar, then you've got those options. There's certainly a lot of grammar curriculums, but I would say on the understand-language-deeply, study Latin, on the apply-grammar-to-your-own writing, then look in the *Fix It!* And if you like diagramming, do it. But the frustrating thing is you can study it a lot and then you can come up with a sentence that kind of defies being diagrammed in the same way by different people. And so it's not as precise of a science as many people wish it would be. And I always go back to point out, grammar is not a science at all. It's an art, and there are often many ways to do arts. Drawing, painting, writing, grammar. So,

Julie Walker: Did I ever tell you, Andrew, that when I taught in a school, we did diagramming? I don't know that I ever told you that.

Andrew Pudewa: I, but you taught first grade or something.

Julie Walker: Well, I did. I started in middle school

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, you did,

Julie Walker: And I said, get me out of here, but, but one of the things that was, I understood as an adult is just what you said, there are exceptions and especially with English, because as you also say, It's not a decline, what do you say?

Andrew Pudewa: It's not an inflected language.

Julie Walker: an inflected language, and so the words could be different for everything. My students got super frustrated with diagramming, and so we at IEW, we teach editing because we want the grammar to apply to their writing, and so that's why our *Fix It!* program focuses on that.

Andrew Pudewa: We can refer people to my talk, *But...But...But...What about grammar?* Which I believe we have a recorded version online. Is that correct? Good.

Julie Walker: We do. Yep. Okay. Next question. You ready for the next one? All right. What was the math curriculum you used with your daughter who struggled with mathematics? More specifically, what was the method? And of course, they're talking about the mastery learning talk.

Andrew Pudewa: Right, so we can put a link to that talk, Mastery Learning. We had reached a point with her where she had kind of made her way through or partly through a math book each year. But she didn't really understand it, but if you're growing up, every year you have to get a new math book with a new number on the cover, otherwise you're behind and that's depressing for everyone, moms and kids alike.

And it reached a meltdown point, where around 12 years old, she couldn't actually do any of the math in the math book. And needed to go way, way back. So what we did was we enrolled her in the Kumon program at the Kumon Center in the town we were living. K U M O N. And it's not a curriculum that's easy to buy and use at home because what you're really paying for is this discipline of doing something until you have speed and accuracy.

Julie Walker: Well, and let me just insert something there because Andrew, you can buy Kumon workbook, but it's not the same as going to a Kumon center.

Andrew Pudewa: No, because what the Kumon Center does is it enforces. You can't go to the next level of complexity until you have the speed and accuracy at the level you need to be to have success with the next operation. So you will camp out doing those same problems again and again and again and again, week after week, after week, after week, until the Kumon teacher, through some system they have of knowing this, determines that you now have the speed and accuracy to be successful with the next level of complexity, at which point you get those problems.

The short version of the story is that she went way back to, I mean, we're talking single digit addition and over a period of four years was able to get to the point where she could do math with speed and accuracy almost up to the level or better than most of her peers at that age.

But the trick wasn't that changing curriculum so much as it was understanding essentially the EZ+1 approach applied to math. And that is a very hard thing to do at home, which is why with a workbook, which is why the accountability that the Kumon Center provided was critical for her success.

Julie Walker: Yeah. And today, can you tell what she's doing?

Andrew Pudewa: She's in fourth year of medical school. Yeah. She would have been the least likely to want to do anything academically challenging

Julie Walker: Especially the science and math department.

Andrew Pudewa: that 12, 13 year old age, but, yeah,

Julie Walker: So this one's, I think, the answer to this, but if you don't, I'll be happy to share, is there a forum or a live audio chat channel to speak live with other folks who are learning IEW materials?

Andrew Pudewa: I don't know. You have to answer that.

Julie Walker: Well, it's our Facebook page, but it's not live audio. You can also call our customer service team.

We've got incredible

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, well, we got people that will chat endlessly if you need it, but

Julie Walker: Yeah. So

Andrew Pudewa: There is an IEW Facebook page.

Julie Walker: We're here to help.

Andrew Pudewa: IEW official or something like that. And then people do ask questions and give answers.

Julie Walker: Lots of people help out, lots of our. and I find this an interesting question because we're just a language arts curriculum publisher. No, we're not. We're much more than that. And we recognize that a lot of people are learning to write in a way that's different than they were taught to write. We don't want to withhold help.

That's one of Andrew's, another one of Andrew's talk, *The Four Deadly Errors*. And so we want to be available to help you and we have all sorts of tools and resources available to you. Yeah, just. We have a couple of Facebook groups and we'll put a link in the show notes for that. So good.

All right. So now we have a 10th grader. This is such an easy question, which is why I threw it in. Here's a softball. 10th grader looking for a supplemental writing class to go with dual enrollment in English.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, well, we have our SSS-1C course approved for a full year of grammar and composition credit through two accredited universities, Donnelly College and Southeastern University in Florida. And we do that through Christianhalls.org, our friends at Christian Halls International. So that's a very good option right now, yeah.

We also have a lot of stories of people who've done three, four years of IEW, middle school ish, go off and take any college-level English composition course and generally do very, very well. Most of the stories are the teachers saying, where did you learn to do this? How did you learn to write this well?

Julie Walker: Andrew generally doesn't look at my questions, and I know he has not looked at this question. But look at the next question is, does Andrew recommend community college for the first two years of college to save money? What is his opinion of gap years? And I just think, going off to college as dual enrollment and then hearing those stories is something we definitely hear.

Andrew Pudewa: it's a tough one. I do have my talk *Hacking High School*, and that's available, so put a link to that.

Julie Walker: And we did a couple podcasts on that

Andrew Pudewa: We did a couple podcasts. The upside of community college is you generally can live at home and do it. You can do dual enrollment starting at 15 or 16. If they say you have to be a junior, well, who's to decide? You could actually just skip 10th grade and declare yourself a junior. Nobody can stop you from doing that. For my kids at TCC here in Tulsa, it was just a reading. They just had to pass a reading comprehension test,

Julie Walker: Pretty sure they did well on that.

Andrew Pudewa: Which they did no problem.

Julie Walker: even your dyslexic son.

Andrew Pudewa: Community colleges are public institutions, and to that degree, they are very secular in many ways, depending on where you live, they may be in a more conservative or a more liberal zone. So they don't have the advantage of, say, an online Christian college that may have the curricular option that's more aligned with your family's values in that way. But certainly reducing debt load is tremendously valuable. Having a couple of years of very low cost dual enrollment and then having the option to then go take those credits into a university, entering as a sophomore or junior is a big money saving thing. There's also a lot of online options that are not community colleges that are also much lower cost.

Julie Walker: Even Christian Halls. We've already mentioned

Andrew Pudewa: I know dozens of kids who quote, finished high school with an associate's degree of the equivalent, and I could name five kids I've met who finished high school with a bachelor's degree. So it's not impossible, you just want to look at all the options. And the good thing about community colleges, I think you very often get people who are more interested in teaching in community colleges. Because you get into university, it's kind of the publish or perish tenure track. You've got to forward your career. And people teaching in community colleges, they're not in that world, and very often they're teaching part time while doing real jobs, other jobs in their field. And so their interest is more in sharing what they love with kids than grinding out an academic career. So that's another benefit, I think, from community colleges.

Julie Walker: One thing I did, Andrew, and I know you know this, I actually, my son was going to four year university and was struggling with his economics class there at the four year university and decided to take it at the community college. And homeschool mom that I am, I asked him, would you like me to take the class with you?

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, nice.

Julie Walker: And he said, yes. And so I did. And Andrew, what you're talking about is exactly what I experienced. I had a great time learning about micro and macro economics from someone that actually worked in that field, not just teaching. And it actually wound up leading to my MBA. So that was a really good experience.

Andrew Pudewa: One thing, though, is so much of what community colleges and universities offer is just available open source, online. My son, who did enroll in Tulsa Community College and did take a math class, could not understand the teacher in the community college class. So he just went to YouTube and watched videos on how to do the math on YouTube, and then he just did the homework and took the test at the community college. So, the truth is you could probably learn almost anything you wanted to learn. If you weren't terribly concerned about getting the credits for it with the myriad of options that are available, open source and open classes and online tutorials, and it's a brave new world now of

Julie Walker: So many more resources available. So great question. Yes. And so many opportunities. Okay. Here is a kind of in the weeds of our sweet spot right here. What to do with a bright student who thinks she already knows how to write? She has used IEW. This parent has used IEW with her two older children "and now on the second year with my youngest. Yes. Who is going into 7th grade. She thinks she knows it all." Oh, those 7th graders, man, we keep running into that. "She thinks she knows it all and is already refusing to use IUW. I don't want to change to another writing program, but I also don't want to make a war if I continue with this program. Thanks."

Andrew Pudewa: I don't know that I could answer that without understanding more about why this child doesn't want to do it. Now, being the younger child in a sequence, she may have just overheard everything and say, well, I do all that stuff anyway. I always go back to the analogy of music or sports, right? If you want to be good in a sport, if you want to be good on an instrument, you do exercises. And so the way to negotiate this with this kid would be to say, Hey, this is an exercise. We're not terribly concerned about the product. We're way more concerned with the process. If you think you know it all, fine, then demonstrate that and work through the course and stop whining. Once you have a 12 year old that doesn't want to do what you want them to do, then that's kind of a different problem than writing, it's more of a, how are you going to negotiate this? Maria Montessori had a pretty good idea about teenagers, which is just stop school entirely. Make them work hard labor for several years, as hard as you can make them work in the real world, and then let them come back and decide to study. They might have a different attitude. So, we can't do that in our modern world, but that's the way it used to be. Hard labor. So, I guess you could set up an ultimatum. Write your essays with the IEW checklist. Or, pull the weeds, scrub the floors, wash the toilets, climb on the roof, and clear the gutters, and stop whining. I don't really have an answer to this question.

Julie Walker: That was a tough one. Let me give you the easier one, but that was a good question. Okay. Now it's a fourth grader. All right. "How do I encourage a student who hates, and then she uses the term language arts, he's going into fourth grade?"

Andrew Pudewa: Well, you can't encourage a student out of hating something. That is a bottom line fact. So, change your way of thinking about it. Don't imagine you're going to cheerlead a kid into liking something. Generally, children dislike the things that they do not believe that they are good in. They like the things that they believe they are good in.

So the trick is to back up to a point where the child can do something and be decently good at it. And with a 10 year old, it may be going all the way back to just straight copywork. One of the reasons that kids dislike putting letters and words on paper is they don't have the stamina for it. The same way that a person might dislike exercise because they have no stamina, therefore they don't want to do it, therefore they don't, therefore they never gain the stamina, therefore they dislike it forever and suffer as a consequence. So in order to change an attitude, you've got to create some experience of success. So I would combine: number one, memorizing poetry to furnish the mind, Audiobooks to fall in love with literature, copywork every day, scripture, poetry, Aesop fables, anything you like, get that momentum going with copywork. And then maybe you can move into one of our SSS courses or a theme based book. We don't know if this person has done any of our material yet.

Julie Walker: doesn't give any indication.

Andrew Pudewa: yet. But my talk on motivation, I think, is very broadly applicable, so we'll put a link to that. But basic laws of motivation are children want to do what they can do, or they like to do what they can do, They want to do what they think they can do and they hate

and will refuse to do those things which they believe they cannot do or do well or due to the satisfaction of a parent or teacher. So, back up to a point where it's possible and work there for a while and then don't hope that you're going to encourage them into liking it. Just do it. They may never like it. I always tell kids, I don't like writing. You don't have to like writing. There's no rule that says you have to like this. You just have to do it.

Julie Walker: That's true. That's true. Until you're a grown up.

Andrew Pudewa: Then you still have to.

Julie Walker: That's right. That's true. Okay, just a couple more questions. These have been some great questions, listeners. Thank you for contributing these. So, This is an editing question. When editing my students' papers, I sometimes offer better adjectives, verbs, or phrases instead of encouraging them to identify the problem, understand why it's subpar, and make the improvement on their own.

What specific editing techniques, phrases, can I use to help them move from mediocre to good to better so that they can grow into excellent writers?

Andrew Pudewa: Well, again, we don't know the age of this child, but the general response would be, you should assume they're doing the best they can. So, when you have a conversation, either on paper or in person, when you have a conversation with a child based around this question, Couldn't you think of a better word? don't you think you could think of a better way to say this?

The child's reaction is no. If I could have thought of a better word, I would have thought of a better word. So, just tell me what to do and I'll do it. But, I don't get what you're trying to say. So that's why I suggest, and again referring to the *Four Deadly Errors* talk, if you don't like the word the child chose, just cross it out and put the better word. But don't have a conversation trying to get them to mindread you. Because they're not going to necessarily do that. And even if they do, they're not going to gain much from that experience. So look at it as, yes, your concern is make it legal, but don't try to make it good. If you don't like the word or it doesn't make sense, just cross it out and put one that works.

And then just let them copy it over with that word in there, and then they get that little bit of information. Oh, that wasn't the best word, this is a better word. But I think we get into a dangerous area when we edit the kid's paper and then try to explain to them why we made all these changes. Because they're not necessarily hearing us.

In fact, I'm pretty sure they're not hearing us and they may even be curing an internal recording like "I'm dumb, I'm stupid. I hate this. I don't know how to do it. I never make her happy. I don't want to do it anymore." My approach is let them write whatever they write. Don't try to make it good. Just try to make it legal. If you want to try to teach vocabulary, do that separately through poetry memorization, through better literature, through Greek and Latin word roots, or through learning Latin, through a vocabulary program if you like that. A

lot of our theme based books have vocabulary elements. Make it separate, don't try to fix something up ex post facto, because that generally kind of has a negative reaction.

The exception to that might be the older child who comes and says, I'm just not sure how to make this better. Do you have any suggestions?

Julie Walker: Wow.

Andrew Pudewa: That's a different scenario, right? We have to be careful to help at the point of need. But not meddling and giving these ex post facto explanations of if only you had been smarter, you could have done better. None of us like to hear that.

Julie Walker: I discovered IEW and Andrew Pudewa when my son was, guess how old, 12. 12.

Andrew Pudewa: Daniel was 12?

Julie Walker: He was 12. And this was what I would say. We would fight about what was good writing and what wasn't, and it saved his life. So, all right, one last question. It's a middle school question again, Andrew. How do you motivate a middle school child to follow the checklist.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, you would motivate them the same way you would motivate them to clean their room, do their chores, brush their teeth, help with life. You either set rules, expectations, and have consequences. Or you make it a challenge and you say, if you do this, then there's some benefit to you.

But like I said, you can't really cheerlead a kid into doing something they don't want to do. You either have to require it and have consequences. Or you have to set up some kind of economic system and make it worth their while.

Julie Walker: We're going to share with you the motivation talk, because that's definitely something that can really help. I think of how in the *Structure and Style for Students*, Andrew teaches, it's either A or incomplete. And so if the checklist requires an -ly dress up in every paragraph and your son or daughter in middle school skips a paragraph, then it's incomplete and you just hand it back.

Andrew Pudewa: I would add in that middle schoolers do respond well to positive peer pressure. Not all the time, but many times. So if you have a little group of kids, it's easier to get them to work harder than if it's just inside one family with one or two kids, because then you can kind of praise the things that you like that some of the kids do, and then the other kids will want to have that same reaction about what they've done. So they'll work a little harder because of the public nature of it, and then very often you can get kids into some kind of competition, like we have a essay competition every year, we have a speech competition, there are other essay and story contests

Julie Walker: And let me just give a plug for our *Magnum Opus Magazine*. That is almost like a competition because we pick the best of the best and publish them monthly in an e newsletter and then we're on volume 15 now of our print magazine. So our best of the best goes into our Magnum Opus

Andrew Pudewa: I've seen middle and younger high school students work much, much harder because they were entering a competition than I ever would have got them to work, simply by bribing, begging, threatening, whatever, for them to do their best for me. So, it is that age, 12, 13, they start caring less about what mom thinks. And more about what peers or external accountability thinks. So working in that direction could be helpful as well.

Julie Walker: Okay. That's most of the questions. If you did not get your question answered, we're sending this over to our well-equipped, competent customer service team. We'll have, be sure that every single one of your questions that you've submitted is answered. Thank you so much for being a part of our live Ask Andrew Anything podcast

Andrew Pudewa: And we'll do it again in 10

Julie Walker: in 10 weeks or so.

All right. Thanks everyone.

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. 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.