

Podcast 476: Teacher Appreciation Month

Episode Transcript

Andrew Pudewa: It's just so sweet though when you realize that the power of video and how somehow the heart comes through. And I want to touch their heart, and this type of short, little letter does that.

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.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, Julie, I have a couple fun things I thought I would share with you before you tell me what we're talking about today.

Julie Walker: I love it.

Andrew Pudewa: I'm always kind of delighted when I know that children have learned some poetry. And that has spilled over, their love of poetry, spilled over into their writing of poetry. And I find it particularly interesting when the poem is about something that every kid can relate to. So I have here a limerick.

Julie Walker: Oh, a limerick.

Andrew Pudewa: And it was written by a young man. I actually met him not long ago. He came to a talk with his mom, and he was busy studying his electronics textbook, but evidently he has a younger brother, so he wrote this limerick about his younger brother.

There was a young boy who hates grammar,
The prospect of which makes him stammer.
When he does fail, he makes such a wail.
It confirms his hate for that grammar.

Julie Walker: Nice.

Andrew Pudewa: Someone has got some Edward Lear lime in their, in their brain, but more charming. I get a good number of letters from kids, and this one was short and I don't know, it just kind of touched me.

So this is from Paige in North Carolina, I think. "Dear Mr. Pudewa, my name is Paige and I am 11 years old. I like drawing, playing violin and reading. I love IEW, and I hope to become a famous author one day. I am writing this letter to you because you are an intelligent, good man." (How can I not read it?)

Julie Walker: Right, right.

Andrew Pudewa: “I love watching your videos with my mom, and I have learned a lot from them. Please send me back two signed autographs so that my mom can have one too.”

Julie Walker: Okay, great.

Andrew Pudewa: Which was sweet. But this was the best. This was the letter “Ps. I love your mustache.” She hasn't probably seen my new addition to the mustache, which is a white beard. I feel like I should take a picture and send that one with the autograph so she can make a determination whether the beard is as good as the mustache.

But it's just so sweet though when you realize that the power of video and how somehow the heart comes through, like I want to touch their heart and I want them to feel touched. And this type of short, little letter, does that, it's like, I get it, Paige, and I get you. And you get me.

Julie Walker: She knows you and you're her teacher,

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah.

Julie Walker: Which segues beautifully into what we're talking about today, which is this is National Teacher Appreciation Week.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh really?

Julie Walker: Yeah, so actually today, this podcast launches, we generally launch our podcast on Wednesdays. So if all goes well, this will be launched on Wednesday, May 7, and teacher appreciation week for this year is May fifth through the ninth.

So typically what happens during this week is students, if they're dialed into this, bring gifts to their teacher. Generally, this is toward the end of the year and “hey, we really appreciate you, teacher.” And so I have some ideas of what is a good gift, and perhaps you can comment on this as well. What is not such a good gift?

And honestly, I've got to be honest, I'm doing this for my son because he is a teacher. He teaches at a small elementary school in Northern California. He's actually their PE teacher. So he's very much into health and wellness and working the kids out and playing games with them and helping with coordination.

Andrew Pudewa: I can just imagine him doing that with such joy.

Julie Walker: Yeah, he is. He really is a good teacher, kind of makes a mama proud. But he, of course, is well loved by his students, partly because he's one of the few male teachers at the school, and that is very special. But I know, and I actually will have a link to this. I actually pulled up an article from *San Diego Family*, and it talks about, well, I'll read this a little bit.

Some teachers don't expect a gift during the busy holiday season, so this is actually applying to Christmas, this article. Or the holiday season, but this extrapolates into the end of the year. Teacher appreciation gifts.

Andrew Pudewa: End of the school year. They've had a whole year. With the teachers. So it's probably a more developed relationship and appreciation than it would be at Christmas. You barely survived the fall.

Julie Walker: Yes, exactly. Exactly. So we want to, as grateful parents, acknowledge those who have spoken into our children's lives. And so how do we show gratitude to them? How do the students show gratitude to their teachers? And so here's some just ideas, and I don't want to forget, Andrew, the joke that you tell about teacher appreciation.

Yeah. So I'll share a few things and then we will maybe end this podcast with a joke. How does that count? So stick around. We've got a good one. All right. So what not to give. Here we go.

Andrew Pudewa: Let me guess: ties, coffee mugs, and knick knacks

Julie Walker: Well, knick knacks is definitely on here in this list. They call them trinkets. "One teacher says, while we appreciate the sentiment of love involved in purchasing trinkets, they pile up, we run out of space, and sadly, they end up in the donation pile." And I think about your class, Andrew, that you're teaching right now with your students. You have a store where you auction off things with the tickets that they've

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah, not a store, but an auction. And I do look for all of the little things that have accumulated, and I think I don't want to have that thing around the rest of my life. So I put it in the donation pile and then I had a lot and the kids loved it. They were so excited. So yeah, even the trinkets and knick-knacks and extra little bags or pens or mugs or whatever you don't like. There's a use to it. Give it to someone else. Auction it off.

Julie Walker: There you go. Use it. Use it for your little auction for your store. Okay. You mentioned mugs. That is, that is number two on the list. And I know that here at IEW, our cupboard is full of discarded mugs that we've all gone through our kitchen. I mean, let's be honest, my husband and I, we've got our set of everyday dishware with the obligatory mugs included that we never use.

We have our favorite mugs that we use over and over again, and all the other mugs that we collect are for our guests, or they get donated to here at IEW. So mugs in honor of teachers everywhere. Our word problem. If five students give you one mug each year, how many mugs will you have at the end of six years?

Yes, 30. Keep in mind that teachers have 20 to 90 students depending on what grade level they teach. That's a lot of mug potential. Bottom line, no more mugs, please.

Andrew Pudewa: I'm onto that. All right.

Julie Walker: Another thing that they mention is candy. Teachers receive a lot of chocolate and other candy this time of year, and I just think, oh, chocolate. It's just too much, they say, and for those who are trying to eat healthier, there's little hope of success with a constant stream of sweets coming through the door.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, a good piece of fruit, I think a

Julie Walker: the classic apple on the desk

Andrew Pudewa: Or I think a bag of dried fruit like apricots or figs. It would still be sweet, but it wouldn't be packed with toxic ingredients.

Julie Walker: Yes.

Andrew Pudewa: And you could share it too. So I don't mind, I wouldn't mind that. What else do we have on the, no, no thank you list.

Julie Walker: Homemade treats. Yeah, and I understand this. I love it when I show up to work, and someone has brought in a plate of something fun that they've made at home. And I know all of our coworkers here, and I know that for the most part, they're going to put something in there that's going to be delightfully healthy or not, but it's still going to be delightfully good. While the gesture is appreciated, it's risky business with allergies, germa-phobes, and unknown ingredients. Homemade goodies often end up in the trash, clothing, jewelry, or other items featuring apples or school themes. See, now I have, I was a teacher, and I have on my Christmas tree some teacher ornaments that were given to me by my students, and I love that.

Andrew Pudewa: Well that's okay 'cause you have a sweater and on your sweater is a Christmas tree with little lights that battery powered flash. Something I would never wear.

Julie Walker: I love Christmas though, but you say our teacher loves bees. This is a little comment here. They're all over her classroom. That may be true, but if the theme in a classroom is bees or owls, it's best not to assume that the teacher likes to decorate her home or body with them. Classroom themes are typically connected to something teachers want students to remember

Andrew Pudewa: So that's the no thank you list. Now what are some of the... well, I'll tell you. What I love the most. Letters like this from students. Just that sweet little note that says, I've learned so much from you.

Julie Walker: Yep, and that's number one on the list. Thoughtful notes. Teachers love sincere messages of thanks and appreciation. One teacher says, I love notes from students and parents. I keep them in a folder so I can read them when I have a difficult day. I have a box on my shelf, behind my desk, and it has notes in them, and I keep them for that very reason.

Another thing that they appreciate, and I love this one, a lot of school teachers now have an Amazon wishlist for their classroom, and they share it with their parents, and it's a way to help them fund what it is they're trying to do because the school can't buy them everything they need or want.

My son is a perfect example: PE teacher. What does he want? Playground balls. How many does he want? Lots and lots and lots more than what you could imagine you would need for a kindergarten class or a sixth grade class, whatever games he's playing with them.

And so let me just read that “a recent survey revealed that teachers spent almost \$500 of their own money on classroom needs every year.” My daughter-in-law was a classroom teacher and she and, and my son. Wrote into their budget a hundred dollars a month for classroom supplies, and it was like, wow, that is crazy. But yet, as one teacher put it “the way to a teacher's heart is through school supplies. Another says, I would be totally excited to get a blinged out new stapler, class set of new rulers, or a gift card to help fulfill the needs in the classroom.”

So if you are a teacher and are listening to this, I do recommend setting up an Amazon wishlist that you can share with your parents because this is now a way for them to give you something that will in turn help you do a better job.

Andrew Pudewa: Was that blinged out?

Julie Walker: blinged out new stapler

Andrew Pudewa: Blinged out? I don't think I have ever heard that idiom before. I guess it's the equivalent of

Julie Walker: sparkly.

Andrew Pudewa: bling out your teacher list or

Julie Walker: There you go. Restaurant gift cards. Find out where your teacher likes to eat and what's convenient to where she lives or hangs out. No need to get fancy. One teacher suggested Jamba Juice, another says a gift to Rubio's or Starbucks. And yes, my son probably got about 13 Starbucks cards this year, but you know what? Overtime.

Andrew Pudewa: You can just add 'em into your

Julie Walker: Exactly. Yep. So some teachers said that they actually get way too many, which I'm not sure that's possible to get too many coffee cards. But another idea,

Andrew Pudewa: Then you can give them to other people that you appreciate.

Julie Walker: It's regifting. And here was a, here was a great idea. And we do this for our employees here. People want to participate in what we call a secret Santa. We have a survey, a

questionnaire. The idea is ask teachers to fill out a questionnaire about their favorite things: hot drink, cold drink, lunch, restaurants, colors, hobbies, what do they do in their spare time?

And then you can use that as a guideline for purchasing, maybe a group gift from the classroom, which is always fun. One of the most treasured gifts that I received when I was teaching a first and second grade classroom was a You Are Special plate, and it's this red plate and it says on there You Are Special. And on the back of it, the kids all signed it.

With the white pen and they baked it and it's something that I treasure from having taught in the classroom over 40 years ago.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, now do you use the plate?

Julie Walker: Oh no.

Andrew Pudewa: No. Okay. Well,

Julie Walker: Sits in our red room.

Andrew Pudewa: it's like a mug, but there's only one of them rather than too many.

Julie Walker: Only one plate. Only one plate. Yep.

Andrew Pudewa: It reminds me though, of the Norman Rockwell painting that we used for a student sample in the TWSS, and it was her birthday. And the painting was the kids that scrolled all over the board, decorated the classroom and had the apple on the desk. And that was still one of the finest examples of student creative writing I have ever seen was a Unit 5, Writing from Pictures. Advanced high school kid, but kid, superb.

Julie Walker: We'll put a link in our show notes so that you can see both that image and the essay that accompanies

Andrew Pudewa: Good. Yeah, people love it.

Julie Walker: Well, there's some ideas for gifts for your teachers, what they really want, and the opposite of that, what they really don't want or need. But Andrew, you know what everybody wants right now—a joke.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, alright, let's see if I can tell this one. So it's Teacher Appreciation week and all of the little children are giving gifts to the teacher. And Sally's mom owns a florist shop and so there's a box, and the teacher kind of suspect what's in it. And she opens it up, acting surprised. Oh, beautiful flowers. Thank you Sally. Thank your mom for me.

And then Billy's dad is a baker, and so here's a box. And she thinks okay, and she opens it up and there's these beautifully professionally baked cookies. Obviously she's going to share them with the students because she doesn't want to eat all these things.

Johnny's dad, well, he owns a liquor store. He brings a rather heavy box, and there's a little bit of liquid dripping out the corner. And so she touches it with her finger and tastes, and she says, oh, Billy, is this, is this brandy? And Billy says, no, it's a puppy.

Julie Walker: So Andrew, one of the things that's on the list of things not to get is a pet.

Andrew Pudewa: Is a pet.

Julie Walker: Clearly a pet requires a lot of responsibility, and I'll just end with this really quick story. One of my favorite teachers, Mrs. Jensen, sixth grade class, my friends and I, two girls, the three of us, we got her a puppy, but we did check with her husband first, and she was happy.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, I'm glad you checked.

Julie Walker: Yes.

Andrew Pudewa: Please do not give me ever a puppy.

Julie Walker: Don't give Andrew especially Chihuahua.

Andrew Pudewa: I really don't even want a chameleon. I mean, I'm happy to visit other people's animals, but I don't need any more in my life at the moment.

Julie Walker: Well, thank you Andrew.

Andrew Pudewa: 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, 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.