

Podcast 500: What Are We Really Doing Here? Part 1

Episode Transcript

Andrew Pudewa: When we are able to talk with people who are really in the thick of the front lines on restoring sanity and and focusing on wisdom and virtue, and that gives me hope.

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

Julie Walker: Well, welcome everyone to our 500th episode. Andrew, I remember when we first pitched the idea of doing a podcast, you said, every week? We’re going to run out of things to say, and yet, here we are.

Andrew Pudewa: So 500, that’s almost 10 years,

Julie Walker: Well, and I actually have a stack of papers in front of me.

Andrew Pudewa: No doubt.

Julie Walker: And one of them has our oldest episode that you can listen to right now if you wanted to. And that is episode 57 [54].

Andrew Pudewa: How come not number one?

Julie Walker: Exactly. And I’m going to explain that. So episode 57 [54] is, What Are We Really Doing Here?

Andrew Pudewa: Ah.

Julie Walker: And when we first started this journey, I was so nervous. I was just a young pup then. Actually not that much younger, but I guess kind of.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, relatively.

Julie Walker: Relatively, yes. And I said, can we just do our listeners a favor and do me a favor? And our listeners who are new to our podcast, I’m thinking. They love it so much they’re going to want to go back to the beginning. Well, when you had 500 episodes to get through, you just, you just can’t do it.

Andrew Pudewa: True.

Julie Walker: True confessions right here. I tend to be a binge watcher. When I find a good episode, I will watch or listen and just not stop. And so sometimes I’ll wait until they pile up before I actually listen to them because otherwise I can’t do the binge watching.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh.

Julie Walker: And so we're just basically doing a service to our listeners to not have to go back to the first 50.

Andrew Pudewa: Okay. Can I explain to you how I listen to podcasts? I have a particular category of podcast for a particular category of activity.

So in the morning it's inspirational. Usually Bible in a year, something like that. Then at the gym, it's fitness, nutrition, health, all that. And then when I'm making dinner, it's political commentary. So I don't binge, I categorize.

Julie Walker: I see. Got it

Andrew Pudewa: Just so you know.

Julie Walker: Well, and that's— many people have several podcasts they listen to.

Andrew Pudewa: Too many of us have too many podcasts we listen to.

Julie Walker: I subscribe to a dozen, Andrew, and I am not caught up on any of them. So, but here's, here's a little trick that I learned from my son, which, you know what? I said I was going to do this. So I'm going to introduce my son to our listeners.

This is one of my sons. So come on, stand right back over here. He's tall enough to be able to do this. This is my son, Mikael.

Andrew Pudewa: He looks absolutely thrilled to do this.

Julie Walker: He loves this kind of stuff. Mikael is our video and audio editor manager. So whether or not he actually does the work, he oversees it.

Andrew Pudewa: That is such a boring title. I think you should call him what he truly is...

Julie Walker: Videographer works.

Andrew Pudewa: No. The Wizard.

Julie Walker: Wizard. Yes, he is the man behind the curtain who makes all things magically happen.

Andrew Pudewa: And what a lot of people don't know is he was in a writing class. I did when I came to Biola. Yes. And he was probably what, 10?

Julie Walker: Yes. And a very, not just a reluctant writer could hardly write, like putting letters on papers were really hard for him. So,

Andrew Pudewa: Now he just,

Julie Walker: and now he is here

Andrew Pudewa: He massages pixels on screens.

Julie Walker: He does. And you know what they say: the person with the most screens wins. He wins. He has seven screens in his office.

Andrew Pudewa: At least he's the IEW Champ.

Julie Walker: So what I wanted to say about Michael, in addition to what he does for IEW (Thank you. You can go back.) He listens to his podcast at 3x.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh yes. Well, I've tried that, but that requires more concentration. See, I want to be able to listen and do other things while I'm listening. If I put them on faster, then it's really hard to do other things because I'm putting so much energy into listening.

Julie Walker: Here's another little secret about Michael, which is not a secret, but if you ever hear me talking about our special needs episodes and I talk about an ADHD kid, well that's him.

Andrew Pudewa: Did you have to reveal that to the world?

Julie Walker: Well, honestly, here's hope that if you've got a kid that has some learning challenges, and like I said, he wasn't writing much when he was 10. He definitely had some visual processing things, but he is brilliant. He's always been brilliant, but he's able to listen to podcasts at...

Andrew Pudewa: Podcasts at 3x

Julie Walker: Yeah. At 3x and

Andrew Pudewa: That's an achievement. And you can probably cook dinner while doing it.

Julie Walker: Yes, yes, but he doesn't listen to podcasts.

Andrew Pudewa: So what's in your stack of paper that is just a little too large.

Julie Walker: Well, and this is just a bunch of stuff that I put together in preparation for this, and this is kind of an organic episode. We're going to, as I mentioned, split this into several parts, but we're going to launch them all in a week because we've got more podcasts to launch, and we've got to stay on schedule because we have a really exciting podcast. All of our podcasts are exciting.

Andrew Pudewa: Well to you. I've never listened to one of them, but I enjoy making them.

Julie Walker: Well, and this is going to be a little tricky because one of...

Andrew Pudewa: But three in one week. That sounds like a, that sounds like a barrage.

Julie Walker: Well, and it's going to be a little all over the place, but one of the things we want to be able to do is answer questions. We usually do that with the Ask Andrew Anything episodes. And those are the every 10th one. By definition episode 500 is every 10th one, but these questions that will happen or I don't.

Andrew Pudewa: These better be the best of all.

Julie Walker: I don't have any prepared questions. I am relying on myself not to say...

Andrew Pudewa: I'm trying to train myself not to say, "That's a good question." It's just so overused. Every single podcast anybody interviewed? That's a good question.

Julie Walker: That's a good question.

Andrew Pudewa: I'm trying not to say that. I'm trying to look for an alternative.

Julie Walker: I could see two reasons why you would say that. Number one. It affirms the questioner. That's good and you're good at that.

Andrew Pudewa: I agree with that.

Julie Walker: Yeah. And secondly, it gives you a minute to think what the answer is. So, and when we do Ask Andrew Anything episodes, Andrew doesn't get to see the questions ahead of time.

So in true Ask Andrew Anything format, if you who are here today on September 13 when we are recording this podcast, if you have any questions, please put them in the chat and we can see them. And I love seeing some of the chatter right now. I love seeing that there are people here who walk, travel or walk.

So, and that's exactly my shtick. When I walk or workout in the morning, I try to make sure that the podcast I'm listening to can end in my allotted workout time, which is 30 minutes. It's all we ask, right? So that's kind of what we try to do. And sometimes shorter, sometimes longer.

So our agenda loosely is favorite episodes. So I thought it would be kind of fun to ask you, do you remember some of your favorites? He just admitted that he does not listen to our podcast. Can you imagine? But that's okay. He also admitted to me, and now he'll

Andrew Pudewa: I can think of a few.

Julie Walker: Yeah, go ahead.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. The notable ones are when we have guests.

Julie Walker: Yes, exactly.

Andrew Pudewa: And we don't always have guests. Sometimes it's just you and me riffing on some aspect of what we do or language and all that.

But I think I really enjoyed when my son came on because he was the most dyslexic child I have ever met. Didn't read a book till he was 12 years old. Really just banging head against the wall to get him to read anything. By 15, he was reading pretty smoothly, and he went off to college, did really well. But when we had him on the podcast, he talked about really the secret gifts or powers that dyslexic people have. And I think that is very reaffirming to many, many moms and dads who are out there with, they're at the 12-year-old phase, the the 12-year-old who hates reading more than anything.

Julie Walker: And probably by extension hates writing.

Andrew Pudewa: Probably. Yeah. And they grow up and then they're 20 something and I'm very, very proud of him.

So that was one podcast that I really enjoyed. We've had Dr. Sax, Leonard Sax. We've had him as a guest a couple times. And he's just one of these so objective, sane, common sense observations about the truth of things in the world without an agenda.

Julie Walker: Right.

Andrew Pudewa: And so I just, I always enjoyed listening to him talk. And so we had a couple episodes there and more recently probably had to be Scott Newstock.

Julie Walker: I knew you were going to mention it.

Andrew Pudewa: *How to Think like Shakespeare*, that book just— I love that book so much. In fact, I keep buying two and three copies at a time because I give it away so fast.

Julie Walker: Yes.

Andrew Pudewa: But that was such a good conversation.

We had to roll it into a double episode, and then I had a chance to actually meet him at a conference this last summer. So those would be three of the more memorable ones.

Of course, Dr. O'Toole from Hillsdale

Julie Walker: Yes.

Andrew Pudewa: And talking about that mission and what they're doing is so significant, and I think anything that gives me hope for the future, either hope for the kid who's having a hard, hard time or hope for the world and how education is so closely connected with civil society.

Julie Walker: Yes,

Andrew Pudewa: And when we are able to talk with people who are really in the thick of the front lines on restoring sanity and and focusing on wisdom and virtue and, and character and excellence in schools, that gives me hope because those kids are going to grow up and they're going to be out there to balance out so much of the uncivil things that we see.

Julie Walker: Yep. Well, there's so many things I could comment on right there. First I have to show you, I have visual aids. You know me, I always have something to bring, so hold on. I got to.

Andrew Pudewa: I just have a cup. See, Kathleen likes that our podcasts are short and pithy. (from the chat)

Julie Walker: Pithy. Oh, that is such a good word.

Andrew Pudewa: Just the right length, like Goldilocks.

Julie Walker: Oh, oh, just right. Okay. So what I have here is a stack of books.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, of people that we've had on the podcast.

Julie Walker: Yes. So this one is actually not out yet, but this is Amber O'Neal Johnston, and she's a new find. And this is basically a collection of how-to-homeschool-type stories, which I

just love her, and I think you will love this episode. This is going to be a Homeschool 101 podcast that's coming out soon.

And then of course, Heidi St. John. We love Heidi and we've had her on a couple times. And what I love about this book—and this is not necessarily a plug for these books—this is just a reminder of authors that we've had, is this is a devotional. So 365 Days to Encourage and Empower Everyday Moms.

Andrew Pudewa: I must confess, I have not read that one.

Julie Walker: You probably haven't read that, right? Look at this one. I have so many sticky notes. I love sticky notes by the way. And someone actually I should go during the break. I'm going to run and grab a very sweet handwritten note I got from one of our podcast listeners. I know you get them all the time, Andrew. I got one that is so precious, and she has been collecting sticky notes and sending them to, and she sent them to me. Which is amazing.

So this is Dr. Lisa Dunn. And she actually was a professor at San Diego Christian College, but prior to that she was at William Jessup University in the Sacramento area. But now she has her own school because she's amazing.

Andrew Pudewa: Start your own college.

Julie Walker: She started her own college. But this is *Outsourced* and basically a wake up call to parents about owning and not abdicating your responsibilities as educators. And I think what we talk about a lot is parents have a responsibility to educate their children, and that doesn't necessarily mean homeschooling for everyone. That means taking responsibility for educating your children. So, but anyway, we've had Dr. Lisa Dunn on before.

And then of course...

Andrew Pudewa: Well, we can't, we can't talk about podcasts without...

Julie Walker: Sarah Mackenzie. Right. And this is an advanced reading copy, not for sale. So this was one of the very,

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, The Read-Aloud Family

Julie Walker: I got one of the very first one. Yes. And I'm going to read the inscription in here. She wrote it to me, "For Julie who gave me the first Yes, I really needed. All my love, Sarah." And you know what, that first yes was? It was: "Can we get Andrew Pudewa on my podcast?"

Andrew Pudewa: And then we said yes, and then she said, "Ooh, I better figure out how to do a podcast."

Julie Walker: She hadn't actually done a podcast yet, and so you were her very first guest. And now the Read Aloud Revival is huge and we constantly refer people to that.

And then here's another good friend of mine, Monica Swanson. She's a fellow boy mom. She's got four sons and I believe her oldest is recently engaged, which is so... Talk about, what do you call most eligible bachelors. Well, her youngest son is still in high school, so probably not eligible yet...

Andrew Pudewa: Well, maybe she can join the “looks way too young to actually be a grandparent” club.

Julie Walker: could be. Yeah, so this is, this is just a collection of, and like I said, these are not necessarily books that...there's lots of great books that these authors have written.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah, and these are just a smattering. I also was reminded of Dr. Carol Swain.

Julie Walker: Oh yes.

Andrew Pudewa: And her story, so amazing. Growing up in absolute poverty and then working her way as a single mom and going up and then ending up with a PhD and teaching at.

Julie Walker: Oh, I knew you were going to ask that...

Andrew Pudewa: One, one of

Julie Walker: Someone look up Carol Swain..

Andrew Pudewa: Ivy League ... But, uh, just another voice of common sense in the world of education.

Julie Walker: Yes, so I thought it would be kind of interesting for you to know what our favorite episodes are in our customer service team. And one of the things that our customer service team does is help people understand what it is we do by giving them links to our podcast.

And so I have a little list here of their favorite episodes that they give out. They give out “The Benefits of Mastery Education.”

Andrew Pudewa: How are people going to find all these past episodes, which they are now inspired to put in their queue?

Julie Walker: This is true. Well, of course we have show notes. So this, I will tell those of you that are here now what episode it is, and you are great Googlers and huge fans and so you'll find this. But Episode 264 is the benefits of mastery education, the Profound Power of Poetry.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh,

Julie Walker: I love just the title of that.

Andrew Pudewa: I do too, but I don't remember.

Julie Walker: Episode 299. And then Andrew, we had you talking about your book of the year and we had to split that into three episodes and we called that “A Bookish Discussion,” and that's episode 283, 284, 285. And you ended, we ended with, I think, the latest book of the year, which is *How to Think Like Shakespeare*.

Andrew Pudewa: Okay. That was 2024. Yeah.

Julie Walker: Yeah, so we haven't done one

Andrew Pudewa: no, well, I don't have to announce the book until the end of the year.

Julie Walker: That's right. Right. You've got a few more weeks to figure that out. So “Different Stages of Learning.” I thought that was kind of an interesting one.

“Culture, Curriculum, and Care”

Andrew Pudewa: That was based off a conference talk that I did.

Julie Walker: We do that.

Andrew Pudewa: I should resurrect that one.

Julie Walker: That's a good one. “Talking about the Intangibles”--so it was a nod to Mrs. Ingham, which is great.

Andrew Pudewa: What do you learn that's beneath the surface of what you're learning?

Julie Walker: Exactly, exactly. Case in point that immediately comes to mind is our checklist. Check what you do, do what you check, be accountable and be responsible.

So “Impacting English Language Learners with Structure and Style.” So we have a lot of great success stories from people who learned better English by learning the Structure and Style writing method. So that's great. Yep.

Then “Reaching the Reluctant Writer” believe it or not, part one and part two. But part two actually got more listens in part one. Yeah. Isn't that interesting.

Andrew Pudewa: Okay. That's a surprise

Julie Walker: Product versus, sorry, “Process versus Product.” And this constantly comes up because people don't understand who we are, what we do, and why we require this type of writing. And it's all about the process.

“Writing Across the Curriculum.” That's something that we're definitely focusing on more and more, especially with our relationship now with Hillsdale College.

And the very best was “The Mighty Pen: Teaching Students to Change the World through Language.”

Andrew Pudewa: Oh my, I don't think I created that title.

Julie Walker: At what point does content matter more than Structure and Style?

Andrew Pudewa: Ah, Webster's old comment.

Julie Walker: Yes, yes. I'm just reading the description. “Be inspired as Andrew shares the power that language holds, and learn the significance of expanding your students' capacity to think, which will enable them to use language that will allow good ideas to be presented well.”

Andrew Pudewa: Okay.

Julie Walker: So that,

Andrew Pudewa: That's what we do.

Julie Walker: And then another wizard in our company, Cameron. I said, Hey Cameron, what are the most popular podcasts?

Andrew Pudewa: Oh. Oh, in terms of listen list, numbers, number of

Julie Walker: actual factual type.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, okay. That's interesting.

Julie Walker: There are two ways to sort this. One is by unique views and the other is how many hits it got. So some people went back to listen to it over and over

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. Or listen to the first part and then run out of time and come back.

Julie Walker: So as far as unique listens, Optimizing Instruction for Boys and Girls, so that's that Leonard Sax one; that's episode 311.

And then Speaking of Spelling.

And then an interview with Sam Sorbo. Do you remember we had Sam Sorbo?

Andrew Pudewa: I do, yes.

Julie Walker: And that was a homeschool 101 podcast and we started doing...

Mrs. Brown says, it looks like I'll be buying more books today. Mrs. Brown, stop. Don't buy more books. Just enjoy the ride. But if you wanted one, actually, the one that I have, Mrs. Brown, the one that I love, that Amber Johnston O'Neill wrote, not the anthology, but *Soul Source*, write down, *Soul Source*, that is like a list of books to read.

Andrew Pudewa: You're going to buy a book that gives you a list of books to read?

Julie Walker: Yeah, you're right. The irony of that, nevermind. Don't get that one.

Andrew Pudewa: All right.

Julie Walker: Okay, so moving on. Here's the interesting, oh, and I'm going to go to the next page. The next page is how many unique, how many hits, number one, most amount of hits. It was when we talked about Twelve Days of Christmas Giving,

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, well.

Julie Walker: so that had 75, almost 76,000 hits.

Andrew Pudewa: Okay.

Julie Walker: So sometimes I sit in our little podcast studio and just, it's just you and me and I start thinking...

Andrew Pudewa: Does anybody care?

Will anybody actually listen to this?

Julie Walker: That's what you think. I think, oh my word, Andrew. There are thousands of people who listen to me.

Andrew Pudewa: oh, yeah.

Julie Walker: I'm a little intimidated by that. So, okay. And then I have another list.

This is just kind of general comments of popular episodes.

When Technology in Education Makes Sense. One of our topics that I want to get to, maybe this part or maybe the next part, is educational trends. Where have we come from? Where do you see us going? And that's really going to be you. But When Technology in Education Makes Sense, and this was episode 261, so this was years ago, and we were talking about what about all this technology in classroom and what really is hurtful and what is helpful.

So "Alternate Learning with Jennifer Mauser" another, she's not really a guest. She works for us. We love Jennifer and she has such wisdom and is able to help so many people with their special needs kiddos, both in the classroom and one-on-one in the homeschool environment. So Ask Andrew Anything episodes are popular.

We had Pamela White on, she is the author of.

Andrew Pudewa: Fix it.

Julie Walker: *Fix It! Grammar*. That was episode "The Grammar of Thinking."

And then we had several literature selection type podcasts, which people love books. In fact, the last couple episodes we did a part one and we didn't know it was going to be part one until we got some response that we needed to do a part two. So we did a part one, part two on "What's in your Audible Playlist?" And people enjoyed that one too. So.

Andrew Pudewa: What are you listening to right now?

Julie Walker: What am I listening to right now? We just finished *Robinson Crusoe*.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh really? Yeah, Okay.

Julie Walker: and it's one of those my husband picks and I pick and he actually picked *A Tale of Two Cities* and I told him, alright honey, this is not an easy read

Andrew Pudewa: And this is while you're driving? Mostly.

Julie Walker: Before we go to bed at night or something, we'll listen to a chapter. I'll usually fall asleep listening to it just because I'm exhausted.

Andrew Pudewa: Especially miserable.

Julie Walker: Yeah. So that's, we just finished *Robinson Crusoe*, so I think it's now my turn to pick, whoa, I should say *A Tale of Two Cities*. We got three chapters and that's all the further we

Andrew Pudewa: okay,

Julie Walker: I made him commit.

Andrew Pudewa: What are you going to pick?

Julie Walker: I haven't decided

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, okay.

Julie Walker: But you had mentioned several books when we were talking about, one of our dear friends who's retired recently, Jean Nichols, and you were talking about some books that she had recommended that you love. So what are some of those?

Andrew Pudewa: *Parnassus on Wheels*. Then same author. It's kind of a sequel, is *The Haunted Bookshop*, Christopher Morley, where he wrote back in the early 1900s, and it's set in that period when very, very interesting stuff. Delightful. Not heavy, nothing weighty. I am currently almost finished with *Magister Ludi* or the *Glass Speed Game* by Herman Hesse. I remember reading this as a teenager and just being completely enamored. It's a utopian novel.

Julie Walker: Oh, of course. Utopian or dystopian?

Andrew Pudewa: no, utopian. It's after the century of wars. And there's a province of Castalia, that is dedicated to the higher intellectual pursuits, kind of like an ideal classical education province. So it's, it's the fictional biography of, of a young man who then becomes the kind of the, the magister of the glass speed game, which is the highest form of the integration of the intellectual disciplines.

Julie Walker: And you were enamored by this as a teenager?

Andrew Pudewa: I was, yeah. Well, maybe early twenties. Somewhere in that zone. But, um, it's interesting because it's like you think from the future back to the present.

And I find that just very stimulating and I don't know if it's it, if it's a moral book, but it does talk about music in the most profound way that any book. So anyway, that's it. Move on. You've got a lot on your list.

Julie Walker: I do have a lot on my list, and we're actually, I'm just kind of wrapping up this part. We have a rating on our podcast, Apple's Podcast of 4.9

Andrew Pudewa: Well, I want to hear the one.

Julie Walker: Oh, I've got, oh, I've got it. I've got it. Because that's what you, that's what

Andrew Pudewa: That's what's interesting.

Julie Walker: Right. Okay. So I'll read some of these, and I love the names.

Andrew Pudewa: These are the low rating?

Julie Walker: No, this is the high one.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, I want to hear the people who put the lowest.

Julie Walker: I only have one. Here's one that was posted in August, so pretty recent, and the moniker is writing is my passion.

Andrew Pudewa: Okay.

Julie Walker: “As a current IEW student, this podcast is so inspiring. After listening to the latest episode or replaying a favorite, I immediately use the knowledge I have acquired and use it for my assignment. Thank you for inspiring me to become a more avid writer.”

We'll pay you later.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah, that. gives you hope for the world.

Julie Walker: Absolutely.

Andrew Pudewa: Can we hire this person?

Julie Walker: I know, right? Come, come. Yeah. I'll give you our email address. Alright. I'm going to give you the one star before we get kicked off here. The one star. Ready? This made me laugh.

And you know what? We welcome all stars, right? Boxed. And the moniker is non culture. So that's the person who wrote this is non-culture. Here it is “a pair of judgmental, unsympathetic psychos.”

Andrew Pudewa: Wow.

Julie Walker: I know. Painful, right?

Andrew Pudewa: It's almost so bad. It feels good.

Julie Walker: know. I know. And so I'll just end with a good one. “Your show has been so encouraging and helpful for our family. We're using your writing courses for our three kids and are very satisfied with their progress. Thank you. And please keep it up.”

And on that happy note, we're just going to take a quick break.

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.