

Podcast 500: What Are We Really Doing Here? Part 3

Episode Transcript

Andrew Pudewa: It's more than just a business. It really does affect people in a deeper, meaningful way, and that's the thing I am just most grateful for.

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: Okay. This is episode 500 part C/3.

Andrew Pudewa: Yes, and excuse me if I'm slightly out of breath. I went to do some pushups in between because you know I'm on this add-one-every-day. And it's pretty late in the year.

Julie Walker: Okay. Oh my word.

Andrew Pudewa: If I don't stretch out these pushups throughout the day, they all pile up in the evening. And that's super depressing.

Julie Walker: Andrew. I love, okay, this is learn something new every day. I'm thinking, yeah, I could do one pushup in January, on January 1st,

Andrew Pudewa: No.

Julie Walker: there's no possible way I'm going to get to December 31st, 365 in a row. But you spread it out throughout the day.

Andrew Pudewa: Yes. So usually

Julie Walker: Is that legal? Are you cheating? no,

Andrew Pudewa: no, no, no, no. I'm nobody, no, I'll do sets of, of 30 plus or minus sometimes and stretch them out and then just keep track with the calculator on my phone, how many I got. I can't remember it, but it's confusing. But no, I did this a few years ago and I made it 365 pushups on December 31st.

Julie Walker: amazing. That's

Andrew Pudewa: And then I did something else for a couple years. Now I'm back on it.

Julie Walker: Good job. So we are giving away 500 Portable Walls in honor of our 500th episode. So if you use the coupon code E 500 dash PWSS [E500-PWSS], you can receive a portable wall. Now, of course, you have to go to IEW.com/PWSS in order to find the product.

Add the product to your shopping cart and then you get, you get it free when you put in that code, you have to pay for shipping unless you have a shipping code too, which if you are a premium member, you receive a free shipping code as a part of being a

Andrew Pudewa: And then you could buy all the other stuff that you wanted to buy.

Julie Walker: It's true. And a Premium Member, I'm just going to do a little plug for Premium Membership. Of course I am. They get access to the Checklist Generator, which is a phenomenal tool. They have access to.

Andrew Pudewa: I use it every week, by the way,

Julie Walker: Do you really? That's amazing. Yep. Yep. And this is one of those, when you own a business, you can say, do this because I need it. And that's exactly what we did. And people have said, can I get the Checklist Generator without being a Premium Member? Uh, no. But the good news is, is you get it if you're a premium member, yay.

Andrew Pudewa: Cheaper than a cup of coffee a day.

Julie Walker: Yes, this is true. That is very

Andrew Pudewa: Actually, it's cheaper than a month of coffees.

Julie Walker: Absolutely. Yeah, it's totally worth it. Yeah. Checklist Generator plus all kinds of other goodies that we put in the Premium Membership, including the *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style* video course, and something that we call TTAP. TTAP stands for Teaching Tips with Andrew Pudewa. And so this is where

Andrew Pudewa: It's actually cheaper than 10 coffees.

Julie Walker: He's doing mental math. See previous episode about mental math. So anyway. Get the *Portable Wall for Structure and Style*. First 500 users, the 501st user, I'm sorry, but this is good now until we run out of coupon uses.

Andrew Pudewa: So you mentioned that, Danielle.

Julie Walker: Oh, yes. Oh yes,

Andrew Pudewa: our Yes. Podcast? Yes. Danielle, with the use of probably ai.

Julie Walker: yeah, so we have a bot that creates a transcript that we, because we are the Institute for Excellence in Writing, don't just post what,

Andrew Pudewa: Thank the heavens. I haven't,

Julie Walker: right. We have someone who is skilled at grammar and is a first class editor, and this is Danielle. And so we were laughing about some of the, the things that the bots come up with and one of the things was. Destruction and style in writing is one of My favorite AI hiccups, is what Danielle

Andrew Pudewa: I think that could be the title, destruction and Style in writing of a, of a blog post at some point, you know?

Julie Walker: Danielle, make a note of that. She's also on the blog team, so Danielle wears many hats for us. She's also an online instructor, so I could actually give a plug for our online instructors, and they do such a great job of teaching those students to help them go through the *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style* and the *Fix It! Grammar*.

We'll talk about that in just a minute. Crystal, you have all the best questions,

Andrew Pudewa: I don't even know if this

Julie Walker: I don't know if it's a question I think it's just a comment. So I'm going to read it. "I sent an email stating that our first grade daughter..." oh, this probably went into, we collect stories like this, crystal. So if you sent us this, I promise we've collected this. "Our daughter was so excited to start Structure and Style (She's a first grader) after watching her older brother go through it. When I stated that she had to wait two more years, she was highly upset. She told many people that I was keeping her from writing great works. I ordered *Bible Heroes* for her once I realized how much she was drawn to writing, you had once noted my email on a podcast.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, okay. Well that is a nice little

Julie Walker: She has exploded in her abilities in writing. When I met Mr. Andrew in Orlando at FPEA, I'm imagining, while waiting for a car ride to the airport, I mentioned to him how much she loves it.

I also was going to start the *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style* teacher training course. Good job, crystal. I've thoroughly enjoyed learning alongside our children. Soon our son starts two A and our daughter will do people in places in our community. I've been so thankful for all of your encouragement in person and online, and we can adjourn the Mutual Admiration Society

Andrew Pudewa: We are deeply appreciative of Crystal and everyone who takes the time to send it. Alright. What's on your list? We have to get to business here.

Julie Walker: Well, here's the business, and that is the most frequently asked question we get here at IEW or online, through our social media channels or even on this podcast. And that is what do I buy? And in some ways, this podcast is about a bunch of topics that we talk about. Sometimes it's about health and fitness.

We did a cooking show one time, not actually a cooking show, but I would love to actually do a cooking show. Do you know what I'm doing after this?

Andrew Pudewa: You're going to go cook a month's worth of food in one day.

Julie Walker: I am for a friend who's having a baby. And so she's coming over, and we are knocking out 17 recipes and probably multiple, and I literally have in my crockpot spaghetti sauce, my own bolognese, that I make beef stew and pot roast.

Andrew Pudewa: You, you're like a one woman meal train for the newborn family.

Julie Walker: Just call me Meal Train. Yes. So anyway, I would love to do a cooking show sometime and plug for my, our friend, an app developer, Joseph.

Andrew Pudewa: yes.

Julie Walker: Oh yeah. He has developed an app called Chef Jojo. Chef Jo Jo.

Andrew Pudewa: JOJO, yeah.

Julie Walker: And it's a way to collect all your recipes in an app and it's so fun.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. And then it also gives you shopping lists and things

Julie Walker: It does. Yeah, it's very handy. I love it. I love it. So Chef Jojo use that app. I'm using it today. As it's collecting, you can actually put in your own recipes. Like my son has a secret taco seasoning. Like it's his own personal recipe that he, he has perfected. It is in my Chef jojo app because I was able to copy and paste it and put it in there, but I could also share it, but I'm not

Andrew Pudewa: No, it's a secret. Yeah.

Julie Walker: recipe. So unless your last name is Walker, you can't have it.

But, alright. Here's the frequently asked question, which is, what do I buy? And so I'm just going to kind of go through three options. I call our *Fix It! Grammar*, kind of joking, our gateway drug. This is not our teaching, this is not how to write. This is a grammar curriculum, and what I'm holding here is a level one nose tree student book and teacher book.

The teacher book, of course, has the answer as well as a grammar glossary. Some great hints and tricks. So this is one of our best selling products. What I love about *Fix It! Grammar* is it takes 10 to 15 minutes a day. Kids love it because it's like a game for them.

Andrew Pudewa: I don't guarantee they love it, but I would almost guarantee it's less painful than other grammar.

Julie Walker: I'm going to show you one day of grammar lesson, if you haven't seen these yet. This is one day, this is week 17, day one. The students have to find the vocabulary and

define it: *wandered*, this is not too hard to define that word, but in the context of that sentence, what does wandered mean? And then they have to mark the parts of speech. Here's your little checklist. They have to fix it. There are three embedded errors in this one sentence, and then they rewrite it and that's it. That's one page of grammar. It's super easy. And you're thinking, that is so easy. How could they possibly learn grammar? Enough grammar to actually help their writing? Well, the fact that we're teaching grammar in the context of editing helps 'em find their own errors. Andrew, I don't even know if you know that we did this, but we added a page on the back. This right here is for those moms who like to keep artifacts of their students' work. And so you take this to Office Max or office, Staples or something like that, and you have them cut it.

Andrew Pudewa: You have the re-handwritten version,

Julie Walker: page by page. all the rewrite it, and you'd have to take out a few of the pages, but then you have a little artifact of the nose tree edited by, and then you put your student's name and then they can keep that. Isn't that great? So it's read it, learn it, fix it, rewrite it, and now keep it. So that's easy.

That's a pretty affordable entry level to our products. If you want a good grammar program, we love that. We also have our Writing Across the Curriculum resources. I have this one in particular. This is probably about a third grade, third or fourth grade level. We wrote this book in collaboration with Hillsdale College, so Hillsdale College, K 12schools.

Andrew Pudewa: So we, we set it up so that the assignments as you go through the seven units over the course of the year,

Julie Walker: This one is seven. The older ones have nine or more.

Andrew Pudewa: would correspond with things from their history or their science or their culture, music and art, things like that. So that you were trying to be writing about the things you're learning about and learning more about the things that you're writing about. And so it's been a great partnership, and that's how we put the source texts together.

Julie Walker: So one of the source texts in this one *Adventures in Writing* is on the Mayflower, and that's our unit six. And I mentioned that one because I was involved in writing that one because you know what? My ancestors came over

Andrew Pudewa: Well, and you learned a few interesting things about the Mayflower that you didn't previously know, huh?

Julie Walker: It was. If you were you, Andrew, you're over six feet tall, you would not be able to stand up straight where the, where the pilgrims were in,

Andrew Pudewa: in the boat. I, yeah,

Julie Walker: just very small, small area and it's actually pretty remarkable that no one died. No one, actually, there was one person that got swept overboard, but that was the only fatality on that whole crossing,

Andrew Pudewa: Did you put that in the source text?

Julie Walker: I believe so. Editors, sometimes they decide what can fit, right. They give me a length.

And then I brought the granddaddy, the big fat one, and this is our *Structure and Style for Students: Year one, Level B Premier* package. And this has in here our very popular *Structure and Style for Students* course along with the *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style* teacher training course.

Andrew Pudewa: Along with.

Julie Walker: Along with a *Portable Wall*...Along with *A Word Write Now*. And along with in this book, it has the third level of *Fix It! Grammar*.

Andrew Pudewa: That's why the box is so big.

Julie Walker: That's why the box is so big. Exactly. But this one is video based, so if you want your students to watch Mr. Pudewa and all of his antics teach writing. Then that's what you want is the *Structure and Style for Students* video course. If you can do this without video courses and you know our method, then you can do one of our Writing Across the Curriculum resources. Or if you just want to get started, *Fix It! Grammar* is a nice, easy way to get started with who we are and what we do.

Andrew Pudewa: So. We recorded on this whole video series, three classes on Tuesdays for 24 weeks. For two years. How many classes is that?

Julie Walker: 144.

Andrew Pudewa: then we, we added 24 more on,

Julie Walker: Oh man. You're going to make me now do real math 168.

Andrew Pudewa: So we recorded 168 video classes in this room, and I had to tell a different joke for every single one of them.

Julie Walker: Sometimes multiple jokes. Yes. We were feeding him jokes

Andrew Pudewa: So I just, just have a warning for those of you who choose the video course for the kids, they are going to learn some jokes,

Julie Walker: A lot of corny jokes, but a lot of

Andrew Pudewa: a lot of good ones. So I always, you know how some people back to cooking use bread as a butter delivery mechanism.

Julie Walker: Yes, exactly. Yes.

Andrew Pudewa: I view writing classes as a joke delivery mechanism.

Julie Walker: There you go. There you go. You also say that food is a Tabasco delivery method.

Andrew Pudewa: That's, that's partly true as well. butter and Tabasco.

Julie Walker: So that is our number one most frequently asked question is, what do I buy? And it's not too hard to figure that out, but that's basically it.

Andrew Pudewa: We fortunately have a team of people who are very good at helping everyone navigate the choices.

Julie Walker: Yes, exactly.

Andrew Pudewa: Yes, exactly. And it's always, if there were fewer choices, there'd be fewer questions. But, there's so many different situations and circumstances that we want to, and we don't put grade level on anything. Right? We have Fix It! level 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. That's not corresponding with any grade. We have level A, level B, level C, because there are older kids who need more basic and there are little kids who can speed through and everybody in between. So

Julie Walker: But we do have recommendations like if you're in third grade, this would be a really good book to start with.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, I would say third grade reading level.

Julie Walker: Yep. yep. And the reason why we do that is because sometimes it's hard for people to translate grade, grade, grade, grade, and now no grade. So we just kind of give them suggestions.

Andrew Pudewa: But I would always say reading level, so it would be perfectly okay to have an older student.

Julie Walker: Oh yeah, absolutely.

Andrew Pudewa: 10 or 11 using

Julie Walker: Or even in high

Andrew Pudewa: that? book? Yeah. Yeah. Okay.

Julie Walker: Very good. Yeah, we're not, we're not tied to grades. Yep. Look, see, "We love *Fix It! Grammar*, a tear free, painless way to learn. Yes. So that's good. And Holly's kids love

your jokes. Okay. Another question that we get a lot. Oh, oh, you were talking about, I, I need to be sure I mentioned this.

We have another team, Andrew that helps with questions. because I know you were thinking about our quote in-house customer service team, which some of them in-house are in Oklahoma, but some of them are also in North Carolina, Florida, Colorado, Michigan, across the United States. Georgia. Yes, of course. But we have another team and that's our Ambassadors.

So, and we have some, a lot of people just talk about us on YouTube, on TikTok, on various social media channels and have some really positive things to say about what it is and basically are answering the questions kind of in a non-biased way.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, yeah, “I'm just a mom who used this and here's my experience.” Yeah, and again, kind of goes back to that authenticity we were talking about. That's where the marketing power is when you really believe a person's experience, then so.

Julie Walker: No smarmy salesman here. Yeah. We just really believe in what we do and really want to help parents and teachers and teachers. Andrew, I think we should just take a little moment here to talk about our school's department. So when I first started with IEW more than 18 years ago, homeschoolers, far and above were buying our products, but you were even at that time going and doing professional development for schools and you said, Julie, help me get into schools.

And so now here we are, 17, 18 years later, and about a third of everything we sell is sold to full-time schools, which is kind of crazy.

Andrew Pudewa: And it's just so good when I get to go out to some of these schools and meet the teachers who are so enthusiastic, “wow, this is, this is the best way I've ever seen to teach. And the kids love it and it's so good for me and easy.” And then you meet some of the parents and they'll say, well, I've never seen my kid so interested in this before. So it's more than just a business, it really does affect people in a deeper, meaningful way. And that's the thing I am just most grateful for.

Julie Walker: Yep. Indeed, indeed. So question that we sometimes get from skeptics: Is IEW formulaic?

Andrew Pudewa: Yes, but is formulaic bad? Most things have a form to them. If there's no form, there's no thing. Scott Newstok talks about constraint as a requirement for creativity. If you don't have a timer, you don't have a football game. If you don't have a court, you don't play tennis. If you don't have a frame, there's no picture. And the value of conforming to something, and he uses the example of a sonnet, which is the most highly constrained form of poetry.

Well, what does it take to write a sonnet? Mastery. It takes mastery to do that thing and do it well. And that's something that we are seeing develop in our students. The thing, however, it, the fear they have is that, well, that would somehow inhibit or stifle the creativity of the child, the uniqueness, the individuality. No, it's supercharges the creativity, it supercharges their ability to explore and expand, right? Expand what they're capable of. So the question is a great, I said great question. The question is a very helpful question because it allows us to teach a basic principle that's kind of been lost in our modern world, and, and we've thought of writing as being kind of like art, like just express yourself, whatever you do is beautiful and good. And well, there's some truth to that, but a trained person can do things that are more beautiful and more good, so that's why I think we stand on firm and solid ground in answer to that question.

Julie Walker: Great. All right. We're going to end with a question from the Mayat family. All right. My kids love Andrew Pudewa's jokes. They look forward to them each lesson they watch. My kids would love to know what Andrew's favorite joke is,

Andrew Pudewa: Well, that's like asking who's your favorite child, right? Each joke is a particular joke in a particular way for a particular audience. Okay? It's actually rhetoric training. Because audience is the first rule of rhetoric and you have to choose the right and say it in just the right way for the right audience. So since you are my audience,

Julie Walker: Here we are.

Andrew Pudewa: I will tell this as my favorite joke which you hate.

Julie Walker: Oh my word. Are you going to tell this one?

Andrew Pudewa: Yes. Why did the egg cross the road? It had the inclination.

Julie Walker: And every time I groan and I shake my head and he, and then he explains it to me because as if I don't understand, I get it. Inclination means I'm so inclined to cross the road. Or it can roll because it's an incline. Yeah. I got it the first time. Even before you,

Andrew Pudewa: It's a vocabulary joke.

Julie Walker: even before you explained it to me, and I still groaned because it's a total...

Oh, you laughed. Okay. That's okay. You can laugh. Alright. I laugh at most of his jokes too, so. Well, we covered a lot. I don't know that we got to everything. I will let you know that in 2026, let me let me back up. In 2024, we spent the whole year hitting occasionally, frequently on this idea of learning differences. We talked about dyslexia, dysgraphia. We had some incredible guests on real experts in the field, and just some great stories. That was 2024. In 2025, which is right now we really capitalized on this idea of thinking how to think. And we used every month, in fact our March month was the grammar of thinking and what do you need in terms of grammar to be able to think? And the most recent podcast was about

vocabulary and how vocabulary, having vocabulary, helps you think, like the word inclination. Do you see what I did there? Drew it in. Okay, 2027, we are going to kind.

Andrew Pudewa: 2026 you mean?

Julie Walker: I am already thinking 2027. I don't know what we're doing in 2027. I'm sure we'll come up with something before then, but 2026 is kind of back to the basics. Laying a foundation, what is good teaching and what is good writing?

Andrew Pudewa: What is listening?

Julie Walker: and what is

Andrew Pudewa: What is speaking

Julie Walker: what is reading and what is writing, and ultimately what is thinking?

Andrew Pudewa: and what are we really doing?

Julie Walker: What are we really doing here? It's often a question that we ask ourselves. Thank you so much for all of you that joined us live. Thank you for all of our dear, dear listeners. And we just look forward to, I don't know if we'll have 500 more, but I'm sure that we'll have more than 500.

Andrew Pudewa: I took me a minute to

Julie Walker: Pick up what I was putting down.

Andrew Pudewa: why not five hundred anymore? It only takes 10

Julie Walker: It only takes 10 years. Thank you everyone. God bless 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.