

Podcast 510: Ask Andrew Anything

Episode Transcript

Andrew Pudewa: We depend on, I might use the word skill. I might use the word ability. I might use the word common sense of the teacher. Yes. Right. That's why we focus on teacher training. Then you'll know how to help the student.

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, ladies and gentlemen. Whew. We survived episode 500.

Andrew Pudewa: That was a big deal.

Julie Walker: It was a big deal. I am quite sure, Andrew, that when you sat down that first day, you weren't as nervous as I was when we recorded our very first podcast, you were thinking, oh, sure, we'll be around for 500 episodes.

Andrew Pudewa: It is rare for me to get nervous, but I never would've imagined 500 episodes.

Julie Walker: And here we are at 510. It seems like just yesterday.

Andrew Pudewa: Time moves faster the older you get.

Julie Walker: So, of course we're recording this a few weeks ahead of time just because of scheduling and holidays and everything that's coming down. But here we are. It's actually that we're recording this on October 29th, which is my sister's birthday.

Andrew Pudewa: to which sister?

Julie Walker: Janelle, happy birthday, Janelle. We did a happy birthday to her last year.

Andrew Pudewa: She works for us, right?

Julie Walker: No, that would be my other sister, Janine.

Hey, parents out there don't do this.

Andrew Pudewa: Janine, Janelle, you'll just be confused forever.

Julie Walker: Do you know who I am?

Andrew Pudewa: Julianne?

Julie Walker: Ju. I am Julianne, you know that, but people call me Janulie

Andrew Pudewa: Oh,

Julie Walker: because you have to get the

jet in there. Yeah, no, it's just a mistake, but. Last year at this time we did a podcast just for her on homeschooling preschoolers because at the time she was homeschooling her daughter.

It was a very good podcast. I thought it was fun to be able to share something personal to me, but yet relevant to all of you. So hopefully the questions that we have today are personal to the few people that ask the questions. And I don't have names again. We'll have to fix that. Sorry. . Relevant to

Andrew Pudewa: It's okay because you wouldn't use the whole name and anybody you asked the question might remember having asked it.

Julie Walker: Yes, I hope so.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. Anyway, I do have a couple pieces of correspondence. Can we start with that?

Julie Walker: Oh, that'd be delightful.

Andrew Pudewa: So this is kind of typical, but it came just a couple days ago. LinkedIn. People want to connect with me on LinkedIn and if it's a person working at a school, I usually write back. Thanks for connecting. Do you use IEW in your school? If you do, please let it me know how we can serve you better. If not, can we send you some information?

So this one came back. "Hello. We have used IEW for many years. It's often reported back from students who left our school and are navigating college writing, that they feel well beyond prepared when compared to their peers. A testament to an excellent writing curriculum. Eek. I feel the pressure to check for band words as I write this."

Julie Walker: People don't like writing to you for that reason, Andrew

Andrew Pudewa: Well, I people do. They say, oh, it makes me nervous to write to you. I write back and say, it makes me nervous to be me.

Julie Walker: Yes, yes.

Andrew Pudewa: Anyway, that's kind of something we hear often, but it's, it's always good to hear.

Julie Walker: yeah. Especially from a school.

Andrew Pudewa: This is a cute letter, a little longer.

Julie Walker: Okay.

Andrew Pudewa: Do we have time?

Julie Walker: Yeah, of course we have time.

Andrew Pudewa: All right.

Dearest IEW Teacher, As I sat for hours writing, I marveled over how much my speech and writing has improved, and not just mine, but my siblings too. My whole family has benefited from your writing class. We love your class and cannot wait to continue learning. Hopefully, I can meet you face to face someday. I want to learn more about you and maybe be just like you someday.

[No, I don't recommend that. Be like yourself.] I thoroughly enjoy each new video, minus the blank papers and the long hours of puzzling over the right word. When I get too engrossed in IEW, my mama has to pull me away from it because I need to tend to my many other responsibilities such as chores, laundry, et cetera. IEW is definitely my favorite school subject, which is great because I have no choice but to do it.

I like this kid.

Julie Walker: good character. Yeah. You, when you get to be a grownup, you come work for us with that attitude.

Andrew Pudewa: For a bit about me. I am 11 years. In sixth grade I have a family of eight. Hopefully God blesses my parents with even more children.

Julie Walker: I

Andrew Pudewa: When we are not at church, a library or a friend's house, we are at home learning life lessons and inventing new games. We are homeschooled, which is perfect for my family and I would not have it any other way. We live in western Ohio on five and a half acres with a goose, chickens, dogs, and one cat. All of our other cats ran to the neighbors because there they actually get fed. It is way too expensive to feed over ten cats. These are a few things about me.

I'm experiencing this thing, same thing now. Cats, they just multiply like rabbits. No, they multiply like cats and then they hang around. So the only trick is don't feed them.

Julie Walker: If you don't feed them, then they become mousers, which isn't that what you want?

Andrew Pudewa: I'm suggesting we don't. I absolutely love your class. You make the hardest problem so simple. In addition to learning so much, it is completely changing our style and technique of writing. Even when I'm writing in my diary, I use prepositions, adverbs, and adjectives, which I rarely ever did before taking your class. Actually, it is

improving our speech as well. I'm on Level B year one. My younger siblings are on level A year one. We love the jokes you tell before each class, and we pass them on to our grandparents. Your jokes have probably been retold around 50 times because I have to remind my grandparents of vital details that they might have missed.

Julie Walker: Oh,

Andrew Pudewa: Get the jokes right. I appreciate everything you're doing for us. Your class is so enjoyable. My whole family is benefiting from your amazing writing class. You make it so fun. Undeniably doing IEW together teaches us patience, which some people in my family have a tough time with. That includes me. Also, your class is also teaching us teamwork. My younger siblings have to share a binder. Unlike any writing teacher that I have ever had, you do not just teach us writing, but you teach us about history, animals, and places while having us write about it too. I could never put pen to paper for how much you have inspired me and continually encourage my writing abilities. Your class is benefiting my entire family because we are learning more about the things that go into authoring a wonderful paper.

May God bless you for positively changing the lives of all your students. Although I might not become an author or a teacher, I look up to you and enjoy learning new things. I love your class, and it is benefiting my whole family in countless ways. If I may share another thing about me, it is that I do not enjoy boring classes, which if I am honest, no one does. Begrudgingly, some of my school is just that, except for yours, the most significant thing.

Notice that in her conclusion. The most significant thing about IEW is that it's not boring because of the jokes, funny comments and ... you,

Julie Walker: Aw.

Andrew Pudewa: I would appreciate it if you wrote back. I will always think of you as my quote, dearest, IEW teacher, which also then follows the title, final sentence rule.

Your friend Amelia.

Julie Walker: Aw.

Andrew Pudewa: Anyway. Those are the ones you, I really have to write back.

Julie Walker: Yeah. Yeah, you do. Yeah, you do.

Andrew Pudewa: Alright, well, what have you got for us today?

Julie Walker: Well, Amelia said something that I wanted to just capitalize on a little bit, just tiny bit. This idea of writing about various topics, and it's something that we've done for years and we have decided here at IEW that we are going to call it what it is, and that is Writing Across the Curriculum because writing is learning and writing isn't just relegated to the English department. So we do that intentionally. We've done it for years. So kind of changing that category of theme-based more to a Writing Across the Curriculum.

Andrew Pudewa: I don't mind it, but I will tell you the acronym WAC

Julie Walker: Yeah.

Andrew Pudewa: I, I don't like that part of it.

Julie Walker: Well, if you would spelled it W-H-A-C-K, then it would be whack.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah, but then it would be writing haphazardly about curriculum and knowledge.

Julie Walker: Oh, that would be good. Let's do that one.

Andrew Pudewa: No, no. Anyway, I'll get used to the WAC

Julie Walker: You will. It's, it's kind of a term that has been around for

Andrew Pudewa: Women Army Corps,

Julie Walker: decades, and it's interesting. I did a talk on Writing Across the Curriculum at the homeschool convention in Southern California, and in preparation for that talk, I did a little research on how this came about, and it was right about the time that Dr. Webster started this method. So

Andrew Pudewa: It came into the schools of education and the thought about teaching. Okay. Well, you'll see in our new catalog, Writing Across the Curriculum has replaced theme-based.

Julie Walker: And it's okay. We're dual language. We'll understand what you're talking about no matter what you're talking about. Okay. Question number one, does IEW have mnemonics for writing? Like the OREO or RACES. So I'm going to tell you what Oreo stands for, which I love. I love that it's Oreo, but it does make me hungry for an Oreo

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, I would not eat Oreo if you paid me \$10. Poison my body, never.

Julie Walker: Opinion, reasons, evidence, opinion restated. That's Oreo.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, no, we don't use Oreo, but we do have the topic clincher, which is pretty similar. We're not pushing this idea of having an opinion really strongly in the beginning. Right, because we're working with retelling information, retelling stories, summarizing writing from pictures. So you could use that Oreo if you want to, probably with unit seven, maybe some unit eight, but it's downline and it would fit perfectly into our topic clincher because opinion.

Julie Walker: And then restate the opinion. Opinion. Restate it is what it. So RACES. Would you like to know what RACIST stands for?

Andrew Pudewa: As long as it's not racist, we could get in trouble for that.

Julie Walker: It's not

Andrew Pudewa: Okay.

Julie Walker: So race is restate. Restate the question, answer the claim, give evidence, and provide a summary.

Andrew Pudewa: That that sounds like a thing that someone came up with to help someone answer essay questions.

Restate the question. Well, someone's given you the question, so that sounds pretty specific. We don't really have that, but you could use that and it would fit in with what we do. The ones we teach at a higher level are the TRIAC which is topic, restriction, illustration, analysis and clincher or concluding, but we say clincher and then.

DCAS. DC at Sunrise DCAS Division. Comparison Analysis. Synthesis.

Julie Walker: Yeah, and it, we actually called it application

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, application. Okay, so division, comparison, application ,synthesis.

Julie Walker: significance.

Andrew Pudewa: Okay, so I'm, I don't even remember what I taught. Those are loosely based on the common, common topics,

Julie Walker: Yep.

Andrew Pudewa: division, comparison, application, and

Julie Walker: Significance. Yep. Page 39 in our *University-Ready Writing* course.

Andrew Pudewa: And, and those are not, that's not really a formula for a paragraph that's more tools for thinking.

Julie Walker: Tools for Thinking.

Right.

Andrew Pudewa: so the TRIAC would be a paragraph model. The division comparison application significance are tools for invention.

Julie Walker: So that you can make a keyword outline asking those questions. So you said Triac just now, you were saying topic clincher earlier.

So talk, say what the triac is.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, I did topic restriction, illustration, analysis, and then clincher.

Julie Walker: Yep. Very good. So, and then we have one, another one I, I'm reminded that we of course have the www.asia. We, we do some mnemonics, but there's so many out there. There's power, pre-write. Organize, write, edit, rewrite POWER.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, I've never heard

Julie Walker: You've never heard that one? Yeah. That was my pre IEW days when pre-write, that's called the key word outline for us.

But in our *Introduction to Public Speaking*, in preparation for doing an impromptu speech, we have this thing called divide, where you give the definition, create some image. Viewpoints, implications, decision emphasize. And sometimes these acronyms, these pneumonics can be a bit of a stretch, but if you have them, you memorize them, especially when you're doing an impromptu speech. You've got limited prep and you can't use your notes, so at least you're going, oh, what's the next thing I, what was I stand for? Oh, images. I'm supposed to tell a story about this random topic. I selected to do an impromptu speech, but,

Andrew Pudewa: Okay, well, so there are a few acronyms for people who like them.

Julie Walker: Kind of one more. I'm sure it might, might be from the same questioner. What about CER: claim, evidence, reasoning type of writing,

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah, you can use anything you want. It depends who you're teaching. That kind of thing sounds like it would fit better with older kids in certain contexts. So, what we do is we teach the units, they're applicable to all ages and all purposes, but you can add in to those units, things you want to specify, such as claims and evidence.

Julie Walker: And actually you are anticipating the part of the question that I didn't actually answer. What about doing that for a level A or level B student?

Andrew Pudewa: Well, I, you, you have to look at the students and understand them and think, would they understand the words I'm using? Would they understand the thing I'm trying to explain? Do I have a sample? Do I have an example? Could I write one of these with the students on a whiteboard? Because if you just say, here, do this, and they don't understand the words, you're not going to get a very good result and you might get frustrated students. So whatever acronyms you like, whatever formulas you want to use for constructing paragraphs to a particular purpose, just be sure that you give plenty of examples. Do it together. Make it real to them, not just conceptual.

Julie Walker: Okay. Question number three. Did you know we were on question number three already. What can I use for my grammar loving kid after she finishes *Fix It* level six?

Andrew Pudewa: Can you guess my answer to this?

Julie Walker: Of course I can.

Andrew Pudewa: Latin.

Julie Walker: Yes,

Andrew Pudewa: Just do Latin. If you love grammar, you'll love Latin. And if that, if you already did Latin, you can roll on into Greek. I've never done any Greek, but I know people who have done Greek.

Julie Walker: Yeah.

Andrew Pudewa: Greek. Yeah. I also think if you finished *Fix It* level six, you probably could take a graduate level course in grammar.

Julie Walker: Yeah,

Andrew Pudewa: You'd be familiar with most everything. Although it was funny. My wife, who has a degree in elementary ed, she had to take a grammar

Julie Walker: Graduate writing proficiency exam. I know exactly

Andrew Pudewa: Now here's the funny thing. She told me that in that particular course that vernacular, they called the bee verbs, strong verbs because they were the strongest of the verbs. Like if you say something is something, there's nothing stronger than that.

And so we were using of course, strong verbs to create a stronger image or feeling almost saying. Substitute in something for your B verbs if you can. So I just thought that was interesting how the terminology she learned and I don't know if they still use that. That was quite a number of years ago.

Julie Walker: Okay, so there you go. Latin. Alright, question number four. Scaffolding is a buzzword in education today. How do IEW methods and materials train teachers to provide temporary support to students so they can learn a new concept or skill with the goal of gradually removing that support as a student becomes more independent?

Andrew Pudewa: I have never used the word scaffolding, but other people, some of whom have worked with us, have. I generally don't like buzzwords, but my approach is basically to say very simply, you give them as much help as they need until they tell you they don't need the help. Right. And so that would be the idea.

I mean, scaffolding you thinking, okay, you have this stuff and it lets you work on the building. Until you don't need the ladders. I'm not sure if it's really a good analogy, honestly, but here's what we've found is step one, just do it together with students. Do it together with everybody. Step two. Do part of it together and then say, okay, looks like maybe you've got the hang of it.

Finish this part. Right? And if it's a key word outline, okay, do the first two-thirds of it together, okay? Try this on your own. See how it goes. If you have any questions, ask me. If you don't know what to do, I'm going to do it over here. You can follow along, right? Step three, just do the first part. Get everybody started. Okay? See if you can finish this thing on

your own. Step four. Okay. You probably got the hang of it. Give it a shot, and I'll be here to help anybody who needs help. And that's true for the simplest little thing, like a unit one key word outline and then the more complicated thing, like a super essay.

Julie Walker: Yeah.

Andrew Pudewa: So that's basically how I would define scaffolding. But I think people sometimes are wanting it to be more concrete in terms of the curriculum lays it all out.

We depend on the, I might use the word skill. I might use the word ability. I might use the word common sense of the teacher. That's why we focus on teacher training, learn our system, practice it, go through the practicums and get yourself accredited, and you'll understand it. Then you'll know how to help the student. So in terms of, do our books lay that out with exactly? No, because. Then we'd miss too much. We'd miss the mark too much of the time. So that's dependent on the teacher to say, okay, I think you've got the hang of it. Now. Try the rest yourself.

Julie Walker: Okay. This family usually takes the month of December off.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, everybody takes December off whether they want to or not for the most part. It's a horrible month in terms of getting things done.

Julie Walker: Let me introduce you to you, Scrooge. Will my struggling student lose momentum and struggle when we start back in January? What's the best way to handle an extended break? I'm predicting what you're going to say.

Andrew Pudewa: I don't know. Will the student struggle after a break? Possibly, but that's part of the price you pay for choosing to take the break. If you could do a little bit, just a little bit, each week for maybe three weeks out of December. Don't do it formally and spend a whole lot of time, that would build a bridge, but I would have to go to violin.

people say, oh, we just want to take a month off from practicing. This is never a good idea because you take a month off and then you pick up your violin or sit down at the piano or whatever. You can't do it quite as well as you used to be able to do it. And therefore you dislike that feeling.

Kids are always used to getting stronger, faster, smarter, better looking, more competent, and when they have a retrograde experience like going backwards and not being able to easily play the thing, they could easily play. They don't like that. So I wouldn't say writing is quite as bad as playing an instrument in terms of you have to do it every day to get the best results. But yeah, take a month off, take three months off. Over the summer there's going to be some recovery that has to happen there.

Julie Walker: Yep. Good. Alright. I have heard Andrew talk about Suzuki method, speaking of violin.

Andrew Pudewa: well there we go.

Julie Walker: and how it can be used to learn poetry and of course our *Linguistic Development through Poetry Memorization* courses based Exactly on that. Have you used Suzuki method in learning Latin? And could you talk more about some specific ways it could apply in that area of study?

Andrew Pudewa: Well, certainly daily practice, daily—I don't even like the word review, but we'll use it— daily review of everything you've learned is going to make it a lot better. So if you have a student and they have vocabulary and they have vocabulary flashcards, you're not going to do exercises on paper that are going to include all of those words you've learned. That's just too much. It's too time consuming, but you can run through flashcards pretty quickly. So if you ran through flashcards every day until you could do it easily, and then maybe every other day until, and then maybe every week you could use that same kind of spaced repetition. Same thing with your conjugation and declension paradigms. You want to recite those paradigms every day until you've. Got it super solid and then maybe every other day, and then maybe once a week and then maybe once a month. I have been working on memorizing prayers in Latin. And at my age it's a little bit of slow going, but I just made it a habit to always recite all the things I had ever learned while sitting in the sauna, but I don't sit in the sauna every day. And summer was rough because I was already hot all the time, and I wasn't terribly interested in getting hotter. So I actually lost a little over the summer. But if you have that kind of scheduled, okay, I'm going to be there three times a week, I'm going to do this, and then you just make it a habit to do that while you're doing something else, then that's helpful too. The main idea is you just, you want to do everything often enough so that you don't forget something that you once learned and knew because it's the forgetting part that kids don't like. Same thing like I was talking about

Julie Walker: Exactly. So I just have one more question for you, Andrew. Okay. It's kind of a don't step on my Ruby slippers. I love the Wizard of Oz type of question because there's controversy about the Wizard of Oz, but that's not what this question is.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, too bad. I'd love to talk about the Wizard of Oz.

Julie Walker: I know, right? No, we, we, should devote another podcast to that. Someday we'll talk about The Wizard of Oz and what's a hidden meaning behind the Wizard of Oz? Do you know? We'll find out. Stay tuned. Harry Potter versus Lord of the Rings, or just Harry Potter in general, what are your thoughts on children reading these books?

Andrew Pudewa: I have addressed this from time to time, either as part of my talk, *Fairytales and the Moral Imagination*, or in response to a question that someone might have. The first thing I would suggest is that fifty years from now, people will still be reading Tolkien. I doubt that anyone's going to remember JK Rawlings.

Julie Walker: Ah, did you see everybody just hissed and booed right there.

Andrew Pudewa: I could be wrong, and I won't be around 50 years from now to see if my prediction is true or not. But there is a deep, deep level of classic beauty and power and truth in Tolkien's writing. It doesn't mean that Harry Potter isn't a good story. And there is an orthodox theologian, Bentley, I think, who wrote a book called *Finding God in Harry Potter*. I've not read this book, nor have I read much of the Harry Potter books because there's too many of them. But I would make two kind of categorical comparisons, things that are fundamentally different.

The first thing I would point out is how magic is put into the story. Because a lot of people say, well, it's the same. It's magic, it's fantasy. But there are, there's a significant difference in *Lord of the Rings*, the entities, the characters, the personages who use magic are supernatural archetypes. Right, so wizards are archetypes of angels, and so you have kind of the archangel archetype of Gandalf and you have the fallen angel archetype of Sauron and Saruman. You have the angelic archetypes of the elves. They're immortal unless they die in battle or have a really bad accident. But, it's pretty clear that they are not the normal people. The normal people are the men and the hobbits and they don't have intrinsic magical powers. They have maybe get a magic sword, but even that comes from a supernatural source.

Okay. Now in Harry Potter, it's kind of the opposite. The normal people, the Muggles, who you don't want to be like, they don't have magic. And the people you identify and think about are the normal people who get to go to Hogwarts and learn it. So there's this thing about normal kids could learn and do magic if they had the right school and the right teachers, and wouldn't that be cool? Okay, so that's a significant difference there.

The other difference is that in *Lord of the Rings*, the magic happens, but you don't know how it happens, right? Gandalf throws a fireball at the balrog. You have no idea how Gandalf does that, nor do you have a right to know it's not quite licit in Tolkien's world because it's supernatural, it's mystical, it's grace.

In the Harry Potter world, she spends a good amount of time and very cleverly using Latin, describes the mechanics of how to do spells, so this affects the imagination of the reader differently. Right. So who do you identify with in *Lord of the Rings*? Probably Frodo, Sam, Aragorn, if you're ambitious, Boromir, if you're realistic. You don't really imagine yourself as being Galadriel or a Gandalf.

I mean, you could, but you can't get very far into that, right? Whereas in Harry Potter, you imagine yourself being Harry or Hermione, or one of the gang. So your imagination goes, well, I want to be like that. And to be like that, I have to learn how to do magic so that I can fight evil. Right. And one of the side effects of kind of the Harry Potter craze was kids all over the world. This was reported by librarians and booksellers all over the world. Kids, young kids, you know. 11, 12, 13 coming into libraries and bookstores, looking for books on how to be a wizard, how to do real magic occult practices, and that kind of can steer the wrong direction.

Now, I don't think that most of the kids, especially kids connected with our listeners, are likely to go that direction, but it does point that there is that imaginative peaking of interest in, well, how could I, how could I learn to do spells? And of course I would only use white magic, but it seems to be a dangerous zone.

Julie Walker: What I thought you were going to say, Andrew, was that these kids were coming to the libraries wanting to learn Latin so they could do the spells.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, possibly it did. I mean, it's possible that her books did create kind of a resurgence in, interest in Latin, which would be a good thing. And I know that, she wrote these at a time when reading was very much on the decline of young people. And this was looked at as a phenomenally great thing that now there were kids standing in line at bookstores to get the next Harry Potter in the series. They were so excited about reading. But there is kind of a fallacy that all reading is good—like reading is just *de facto* good and it doesn't matter what you read. Whereas the, I think, other argument that I would go with is it would be better to read nothing than to read bad books. I'm not saying that Harry Potters fall in the bad book category, but it's I think, an error for us to say that all kids reading anything is *de facto* good.

So, I'll leave it there. I don't have a super strong opinion. I chose not to read Harry Potter and bring it into my home or my family. I tried to watch one of the movies on an airplane once and fell asleep. I just, it wasn't something that engaged me personally, but I did of course, read C.S. Lewis and Lord of the Rings, kind of these, this distinctly. Christian fabric to my children, George McDonald and kind of the Christian fantasy. The Inklings crowd,

so you can think what you want. You mostly do that.

Julie Walker: Yeah. Well another ask Andrew. Anything in the books, in the can what we say when we shoot a film? That's a wrap. That's a wrap. That's a wrap. So thank you all for joining us. Thank you for those of you that are listening to us after October 29th and we'll see you next time. God bless.

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.