

Podcast 540: Ask Andrew Anything

Episode Transcript

Andrew Pudewa: Usually when you are getting something you don't want, it's the result of not enough modeling, right? So more modeling will allow the student to say, "Oh, so that's how you do it."

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: So this is episode 540, and we are doing an Ask Andrew Anything. So as is our habit, as is our ritual, Andrew has not seen these questions, but these were pulled from customer service questions. Some of you asked these online, and some of these were pulled from Facebook. And I have a few surprises in here.

Andrew Pudewa: Good, because we need some, we need some ringers.

Julie Walker: Energy, right? We love energy.

Andrew Pudewa: Some wild things. Where the Wild Things Are

Julie Walker: Okay, this one you're not going to be able to answer, but I'm really excited to be able to share this because I know the answer to this. Well, I'll read it. Maybe you do know this. You s- you never cease to surprise me. Although I have been working now for you, Andrew, for 19 years.

Andrew Pudewa: And I've never known the answer to this question.

Julie Walker: I don't know if that's true.

Andrew Pudewa: Okay. All right. What is it?

Julie Walker: "I'm looking for a series of slides that show "-ing" openers gone wrong. My note says that it was shared on Facebook several years ago, but I can't find it. So do you know where to find it?"

Andrew Pudewa: No. I'm sure that we had some kind of, probably did something for grammar week or who knows?

Julie Walker: Well, we did a series called Practical Printables.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh

Julie Walker: And let me just show you them, and then we'll put a link in the show notes for those of you that are watching the recording, and then a link for those of you that are watching it live, you'll get this link right away. So let me see if I can find it.

Here it is. So these are on our website, and these are misplaced modifiers. So I'll let you look at some of those, Andrew. You can read them

Andrew Pudewa: No, I can't. I don't have any glasses. He wore a straw hat on his head, which was obviously too small.

Julie Walker: So that's a misplaced modifier. That's not an -ing opener.

Andrew Pudewa: “Hanging in the art gallery, my friend was delighted by the painting.” And we have cute little illustrations of someone hanging on the art gallery. “Sleeping peacefully, the mother carried the boy up to his bed for the night.” Somnambulance. “After eating all their food, we took the dogs for a walk.”

Julie Walker: They ate their dog food, clearly. Anyway, there's a link in the show notes where you can see how we were playing with that. Some of these are -ing, some of these are other openers, the when, while, where, some of the prepositional.

Andrew Pudewa: Being thoroughly labeled, Janice put the supplies away correctly. Sticking to the side of the aquarium, Joey counted six suckerfish. Colorfully sprinkled, the children devoured the freshly baked cupcakes. All right. So evidently we do have this.

Julie Walker: We do.

Andrew Pudewa: And where can people find it?

Julie Walker: This, well, it'll be a link in our show notes to a page on our website, [iew.com/practicalprinciples](http://www.iew.com/practicalprinciples). And there's a whole bunch of, principles on there that you can

Andrew Pudewa: Practical-printables, all one word?

Julie Walker: Hyphen. Thank you for asking. Practical-printables. Okay, next question that I know you can answer. This came from our Facebook page.

“Do you allow kids to look back at the source for spelling while they write, or is the paragraph to be written strictly from the key word outline?”

Andrew Pudewa: I think that I say pretty clearly in the TWSS it's always okay to go back and look at the original, and that could be for purposes of comprehension and accuracy, but I think spelling is perfectly valid. I think some people are worried that, “Oh, no, they're just gonna copy,” and my response would be, “What's wrong with that?” Like, copying has value, and if you don't know how to spell a word, you would look for the easiest way to find out how to spell it, which would probably be where it came from. Otherwise, what are you going to

use? A phone, a tablet, a computer? I heard that there are a few people in the world who actually have books on their shelf titled *Dictionary*, but I haven't seen one for a while.

Julie Walker: No. No. Okay, I'm interested to hear the answer to this question because I don't know what I would recommend given this question. This is from Kathy who asks on Facebook, "Does IEW have something that could be used to teach a high school level, 30-week creative writing course for a co-op class?"

Andrew Pudewa: We would have to probably ask Kathy what is her definition of creative writing. But since we can't, I would say everything we teach supports creative writing. So my thought would be to use the SSS-1C and just do that and call it whatever you want to. There's 24 lessons, but some of those definitely would be split up over a couple weeks.

If you want something pushing a little more on the creative, I might go with the SSS-3B, and we get into some kind of interesting stuff, author imitation, poetry, things that we don't necessarily normally do in a first-year course. If you want to stay away from source texts and summaries and essays, then I'm not sure that we're a good fit for that particular goal. But what we do know for a fact is if kids work with source texts and summarizing and pictures and essays, what you get at the end of that is way better creativity and way more enthusiastic writers as well.

Julie Walker: Yep. Very good. Okay. What is the warmest part of a room?

Andrew Pudewa: This is a pun. The corner because it's 90 degrees.

Julie Walker: And the IEW online student who asked you that question I'm sure is like, "Oh, I was hoping to stump him," but there you go.

Andrew Pudewa: No. Well, I was initially thinking science physics heat rises, but no, it just was suspiciously like a pun.

Julie Walker: Yes. Yes. So I'm going to show you a product. This is SSS-2B. So Year two, level B. So these students have had some background in IEW. This is also a question from an online student. All righty? It's a real stumper.

Andrew Pudewa: What is Hamlet's favorite writing class?

Julie Walker: That's not the question, but that's a good one. Go ahead. What is it? Oh,

Andrew Pudewa: 2B

Julie Walker: SSS2B. A little slow on the uptake there. Okay, here it is. We have props on our table. Can you guess what this question is?

Andrew Pudewa: I'm-- No, go ahead

Julie Walker: Okay. "What was in the box that was moving across the desk?"

Andrew Pudewa: I, as far as I'm aware, there was nothing in the box.

Julie Walker: You're not supposed to say that. It's a big mystery.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, but we wanted to be able to move it easily with the invisible fishing line so that it could kind of walk across the table.

Julie Walker: You're giving the inside scoop.

Andrew Pudewa: And so an empty box would make the most sense.

Julie Walker: So now you know. Don't tell anyone. It's only for podcast people.

Andrew Pudewa: You can tell whoever you want.

Julie Walker: Podcast people that watch this episode that they learned what.

Andrew Pudewa: The reason for listening to podcasts is so you can tell other people the interesting stuff you hear on a podcast.

Julie Walker: Okay, Andrew, I pulled 2B, but it was actually in 2A that we did the box.

Andrew Pudewa: the moving box? Okay.

Julie Walker: Which was fun.

Andrew Pudewa: But at least now we have a new joke.

Julie Walker: Yes, we do.

Andrew Pudewa: What is Hamlet's favorite IEW course?

Julie Walker: Yes, exactly. Okay, and I, I brought—actually part of the reason why I brought to be out here for you all to see. Here, I'm going to have you hold this if that's okay And I brought also one of our...

Andrew Pudewa: This is heavy. No wonder shipping costs so much

Julie Walker: This is a Writing Across the Curriculum. This is a Writing Across the Curriculum resource, and the question specifically is: "What are the pros and cons of *Structure and Style for Students* versus a Writing Across the Curriculum course?"

Andrew Pudewa: The huge pro of the video course is the video. And the huge benefit of the video is the jokes. But essentially, the video courses are me reading the source text, making the key word outlines, walking the kids through, reading stuff, creating, creating that type of direct instruction interactive environment.

Whereas the books are mostly for teachers or parents or co-op people, whoever, who want to do that themselves with probably a group of kids. So we wrote the Hillsdale series in

cooperation with Hillsdale mainly for use in schools that are using the Hillsdale curriculum map, and then lots of other schools have joined in.

Julie Walker: Did you know they opened up a brand new Hillsdale school in Long Beach, California? Los Altos area, which is right by Cal State Long Beach, which is one of my...

Andrew Pudewa: Just goes to show that good things can still happen in California. But people think that it's a nice thing that I tell a joke. Like, if I meet a kid who's done a video course, they will always invariably say, "I like your jokes." And so the truth is this: people think this is a writing course with jokes. But no, this is a joke delivery mechanism much like, you know how bread is just a butter delivery mechanism.

Julie Walker: You have to say the one that you always say about Tabasco sauce.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, yeah, food is a hot sauce delivery mechanism. But so anyway, I think though what you'll find is that you're just getting started and you want a really good experience for your students, either at home or in a classroom, that SSS is going to provide, almost without fail, a very positive experience.

And a lot of people will use a video course for a year or two and then shift over and pick up one of the curriculum-based courses because now they've got the hang of it, and the kids got the hang of it. But they're basically the same stuff in terms of the structural models, the stylistic techniques, the things that are learned. The source texts differ, of course.

Julie Walker: Yep. Well, and I'll just add my two cents. There is a cost difference. Video does cost more than the Writing Across the Curriculum resources, but primarily because I know how much time and effort and energy and people are involved in this versus this. This is still a labor of love for sure, but there's more hands that create this, and the video is just, it's just...

As Andrew said, when, when I talk to people at homeschool conferences, when I do the EZ+1 webinar that we do once a month, you can see a link in the show notes for me presenting the EZ+1, I always recommend the *Structure and Style for Students* for first-year families, first-year teachers, just because even a first-year teacher now has that model to imitate. They can watch you, and they can even use your jokes.

Andrew Pudewa: Absolutely

Julie Walker: So good. Thank you. Oh, and the thump factor is real. Okay. "How do I respond to people..." this is from Kay,

Andrew Pudewa: Okay.

Julie Walker: "...who say we should not teach mechanics or grammar too soon because it can interfere with love of learning and crush a student's desire to write well?"

Andrew Pudewa: Well too soon is fairly nebulous. We'd have to define that to give a good answer because I might agree with it if we're talking about five-year-olds or something. So, I don't know what the context is here, but there is a philosophical gap here between a person who is offering that critique and reality.

And it's a modernist deconstruction that we see in all different areas, whether it's music or art or math or writing, really anything. And that is this idea that somehow knowing how to do something will interfere with someone's enjoyment of doing it,

And so "let's not go over the edge of teaching kids how to do something correctly. Let's let them do whatever they want, and then they'll enjoy it more." But that's not true. If a person has spent time with children, they would realize that what children actually enjoy the most is knowing how to do something correctly or well. And they do have an instinctive understanding when something is more correct and is not.

I watch this with my grandchildren who love to draw. They just, anytime they have spare time, pull out paper, box of colored pencils, and they're really quite good at it. But they love doing it. Why? Because they have learned how to draw a face with the right proportions, how to draw a body with the right proportions, how many petals should be on a flower, because there's an actual scientific number of petals that exist on flowers.

And they're always critiquing themselves in comparison with what they know is the way it should be. And I think kids will do that with language as well. So, if they're literate at all, if they've been read to in any quantity, they have this database of good language, a literary sense, how words fit together, and they want to be able to do that.

And so why wouldn't we teach them the... give them the tools to be able to get as close to what in their mind they've experienced as, as good as possible? And then of course, we can always default to the music model and say, "Yeah, you could say to a kid, 'Here, sit down at the piano and fool around for 20 minutes a day and do that for a couple years, and you'll learn to play the piano.'"

Or we could say, "Here, play this piece, play it this way, polish it up, perform it maybe, play another piece, play it this way, polish it up, play another piece, maintain a repertoire of..." Well, two years down the line, who's gonna love the piano more? It's kind of a no-brainer. So no direct criticism to the friend of this person who had that critique point that we shouldn't do something to inhibit the love of doing it. But it's a misunderstanding. Children actually love doing the thing that they know how to do the best. So that's what we're doing, is trying to teach them how to do it well.

Julie Walker: Yes, exactly. Good

Andrew Pudewa: And I've got a huge stack of letters from kids and, and so many of them say, "I used to hate writing," or "Writing was my worst thing," or "I hated all school," right?

“Until I did your video course.” Right? And, and why? Because we're giving them that experience of knowing what to do and then being able to do it decently well.

Julie Walker: Great. Good Okay, this one is pretty technical. I think this is a Unit 6, so here we go. “What coaching advice is there to help students be mindful of an overarching timeline in their writing when working with fused content? They'll describe a person's life, birth to death, in one paragraph, and then describe that person's childhood in the next.”

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. I'm kind of going to go to Webster's edict, “hands on structure, hands on style, hands off content.” If you want them to produce a product that is better than what they're doing, then just tell them what to do. And if you don't want to just tell them what to do, then let them do what they do and be okay with that.

We gradually, as we grow, we get a better sense of how things should be organized. And yeah, you can talk about it. You can say, “Does...which would make sense, to put this first and this second and this third or this other way?” but, it's not something that you can, you can force them to have a better sense of it.

They just have to grow and develop that. Usually when you are getting something you don't want, it's the result of not enough modeling, right? So more modeling will allow the student to say, “Oh, so that's how you do it.” Trying to explain by principles is not going to be as effective as more modeling, and that's one reason that we have the *Magnum Opus* with samples, and we have the exemplars that are available for download.

And we're trying... And in the *Seminar Workbook*, we have these examples, and that's supposed to give you ideas of how you can model this thing more for students. But it kinda goes back to that problem of just being attached to the product and realizing, if this kid is 10 years old, why worry? They're gonna be much, much older in a year.

Julie Walker: Yes,

Andrew Pudewa: or two, and they'll have just an overall better sense. And so it's just a dance that we do with the students.

Julie Walker: Okay. This is actually one of my favorite questions, and this comes from Julie. But that's not why. I just love her question. “How do I help students transition what they are learning into applicable use?”

Andrew Pudewa: Again, this question needs more context. So what is applicable use? I mean, we would look at our assignments and say, “Well, you're learning a dress-up technique. You're practicing it a little bit, then you're going to use it.” Is it going to be smooth and easy, perfect the first time? Probably not, because with all technical growth, there's a period of practice that's required.

Applicable use, where am I going with this? You're writing something for someone else's class, or you're imagining what you're gonna have to do in high school or college, or you're

thinking about real world of emails and reports. So I don't know what the idea of applicable use is here, but what I do know is that when you learn something and you do it enough when you're young, it starts to become second nature.

And I've also had a lot of letters—even one girl sent me a book that she wrote and got published and, and she wrote something about how, “Now that I'm grown up, I just do stylistic techniques without even having to think about them.” So that's the kind of goal that we have, is for the things that they've learned to become second nature. “I don't have to wrestle with it to make it happen. It just comes to me and I can get it down, and use that.”

So I think the answer to applicable use is simply practice over a period of time, and then it starts to become natural and second nature, and that's useful.

Would you add anything to that?

Julie Walker: two comments. One, just capitalizing on what you just said. We actually did a podcast on the value of doing IEW year after year, and how long should I do IEW? And the answer is just a little bit longer.

Andrew Pudewa: Well or until you do something else.

Julie Walker: Well, this is true, but the longer you do it, and this is the results I'm going to share in my own life, and this is me now being a homeschooling mother because when I taught in the classroom, I didn't know about IEW. I don't think you knew about IEW when I taught in the classroom.

Andrew Pudewa: Probably not.

Julie Walker: But I decided after my own children were done with their high school years that I was going to go back to school, and I applied for the MBA program, and you have to do the GMAT, which is a written and fill-in-the-blank test.

Well, my written test on a score of one to six, I got a 5.5. I had two graders, which means one grader said perfect score. The other grader said pretty darn close to perfect, but not good enough. So 5.5. Why? Because I knew this method, and there was nothing that I did other than just my own background in language growing up, but also teaching my children this method.

I created a little outline, did not use AI or anything like that to write my paper because it didn't exist back then. And I had no help with spelling or grammar or anything. It was just me and that paper. And it, that, if that's not applicable use, nothing is. And then just piggybacking on that, yes, I got accepted in the MBA program. Yes, I do have an MBA, and I graduated with high honors because so much of our program was writing, and I knew how to write.

Andrew Pudewa: Yes. And I always get to say that I have an MBA, and I hope that I pay her very well.

Julie Walker: He takes good care of me. Okay. A different Julie asked this question.

Andrew Pudewa: Lot of Julies today

Julie Walker: I know, right? “What advice do you have for teaching a child with ADHD? We erase our work to write it more neatly multiple times and struggle with a bad attitude of not wanting to do his schoolwork.”

Sorry, Julie. I think you're going to hear something that you may not want to hear.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, again, I, there are missing things to this. Age of child, past experience, like always homeschooled, in school, just started homeschooling, in a hybrid. So there's, there's that element. And then is there a visual component to this as well? Is there a dyslexic, dysgraphic thing going on?

So I can't necessarily know well enough to give specific clinical advice here. But what I would think is that having to erase and rewrite would be really frustrating for anybody, but hyper frustrating for a kid who's basically just, “I gotta get done with this.” And that's mostly what ADHD kids are always experiencing.

“I need to get done with this.” Why? “So I can do something else.” That feeling. So I would try to not do that. Again, I need more information, but what I would try to probably do is separate handwriting and do handwriting. And in just the handwriting part, yes, if you wanna erase to get your letter so that it looks the way it should, okay, copy work, handwriting, cursive maybe. There's a lot of interesting research to show that cursive is helpful both for dyslexics and for ADHD, which means it would probably be helpful for everyone. And it uses more of the brain, so it's more engaging. But, a lot of people say, “Oh, but that's just too much more complexity.”

So I don't know. But if you could do just the handwriting, and then for the composition, either do it together on a whiteboard or do it on paper, but use a pen and don't erase. And then you would go in and put the spelling corrections or edits or whatever needs to make it legal. Don't try to make it good, just make it legal, and then copy that over.

One thing I would mention, I don't know if it applies in this situation, but I think it's very good general advice. A lot of people will say, “Well, my child has to dictate because he really just can't, he can't do it all at once, right? He can copy and he can think of what to write, and it's pretty good, but if he has to write it, he can't remember.

He can't concentrate that long. And so he dictates to me.” Okay, I'm fine with that, but here's, here's what I think is a better approach than him dictating and you writing it on paper, or worse, him dictating it and you typing it, and then you're done. Because he's not seeing what you're writing or typing.

So ideally, have a big whiteboard, let him dictate, and if you have a key word outline, which you always should, it's going sentence by sentence, right? And so he dictates a sentence, you

write that on a whiteboard exactly as he says it. Yes, you'll spell the words correctly. That's fine. But you may get to a point then where not only can he see his words going into text, but you can find some things that he might wanna edit, right? So he might dictate using a banned verb or something, and you say, "Oh, that's a banned verb." And, and then you go back and you say, "What could we change that to? Let's look on our list of strong verbs or the banned words list and figure out what we can use here." So that it's happening together in a much more clear visual context.

Then you've got the thing on the whiteboard, whether it's a short Unit 1 or short little Unit 2 style thing, or whether it's one paragraph of a longer composition, that's okay too. But you've got it on the whiteboard, it's been edited. Okay, now are those copying skills transferable, and could he copy it from the whiteboard?

And if not, okay, then you can write it for him. But I've actually watched parents scribe for kids and write on a paper something that is clearly not readable by those kids because the mom's handwriting or she's doing cursive or whatever. So practice your kindergarten printing, do it on a whiteboard, make it big, easy to see, and then if you want to, see if he can copy that himself onto a paper.

Julie Walker: Yeah, and the only thing I would add to that, because I experienced some of this with my own children, is short, frequent assignments.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. Yeah

Julie Walker: What he just described, you're not going to do all in one day. Yeah

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah, there's also a general rule, and sometimes it's easier to implement than others, but the general idea is stop doing something before a child is exhausted. Now, some kids, they've been exhausted so many times by doing this thing, they're exhausted just by the thought of having to do it.

So there may be a little unraveling that has to happen there. But most kids have an attention curve that, that kind of they start out, it's going pretty well, going pretty well, going pretty well, and then they hit a peak. And then for them, after that peak, it's straight down. It's a cliff. "I'm done. I can't do this anymore." And what a lot of us, as teachers and parents, we fall into this trap like, "Oh, it's going so well. It's going so well. Let's just keep it going a little further." And we want to force the curve to continue up, and so we're trying to be up here. The child is way down here, and that's where this angst can happen.

So i- I used to tell my violin students' parents, "It is better to stop any time before that peak than afterward" because if you stop any time before, the after feeling is, "Oh, that was okay," or, "That was kind of fun," or, "I was doing pretty well." If you stop anywhere after the peak, the aftertaste feeling is, "That was exhausting. I hope I never have to do that again." So it would be better to stop six minutes into music practice and maybe lose a few minutes of good

attention than to go two minutes over that attention limit, and then just do more frequent, shorter sessions.

Julie Walker: Yep. Well, I have more questions, but not enough time to do any more. But any time a question is submitted to us, we promise to answer them, either our friendly, cheerful customer service team or in a future podcast. There is one question that we're not going to get to today, but we are going to answer in a future podcast, and I'm looking forward to it.

Andrew Pudewa: What is it?

Julie Walker: Well, I'll tell you the question, but you can't answer.

Andrew Pudewa: All right.

Julie Walker: Don't answer it. Okay. "How do you recommend working with families whose first language is not English? The parents are not always the strongest editors in the middle school," and all I will say is there's an app for that, and we're going to be coming about with that, and we're going to be talking about that in a future podcast about how we can help all teachers who have students who don't have parents who are willing or are not able to be the editors in their student paper. So I'm excited to be able to talk about that, but that won't be today.

Andrew Pudewa: All right

Julie Walker: All right. Thank you, Andrew

Julie Walker: Thanks so much for joining us. If you enjoyed this episode and want to hear more, please subscribe to our podcast or just visit us each week at IEW.com/podcast. Here you will find our show notes and relevant links. One more thing: would you please rate and review our podcast? This helps other smart listeners like you find us. Thank you.