

## Ask Andrew Anything

### Transcript of Episode 370

**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.

So Andrew, when I put together the list of questions for the Ask Andrew Anything, it just occurred to me that I don't ask you any questions of things that I want to know.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well, I think you know almost everything that you could know or that you will know. Okay. Well, about me already,

**Julie Walker:** Well, maybe our listeners don't know because, you know, I like to think of myself in the seat of the listeners. Mm-hmm. And what would they be asking you? Well, of course we have several of those questions, but you know, just random questions that just occurred to me. When you travel and you're looking for a restaurant to eat, what type of cuisine are do you generally gravitate towards?

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well, if I have to eat in a restaurant, it would be First Choice Indian. Mm-hmm. And second choice Thai.

**Julie Walker:** Oh, nice.

**Andrew Pudewa:** or I guess kind of an Asian fusion mm-hmm. Would fit in there. But, uh, I generally like Asian or Indian restaurants, number one, cuz the food. But number two, they tend to be quieter. They're not as likely to have music that's irritating and interfering with your thinking or your conversation.

Kind of the way a, you know, a popular American restaurant chain is just so noisy. In cities that I have been to many times, cuz I like go to certain conventions year after year. I know where the Indian restaurant is.

**Julie Walker:** Ah,

**Andrew Pudewa:** Another thing is it's one of the few places you can almost always order a lamb dish,

**Julie Walker:** mm.

**Andrew Pudewa:** which I prefer.

Over some kind of random commercial beef that you're gonna get, you know, in a steak or hamburger, which may or may not be good quality. Lamb, I think, is generally less commercial, and occasionally you can get goat. Mm-hmm. Uh, which tastes pretty much like lamb, just a little

gamier. And then with, uh, Thai, you can get really good vegetable dishes. Mm. Right. And, and of course both of those places, and most

**Julie Walker:** You should see the smile on his face. Listener.

**Andrew Pudewa:** You could put a high level of hot,

**Julie Walker:** yes.

**Andrew Pudewa:** you know, in a Thai restaurant, they'll be like, one to five. Okay, five, no brainer.

**Julie Walker:** No kidding. You go all the way up to five, Andrew?

**Andrew Pudewa:** yeah, five, but one to 10, then you have to be a little more careful, like eight or nine.

Mm-hmm. But sometimes, you know, if you go 10, then I think the cook back there is like, okay, we're just gonna stick it to him. You know, we're gonna make him pay for this audacious belief that he can handle Thai spicy. But it, it's rare. It's rare that I get a dish that's too hot. Mm-hmm. But that would be my, my main preference.

And then if there's nothing like that around, I would just look for quality of food.

**Julie Walker:** Mm-hmm.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Do they serve food without added antibiotics? Like Chipotle is, is decent. Chipotle is probably the, the safest fast food. But I'll tell you these days, I hate restaurants so much that if I'm not going with someone, I'll just go to a

Trader Joe's or Whole Foods or even the organic section of a supermarket, buy like an avocado, some grass fed beef jerky, maybe some cheese, and I'll just eat that for dinner.

**Julie Walker:** Right. Well, there you go, listener. Now you know what Andrew Pudewa eats when he travels. Very, I have the opposite problem. It's license to pig out. I love it. So,

**Andrew Pudewa:** I lose weight every single time I travel. I, I lose probably half a pound to a pound a day when I'm gone. So if I'm gone for three days, I'll come back two to three pounds lighter.

**Julie Walker:** We were just talking before we turn the mics on today for this podcast, how we balance each other. I don't know if I like this balance because when I travel it's just the opposite. I will gain a half a pound to a pound.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Yeah, but you know, you're traveling for usually festive family enjoyment purposes. I'm just grinding through, you know,

**Andrew Pudewa:** I love being out there at conventions, talking to people, helping people.

**Julie Walker:** I know you. do.

**Andrew Pudewa:** I, I'm just really tired of airports, hotels, and restaurants at this point in my life.

**Julie Walker:** Yep. Okay. Well let us get into listener submitted questions and we actually put together some questions that of a theme this time and that is, Are learning differences. Those students that have dyslexia, dysgraphia, some of those other things because this year, the year 2023, we're actually spending a little bit more time talking about how I E W helps teachers, families, parents, students who have learning differences.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Yes, I noticed,

**Julie Walker:** Yes. Okay, so first question and oh, I usually have names of who asks these questions. So if this is you listener, you will recognize your writing cuz I don't have your name. I'm so sorry. So spelling and writing, are a big challenge for my second grade daughter, I suspect that she is dyslexic. How should I approach writing with her?

How much should I push it?

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well, when someone says second grade and it's January, I'm thinking this kid is probably seven. Plus or minus six months. And the general advice I would give to anyone with a child that age is do not be stressed. Do not compare this seven year old with other people's seven year olds. And you know, that's a theme we've built on any number of podcasts and talks that I have.

I would consider the most useful thing that you could spend time on wouldn't be English composition so much as it would just be straight copy work, yep, building stamina. Mm-hmm. If there is a dyslexia dysgraphia there and you know, we've had a few experts on, and we can link to those podcasts, Susan Barton, the IDs and their opinion is, if you think your child.

Dyslexic. Well, they probably are. Mm-hmm. So, you know, what good does it do to worry about it or go get a expensive diagnosis or whatever. But I, I would say for children that age, it's just, you know, it's a young age. Mm-hmm. And children come into reading and writing readiness at different speeds. And that's not always connected.

A diagnosable thing like dyslexia. So I, I would say three things to do. One would be just copy work every day. Mm-hmm. And you can use a story, you could use scripture if you're so inclined, you could use poems. Mm-hmm. I used to write stories for my young children to copy because I would try to make it about them.

I would try to make it funny and. They may or may not, you know, understand it all perfectly, but I would read it with them and then have them copy it. The most important guideline is be sure that what you're giving them to copy is large print.

**Julie Walker:** Hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm.

**Andrew Pudewa:** So if you're using something from a book, then ideally you would have a machine at home that would.

Enlarge, you know, an enlarging photocopy function on a multifunction printer or something. Right. Mm-hmm. So you could get it at least up to say, 18 point font.

**Julie Walker:** Mm-hmm.

**Andrew Pudewa:** That would be ideal. If it's smaller, it's just gonna be harder, and if it's larger, it's gonna be easier. Mm-hmm. The second thing regarding spelling is I would try to do as much spelling as possible with no paper involved, just do verbal auditory practice. Mm-hmm.

And start with three letter words and you know, short vowel sound, sound outable three letter words. And once that's a little easier than introduce some concept like an E at the end of the word, mix the vowel. Mm-hmm. Say it's. Name or it's long sound. You can get into blends, you know, the, the, constant blends that are still sound outable.

So, you know, just work with three and four letter words, but do most of it, not by looking at paper, but by just thinking about the letters and their sounds and doing it verbally. And, you know, 10 minutes a day is probably plenty

**Julie Walker:** Right that point. Mm.

**Andrew Pudewa:** I would even say, You could do a lot of math verbally,

**Julie Walker:** Mm,

**Andrew Pudewa:** you know, with children.

If, if they're kind of mixing up letters or whatnot, there's a very good chance they're gonna kind of mix up numbers. Mm-hmm. And you know, the, the difference between 13 and 31 or six and nine may be harder to sort through visually. Whereas I think when children do mental math through verbal practice, they actually learn to think mathematically a little better.

They internalize it more. And then the third thing is if you've got a child who really wants to write something, write a story, write a poem, you know, write a letter, whatever, let them dictate it to you. You write down what they say. On a whiteboard, and really, I've said this any a number of times, if you're teaching kids at home, you really want to have a large, like six foot large whiteboard in the space where you are spending most of your time because everything will be better once you do this.

In fact, I would say don't buy anything else at all ever until you have a nice large whiteboard. But if the child wants to dictate a story or something, they can dictate. You can write down a few sentences and then that can be copy work for the child. So I would prioritize those things in that

way. Copy work, verbal spelling practice, and then dictation, which the student could hopefully copy what they dictated to you.

And just remember, seven years old is very, young

**Julie Walker:** You've got a lot of time to get them up in writing and, and I think through all of this, they're going to enjoy this a whole lot more than being pushed. Because she used the word, how much should I push?

**Andrew Pudewa:** And the idea is don't push because, you know, people who have that concept is like, oh no, my kid is behind because I'm comparing this child with some other children. Mm-hmm. But you know, we see again and again and again, you need to have a family with a. Nine year old, seven year old, and a four-year-old. And the four-year-old is the one who really wants to learn to read.

Right. You know, or the seven year old is reading circles around the nine year old, or the nine year old reads and the seven year old couldn't care less

**Julie Walker:** Mm-hmm.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Mm-hmm. So, you know, just relax. It is extraordinarily rare, if not completely unheard of in my experience for an even very dyslexic homeschool kid, to actually become a teenager and not have learned to read and write and spell to some degree, I mean mm-hmm.

Everybody learns. Mm-hmm. It just happens at different paces.

**Julie Walker:** Right. Good. Okay. Here's, I believe this is another homeschool mom question. My three sons all battled different levels of dyslexia, and one also has severe dysgraphia. Language arts and writing have been extremely difficult in our family, which has been challenging for this. English degree language loving Mama.

Oh man, I am right there with you, girl

**Andrew Pudewa:** that is the tough part.

**Julie Walker:** I've wanted to use I E W materials many times, but have often felt they were way above what my sons could do. What should I start with? Especially for my son starting high school next year, who has shown such aversion to writing, but is an avid reader,

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well, that's a great thing that this student reads well. Um, right. I mean, that's, that's a blessing. You know, there are, um, probably some pretty good arguments to be made that if you have a child around 13 or 14 and physically putting letters on paper with a pen is overwhelmingly frustrating. Mm-hmm. Teach the kid to type, probably already knows how to type, or can at least do it to some degree.

You, you probably get better at typing if you use some kind of training to use the right fingers on the right keys. Although I think a super majority of people below 30 years old right now, do not use the fingers on the keys the way you and I were taught in high school decades ago, and some of them type just as faster, faster than I do.

So, you know, I'm not sure there's a super strong argument to be made for forcing everyone to use the fingers, the way we were taught. I mean, I'm grateful, but people accommodate. Mm-hmm. Um, the, the thing to keep in mind though is if you begin to let a student type everything and they never really get enough practice of writing on paper, then they may become unable to do that with any degree of confidence or ease as an adult.

Right. And I think most adults are grateful that they can write on [00:14:39] paper. Mm-hmm. Most people would hope that their children are able to write on paper. There's obviously physical handicaps that could prevent that. So the, you know, the technology will atrophy, the skillet replaces. But in terms of the composition side, I would think that a student, as this person has described, would just be a lot happier trying to write typing.

**Julie Walker:** Mm-hmm.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Depending on the level of cooperativeness mm-hmm. You get from a child that age again, uh, copy work has value. Mm-hmm. Just practicing, putting letters into words and words into sentences and sentences onto paper without having to think of what to do. Right. You can copy the spelling. You can copy the punctuation, you can copy the sentence, you can copy the idea.

And you know, that has a lot of value regardless of age. It's just, it seems a lot easier to do that as children are younger and it gets a little bit harder as they get older because there's that pushback. Mm-hmm. And you know, depending on this, uh, student's experience with other things such as sports or music or You know, anything that requires a discipline.

You know, sometimes you just have to do, you know, your pushups, sit ups, dribble drills, wind sprints, whatever, if you want to get better at the sport itself. So I would try to frame this for the student in the same way. This isn't fun, it's not sexy, it's not interesting. But If you do it, you get stronger and that'll be a good thing later in life.

They may or may not buy into that idea at 13 years old,

**Julie Walker:** Mm-hmm. Right. So I'm also going to chime in with a couple of recommendations as far as what products Yeah. You might to wanna use. And I think of a high school student who has some learning challenges. We have our courses. Basically categorized into three different groupings, level A, which the reading level is grades three to five level B, which the reading level is grades six to eight and level C, which is high school, and that's grades nine and up.

And our level B materials may be exactly what you would find really helpful for your son. Um, the high school student, there's nothing in there that says this is for junior high.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Oh yeah. We have teenagers using the Level B materials all the time

**Julie Walker:** Yeah. Or even all the way down to level A. Yeah. But the nice thing about the the level one B, *SSS Structure and Style for Students*, year one, level B Premier package.

I'm gonna recommend that one because it has. Fix-it, grammar in it, which has built-in copy work. Mm-hmm. And it has the teaching writing structure and style teacher training course. And so that way the parents learn the methodology themselves, the teachers learn the methodology so they can make adjustments as needed.

You could also do one of our theme-based books, history-based Writing lessons, US history, modern World history, or rather than going to, uh, *Fix It!*, that goes with the one B. The third level of *Fix It!* Maybe you wanna go all the way down to the first level and it doesn't say, this is not for high school.

This is where you are at in your grammar. And like I said, there's built in and that exercises are short. There's not a lot of stretching, but there's just enough. It's just the right amount.

**Andrew Pudewa:** We could also note that usually kids who are in this category mm-hmm. They don't like writing, in part because they are not confident about spelling. Yes. And so there's that hesitancy if they. Have to write a word they don't know how to spell and if there's a lot of words they don't know how to spell, it's kind of a, a negative feedback loop.

So obviously giving them the freedom to write it the best they can and then fix it later. Yep. Is something, you know, I'm always stressing in the video courses and whatnot, but the excellence in spelling program, the phonetic zoo is an Auditory

**Julie Walker:** Mm-hmm.

**Andrew Pudewa:** approach to teaching spelling, which helps a lot, especially with kids who are likely to visually be still mixing things up a bit.

Or kids who have not had good success with some kind of spelling workbook or paper based approach. Yep. Uh, this will give auditory input with higher repetition. So, you know, that's another product that someone could look at there.

**Julie Walker:** Okay. I have another question for you. This one, it's going to sound a little more complicated, but I think you can track here. We have a highly gifted and dyslexic. Mm-hmm. Put that together, and that's called stealth dyslexia. Have you ever heard of that before?

**Andrew Pudewa:** I have not heard of stealth dyslexia. I have heard of twice exceptional.

**Julie Walker:** Okay. Right. Okay. There you go. Well, I, I like that stealth dyslexia. Okay. Yeah. It presents most often with a high capacity for reading, but extreme difficulty with written output, which actually sounds like a question that we had earlier. We tried IEW when my son

was in the fourth grade. He was reading at a high school level, but he could not do any of the writing, including simple keyword outlines without full assistance.

However, now that my son is 12, he's able to work through I E W one B with minimal help.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Oh, superb. How? How delightful.

**Julie Walker:** The structure is so helpful for him because it gives him a starting place. I'm curious to other ways in which I E W is well suited for those with learning differences.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well, we've done several podcasts on explaining why what we do works, right, whether the problem is dyslexia or dysgraphia or a d d, or, you know, spectrum issues or auditory processing. You know, those neurological conditions can oftentimes just make the whole process of writing seem too complex, too overwhelming.

Yeah. Too many things to have to do at once, right? And so, you know, this is why we generally can recommend with complete confidence for almost anyone, it's gonna take the complexity. And break it down into the smallest possible manageable steps. And then the parent or teacher needs to follow the guideline of, give as much help as necessary.

Mm-hmm. And don't expect even those small steps to be instantly independent. Yep. And to follow the principle that to create independence, you give enough help so that there gradually builds a up to a critical mass of information and experience of doing it together in confidence. Yeah. And then at some point the child will say, okay, I got it right.

You know, leave me alone. I can do this. Right. But we don't want to have, um, you know, an expectation that that's going to happen according to our desired schedule. Right. It will happen at the rate that student grows. Um, and kids are all different.

**Julie Walker:** Yep. Well, thank you Andrew. Okay, so can I use I E W for my child with autism who struggles with writing, spelling and articulating thoughts, Poor memory, but he's already graduated Public high school?

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well, the answer is yes. But,

**Julie Walker:** Mm-hmm. Yep.

**Andrew Pudewa:** You know, a student in that age really has to be motivated, self-motivated. I, I mean, I don't know too many parents who could take a, you know, 17, 18 year old kid and boss them around too successfully. Mm-hmm. So that's why it would be probably best for, you know, you to maybe listen to

Some of our podcasts mm-hmm. On special circumstances and see if that hits a resonance with that student. Um, you know, if this kid is thinking, well, you know, I'm gonna take a year off, but maybe I'll go to college. Well, we have any number. I mean, countless people who found our

stuff while they were in college and said, wow, this is really gonna help me be more organized and write my papers better and be successful.

Or, you know, we have, you know, people in their midlife who said, oh, I'd only learned this when I was younger.

**Julie Walker:** Mm-hmm.

**Andrew Pudewa:** If the student on the other hand is saying, no, I have no interest in academic. What I wanna do is learn a trade. Mm-hmm. Which is actually one of the better career options in many cases these days. Yes.

You know, you've, you become a. You know, a good plumber or a welder electrician or something, you, you can do very, very well. Mechanic, auto mechanics make more than school teachers, right? Mm-hmm. So this idea, uh, you know, of what's he thinking about what he wants to do mm-hmm. And how does spending the sweat, time, energy, effort to do something that's not gonna be easy or fun, You know, is that necessary or to what degree is it a benefit right now?

You know, the other thing is I think it's really good for kids. Honestly, I don't think anyone would benefit hugely from going straight from high school into [00:24:25] college. I think a lot of people would benefit from taking a year or two. Mm-hmm. Getting a regular job, working full-time with, with adults for a couple years.

Get a sense of, you know, what is that like, and do they like, Job and what they're doing. Would they want to learn more enough to do that more successfully? Or maybe, no, I don't like this. I should go into something else. So I think a couple years of real life experience and maturing helps a young person then maximize that investment they're gonna make of time and a lot of money in the college experience.

**Julie Walker:** Okay. This one, uh, a little bit younger. I think we've got, uh, time for maybe one more question. Our child has some reading comprehension challenges. After reading the source text, we work together to create the keyword outlined. Good job, but it's difficult for her to recall information to write even after creating the keyword outline.

Any suggestions?

**Andrew Pudewa:** It would be helpful to know the age, mm-hmm. Of this child, but generally, Would get the diagnosis of use slightly simpler source texts. Mm-hmm. So in the T W S S, I say again and again and again, source texts should be at, or preferably below. Mm-hmm. The reading level of the student. Right. So, If the words are unfamiliar or the sentences are too long, or the concepts are a little too abstract mm-hmm.

Then you wouldn't want to use that for a writing project. Um, so maybe, you know, if you're using. Our level B material, you would do better to look at the level A. Mm-hmm. Slightly lower reading level. We teach the same stuff. We teach the same models and techniques, and the

system is the same, but what varies mostly is the length and complexity of this horse tax, or if this child is on the young side already in the.

A, and that's a tough one. Well maybe back up and look at Bible heroes or people in places in the community or whatnot. Mm-hmm. You know, there can be other causes of reading comprehension issues, which is generally gonna be in that zone of short-term memory. I just don't remember what I heard a minute ago.

Yeah. And that's not an an easier magic fix, but what I do know for a fact is that doing keyword outlines and telling back contentt will improve reading comprehension.

**Julie Walker:** And you just said something telling back content. I wonder if this teacher has skipped that step because that's a big part of comprehension is now they're not writing, they're just telling back from the keyword outline. And that doesn't stop in unit one or two. Yeah, that can go all the way up.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And, you know, one other thing, and, and again, we don't know the age of this student, right? But at a certain point it, it's funny because there's a, a point before this where kids don't know the meaning of a word and they just ignore the fact that they don't know the meaning of the word, and they won't say, what does that mean?

Say, what does that mean? Then they go through a kind of a sensitive period where they will ask, what does that mean? Right? But then they get a beyond that, and now they figure, well, I'm supposed to already know what everything means. And since I don't, I'm not gonna ask cuz that's awkward and embarrassing and uncomfortable, so I'm gonna pretend. And so some of the reading comprehension problems that can happen and I think. Unwittingly, certain school

environments have promoted this idea of make an inference, mm-hmm i.e guess, at the meaning of words. Mm-hmm. Which, you know, you can see. Why people would suggest that, but it's a sloppy thing and I don't think it long-term helps.

I think it would be better if teachers would say, well, if you see a word you don't know, ask or use some device to, yep. Find out what that means. Don't let words just go by and guess, because that contributes to a sloppy, careless approach to reading. Mm-hmm. And, um, I worked for a while in an organization that had a school and I was working part-time in the school.

And that was like an absolute rule, is that if anybody ever saw a word and they did not know what it meant, the first thing you would do, you'd drop everything is get a dictionary. This was pre-internet days. Get a dictionary and find out what that word means and don't go past it. Mm-hmm. Because if you go past it with a fuzzy understanding, then your understanding of everything that comes after.

Is going to likely be affected by that fuzziness. Exactly. And so that was like a Policy mm-hmm. Of the school and the teacher. I mean, even adults would follow this rule. And so, you know, I think, you know, there's a, a time and a place for everything, but I do know that that habit of

stopping to look at the meaning of words, to be sure I'm clear on that, was really a great benefit for me ever since I, you know, I was working there in my mid to late twenties.

Yeah.

**Julie Walker:** Yep. Well, Andrew, I love these. Ask Andrew Anything podcasts. I love that no matter what I throw at you, you seem to have the answer that will perfectly suit or maybe not for this listener, many others who are listening to what we're dealing

**Andrew Pudewa:** know, we've been doing this for a long

**Julie Walker:** Yes,

**Andrew Pudewa:** that gives us the blessing. Yes. Of having looked at, you know, all huge, huge numbers of kids and parents and circumstances over periods of time, hearing problems, then hearing testimonials, putting those all together to better serve the families and teachers that we can.

**Julie Walker:** And that's what we're here to do. 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 in iTunes, Google podcasts, Stitcher, or Spotify. Or just visit us each week at [IEW.com/podcast](http://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.