

## Hacking High School, Part 2

### Transcript of Episode 385

**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.

Podcast episode 385 part two. We've never done this before, Andrew.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well, we've had continuing podcasts, but we haven't actually had the same number twice.

**Julie Walker:** Right, right. Nor have...

**Andrew Pudewa:** And that might confuse people, especially if they're counting the weeks of their life by our podcast.

**Julie Walker:** Well, and we've decided to release both part one and part two on the same day, which is another first for us.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And this one might be shorter than usual, but you never know.

**Julie Walker:** Well, we do want to be respectful to you, listener. We figure your walk is about thirty minutes. It takes about thirty minutes to clean the kitchen while you're listening to this. So here you go. Part two of *Hacking High School*, which is part of our Homeschool 101 series.

Now we've already addressed four different ways that you can hack high school. The first you mentioned was speech and debate competition specifically.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Or mock trial or speech contests of some sort. That kind of all falls in the same category although we didn't talk much about mock trial, but I think you get some of the same benefits.

**Julie Walker:** Right. And then you talked about doing logic and that you actually taught logic for four years to a group of high school students. That's incredible.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well, you know, it was a sequence that was laid out kind of for me. I didn't figure out what to do. And you know, if I did it again, I might use different materials. But I did learn a lot from the process of teaching traditional logic one, traditional logic two, which got pretty dry. Material logic, which had a lot of challenge, and then really just slogging through Aristotle's rhetoric with the help of a workbook, guidebook, and teacher's notes and all that. I think if I did it again, I would do it better...

**Julie Walker:** Of course you would.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Can I tell you one of the funniest things that I learned in Aristotle? So, Aristotle talks about the forms of government.

**Julie Walker:** Okay.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And Aristotle points out that the highest and best, most efficient form of government you could have is a benevolent monarchy.

**Julie Walker:** Oh, okay.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Plato's philosopher king. This idea that if you had a truly good person who could be a dictator, it would be the best government you could have. And we see some examples of that in history like Cincinnatus who was a humble little farmer. He had been a senator, a politician or whatever, and they came to him and said, "Please come and save Rome. We're in desperate straits." And he said, "yeah, I'll do that, but I have to have absolute power over everything and everyone." "You got it." So Cincinnatus comes out of farming and retirement, takes over the Roman Republic, has absolute power, defeats the enemies, and then does the most remarkable thing in history—abdicates, turns back over power and goes back to farming.

**Julie Walker:** Oh wow.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And this is why George Washington is referred to as "the modern Cincinnatus." In fact, there are statues of George Washington, kind of his body and face in a Ancient Roman costume because making that connection. So that nobility. But Aristotle said you can't really have that because power.

**Andrew Pudewa:** So the next best form of government would be probably an oligarchy. So, where you have a few people with shared power and those few people can keep each other kind of checks and balances type of thing. And our form of government with the Executive, Judicial, Legislative branch is in part based on that political philosophy of the division of powers for the benefit of the country as a whole.

And then he talks about democracy. And here's the really funny thing. His definition of democracy is very different than what you or I may think democracy means.

**Julie Walker:** Isn't that where everybody gets a vote? Democracy?

**Andrew Pudewa:** You know, rule, but majority rule or in a republic you elect officials who then have a majority role. No, his concept of democracy is that you would choose by lot at random from a pool of qualified people those to rule over you for a limited period of time.

**Julie Walker:** Oh, interesting.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And I will confess, I was teaching this right when the most unpleasant election had happened, it was happening where I really did not want to vote for either of the candidates, and I thought to myself, you know, I would almost choose at random someone from the Tulsa phone book if there were phone books anymore, then these two people.

So, it was kind of funny, but that idea of everyone should be qualified, they should be educated and have the skill, the leadership skills to serve for a limited period of time in a position of authority. And that was kind of the early American ideal as well, was that, and Jefferson's desire was, to have a highly educated population so that everyone would be qualified for leadership capacity in some aspect of civic life.

And then of course, the worst form of democracy is a despot. And that's where you have a non-good monarch, a dictatorship that is solely based on the acquisition of power and control. And so I just thought that was so funny about this concept of democracy being random among qualified people. And I don't know, there's something I still like about that idea.

It's not practical in any sense. But anyway, I did teach that. We also talked about, what else did we talk about?

**Julie Walker:** Well, theater and performance.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Drama and theater. And then the thing I tend to get long-winded about...

**Julie Walker:** Which is why this is a part two.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Is the dual enrollment, dual credit—the idea of doing college while you're still the high school age.

**Julie Walker:** Yeah. Not a new idea, but becoming increasingly popular.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And there are a lot of good links in our show notes from that. I was going to say last episode, but I guess I have to say the first half of this.

Okay. So there's a few more things I think are worth bringing up for contemplation. One of them is for high schoolers to have an opportunity to teach younger children.

**Julie Walker:** I love that.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And we all know this, the best way to learn something is...

**Julie Walker:** by teaching. And Andrew, you actually perfectly articulated that when you talked about how you taught logic and how much you learned. Isn't that exactly right?

**Andrew Pudewa:** In fact, over my history of homeschooling my children and teaching classes to them and other people's children, I have often chosen to teach something because I wanted to learn it better. I said, one year, I said, "We're going to do economics." Well, I have never taken a

class in economics. I have read very few books about economics, but I wanted an excuse, and I knew what books that I wanted to use with these kids, and it was fantastic.

But, you know, I was learning along with them and this is one thing that I believe many homeschool parents may have a strong belief or just a subconscious fear that they can't teach something they don't know well— they can't teach something, they don't have formal training or formal education, and it's just not true.

You can stay three steps ahead. And learn right along with kids. And in a way it's almost better because there's a humility, there's an effort you have to put out. You know, if you teach something you know really well, well okay, that's good. You know it really well. You feel like you're doing a great job, but I feel like you get this kind of energy and excitement about learning along with the students. So I have in many cases, in many circumstances, tried to facilitate opportunities for older teenagers who are still in high school, so to speak, to teach classes to younger children.

And one thing I would point out is, you can teach anything. It doesn't have to be one of the subjects that would appear on a report card, say, or on a transcript. You can teach anything that you love. I have kind of focused on this idea of helping older kids teach writing.

**Julie Walker:** Yes, of course. Of course.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And part of that is because if they've done a writing program for 3, 4, 5 years, they know it pretty well. I mean, they could, they've got the checklist memorized, they know the rules. They could draw it from memory, you know, probably every one of the model charts from the nine units. They have wrestled with it and understood it really pretty well. And so now go on the other side of that and start teaching kids who are three, four years younger how to do a keyword outline, how to use a dress up checklist, how to follow the topic-clincher rule.

And the reason this works so well is because they don't have to figure it all out. They don't have to redesign the wheel. We have a well-designed wheel. And so it's easily transferable and yet in teaching something that has a system and you don't have to figure out what to teach, you can learn a lot about the subtler aspects of teaching, how to manage kids, how to encourage kids who don't talk much to talk more, how to help the kids who talk too much give space to other students, reading and marking the student papers.

There's a lot that is learned in that process. And then just organizing it and being accountable and keeping everyone accountable and watching the clock. All sorts of aspects of teaching that you really can't learn except by doing it.

And I kind of think we do teacher education in this country a little bit upside down where someone says, “Oh, I want to be a teacher. I'll go into elementary ed.” And then they do three years of philosophy of education, history of education, psychology, and they get all these theoretical classes before they even ever walk into a classroom and spend a few weeks, and then it's at the very end where they do their

**Julie Walker:** Student teaching.

**Andrew Pudewa:** student teaching, and even that I don't know, is consistently well done.

I'm sure there's some places it's well done. If I were in charge of it all, I would probably say, "Oh, you're interested in being a teacher. You can spend the first year, first nine months, hang out with this master teacher and just watch them every day after day after day. And don't even worry about anything except observing closely."

You know, all of the kids that I have encouraged to teach, that I've known personally, they've been in my classes for sometimes many years. So I know that they learned how by watching, observing, doing. Then they can go figure it out on their own. From that context, from that background.

So I have recruited kids to teach writing classes. I have taken my top Latin students and put them in charge of teaching the next level down. Generally, kids that are two to three, maybe four years younger than they are.

I have encouraged teenage girls to do a book club for girls, and I have encouraged teenage boys to do a book club for boys. I mean, that may sound, I don't know, segregationist or sexist or whatever, but I do think there's a comfort level that can happen when you have an all girls discussion and an all boys discussion, especially in that awkwardness where well, maybe the teacher, she's 15 or 16 and there's a 12, 13 year old boy, that could be tough.

But this idea. And we have materials to help people learn to do this. In terms of literature, we've got Adam Andrews *Teaching the Classics*. It's a teacher training course, how to have Socratic-style conversations. Our first debate coach when we moved to Oklahoma was my student when I was the assistant coach for our debate team in California.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And she was young but in charge of it all. And so that worked out very well. And there's just any number of things. I've also heard of kids 16, 17 years old who have offered online classes to, presumably, mostly homeschoolers in something they know. One example was this girl wanted to teach cooking to kids.

**Julie Walker:** And she did it this online.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And she did it online. And I thought, well, that'd be a little hard, but I guess it's possible. Like, here's the ingredients you need, and I'm on the video and you are at home in your kitchen watching me, and we can all do this together.

**Julie Walker:** I love it. Yeah.

**Andrew Pudewa:** So I thought, well, that's nice. And you know, you may or may not put that on a transcript. I think you could figure out a way to do it.

**Julie Walker:** Oh, sure.

**Julie Walker:** And we have resources to direct our listeners to, if you need help with your transcripts. So again, link in the show notes. Speaking of course, of Lee Binz and her services.

**Andrew Pudewa:** The Home Scholar. And there are lots of people who will help you figure out how to make transcripts if you need to do.

**Julie Walker:** Out of these unique high school classes that you're cobbling together. Online cooking class. Hmm. What does that count for?

**Andrew Pudewa:** So, that's something to think about. Do you have a student who has kind of an aptness and is there a little community that you can put together? And it wouldn't necessarily be a high income thing, but I do think people should pay something. And if you've got several kids paying a little bit, you're probably making more per hour than if you're just getting your first job at Chick-fil-A or whatever.

Along these lines, I am also thinking about other ways in which teenagers can interact with adults in a meaningful way.

**Julie Walker:** Sure.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Rather than just being students of adults, but shared responsibilities or operating in their world. I know I've said this on previous podcasts, but one of the things that I remember so clearly from John Taylor Gatto and his teaching and his books *Dumbing Us Down* *An Underground History of American Education*.

He taught eighth grade English in Brooklyn, New York for sixteen years. But, and he was the New York City teacher, the New York State Teacher of the year, twice I believe. One of the things he said is what every 13 year old in the world wants more than anything else is real, honest-to-God, meaningful, life-and-death responsibility.

**Julie Walker:** Well, and I do have to mention that we do here at IEW have a couple hands-fulls of teenagers working for us. I won't say that they're doing life and death type work, but they're absolutely doing work that we need to have done. We're not just making up work.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well, and they are expected to operate as adults.

**Julie Walker:** Absolutely.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And you know, this is why I think every kid, as soon as they're old enough to legally get a job, is excited not just for the money, but because this is: I'm gonna test myself in the real world.

**Andrew Pudewa:** I've always had kids working in the business, whether it was my kids or their friends or employees' kids.

I've always been in favor of getting them in as soon as possible. And you know, it's not a fit for everyone, but I would say for the most part, I mean probably ninety-some percent, they rise to the occasion. And they learn basic stuff like show up on time and work while you're getting paid and don't chit chat too much and keep focused and all of these just basic life skills.

But another way that I have seen families and individuals do this is to start a little business.

**Julie Walker:** I love that. Yep.

**Andrew Pudewa:** I have a talk, I haven't done it for a while, but I love doing it. It was called *Freedomship and Entrepreneurship Education*, I think. And in that I talk about what you can learn from starting a little business.

And if you think about our arts of language—listening, speaking, reading, writing, thinking—well, that's kind of like the absolute greatest integration because you have to be able to read and listen and acquire information. And then you have to be able to re-articulate verbally and in writing information to be able to have a product and sell it. You have to have a lot of logical skills and some good basic, simple, but solid math skills to understand basic economics of cost and expense and profit and overhead.

So I've seen various little books over the years that I have, kind of, referred people, to in terms of “Start a business with your teen” *Lemonade to Leadership*, these ideas for that. And, I often say if you had a little family business, you don't really even have to make much money to gain huge benefits from it.

Maybe it's a virtual product. You're in the information world and you're creating something and being able to sell it or monetize it online.

That's where everybody thinks because that's where the big money may be. But you know, there are other entrepreneurial activities. My son had a little business we started up with him called Christoph's Sword Shop.

**Julie Walker:** Yes, yes.

**Andrew Pudewa:** He was buying swords wholesale and selling them retail. And, you know, he never made a lot of money, but he learned a lot of lessons. Another area is a service based business. So can you be better than the average person at washing windows or detailing a car? Or cleaning a house or yard work or dog sitting or dog walking or you know, if you were just to do a simple web search on service business ideas, you'd get hundreds of potential things.

And then maybe it's super part-time, maybe it's just you and dad cleaning the windows of two or three buildings on a Saturday, twice a month. Right? That's not a huge commitment of time, but you're starting to learn all these aspects. Probably the one that I was most impressed with was—and I've met many teenage entrepreneurs, and so I've seen a lot of them, but the one I never thought about until this kid said he was doing it, was maintaining fish tanks in professional offices.

**Julie Walker:** Oh, I love that. Yeah.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Let's say you're a dentist, or you've got some office and people come in all the time, and they have a waiting room. And research shows that fish tanks help to create a calming effect.

**Julie Walker:** I love that.

**Andrew Pudewa:** They have a, I won't say tranquilizing, something different, but they are emotionally relaxing.

**Julie Walker:** Yeah.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Just because fish kind of float around happily. They don't worry about stuff. There's little violence going on. It's better than a screen. But if you're a professional, you don't wanna have to mess with the tank.

You don't wanna have to figure out what to put in and keep the pH balance and clean the algae and all that. And you've got an office, and this is enhancing your office. Well, here's a sixteen-year-old kid who knows all about fish. Go in. "I'll give you, I'll set you up with a fish tank, and I will come in every week or two, and I will be sure it's clean and operating and has good looking fish and all that for X dollars a month."

Well, when you're in that world of being a professional, that's a no-brainer. That's a no-brainer. You've got margin in your accounting to have something like that. And I almost think if a kid walked in the door and said, I'll do this for you here at the IEW office, I'd be very tempted, you

**Julie Walker:** Exactly.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Especially if it was reasonable.

So that was the one that kind of impressed me. And I guess this kid did quite well with it. He was making thousands of dollars a month, which when you're 16, that's pretty good.

**Julie Walker:** That's pretty good. That'll fund your college experience.

**Andrew Pudewa:** So, entrepreneurial ideas. And then, you know, to finish up, I have heard lots of stories of kids who have found different ways to essentially be an adult at a younger age by operating in the world where mostly it's adults.

One area I think is particularly accessible is to volunteer on a political campaign because you are not under labor laws. You may find that there's a candidate that you can really believe in, whose positions, whose ideals, whose vision aligns very much with the world you'd like to see. And you can then, whether it's working in the office there on the phones or door to door or sending emails or...



I met one girl in Texas. She was sixteen. She had volunteered for, it was a state legislator from her zone. I don't remember exactly how Texas legislature is set up, but it was a state lawmaker. And she got on his campaign and he won, and he liked her so much. She was such a good communicator. She had done our writing program for many years.

**Julie Walker:** I was wondering.

**Andrew Pudewa:** He actually put her in charge of writing his monthly or weekly or however, his regular newsletter to constituents. She became the editor of his communication to his constituents, and then she was getting paid.

So, the campaign was the volunteer, but she stood out because of her skills. And so at 16, 17 years old, she's got a job working for a state legislator in Texas doing communications for him.

And she never went to college to get her communications or political sci, right? I mean, she was right in there. Now, maybe she would go and continue her education, but what a phenomenal experience at that age. So a political campaign I think is a very reasonable way for kids to get involved.

And it's a totally adult world. Right? I mean, you, you do what you say and you say what you do and you hold yourself accountable and other people hold you accountable. And then you get the thrill of the election and, and maybe winning or maybe not, and you learn something both ways.

Kind of alongside that would be internships.

That's a little bit harder to find, but at the same time, if you had a 16 year old kid who was super interested in something like veterinary medicine, and you came in and said, "I'd like to work for free in this office for six months and learn as much as I can about what you do." I mean, it'd be pretty, pretty hard for someone to say "No, thank you."

I mean, I suppose they could, but first of all, if you were the vet in charge of the office, you'd be kind of delighted, right? And you'd say, well, this is the right approach. And to work for free shows a level of interest and commitment that is beyond "I need a job."

**Julie Walker:** Sure.

**Andrew Pudewa:** So internships, other kind of volunteer opportunities.

And I will throw in this thought because it touches back on what we mentioned in terms of, what if you did a year or two of college before you finished your high school age?

**Julie Walker:** Right.

**Andrew Pudewa:** You'd kind of schedule-wise be ahead of most of your peers and that might give you some time to do something you might not otherwise do—a gap year

**Julie Walker:** I love that. Yes.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And what could you do with that?

Well, travel. Go on a missions trip if you're so inclined. Do one of these other things. Get really involved in a volunteer operation. You know, if your parents are willing to keep feeding you and letting you stay at home. So there'd be a freedom to experience kind of real life in a much deeper, more meaningful way than I think most kids get working part-time or during the summer in high school and then going straight off and doing four years of college when they're 18 to 22.

So you could buy yourself a little time by hacking high school. And with that accelerate the process of gaining experience and maturity to be successful in an adult world. And honestly, I think that right there, Is probably the thing that would make most teenagers the most happy, because what do they want?

What do we all want? So what did I hear Jordan Peterson say, just last night, satisfaction in life is gained by taking on greater levels of responsibility.

**Julie Walker:** Yes.

**Andrew Pudewa:** You have three kids, that's a lot of responsibility, right? It's not gonna be easy, but it's a lot of responsibility, and you will gain satisfaction from that.

So I think we need to rethink high school and kind of go back and have a much higher expectation of what high school students are capable of in terms of growing up and operating in the adult world to some degree.

**Julie Walker:** I have nothing to add to that.

**Andrew Pudewa:** It was fun. I hope it helps somebody out there. Hey, write to us and let us know if you've done any of these things or if this has sparked a new idea that maybe I didn't have because I'm constantly interested to know what do our listeners think about the things we just sit here and mouth off about.

**Julie Walker:** Thank you, Andrew.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Thank 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, 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.