

Dual Enrollment with Dr. Nicholas Ellis Transcript of Episode 383

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.

Do you know what we were doing a year ago, Andrew?

Andrew Pudewa: I have a hard time remembering what I was doing a few months ago, but I’m guessing we were sitting in this room talking to someone.

Julie Walker: It’s true because we have a visual here, and you can see that we have Dr. Nick Ellis right with us in the studio. And Nick, last year you talked to us about Christian Halls International, and this was a brand new program, and you were super excited about it. But you’re even more excited about it now, and it’s continuing to grow.

So welcome back to our podcast.

Dr. Nick Ellis: It’s great to be here, great to be back in Oklahoma.

Andrew Pudewa: And you know, I’ve been doing a lot of conventions this year, and I have to guesstimate that I mentioned Christian Hall’s International to at least ten different families every single day that I’m at conventions, because everyone has the question, you know, what do you do with high school students.

Julie Walker: Right.

Andrew Pudewa: And they’ve heard about the idea of dual enrollment options. They may or may not like the, or even have access to a, good community college situation. And there’s more and more competition from various schools and universities, but I don’t know of any program that’s got it, that the vision is as great as what Nick and his team have put together for CHI.

Julie Walker: Right. So Nick, tell us about that vision, and we’ll do our very best to keep the focus on what Andrew is talking about—dual enrollment with IEW classes through CHI. But it’s so much bigger than that. So let’s start there.

Dr. Nick Ellis: You’re right. The landscape of college is shifting, and I think we’re all starting to feel the growing pains of debt, ideological warfare, the challenges of always feeling the need to send our children away and not really sure how to build the beautiful, flourishing community. I think that’s what we’re all trying to find, right?

How do we as a family and as a community build a flourishing, multi-generational future for our families? And that answer used to be: send your kids away to college, and then we’re not really

sure where they're going to go. But that seems to be the answer. And increasingly people have begun to say, is that really the answer?

And we see that with decreasing enrollments in colleges. We see that with the explosion in the trade school space. And so there's lots of interesting things happening. And we saw that, and we said, how do we ensure that we can build a model where local families, local businesses, local churches can flourish and extend their legacy across multiple generations?

That's really what we kind of got into, and we looked historically and we said, well, how were people traditionally trained? When things were flourishing at the local level, in the classical era and, you know, early Jewish and Christian communities, you know how, how did this take place? And so we basically started to design a model where local eldership, local mentors, local tutors are prioritized, and students were able to get access to our various academic partners and universities and those kind of things, focusing on local implementation. And so the Christian Hall is essentially a group of students partnered with local subject matter experts, local elders, the kind of people that you would want your 18, 19, 20 year old person to be mentored and kind of grow with.

We have just happened to have a number of relationships with various different Christian universities where students can get their classes and their degrees and their credentialing through our universities. And so really what we're doing is we're bringing together local communities, local students, local mentors with top tier accredited Christian universities where you don't have to go into debt. You don't have to send your your best and your brightest away. You can really focus on designing the flourishing community. That's really the vision that we've been driving on. And so then the question is, within that bigger vision, what are the kinds of things that we could do tactically? What are the kind of things that we can do?

And as parents begin to come to us, as local community mentors begin to come to us, as elders came to us, we started to see over the last year that there are specific groups of programs that people have requested.

Julie Walker: And so you have four programs within Christian Halls.

Dr. Nick Ellis: Yeah. We have from an academic perspective—We have now hundreds of classes, literally hundreds of degrees that we could offer—everything from trade school certificates all the way through undergraduate masters and PhDs. But the question is how do you put those together in a community design? And there's really four community designs that we've seen emerge. First of all your, what I would call, your kind of standard honors college, great books reading program where you have homeschoolers and mothers that love reading and they love the great Christian intellectual tradition coming together and saying, we're already doing kind of a classical school. What do we do for a 13th grade or a 14th grade? We really don't know where to send our kids to continue that kind of intellectual tradition. And so to be able to build a local honors college, a local great books program, has been very successful.

Andrew Pudewa: I think when people hear that though, they think, oh, this has to be a big thing with dozens or hundreds of students and a dedicated building and a faculty. But that's not what you're talking about when you say local honors college.

Dr. Nick Ellis: That's right. This is, this is going back to the old tradition of a tutor or a mentor reading in a small group context and leading a discussion. No different than the old rabbinic model or the old Greek pedagogical tradition. And in fact 3, 4, 5 students with somebody who knows how to read through a great book that is an honors college.

And so we've been able to install these, everything from a small group of three or four students with one tutor, all the way to larger groups meeting in churches or meeting in schools of several hundred students with a couple dozen tutors. So that honors college program has been very flexible, and it is targeted on people who really do want to, you know, focus on the humanities and read through the whole history of Christian thought.

And there's not a lot of places you can do that affordably today, you know, in the collegiate environment. That would be one design. On the other extreme, the demand for skilled trade and the demand for people who want to work in businesses, not go into debt, not go into the traditional collegiate environment—that has just exploded over the last year.

And so we've worked very closely with one of our universities, Southeastern University, to design a very exciting program: an associates to bachelor's program in skilled trades. And to be able to earn a certificate or a degree in electrical or in plumbing or welding, in general contracting, working with a local mentor, a local professional, doing some of your general education and also working your way through a skilled trade.

I think that's going to be our number one program.

Julie Walker: I love this idea, Nick, because sometimes I think about that electrician that comes to my house. And he's going to retire in a few years. Who's going to take over for him? It seems there's a decreasing pool of people that are qualified to do this, and yet now you are coming alongside and saying, Hey, like the journeyman program, right where you got the apprenticeship.

Dr. Nick Ellis: That's right. We were shocked to find that really apprenticeship disappeared in this country really going back to the post World War II when the GI Bill came in and many of our colleges, especially our faith-based colleges that had been providing a skilled trade education, the money pulled them into more of the humanities, white collar kind of training.

And basically we abandoned the trades.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah, I'm sure you are familiar with Mike Rowe. You should get together with him because I think his TED talk on how we have to rethink work is possibly the best of all TED talks I've ever heard. But you know, he's saying this, if we don't start making this an important and valued form of education for young people, we will pretty soon have a country that doesn't have people to keep the lights on and keep the waters flowing.

Dr. Nick Ellis: And we need to start early. We need to tell kids in junior high and in high school—this is a beautiful, valuable contribution to our society. If we tell them this is a dirty dishonorable program, they will start to select out and then they will say, well, how do I go to college? And suddenly two years in, they're like, I didn't really want to go to college, but now I've got sixty to a hundred thousand dollars in debt and what do I do instead? We can find those opportunities for local mentorship. For local apprenticeship, you can come out with no debt. You can be earning 60, 70, 100 thousand dollars two to three years after graduation.

It is an amazing moment to rejuvenate the skilled trades. So that would be our second program. And then we have two other programs. We have our kind of standard Bible college and seminary option for those students that really do want to kind of lean into their faith tradition. And then we have an increasing interest in our work study program where students are coming into local businesses, learning on the job, doing their academics and partnering with a local company.

So those are, those are four designs that have been growing. I don't know what caused the catalyst, but just for example, this month we've had over a hundred requests for new Christian Halls just in North America. Canada is beginning to call. We've got hundreds of campuses in Brazil. So something is taking place where there's now an interest and an openness to doing something different in the post high school space.

Andrew Pudewa: So I want to tell you what I tell people and have you correct that if I'm wrong about anything. This is actually the first time I've heard of your four different subdivisions, I guess, but I'm often talking to a family. They've got a couple very sharp teenagers, you know, 16, 17, 15 maybe. And I will engage them in a conversation about dual enrollment.

Have you considered this? Well, yeah. We kind of know something, and then I will point them to a couple sources of info. Obviously a lot of these colleges, Liberty, Grand Canyon, Colorado Christian, they are actively working to get dual enrollment students distance learning and role because that's how they can—

Dr. Nick Ellis: Recruit them.

Andrew Pudewa: So if you do a year worth of college credits when you're 16 or 17, you're much more likely to want to finish out at that school. But when I explain CHI I, I do it kind of like this. I say, well, it would be your couple kids and a few of their friends, and you would start essentially kind of like a club and you would need an adult to help facilitate everything.

The kids would then get together and look at the list of possible courses that CHI offers through these accredited institutions. And your little group could choose one or more of these. They would all enroll in the course, but then they would get together once, maybe even twice a week to read and talk, maybe do some of the homework or bounce ideas off each other, have a little study group so that they would have that experience in order to get the most out of this kind of online remote, asynchronous course that they're doing. And then if that goes well, then they could add another course the next semester and, and maybe add a few people. Is that basically correct?

Dr. Nick Ellis: That is the core definition of what is a Christian Hall

Andrew Pudewa: Then I'm not giving anyone wrong information.

Dr. Nick Ellis: Everything beyond that is program selection. "Oh, you want to do ____? We have a wonderful aviation program that started to develop." Well, how did that start to happen? Well, because pilots are a very interesting breed of person. They love their hobby, and they have expensive toys, and they need to justify the use of those toys to their wives.

And so there's no greater justification than getting together with young, late teenagers, early adults, and training and teaching them in the very hobby that these pilots simply love to do. And so we've had pilots come to us to say, "We have young people that want to learn how to fly. You have a bachelor's in aviation. Could we get together and form, in your language, a flying club." Where these retired pilots, sometimes with 30, 40, 50, 60,000 hours of flight time in the professional airlines are now retired? And they love nothing more than to talk about aviation and teach about aviation and to train other people and use their airplanes. Well, we just match up those mentors with our academic programs to create this Christian Hall learning community, this, this club.

Well, what are the other kind of areas of interest? Suddenly we have a welding program. Why did we build a welding program? Because we had retiring welders saying to us, "don't have people to give my company to."

Can you give me a way, an instrument for them to stay here and learn with me so that I can create a flourishing community? And if the welders go away, everything breaks. You don't know how much welding is important.

Andrew Pudewa: So you're bringing adults with areas of interest, expertise, you know, kind of a passion and connecting them up with groups of kids and then offering various things depending on what that group of kid and which adults are involved. And essentially they can take these academic courses from a variety of accredited universities or colleges, and somehow you are able to be the nexus there, you help them find it, you help them sign up for it, you facilitate the economic side of it, and then you keep records. Is that correct?

Dr. Nick Ellis: Yes, that's correct.

Julie Walker: While Andrew, you were talking about online classes. I know, Nick, that you have gone to these universities and you have requirements. So when you go to these universities, say like Southeastern University, you're looking for schools that are accredited at the highest level because when a student's doing dual enrollment, they're not necessarily knowing what school they're going to transfer to.

So it really helps that these schools have credit that can be transferred. Here you've got these four programs, but each of these programs have academic components to it, and all these students have to take English Comp I and English Comp II. And so what you have negotiated with these

universities is *IEW Structure and Style for Students: Year 1 Level C*, along with *Fix-It Grammar: Level 5*.

That is a robust course, and that can count as two semesters of college credit.

Dr. Nick Ellis: That's right. So let's talk about how IEW really kind of came into this whole ecosystem. As we begin to talk to parents and as we begin to select—what are those classes that they're selecting? What are those classes that they need? What are the priorities for dual credit? What should they take in high school, early stage college?

People begin to come to us and say, “I don't love what I'm getting in that generic comp one or comp two class. In fact, we've been doing courses with Andrew Pudewa and IEW for 5, 6, 7 years, and then we show up at our local community college. And the quality is just starkly, you know, starkly different. Why would we go take that generic class that we don't know what they're going to do? It's like, here's an apple. Go bite into it.

But we don't really know what it's like. Man, it's full of worms. Why would we want to eat that apple when we have a wonderful apple here that we know and that we trust? And so we were able to go to our universities and say, you know, instead of using that Macmillan or Pearson generic textbook for comp one, why don't we switch that curriculum out and use a trusted curriculum that we know and that our families already love, and then assign a professor to teach this at the freshman level?

And our university said, well, let's give it a shot. Why not? We're just changing the textbook. And what we've found is that that has been so much more successful in terms of actually teaching kids how to write both at the dual credit level, And now, interestingly enough, even in the post dual credit world, because from a college perspective, it's a college class. And so we have some students taking that at 16, 17, 18, in the high school years for dual credit. And increasingly, we're having 18, 19, 20 year old students take that as their college writing class. And they're not taking it for dual credit, they're taking it as their standard college writing class and very, very successfully.

And so my job is to triangulate between subject matter expert mentors in the community, students and find the best program possible to serve those clients. Well, it just so happens that the best writing curriculum that we've been able to find is the IEW writing material, because we can install this in any community, working with that local mentor, and it works, and it's very, very successful.

Julie Walker: Well, it does really help to have that video component. There's no trusting on someone else's experience or lack of it to be able to teach the course. You're getting taught by the expert teacher, but what about grading papers, Nick? How do these students get these papers evaluated?

Dr. Nick Ellis: The wonderful thing about the IEW ecosystem of parents and groups and co-ops and Andrew is the subject matter expert, is now it is a very mature program. And so what we've

been able to find is that there are moms individually that have been trained in IEW that know how to support their students.

There are co-ops that are out there with very successful IEW tutors that have been certified, accredited by IEW, and they have a very high standard and a very high fidelity of instruction. There are schools that we now work with that have implemented IEW and are starting to build out that program in their writing program.

And those teachers have been trained. So all the way down the ecosystem. In fact, IEW has a wonderful online live tutorial program.

Julie Walker: Right. Yes. Our IEW Online classes talk about this, Nick, because this is something that you and I, we weren't really sure how that we were going to do this last year, but then we landed a couple months ago, and it's going to be great.

Dr. Nick Ellis: So whether it is an individual homeschool mom that's been trained, whether it is a co-op tutor, a school teacher, or an online live tutor from IEW—those are all options that we've been able to find that students, we know that our members will get a very high quality education going through the IEW system.

Now, one of the things that we learned this year, we've been doing this two semesters now. We're entering into our third semester and we've discovered that we really did need to offer two different classes. We needed to offer a IEW class that follows the curriculum as written. And then we also offered a separate class that follows the IEW Online live tutoring program.

Julie Walker: Yes, so IEW.com/online, that's specifically what we're talking about here, our IEW online classes. Our instructors that we've hired to teach this group of students, they follow a very specific plan. They adopt it slightly because of the engagement they're having. They're meeting with the students for fifteen weeks.

They're bringing in the *Frog Prince* for the *Fix It! Grammar*. So they're not just doing the video, they're giving them the coaching. There's still an opportunity for students to enroll in these online classes. We still have a few openings, but if you're enrolled in an IEW Online class, Year 1 Level C, you're going to get high school credit, and now if you also enroll in Christian Halls International and Southeastern or Donnelley College, you're also getting college credit.

Andrew Pudewa: So in that case it's our people, our online instructor team. They are marking the papers and giving the grades, and that is working for the college credit part of it.

Julie Walker: So almost. Once they're given feedback from their IEW Online instructors, the students can fix it up, and they turn it into their learning management system LMS. Like Canvas. I think that's what Southeastern University and Donnelly are using. And then these schools, with the partnership with CHI have hired IEW Accredited Instructors to be the graders.

And those IEW instructors that are the graders, they know what they're looking for. They know what a good assignment is. They're anonymous, but they're the ones assigning the grades to the students.

Dr. Nick Ellis: This is where that robust mature IEW ecosystem has been so valuable to us. What we've discovered is it's not just a curriculum, it's really a whole community and a culture around IEW. And so to be able to go out and find these highly qualified, accredited instructors that know the material, they can work with our professors at the universities and provide a very consistent, high quality amount of feedback.

So you're not just kind of getting this, well, that one professor kind of didn't like what I was doing and marked things down. They have been trained by IEW, and so we've been able to find and hire those accredited instructors.

Andrew Pudewa: And writing is one of those things you really can't assess with a multiple choice kind of more automated grading testing system, like some subjects would lend themselves to that. That's generally the hardest part of the equation for parents if they don't themselves feel qualified to mark in grade papers, who is? That's fantastic.

I know a lot of people might be curious to know what's the differential in cost between, say, a dual enrollment program at a community college or a private school versus Christian halls versus waiting until you're nineteen and enrolling at the University of blah, blah.

Dr. Nick Ellis: Our standard price point is a hundred dollars a credit hour for dual credit. And so we encourage students to take advantage of that as much as they possibly can because from 15 or so until 19. They're eligible for dual credit, and so to get up through about 60 credit hours at a hundred dollars a credit hour, get your associate's degree.

The cost savings are enormous. I tell parents all the time who are about to graduate their sixteen-year-old high school student. I say, why would you do that?

Andrew Pudewa: Right.

Dr. Nick Ellis: You are, you are about to triple or quadruple or quintuple your college costs by graduating them early. Keep them listed as a high school student. Take advantage of. They're the same exact class. Right. The only difference is the price point. And so take advantage of this and implement this as much as you possibly can. And then of course we would love for them to start a local Christian Hall and engage through our program. But even if they just knock off those dual credit classes and then transfer, that's still an enormous benefit.

We have one community in Huntsville, Alabama, that we're working with, and they're just so marvelous because they know exactly how to triangulate their local talent, and the local students and the local market need.

They came to us with three programs. They have a local classical school, they have strong interest in the trades, and it's Huntsville, so it's NASA. And so they came to us, and in the first

consultation they said, we want three programs. We want our honors college program, great books and humanities and whatnot for all of those classical students that really want to continue to study and work through their way through the literature.

We have our trade school program that we want to start, and we have a two year polytechnic launchpad that we want to start basically for students to be able to knock off all their general education. All the psych philosophy, anthropology, some of the frankly, the problematic classes that a lot of parents hesitate to send their kids to.

The state school said, we want to launch a two year launch pad for the kids that do want to go to the University of Alabama or to Clemson to get their engineering programs to come back into the NASA program. Those are the three programs that they wanted to launch, and the first thing that they said to us was, We have a bunch of students that are doing IEW, can we use that as our writing class in all three of those programs? Because of course you need to write, if you're going to be in the humanities, you need to be able to write well if you're going to be in the trades. And then we can use this as kind of the general education writing pre-reqs for all of those students that are moving into the engineering programs.

So that would be one way that IEW kind of fills in the gap for all of those. And all of those programs we can get all the way through their associates using dual credit and save an enormous amount of resources for those parents.

Julie Walker: Now I heard you say something that I want to make sure our listeners picked up on. I love the idea of the Huntsville community, and I love that you've got communities now starting in Vancouver, in Toronto. But even if there isn't a community near you, you can still do dual enrollment. Just little old you.

You can enroll in our IEW Online class or have mom teach you at home. Don't worry about it, mom. You're not the one assigning college credit. You're enrolling in Southeastern University or Donnelley College through CHI; they're the ones that are going to grade the papers. They're the ones that are going assign the college credit.

You just take, can take one class, then you may be introduced to the whole smorgasbord of all the different options that you have available.

Dr. Nick Ellis: Yep. That's good. That's exactly what we're trying to say, and we think it is a marvelous way to start the process. And of course, we would love to encourage you to create your own self-governing, no-debt, locally-integrated educational program. But if you just start with IEW, that's a great first step.

Julie Walker: I love it. It's a great gateway program of excellence. You know, I want to read a little testimonial that we have from one of our own students who went through CHI using *Structure and Style for Students*. This is Amy, and she actually works here in our office. We just love Amy. And this is what she says, "Talking to other students, I realize that many of them weren't taught to outline, but were just given a subject and told what to write about."

Using IEW models and outlines for writing has given me the tools I need to approach any assignment with confidence. See there are tools that you're given within in the IEW course that you probably won't get in a Comp I class.”

Then she goes on to say, “Taking the course through CHI to obtain college credit was a simple and enjoyable process. I loved it. CHI graders gave excellent feedback and wanted to help me be the best that I could be. I have decided to attend a university on campus this fall, and the credits I earned. Through CHI will transfer to that university. I highly recommend this opportunity.”

Andrew Pudewa: That's exactly what we're trying to help high school kids with. Get a little head start.

Julie Walker: I was telling you earlier today, Nick, I forgot how exhausting you are because you have so many exciting things that you're working on. Sometimes being in the same room with you, I think, oh, I'm not doing enough. But you're an amazing leader and I'm so happy that you came to us and said your *Structure and Style for Students: Year 1 Level C* is robust enough to count as college credit. And you know, occasionally we get naysayers who say, this is too easy, but now we know it's not too easy. It's good enough for college credit.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, and I think one thing that, I think Nick said this to me some time ago, and I've heard it elsewhere, that you know, these days most college classes are not, especially at the freshman, sophomore level, they're not really any more rigorous than corresponding high school classes. It's just in high school you do, you know, chemistry for a year and you might get that same chemistry in a semester.

So I wasn't surprised that our class would qualify as a college course. You know, we do have the rigor, and it's such a timely thing to have in place. Going back to what Nick was saying, I just know so many parents, one of the most common questions I get is, What do you think about sending kids to college these days?

And it's a very good conversation to have because, you know, a lot of people have ended up with huge amount of debt or kids that get sucked into kind of a semi-woke way of thinking about the world. And that's not what the parents are wanting for the kids. But they don't know another way.

Dr. Nick Ellis: When people ask me all the time now, what is the main difference between going away to a four year college and staying local in a Christian Hall? And I've started to describe it kind of using a little bit of a metaphor that many people go away to their university, they go there for four years, and they will probably never step foot on that campus again for the rest of their life. They might go back for a homecoming, you know, or something along those lines, but it's very transactional. You go, you take your classes, you get your degree, and you're gone.

What we're trying to do with Christian halls is more akin to the ancient synagogue model. Or to, may I say the the martial arts dojo, you know, yes, you can come in and get your white belt and your yellow belt, your dual credit classes, and these early stage classes. Yes, you can go all the way through PhD or get your black belt or those kind of things.

But if you were going to study ten years to get your black belt, would you just stop once you got your black belt? Are you done? Is it over? No. There's a place where you come to practice your art and to train others that are younger than you in your local community. And really the Christian Hall is modeled around that.

It's not a place that you come and get a degree and leave. Generational transfer wisdom for us is far more important than the transactional relaying of data. That is the model that we're going back to because that is how generational transfer of wisdom has always taken place before we moved into this transactional model.

Andrew Pudewa: Nick, you are an amazing balance of this extremely high level vision that is just almost too good to imagine ever happening. And then the practical, this is what you do tomorrow to start, and that is just so valuable in a person. I think that's one reason why I just love hanging out with you because you can think from this very, very high comprehensive idea of what you're doing big picture. And then you are hammering out details little by little. And people can just hop in and, and join you in this, huh?

Dr. Nick Ellis: Well, the only way we've been able to do that is by partnering with mature, excellent programs. Because if I had to design this by myself, it would not be possible. But the only way that we've been able to do that is with, in partnerships like with IEW, where we can trust parents are going to be given the tools to actually build these things up.

And so that's why we're just delighted to be here, to be back in this room with you guys and to be working in partnership as we build out this network of Christian halls.

Andrew Pudewa: Five years from now, ten years from now, it could be so amazing.

Julie Walker: Thank you, Nick.

Andrew Pudewa: Thank you

Dr. Nick Ellis: 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. 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.