

Episode 433: What to Buy

Episode Transcript

Andrew Pudewa: And it's always better to err on the side of being a little simpler than to err on the side of being too tough, because we want students to have success and make good progress.

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, although, Andrew, we are recording this podcast in June, this one actually launches in July.

Andrew Pudewa: Why are we even telling people that?

Julie Walker: It's hard to believe that we are going to launch a podcast on the day we record it.

Andrew Pudewa: True, but

Julie Walker: just being honest.

Andrew Pudewa: The subject of this podcast should have been released in June.

Julie Walker: No, no, this is perfect for today, because today is July 10th.

Andrew Pudewa: Which is the cutoff date.

Julie Walker: For our freedomshipping. So we have a special promotion every year called Freedomshipping.

Andrew Pudewa: And we're just now letting people know about it when it's over.

Julie Walker: no, no, no, no, no, no. I think I, last week, the podcast that we launched last week actually talks about why we don't discount.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, and we said freedomshipping. So people know if they follow our podcast every week, which they should.

Julie Walker: Yeah, and I have some inside information. Today, July 10th, is not going to be the last day of our Freedomshipping promotion.

Andrew Pudewa: Why is that?

Julie Walker: Because of this podcast. We wanted to give them time.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, this was an enigma wrapped in a mystery concealed in a riddle. So whatever.

Julie Walker: So I like that you said it like that because oftentimes people are a little bit mystified about IEW. They know what we do because they've talked to their friends. You've had this happen when you go to homeschool conventions. I had this happen when I went to a recent convention. "My friends told me I need IEW, but I don't know what to buy."

Andrew Pudewa: Well, the sad thing is when I hear someone say, "Oh, I was looking at this a couple years ago, but it seemed too complicated. But now it's like so easy, and it's the best thing. I wish I just did this before." So that's what we're trying to help people get past the "it seems complicated" business.

Julie Walker: It's not complicated. The thing that's complicated and The thing that I think mystifies some of our customers is we don't have grade levels on our books for our student materials.

Andrew Pudewa: Right.

Julie Walker: And so there's a good reason for that, that I'll just touch on right now. Our books Our curriculum is designed to be used where your students are at, and if they're not at a fifth grade reading level, then they should go down lower or higher.

So it doesn't matter what the number is on the cover, just give your students where they are. But the kids, guess what? They know what that number is on the cover. And so if you give them a book that's lower than their grade level, they're going to be embarrassed. And we don't have that.

Andrew Pudewa: No, we don't. We play a game of codes and meaning, but I think you said the key, which is: the most important thing for deciding where to start really is reading level because that indicates that aptitude for reading and writing and it's always better to err on the side of being a little simpler than to err on the side of being too tough because we want students to have success and find that it's relatively easy and make good progress. And you've got plenty of time. You can work through these, and people are always worried. "Oh no. If I don't start with the very first thing, what will I miss?" You won't miss anything. Cause we keep teaching the same structural models and the same stylistic techniques every year.

Julie Walker: And there's a reason for that. It's not so that we can let anybody start wherever they want. It's part of the pedagogy. It's part of the methodology. So I'm going to jump right in, just so, dear listener, you don't have to wait until another few minutes of where to start. I'm going to jump right into our three step implementation program for homeschoolers, and then the added fourth step for the schools division.

Andrew Pudewa: Good thing you're here cause I don't know anything

Julie Walker: Well, this has changed over the years just because homeschooling has changed over the years, and more and more schools are adopting us. And so we tried to simplify it. So the very first thing a parent needs to decide in a homeschooling environment is which curriculum is appropriate for their student.

And we have two options, theme-based, which is a paper based course where you're—it's not a workbook—but it explains a method without video

Andrew Pudewa: Well, it provides all the things that the parent needs, or the teacher needs, which is the source text aligned with the unit, background information if necessary, practice exercises for the new style techniques, if any, and the checklist. Those are the parts of a lesson, and I always point out that if people are going to be using our theme-based writing lessons, they are way better off if they do the teaching writing instruction

Julie Walker: Well, and we'll get to that in a second. So choose theme-based or video-based, and of course we love, we often here at the *Arts of Language* podcast talk about the *Structure and Style® for Students* video courses. They're so good. You explain things so well to the students. The students who watch them at home—they feel like they're a part of the class. They raise their hands even though they know that you can't see them.

Andrew Pudewa: Talk to the screen

Julie Walker: It's just, it's very interactive and

Andrew Pudewa: Surprisingly so.

Julie Walker: Yes and it's very comprehensive. You go through every unit, step by step, every lesson, step by step, and it's just a great product. So do you want a paper-based course, or do you want a video course?

So what, what's their reading level? And then you choose, and then we have a variety of themes to choose from, or you choose the video-based. Now, I am looking right now at the Magalog—magazine and catalog—that we make available to our homeschooling families or co-ops, because a lot of co ops and groups use our materials as well.

And if you don't have one of these, IEW.com/magalog, you can either view it online, or you can request one to be mailed to you. We're happy to do so. But on page 13, there's this really great chart that tells you, here's some reading levels, here's where you can start, and it's divided into paper-based, video-based. And so you choose your curriculum. That is step one.

Step two is To Learn the Method. While your students are learning the method, our way of teaching writing is so, I was going to say, superior, which of course that's market speak, but it's absolutely true, but it's very different than anyone else.

Andrew Pudewa: When she said that she had her eyes closed and she had this huge smile on her face, like she was going back to the early days of twenty-some years ago when you first learned it.

Julie Walker: Yes, it was such an epiphany. I was a school teacher. I taught writing to my middle school students. And then, I don't know, I guess you could say I got demoted to first and second grade by my choice. So I knew how to teach, but there was nothing that taught me how to teach writing in my education. And when we started homeschooling, there was nothing out there that would teach writing in this step by step method that IEW does.

Andrew Pudewa: So what we're saying here is that it's really good if parents learn the program so they can teach it better.

Julie Walker: Yes. So as your students are getting the checklist and they learn their dress ups and as they're reading the source text, there's all kinds of nuances that you learn when you're doing the teacher training program that the students are not getting because the students, it's being taught at their level. They're not getting some of the background of why we do what we do. So that teacher training is almost like a defense for why we teach writing the way we do.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, there's rigor, but I don't think there's too many people who did it and said, "Oh, I wish I hadn't done that." It's just carving out the time really to do it. And of course there's a little bit of summer remaining so people can get a head start.

And you don't have to watch the entire TWSS to start. If you watch the first few units, you can start teaching the first few lessons and then just stay ahead. And everything's organized by unit. So everything, theme-based, Structure and Style® for Students, TWSS, everything corresponds by unit. So that should make it pretty easy to stay one step ahead of your kids.

Julie Walker: That's all you need to be just a little bit smarter than them. Right? Well, in the *Structure and Style for Students*, we have in the teacher manual, the teacher manual that goes with the student video courses, what you should watch in the *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style*® teacher training course just to be that little bit smarter than your kids.

Andrew Pudewa: There you have it.

Andrew Pudewa: But people can do the SSS course in a pinch without having watched the TWSS because we do all the teaching. We do the heavy lifting. It's better, but it's possible. And then, of course, there's the co-ops groups, hybrid schools, people teaching IEW in a class. And I've noticed that there's kind of two groups of people who are in this type of program, right?

The ones who they take the kid, the kid is in writing class, the teacher teaches it, and the kid does it, and the parent's not really informed or involved.

And then other groups where all the parents get together and actually watch the TWSS together, maybe one a month or something and have a little party. And eat popcorn and watch the teacher training course. Those groups are much more successful because the parents know

exactly what the kids are doing, can help them at home. So if you're going to undertake having your kids in this type of class or school or program, you want to be there to help as much as possible and don't kind of abdicate because then you're not going to get the same great results that you could. You might still get good results, but they might not be as great.

Julie Walker: So I'm thinking we have three groups of people who listen to our podcast. We have the homeschooling parent, and they understand that they are taking responsibility for the education of their students. And we would hope that they would be as involved as you just described, Andrew.

And then we have another group, and that is full time school teachers, and they are teaching a group of kids in their classroom. We're going to speak to them in just a minute of where to start with our school teachers.

But then we have this third group, and this is really dedicated parents who have their kids in school, but they still want to be involved. And we have resources for them as well, including our *Structure and Style Overview*, which is a two hour video of you just kind of giving the 30,000 foot of the nine units and the stylistic techniques.

Andrew Pudewa: Right, and that's available online for anyone. It's free, right?

Julie Walker: Yes, exactly. Yeah, yep. And we'll put a link in the show notes so that you can click on that. But it's not the full course meal.

Andrew Pudewa: The full enchilada,

Julie Walker: Yeah, the whole enchilada. It is not the full enchilada.

Andrew Pudewa: The Megillah!

Julie Walker: It is just the chips and salsa before you dive into your banquet.

Julie Walker: So, that's the second step is learn the method. So, first step, choose your curriculum based on reading level and whether or not you want a theme based book or video based book.

Second step, learn the method. And the third is the favorite for me: celebrate success. We are so confident that our students, our teachers, our homeschooling parents will have good results the we guarantee it.

Andrew Pudewa: We do. We guarantee it on both ends, because you can try the *Structure and Style for Students* video course a few weeks for free, online, absolutely no commitment, no cost, nothing. And so, try it. If you like it, okay, get the rest. If you don't, that's okay. And then, if you finish the whole thing and said, well, that was a bummer, send it back.

Julie Walker: Yep. So we're very, very happy to receive all the testimonies. In fact, we should do a podcast where we read some of the testimonies. It sounds a little bit, what do you call that? Self-serving, but it is really fun.

Andrew Pudewa: I think people like to hear the stories of other people. And I particularly like to read letters that I get from kids. Because that's where you really see the change that's occurring.

Julie Walker: Okay. Listener next week. We're doing an episode called From Our Mailbag, and so we're actually going to be reading some of these for next week. But for this week, this is the What to Buy episode. Choose your curriculum. Learn the method. Celebrate success. And you can actually see a short little video that I do with Nathan on our website, IEW.com/start, where we actually give these three steps. And then there's some links in there of the curriculum choices and the teacher training course and some of our testimonials, which is very handy, nice laid out.

Now I want to talk to our school teachers, and it's almost the same, except that as school teachers know, things are a little bit different in a homeschooling environment than they are in the classroom. That five-day-a-week classroom. You've got a range of students based on abilities that may be all the same age, but there are all very different in their abilities, and so we want to provide a little bit extra help to our school teachers to make sure that you're choosing materials that will help you in training your students to become confident and competent communicators and thinkers. I say that every week on our podcast.

Andrew Pudewa: I know.

Julie Walker: Do you? So the very first step if you are in a school is connect with your Educational Consultant.

Andrew Pudewa: Right, because we've got a whole room of people that are very experienced in knowing how to get going, whether it's one classroom, or a few grade levels, or a whole school adoption. And of course there are many factors to consider there. And they basically have some similar options. Printed lessons with source texts and checklists all provided, or video that could be shown to students in class, which in some cases I think works very well, or the teacher could watch me teach kids on the video and then steal my jokes and go try to teach their kids like I do.

So that's a particularly effective form of teacher training is this tight modeling of every lesson. And then after a year, you're kind of an expert. And that's what we want. Expert teachers.

Julie Walker: Absolutely. Absolutely. So, step one, connect with your educational consultant. And then the next three steps. Choose your curriculum, select a training preference, because there are lots of different training opportunities for school, our highest level of training that we provide to schools is onsite professional development. And we have a couple trainers on our staff, you being one of them, where you or Jeff Nease will go out to a classroom, to a school, usually in the summer.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah, usually for two or three days.

Julie Walker: Yeah, two or three days, and do that Teaching Writing: Structure and Style. Answer their specific questions. Oftentimes, everybody in the school is there, regardless of what they teach.

In fact, our director of our schools division, Sharyn Stagers, attended one of these, and this is where she got very excited about IEW. She expected to be bored. She was going to sit in the back and just grade papers while this guy up front, which was you, was going to explain.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, it's because she's a science teacher.

Julie Walker: She was there.

Andrew Pudewa: What does writing have to do with that? But yeah, we've had many, many cases where subject area teachers were part of it because the whole school was doing it but then saw a way to fit that in and write better science reports or do better history research or even make a keyword outline of math word problems to be able to solve them more easily or better. So, yeah, the cross application is phenomenal.

Julie Walker: Yeah. We like to say that writing isn't English. It doesn't have to be relegated to the English/Language Arts department. It is learning. And so if you're writing, you're learning.

Andrew Pudewa: If you're writing, you're thinking. And if you need to think, then writing is a good way to train that.

Julie Walker: A good way to do that. Exactly. And oh, just kind of. Back on the Sharyn thing, so she got super excited about it, started implementing it, just like you say, in her science class with the writing reports. And she passed out a checklist for the students to use when they turned in and they groaned. They said, "Oh, you're talking to Mrs. Pewthers and you're finding out what she's teaching. That's not fair." Because she knew those kids learned how to write. And so she was excited. And of course, now this is 10 years later, she's on our team and schools division is really growing. And we are having many, many great stories from school teachers.

Andrew Pudewa: And so is Mrs. Pewthers.

Julie Walker: Yes, indeed. That's right. We snagged Mrs. Pewthers as well, and she also works for our team in our Schools Division. So that's it. Those are the three. Or for step implementation of where to start with IEW. I mentioned at the beginning that this has changed over the years. Because when I first started, all those years ago, when I was homeschooling my teenage boys, it was the teacher training course. I learned the method.

Andrew Pudewa: You had to go find your own source texts and make your own assignments, and that was good. But this is so much better because we have so many options now, and you can find a theme-based that fits in with what you're studying in history or

literature to some degree. And then the SSS course is plug-and-play easy, which is good because then we've been able to reach more kids and help them learn to read and write and think better. And what better job could we possibly have?

Julie Walker: Right, right. I would be remiss if I did not mention our newest series of theme-based books. They're not specific to a theme, they're kind of a smattering of a little bit of this and a little bit of that. And the reason for that is we are writing them in cooperation and collaboration with the Hillsdale Academy, Hillsdale K-12 programs, schools that are cropping up across the nation.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, their curriculum map is extremely well designed. And so, what we did was we said, "Okay, what history, what science, what literature, what music or art types of things are they doing during this month in this grade?" And then we chose some source texts that would fit in perfectly with that.

So, it really is a beautiful integration and of course the Hillsdale K 12 Curriculum Guide is used in all of their affiliate schools and that network is growing very rapidly, but anyone can use the theme-based books.

Julie Walker: And we now have three. So as of the date of this podcast, we have three, *Adventures in Writing*, *Discoveries in Writing*, and *Frontiers in Writing*.

Andrew Pudewa: Okay. And there will be more.

Julie Walker: And there will be more, yes, someday, yes, so really, really fun thing. But theme based, Andrew mentioned a particular theme, so we have Bible-Based Writing Lessons, which was our very first one.

Andrew Pudewa: my favorite.

Julie Walker: yes, that Andrew wrote, along with the help from Dr. Webster. And then we've got a lot of history based writing lessons. So history-based writing lessons, and then we've got *Wonders of Science*, which is science themed. So I love that we have the themes that are devoted to a specific thing, but I also love this idea of just kind of like a potpourri of topics that your student could write about.

Great source text is what we're looking for. Great step by step guidance that is provided both in the theme based and the structure and style video courses. And of course. We're here at the ready to answer any questions you might have. Our customer service team, our schools division. If you have a question, you can call us, tell us what page you're on. We'll open the book and we'll walk you through it with you because everyone here knows your method too. So, all right. I hope that helps.

Andrew Pudewa: I hope so too.

Julie Walker: Happy Freedomshipping. You got one more day.

Andrew Pudewa: Okay. One more day.

Julie Walker: Thanks so much for joining us. If you enjoyed this episode and want to hear more, please subscribe to our podcast in iTunes, Stitcher, or Spotify. Or just visit us each week at IEW.com/podcast. Here you can also find show notes and relevant links from today's broadcast. One last thing: would you mind going to iTunes to rate and review our podcast? This really helps other smart, caring listeners like you find us. Thanks so much.