

## Podcast 436: Tools to Empower and Equip You

### Episode Transcript

**Andrew Pudewa:** If you want to understand our system, read student samples and see the range of what's possible of kids at different age levels and all the units.

**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:** The end of July. Here we are, which means next month, August. Typically, that's how it works.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well we hope. Yeah.

**Julie Walker:** And of course, August for many, many, many schools and families in the United States signals the beginning of school. It used to be that we would start the day after Labor Day.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well, I don't know if that's just because we're old or because we were in California, but it seemed like it was always middle of September. And this early August, I'm still not used to it, but it is what it is.

**Julie Walker:** So you got a couple weeks left, and I thought that it would be good for us to have a conversation with our teachers and teaching parents about not what they can do, but what we can do. That's what we're talking about: what we can do to help you as you are preparing and actually start your school year using IEW materials.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well, we sit around and think about how can we help people more?

**Julie Walker:** true. It's true. It reminds me, of course, I always go to this talk that you give, *The Four Deadly Errors of Teaching Writing*. And one of the deadly errors is withholding help. And we don't want to withhold help. We don't want parents and teachers to withhold help from their students. We don't want teachers to feel like they were left high and dry. So we are here to help. And we have several ways that we do that. So I thought it would be interesting to enumerate some of them.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well, that is your job, is to let people know how we can help.

**Julie Walker:** Yes. Well, one of them, of course, that we do every week is our podcast, which good job, check, done next. But sometimes we talk about things you can do in your classroom. Sometimes we just talk about health and wellness and eating together as a family. We're actually going to be talking about that in September, eating together as a family, which I think is very fun.

So that's our podcast. Every week we have a podcast.

**Andrew Pudewa:** That's the number one thing. How many things are there? You're going to enumerate. You've got to tell how many.

**Julie Walker:** oh, this is true.

**Andrew Pudewa:** If you're going to enumerate, you say, "Here's how many things I'm going to tell you about."

**Julie Walker:** I'm going to say seven.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Okay. So number one, check, done. Podcast.

**Julie Walker:** Another thing, a huge thing that I think is super helpful is our webinars. We do what we affectionately call a book of the year webinar. And for many years, we did the history-based writing lessons, *Ancient History-Based Writing Lessons*, *Medieval History Based-Writing Lessons*, U.S. History-Based Writing Lessons, and those are done, in the can, as we say in the video world. And they are available to you at our webinar archive page. So if you are using any of those theme based books, we've got eight or nine webinars that we did every month. We did a webinar specific to a unit.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Specific to a unit, specific to one of the history books. And we did this for many years. So webinar archive. So if you are expecting us to do, say, *Ancient History-Based Writing Lessons* this year? No, we're actually going to refer you to the *Ancient History-Based Writing Lessons* webinar archive.

**Julie Walker:** Right. So we're actually doing two, but one of them is being taught by someone other than you,

**Andrew Pudewa:** Oh, good.

**Julie Walker:** it will be helpful. You are doing *Adventures in Writing*, and this is a new theme based book, relatively new. It goes up to Unit 7, and you are doing those on Monday nights, first or second Monday of every month. There's a link in the show notes of where you can register for that. So if you are using *Adventures in Writing* this school year, you will want to tune in, listen live, or at least sign up so that you can get the recording emailed to you.

**Andrew Pudewa:** What if people are doing *Discoveries in Writing*?

**Julie Walker:** And that's the other one that we're doing this

**Andrew Pudewa:** Oh, we are. We're doing both.

**Julie Walker:** We are. And so, Jeff Nease, our Schools Division Implementation Coach, will be doing *Discoveries in Writing* on a different time, on a different date, later on in the week.

**Andrew Pudewa:** So we're doing these primarily in support of teachers who are using these books in their classrooms with their students, either for their first or second year of teaching or more, but they're new books, so it won't be that long. Do you think there's value in anyone just tuning in? I mean, even if they're not teaching that book, we go over the unit. We talk about some of the tips and tricks for the style techniques that are coming. We answer questions.

**Julie Walker:** That's a big deal.

**Andrew Pudewa:** That's really the reason to participate in the live webinars, to get questions asked. So anyone's welcome and it's free

**Julie Walker:** It's free. Yes.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Okay. Webinars.

**Julie Walker:** And actually, every single one of these tools that I'm mentioning, all seven of them, there's no cost to them. We're not going to start charging for this podcast, are we?

**Andrew Pudewa:** We don't even have sponsors.

**Julie Walker:** I know, it's true.

**Andrew Pudewa:** That how uninterested we are in, what do you call it?

**Julie Walker:** Using this as a revenue stream. No, we're not. So, yes, the one of the favorite things that I love about these monthly webinars, this book of the year webinar, is we have a section called Let's Do One Together. And you actually teach out of the book, that first source text in that unit, so that the teachers can see how they could actually then do what you do for their students. So it's like a model for them to do it. I love that.

So yes, it's especially helpful for those that are using one of these theme-based books this year. So we have two books of the year, *Adventures in Writing* and *Discoveries in Writing*. If you're using that book, absolutely. Sign up, know about it, learn about it, attend if you can, live, if not, get the recording, get your questions answered.

But if you're not, and you're using any one of our other theme based books, just know that we're going through the units, and in this case, both of these books only go up to Unit 7, because that's grade-level appropriate for those books.

So another thing that we have available that I think is very handy and helpful is our blog. So we have a blog post every week about something that is, we believe, relevant and relatable and shareable to people who are learning about IEW or who have been in the trenches. So oftentimes we'll post about the unit that we're focusing on that month. There might be a little lesson for families and teachers who have a special needs student. I actually most recently wrote a blog post. I know. Can you believe it? I wrote a blog post!

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well, I'm proud of you.

**Julie Walker:** Yes. And the blog post is entitled, Where's My Discount Coupon? Or something like that, because we get that a lot. And so just write a little lesson, kind of like IEW philosophy, why we do the things, what we do, why we do what we do. And so blogs would be then number three.

Another thing that we have available, and I think you'll love this, Andrew, and I'd love for you to share more about how this all got started, is our *Magnum Opus Magazine*.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Yeah, that is, I think, an underused tool. It looks cute and people think, Oh, that's cute. But really, if you want to understand our system, read student samples and see the range of what's possible of kids at different age levels and all the units.

So, Dr. Webster started this a long time ago. It's pretty cool. Before he was a professor of history at universities, he was teaching in schools. So he had that experience. So when he started teaching African history, and he was putting an emphasis on writing, he would have one of the textbooks the students had to purchase was the collected papers of the previous class, the best papers from the previous class that he taught that section. So he would then use those papers to teach how he wanted the students to write papers. So he's teaching by example and then basically said, If you want an A, you've got to be as good or better than these.

So then when he started helping Mrs. Ingham and got back into teaching teachers in schools, he took that same idea and put in this Magnum Opus book. And this was before computers and photocopies and cheap printing and all that. So what he did was he would say, get the best papers of your students, put them in one book, and that's the *magnum opus*, which is Latin for *great work*, of the students for that year. And then that would go into the school library and it would actually be a book that people could look at in the library to read the stories and reports and essays of kids over the past many years.

And it was kind of fun because often times you'd have a sibling coming in, an older sibling had been in the class, written something, it was in the Magnum opus, and then they could see, Oh, there's my older sister's essay in the book, in the library. So, that idea of motivating kids to take one piece of work and really polish it up and make it as good as they possibly can, and then that's the showcase for the year.

So, we'd been, I had been, sharing this idea with teachers and homeschool groups and parents for...since I met him back in, what, 1990. And then we got the idea, well, why don't we do that? And we can have it be a magazine, and we can solicit the best writing samples of students who've been using the program, organize it by unit so that it's useful for both teachers to learn from and for teachers to use as an example. Well, here is a report that follows, this topic-clincher rule perfectly. Or here's a Writing from Pictures, and that's how this student did it. And so our editorial team is trying to find the best examples not just of creativity and what kids are interested in, but also is it something a teacher could use as an example for other students? So we update the website every month, I believe, don't we?

**Julie Walker:** Yes, exactly. So, there's an e newsletter that goes out every month that has essays from students on that particular unit. So if you ordered anything from IEW in the last year, two years, we've started putting a *Magnum Opus Magazine* in every order. So you have it. Maybe you threw it away. Maybe you need to order something else so that you'll get another copy because it's so good.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Or just call the office and say, "Oh, could I please have a *Magnum Opus*?" or get a whole pile of them and give them away to your friends.

**Julie Walker:** Yes. We'd love to have you do that. We just find this to be, as you say, an underutilized tool. To me, when I'm working at a homeschool convention or I'm talking to anyone about "How effective is your writing method?" I just have to show them a *Magnum Opus Magazine* and they are dumbfounded of how well these students can write.

So, great tool. So that's tool number four. The fifth tool is our newsletters. And so we have several newsletters. One for the homeschooling community. And we have tens of thousands of subscribers to our newsletters every month. So the homeschool community, Schools

Division has a newsletter that goes out to teachers, full time teachers, and anyone can sign up for these. And we'll have links in the show notes for everything that we're talking about, but the links are pretty intuitive. So the newsletter is [IEW.com/E-newsletter](http://IEW.com/E-newsletter), pretty easy to remember, but you can sign up for any one of those two. And then the third one, of course, is the *Magnum Opus Magazine*. And then we have something that goes out every month called the Monthly Mug, and that's for our premium members. And the reason we call it the Monthly Mug is premium members have an opportunity to win one of our coveted IEW mugs.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And it's not swag that people can buy.

**Julie Walker:** No, you cannot buy this.

**Andrew Pudewa:** You can only win.

**Julie Walker:** Yes. Or you can be, be a staff member and then you'll get a mug too, but the Monthly Mug.

So four different newsletters that we send out every month, a lot of them have topics that we're going to be talking about on a podcast, some links to some blogs that have been written, but also it has things like our special events. And so Andrew, when you're speaking at a convention, we've got links to you speaking at a convention, when you go and do your whistle stop tours, which we've enjoyed having you go and speak to different regions of the United States—Hawaii, California, Louisiana,

**Andrew Pudewa:** And South Carolina.

**Julie Walker:** And potentially more to come, but all these events are mentioned in our monthly newsletter, so do subscribe to our newsletter. And that would be tool number five.

Tool number six, we mentioned, just kind of in passing, learning differences and special ed, but we have a page on our website dedicated to parents and teachers who are working with students that have learning differences. And the URL is [IEW.com/learning-differences](http://IEW.com/learning-differences), [learning-differences](http://learning-differences)

**Andrew Pudewa:** Well, and we had some excellent guests, especially in the area of dyslexia, the Eides, Doctor Eide, and Susan Barton, Jennifer Mauser, I believe. So there's a lot of resources for parents who believe their child may have dyslexic, dysgraphic tendencies.

**Julie Walker:** And we collect all those. So there's links to podcasts where we talk about learning differences on that page. So that's a nice place to, all in one fell swoop. That's where you can see all the resources we have available, blog posts, various articles that you might have written, Andrew. So learning differences.

We actually spent last year spending quite a bit of time talking about learning differences and why IEW is so ideal for those students, partly because we're breaking the complex task of teaching writing to its smallest incremental steps, but also because we are so focused on teacher training. So if a teacher knows our method, they can adapt it.

**Andrew Pudewa:** They can customize it for different kids in their class.

**Julie Walker:** And in our seminar workbook that accompanies the video course, there's adaptations, suggestions for those with learning differences. Try this a little bit differently, slow it down, spend more time having them tell back from their key word outline rather than just putting pen to paper right away. So learning differences would be number six.

And then something that you suggested we do many, many years ago, actually, it was 17 years ago, Andrew.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Oh no, I'm curious.

**Julie Walker:** It's the accreditation.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Oh, of course. Yes.

**Julie Walker:** You said to me when I first started working for IEW, “We need to have a way to review and validate teachers who are purporting to teach IEW so we can basically put our stamp of approval, that they actually know the method. They're not just doing keyword outlines and -ly dress ups.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And just calling it that. Yeah. Well, we had that problem for a while. People hanging out a IEW shingle and then you talk to someone. “Oh, I took this IEW class...” and it just didn't sound at all like what I would have been teaching and, and what our system is. So I think that has really been a good thing, the accreditation. There's different levels that teachers can be participating, and of course it can help them if they want to get some students in a tutorial setting, or an online class, or even just mark papers.

There's a lot of parents who would like to have someone else who knows the system edit and grade the papers, particularly among the immigrant population. I meet a lot of moms—English is not their first language, and they do not feel terribly confident about editing and marking their kid's writing. So I think there's a good need for that service. And of course if they're using our material and program, they want someone who also understands that.

**Julie Walker:** Right. And I mentioned earlier that everything that we're talking about today is free. The list of accredited instructors is available on our website, and we'll link in the show notes for that. It is not free to become an accredited instructor because there is a small application fee that basically covers the cost of us taking time to scrutinize your paragraph on book lice or everything else that is required for the *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style* video course.

**Andrew Pudewa:** Yeah. But people seem very happy both to have access to those teachers and to be one of those teachers. And we have schools that have said, this is a requirement. You need to be IEW-registered, accredited instructor to work here. So I think that's great.

**Julie Walker:** And we have on our website, just kind of piggybacking on that, a list of IEW Accredited Schools. We know that there are teachers at that school that have received their IEW accreditation and all of that is available, so that's a really important resource, we think, to have because we do have parents saying, “Do you know of any schools in my area that are teaching using IEW?”

And now we can.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And that, that's a link that even I know, isn't it? [IEW.com/IC](http://IEW.com/IC)

**Julie Walker:** It is, exactly right.

**Andrew Pudewa:** I like those short, easy to remember ones.

**Julie Walker:** Easy to learn. I do want to mention one more thing related to the accreditation, and that is in the past, we actually, I remember very distinctly, and see if you remember this too, Andrew, we were in the barn in Atascadero,

**Julie Walker:** And someone called complaining about this teacher trainer that we had sent to train their teachers using IEW. We had no idea who this person was.

**Andrew Pudewa:** We had not sent them.

**Julie Walker:** No, we had not sent them, and we did not know who they were. And that is part of what we will say to schools is that no one is authorized to teach IEW to teachers unless you're at the highest level of accreditation. And there's really only a couple handfuls of people that are out there because we want to be sure that the schools are learning, the teachers are learning, the whole program and that they're able to teach with fidelity.

**Andrew Pudewa:** And have experience, too, so good.

**Julie Walker:** So, seven tools available to you. We are, we like to think that we're a little bit different because we love our families. We love our teachers. We want to help in any way that we can. One thing I didn't mention is our customer service department, both our schools division, educational consultants, and our customer service team, they are all trained. They've all gone through accreditation themselves.

**Andrew Pudewa:** They have, yes. Sometimes I walk in there, and I see a new person watching me on the video, and I just think, oh, will they survive this hazing that we force everyone to undergo?

**Julie Walker:** Well, fortunately, Andrew, you are engaging and somewhat entertaining, and you've got a lot of great jokes. But I think that way teachers and parents will know that if they pick up the phone to call us, we can answer almost any question that they have, both on our materials or our methodology.

There you go, listener. We are hoping that this is helpful to you as you're now beginning. You're just a couple weeks away, perhaps, from starting your school year. Just know that we love you. We don't want to love you and leave you. We want to love you and support you on this educational journey. Thank you, Andrew.

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

**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](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.