

Podcast 474: Professional Development with Jeff Nease

Episode Transcript

Jeff Nease: Because it works so well from one year to the next, they think that the kids are cheating and they go, well, what do I tell these parents? Or what do I tell these other administrators? And we just say, the method works, and you start going into what we do. And they'll go, okay. Okay. Okay. I, I got it.

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 Andrew, this is the year 2025. I know everybody probably who's listening knows that, but that

Andrew Pudewa: I noticed something though the other day is when you get older, you're not confused about the year at the beginning of the year the way you were when you were younger. You know how you write, we used to write checks

Julie Walker: Yes.

Andrew Pudewa: We'd have the habit of writing the old year. Now I just, as soon as January 1st hits, I'm New Year. It's 'cause the years pass by so fast.

Julie Walker: They, they go by quickly. And last year we were celebrating 30 years of IEW, 30 years from the time that you gave your very first Teaching Writing: Structure and Style presentation.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. That's almost half my lifetime ago.

Julie Walker: Wow. And of course, here we are 30 years later. We're still teaching the *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style*.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. Well, those timeless great things. You don't have to change 'em all that much if they're good to begin with.

Julie Walker: Exactly, exactly. So we have with us in our podcast studio, Jeff Nease, who we brought on a year or so ago,

Jeff Nease: Almost two years.

Julie Walker: two years.

Jeff Nease: next month.

Andrew Pudewa: That just proves how fast time passes.

Julie Walker: It's very true. It's very true because, Andrew, things have exploded in our school's department, and we needed someone else to be able to go out and do the teacher training because your calendar was full.

And so Jeff was willing to step up to the plate. And Jeff, tell us a little bit about who you are and how you got connected with IEW.

Jeff Nease: Yeah. Well first and foremost, thank you for having me on, and my name is Jeff Nease. I'm IEW's Implementation Coach, as Julie mentioned, originally from Ohio—Toledo, Ohio. I moved in to Oklahoma in 2015 because I actually had some family here, and the job market in Ohio was just so competitive in terms of trying to find a teaching job. I remember we had a principal come in and gave us a couple interview tips and said, “I have one social studies position open at my school and I have currently 90 applicants.”

Julie Walker: Oh my word.

Jeff Nease: So the job market is quite different in Oklahoma in terms of teaching, but I taught social studies for eight years in a local school district here. I absolutely loved it. The district was great, the kids were great. I love history, I love social studies. And just so happens that I got connected with Julie because we are connected in terms of going to the same church. And we were discussing one time, I said, I would really like to get my master's degree and be able to teach teachers how to teach. I would love to be able to talk about putting lesson plans together and objectives and making sure students succeed and really just helping get good teachers out there.

She said, “We actually have a position open that would be very close to what you're describing. We had our previous implementation coach recently retired, and we're looking for somebody to teach teachers how to teach writing. And I said, “Writing. Oh my goodness.” Okay. Well, I know social studies and after really looking into the program, looking through the *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style*, implementing some of these components into my own classroom, like the key word outline, I saw tremendous results in student comprehension. I said, there's something to this. And Julie and I talked, goodness, probably before I came on for over a year, almost two years, and finally took the jump. And here I am two years later, and it's been an amazing ride ever since. I absolutely love what I do and just seeing the light bulb moments with students going, oh, okay, now I get it.

One of the great things that I get to see is teachers say to me, they go, I wish I would've learned this when I was in school.

Andrew Pudewa: Yep.

Jeff Nease: The research process with unit number six. They said, if I would've been taught this, my college years would've been so much easier. So anyways, I'm married to my wife Erica, who also works for IEW as an educational consultant. We have five children and absolutely love what we do. And so, yeah, that's a little bit about me.

Julie Walker: So, Andrew, do you love that he used to teach history and social studies?

Andrew Pudewa: Of course Dr. Webster began, well, he was a professor of history the whole time. He had experience, of course, teaching in elementary, middle, high school. Then he got his PhD in African history and you want to know the whole story of that, TWSS will tell you.

Julie Walker: We talk about that very thing.

Andrew Pudewa: But it is often that I see it's the content area teachers that are quickly the ones to be most excited and say, this is going to help me teaching the science. This is going to help me teaching the history. This is going to help me with content. And I think that's so important that we don't just leave the writing off to just the English people, but it's a way to learn everything better.

Julie Walker: Yes. When you are writing about something, you are learning it better, whether it's science, history. Bible literature, all those great content areas. So we have over the years come up with this idea of a four-step implementation plan for schools in particular. We shorten it to three for homeschoolers. The first one that we want our teachers and school leaders is to talk to an educational consultant. So we here at IEW have educational consultants like Jeff mentioned, his wife is one of them and, and basically they're trying to help these teachers and administrators find what will work for their situation.

Andrew Pudewa: What is your need? What are your, I like to always say, give me a wishlist. What do you wish your kids could do when it comes to writing? And just listening to them sometimes makes a big difference because so many people are out there saying, here's the thing, do it goodbye.

Julie Walker: Yes, exactly.

Andrew Pudewa: That's not the starting point.

Julie Walker: No. And so after you've connected with your educational consultant, because your educational consultant has listened and evaluated your situation, they're often able to give you good curricular options for your students in the classroom. So that would be step two. We have over the years developed better and better content for teachers to use in their classrooms, whether it be one of our theme-based books, one of our books that we've actually are in partnership with Hillsdale College to write the writing across curriculum type books and also video options.

And we have our *Structure and Style for Students*. And Jeff, how would you recommend a teacher use *Structure and Style for Students* in their classroom?

Jeff Nease: That's a great question, *Structure and Style for Students* is a wonderful product. And I quote Andrew a lot and say, this is the best thing we've ever done and we've made it so easy for students and teachers to be able to learn how to write with *Structure and Style for Students*. It comes with, when I talk to different teachers, they ask me, well, what is the big difference?

What is the big difference between a theme-based book and say, SSS? I say the big difference is our video-based component. And they usually say, oh, well we don't have computers for every student, so I guess that's not an option for us. No, absolutely not. So I tell them that with the video based component, you're actually getting Mr. Pudewa teaching the exact lesson that you're going to teach to an actual group of students, and you get to see what he writes on the board. It comes in your teacher's manual. You can hear the questions that he asks, how he asks them. You get to hear a little bit of what the students are asking him, and it's really easy to say, okay, now I have a model to go base my teaching off of.

Julie Walker: So you're not necessarily recommending that the teachers show this video in the classroom?

Jeff Nease: I usually give them a couple different options. We say the video component itself is very user-friendly in the sense of if you kind of wanted to do the flipped classroom to where you put Andrew on in the classroom, and then the video will say, pause here to complete key word outline, and then you could say, okay guys, Let's go ahead and continue working on our key word outline. They do the more of the hands-on writing in the class, but I would say 90% of the teachers who use SSS, they will watch the videos in their own time, watch the videos even a couple times to go through to get a good feel of what really the objective of the lesson is, and then they'll model that to their students.

So it's very user friendly. One of the great things is our TTAP videos, which is Teaching Tips with Andrew Pudewa, and I say, you know what? You get a model by watching him actually teach your lesson. You have the board notes and some great guidance in your teacher manual, but these teaching tips are just a quick five to maybe eight minute video of Andrew explaining what the lesson really was, why he presented something a certain way, maybe commonly misconceptions, something like that. So we have so many great elements to that product to really help students become what we say, confident and competent communicators.

Julie Walker: So that's step two is choosing curriculum. And the reason why we do it in this order, let me just go to the third one, and this is really what I want to talk about today, which is select a training preference. The reason why we have teachers choose a curriculum before they actually have gone through the training because they're seeing the results right away. They're seeing the curriculum was laid out very easily for them to implement in their classroom, but then they go, wow, how, why does this work? How does this work? And that's where that training, that teacher training comes in. My education training that I received when I was an undergraduate, I got the math methods. I got the reading methods, but there was not any writing methods class. Is that your experience too?

Jeff Nease: Oh, absolutely. And I, I say this all the time, is that there's always this level of assumption where it's always, well, you should have learned this. You guys know how to do a paragraph. You know how to write a complete thought. You know how to do a topic sentence because the teacher before you taught it, well, the teacher before them will say. You guys should know this by now. And so there's always this kind of passing down of, well, when did we learn this?

And that's the one thing that I love about unit four, and I get this a lot when I go out and do teacher training, is that I kind of call it the anatomy of a paragraph. Well, what is it? It's a complete thought. What's inside of it? There's a topic sentence. There's a clincher sentence and then all the facts in the middle support prove or illustrate what they're trying to prove by their topic sentence. And I have teachers go, I never really, no one, even as an adult, has really told me that is how you do it. So the training is so vital and so, I think so valuable for teachers to really understand what our methodology is, because it is a little bit different in terms of, how we teach writing.

Julie Walker: So I do want to ask Andrew, I know that you've seen Jeff do some teaching with the Teaching Writing: Structure and Style. How is his teaching different than how you teach?

Andrew Pudewa: My jokes are better. I honestly don't know. I think he's done a superb job of studying the most important elements that I have tried to work in the training over years. We have the video course, and I think you've probably watched that any number of times. And then of course, part of making a live presentation sparkle is to add in those elements of your own experience, those stories, those illustrations that are meaningful to you because when I say something, I've got images in my head. I use words. I try to recreate those images in your head. Well, you've got to do the same thing. And those images are a little different. Need to be presented in a different way. And then of course, we all have stories of, of kids we've worked with and how we've answered various questions over time.

And I think that's what really makes the live presentation have this kind of. Magic quality to it, and that's going to be different between the two of us. But I trust him entirely. Now, I, I have no doubt that he teaches this with excellent fidelity and skill and humor,

Julie Walker: Yep. And humor. There you go. So we have actually four different training options. The first two have to do with watching the Teaching Writing: Structure and Style video course. Whether it's a teacher doing it on her own, on his own. And that's option one. Just buy the Teaching Writing: Structure and Style video course.

Link in the show notes, watch it, learn the method. And this would be great if your whole school isn't necessarily on board, but you're the Guinea pig and you're going to try this out in your classroom. And so it's just you and your work seminar workbook. And this guy on the video who's going to tell jokes and tell a little bit more about Dr.

Webster, which we've already alluded to. The other option, which I also love, but also includes the video component, maybe with the DVD, 'cause we do do the streaming option and the DVD option, but this is where you're doing it with your cohorts in your school. So you're doing it together, encouraging each other, holding each other accountable because you got to do the practicum

Andrew Pudewa: because it'll say, turn off the video and make this outline. Turn off the video, write this paragraph. And time and time again, we've heard people who watched the whole thing but said, oh, I'm having trouble, or It's not working, or I don't like it so much. Did you do the practicum? Oh no, I just didn't have time.

Well go back and do that and then you'll be so much more.

Julie Walker: It's a priority to do the.

Andrew Pudewa: And one of the advantages I would mention about using the recorded version, you can stretch it out over time so you can watch the first couple videos and go teach for a month and then watch the next one, and then go teach that unit and watch the next one. And there's some real advantages to not having to drink out of the proverbial fire

Julie Walker: hydrant. Yes, exactly.

Andrew Pudewa: you have to schedule it and be disciplined.

Julie Walker: Yes. But the nice thing is with our *Structure and Style for Students* that Jeff was alluding to, we actually have that built in. The teacher's manual says, watch this Part of the Teaching Writing: Structure and Style. It's 'cause all you have to be is just a little smarter than those kids.

Right? So option three would be the virtual teaching, Teaching Writing: Structure and Style. And Jeff, you're doing this this summer in August. Talk about that.

Jeff Nease: Yeah, so the virtual Teaching Writing: Structure and Style is, is exactly what I would be doing in person or what you would see Mr. Awa present on the videos. But it's virtual. We always say you can do it from the comfort of your, your recliner or your couch, and it is the same quality of training that you're going to get.

So what this is, is that we go through all nine units over the span of a few days, and we're doing it early August. So August 5th, sixth, and seventh. This year, so it's right before school starts and we go through all nine units. We go through our stylistic techniques, we go through our decorations, anything and everything that we go through as you would buy in that package.

And so the setup is a little bit different. And so we have some other educational consultants that are in the chat. So there's a live chat feature. So as I'm teaching, you get questions answered in a timely manner. And so if you have, something that maybe I am expounding on

and, and you are just really not understanding or just have a question, you can chat in right then, right?

And we have, somebody will answer your question, within a matter of seconds. So it's something that is, is really awesome because, you know. Some schools may not have the budget to have actually live in-person training. They might have some constraints in that matter. Um, but it's a great experience.

We've had a lot of success with the virtual Teaching Writing: Structure and Style. We have a lot of people who actually will have, we had this past year. We had somebody from, it was like a whole school. They had everybody all sitting in a room together. Yeah, I love that. Watching it. So there's a lot of different ways you can watch it individually or you can get a group of teachers and do it that way.

Julie Walker: and it doesn't really seem to matter how many are in the audience because they're still getting that care. I mean, we have hundreds of teachers who sign up for this every year and, and they're getting the materials and they're also getting access to those videos so they can watch it.

Andrew Pudewa: Virtual and you can ask a question. We have several people available to do that in a way that's superior to being in a room with forty teachers and a couple people have a question, but you got to move on 'cause you're on a schedule. You can't answer every single question or eat up all your time in this way. People can actually kind of talk at the same time and get answers at the same time. And so that's very valuable I would say.

Julie Walker: So that's option three is this Virtual Teaching Writing: Structure and Style, link in the show notes. Or you can go to IEWschools.com/vtwss. Virtual Teaching Writing: Structure and Style, and we're doing that August 5-7, 2025. Then option four, this is where actual a school hires you, Jeff, to either fly out or if it's local drive to that school. That would be the option 4A to actually go to that school. Or now we've started doing virtual training where the teachers are all in the same room, but then they don't have to pay your travel expenses. So this is another affordable option. And again, we provide to the teachers all that they need to learn the teaching, training materials, including the *Seminar Workbook*, including the access to the videos, and we include a year of Premium Membership,

Jeff Nease: absolutely.

Julie Walker: That has a lot of great content, including the TTAP videos that Jeff was talking about.

Oh, I have to talk about step four because there's four steps, four options for implementing. That's all in step three, but step four is celebrate student success. We are so confident that you will have success using our methods and materials that we guarantee it. And we have hundreds of testimonies that come in. I want to read one. Is that okay? Can I read one here? This is from Beth. She's a language arts teacher. Andrew asked, where is she from? And we

didn't, I don't actually know where she's from, but somewhere in the northwest. And I'll tell you how I know that. 'cause she says that she says. All of my IEW students made growth on their Winter Northwest Evaluation Association scores.

Most importantly, they were engaged in all of the activities we did. I love that it was all I could have asked for and more. While the students success is important, I have to tell you that using Structure and Style has really energized my teaching deep down. I know it was a quality method, but now I have some concrete proof.

So thank you, Beth, for your kind words and we just, we hear this all the time and kind of what Jeff was alluding to. A lot of times teachers will say, oh, I wish I would've learned this. I actually had the benefit of having gone through this several times before I started my graduate program and did very well in my graduate studies because I knew how to write.

Andrew Pudewa: If Jeff has heard this story, but this is kind of bittersweet. I had gone to a particular area every year for many years, and there was a teacher who came and she had been before to my seminar, and she grabbed me and she went off on how great this was and how the students were doing so well, and I said, so do you think the rest of your school would be interested?

And she said, no, this is my secret weapon. Well, it's nice, but I'm not sure that's the right attitude. But it was making her look really good. And hopefully there's not too many teachers that would have that kind of selfish view, but now we're, we're getting whole schools that are basically saying similar to that these results are better unlike anything we've had in the past.

And that's just so gratifying.

Julie Walker: It is.

Jeff Nease: One of the things that we get as an educational consultant, the question quite a few of us, is that because it works so well from one year to the next, and eventually when they graduate, or if they go to another class that's maybe not implementing structure and style. They think that the kids are cheating because their writing has improved so drastically in a short amount of time that they said there's, there's no way that they're taking this home, writing this themselves, bringing it back. This has to be either AI or chat GBT or

Andrew Pudewa: Parent's writing

Jeff Nease: Parents are writing it for them, and they'll call us in, I should say, and they go, well, what do I, what do I tell these parents? Or what do I tell these other administrators? And we just say. The method works. And you start going into what we do and they'll go, okay, okay, okay. I got it. But that is like how Andrew said, it is a little bittersweet because it's such a great testimony to what we're doing here, but also people are thinking, Hey, I think they might be cheating 'cause their writing is so great.

Andrew Pudewa: One thing I have always recommended, particularly in live groups when I'm with a group of teachers, is say, do this at the beginning of the school year. Give your kids some prompt, some dumb little prompt. Like, write about your home. You have 20 minutes. Set the timer and ignore them. You're done. Collect all the papers. Don't even read them. There's no value in that. Throw 'em in a folder, stick it in a file cabinet, then start teaching Unit 1, Unit 2, Unit 3. Go all the way through the school year and at the end of the year, last couple weeks of school, give them the exact same prompt with the exact same amount of time and zero help. Time's up. Collect it up. Pull the beginning of the year samples out. Hand them both back to the kids and say, now you look at what you did seven, eight months ago, and look at what you did now and tell me. What do you see different? And it's amazing. It's just amazing, and that's the best form of assessment you could have.

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Julie Walker: I love that. Well, teacher, we're out of time, but I just want to encourage you to finish this year. Well, I know you only have a few weeks left of the school year, and then you get that delicious summer break. But come back, join Jeff in August. Be a part of the Virtual Teaching Writing: Structure and Style. Consider how we can help you improve your student's ability to write.

Thank you, Jeff.

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.