

Podcast 479: IEW Accreditation with Denise Kelley

Episode Transcript

Andrew Pudewa: We have a lot of tutors. We have some people who have online businesses, and I do know for a fact that we've had some kids as young as 16 or 17 go through accreditation and then start teaching a class of homeschooled kids.

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, I don't know if you remember, but it was about fifteen years ago that we had launched our first IEW Accredited Instructor program.

Andrew Pudewa: Has it been that long?

Julie Walker: It has been. We announced it at the Writing Educator Symposium in Murrieta.

Andrew Pudewa: Yes. I remember that.

Julie Walker: And there were a great number of people there who had been teaching IEW for many, many years, and some teachers who were brand new to IEW, and so we gave them an opportunity to kind of get in on the ground floor of this new accreditation program. But this was one of the initiatives that you gave me when I first started working for IEW. And I think it would be helpful for our listeners to hear from you. Why? Why did we even do this?

Andrew Pudewa: We had kind of a problem as more people started to teach IEW classes in their co-op and even a few people online, even back then, or start a little business, hang out their shingle, tutor, whatever. I would bump in to people who said, "Oh, we took an IEW class, but we didn't like it." Of course, my radar goes right out. "Well, okay, tell me about it." And in some cases people were just stuck. They were doing unit two all year long, and yeah, I wouldn't like that either.

Julie Walker: Right,

Andrew Pudewa: You would get bored.

Julie Walker: And there would be one dress up on their checklist. That's

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. Or you'd get this thing like the report of, well, our checklist is three-ly words and one who-which clause, and then anything else on the dress ups that you want to

do. And I'm just thinking, this is not what I got from Webster. This is not what I've been teaching. That's just too off track.

So in talking with you about how can we build quality? How can we become more and. I was looking at the Suzuki Association of the Americas because they have a training program and music teachers can choose to participate or not choose to participate. But if you go and you take a one-week institute teacher training course, you can register that with the Suzuki Association, and then you're on their website as someone who's been trained. And that allows people who want an authentic Suzuki experience know, here's a teacher in my area who at least has had training and registered it.

And so I think I was trying to suggest that maybe we could follow that model. We can't control what everybody does. And we teach freely and people learn or they don't. But if they want, use the name, we should help them have good credibility and reputation, and then we can more safely refer people to them. So I think that is how we started this conversation way back when.

Julie Walker: Yes. And I distinctly remember, Andrew, I was sitting in the office because I worked remote at the time, so I was sitting in your office, in the barn in Atascadero. You received a phone call from a school that wanted their money back because someone had come in and trained their teachers and didn't do a good job, and we had no idea who this person was.

Andrew Pudewa: Well fortunately I don't remember that. But I tend to remember only good things.

Julie Walker: Yes. Well, that was alarming to me, and I believed you that this was something that we needed to work on.

Andrew Pudewa: And it was—just so that listeners don't get the wrong impression—this was a remodeled section of a barn. This was not like a barn. It was an upscale, classy barn.

Julie Walker: There were no cows or manger or anything in the barn.

Andrew Pudewa: You could go through the doors and go into where the horse stalls used to be.

So we got the accreditation program going,

Julie Walker: And we called it Andrew. I don't know if you remember this, but we called it the beta version because we were going to revisit this in a couple years after we just gave it a try.

Andrew Pudewa: Uhhuh.

Julie Walker: Well, here we are.

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, well at least we kept our intention.

Julie Walker: Yes.

Andrew Pudewa: it rolled pretty well. And you know, I've met so many teachers who've said, "I really appreciated going through that accreditation process because though I probably didn't need to do it, it really helped me understand the program better."

Julie Walker: So much better. So one of our goals, of course, was to have our teachers who are teaching IEW know that they could teach with fidelity and they basically get our seal of approval.

Well, as of today, in now 2025, So my goodness, that would've been, well, like I said, 15 years later, we are now have a revised program, but it still is serving the same ultimate purposes. But I do want to let our listeners know that when it was time for us to do a revised program, partly because of a new website, partly because of some new tools we have available, and partly because it needed some polishing. We got one of our top guns to work with her team to create, now, the new accreditation program.

And that is Denise Kelley, and she is our guest on our podcast today. Thank you for joining us, Denise.

Denise Kelley: Hello, thank you for having me. I was just thinking about that fifteen years ago. I was accredited around 15 years ago, and so it's been a journey to go from turning in those practicums and sitting and waiting to see if they were going to be okay to actually working on the program. So it's been wonderful.

Julie Walker: So I have three questions. First is who is this accreditation program for? Second, why do we think at IEW, it's important to go through and to have an accreditation program, which we kind of alluded to. And third is how has it changed? So who's it for, Denise?

Denise Kelley: You know the accreditation program is for people that want to become accredited by IEW. There are two different categories. There's those that are already accredited and they want to keep that accreditation up. And then there are those that have never been accredited, and so they're going to start at the beginning and work through the *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style*, completing the practicums and following the directions, turning those in, having them graded, I guess you could call graded, not really, but the feedback from that, that will allow them to understand the program in a way that that means they'll be able to teach it with fidelity, which is really what the program is all about.

We want to make sure that when people, as Andrew said at the beginning, are using *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style*, or any of our supplemental material along with that, That they understand the program at a level that allows them to be excellent IEW teachers.

Andrew Pudewa: I, I might add in the, who's it for? We have classroom teachers. We have administrators who wanted to do it, so they would be able to coach their faculty. We have a lot of tutors. Homeschool co-op teachers. We have some people who have online businesses. We even have teenagers who have done it, not necessarily because they're teaching immediately, but hey, it looks good on a transcript or a resume. And I do know for a fact that we've had some kids as young as 16 or 17 go through accreditation and then start teaching a class of younger homeschooled kids and have a great time with it. And then they become young adults, and some of them may even be working for us.

Julie Walker: Yes, this is true. This is true. And there's another side of the coin too, and I remember back in the day when we just had a handful of teachers, we wanted to build our list because people would call us and say, your online classes are full, which happens pretty quickly. Do you know of any other people that can teach my students? And so our accreditation program allows essentially for this registry of teachers that people can search for and find someone either in their area or offering the services that they're looking for.

Denise Kelley: And then I was going to say the other side of the coin, but we've already used both sides of the coin. So but there is, the other side of the coin, which is the accreditation program is ultimately for the students to have teachers who know what they're doing. And when you go, if you read the introduction on our website, we really are always in the end concerned that our students are going to get the best. And this new program is going to allow teachers to be matched with students just in a, I feel like, a more sophisticated way than what we had before.

Julie Walker: Oh.

Andrew Pudewa: I like that one, because if doesn't good edge, it won't roll down the road. So there's no progress, to push a metaphor a little too far..

Julie Walker: So Denise, with this new launch of our accreditation program, what, what are the four tiers that we have?

Denise Kelley: So we have Trained IEW Instructor is the first tier, Experienced IEW instructor, second tier Accomplished IEW Instructor is the third tier. And then we have a fourth tier called Master IEW Instructor. And let me just give you a little rundown on what each one of those levels involve.

So with a Trained IEW Instructor, they're watching the *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style* seminar, completing all the practicum, and after successful completion, then they're accredited at that tier. An Experienced IEW Instructor has been a Trained IEW Instructor for a year or more has taught students at level A, B, or C for at least one year, and the teacher demonstrates this experience by submitting graded student papers.

The Accomplished IEW Instructor has been an experienced instructor at levels A, B, or C for two or more years and has submitted graded student papers and a personal essay of his or her

experience following the IEW Structure and Style methodology. And then the Master tier is reserved for the IEW founder Andrew and a few select others who train instructors for the Institute in Writing.

Andrew Pudewa: So by.

Denise Kelley: Mm-hmm.

Julie Walker: Yeah. Yeah, it's a absolutely yes. I think that'd be amazing. Put the new little badge on there. They're beautiful, shiny, sparkly. So, Denise, you mentioned levels, and I'm assuming you're talking about the levels of instruction that we offer, level A, level B, level C. Can you talk about that for a moment?

Denise Kelley: So level A is usually what we think of as elementary or grade school. Level B would be middle school. Level C would be high school. So even with the way that the accreditation will work as far as when somebody puts a search in. If they're particularly looking for a teacher whose expertise is in grade school or Level A, that's going to show because the person that submits the papers, their graded student papers, whatever level those student papers are at, that's where the accreditation will be given.

So it doesn't mean that somebody that's accredited as an experienced instructor at Level A is not as good a teacher as somebody at Level C. It just means that that person's expertise is at Level A because those are the papers that she has or he has submitted, and definitely anybody that's been in education system for any length of time understands that you might not want somebody that is a wonderful high school teacher trying to teach your fourth grader. And so this just helps to again, match the rate instructor with specific students, and that would include even the learning differences. We have lots of different categories that people are able to check off for what they have to offer.

Julie Walker: So, Denise, speak to that just a moment about helping—Like say I'm a parent and I want one of the IEW accredited instructors to teach my student, how does our new accreditation program help me match up to the instructor that would be best suited for my situation?

Denise Kelley: When you do a search, you're actually able to click on the categories that you're interested in. And in doing that search, you'll pull up all of the instructors that have advertised, basically those, those different areas.

Julie Walker: So Andrew, there's a couple things I have to mention right away. I haven't mentioned the URL of where you can find all this information, which is probably really important. IEW.com/accreditation. I'm pretty sure that.

Andrew Pudewa: I like easy one.

Julie Walker: Easy is good. Yes.

Andrew Pudewa: Then if someone asks me, I can tell them and they may or may not remember, but at least I can remember.

Julie Walker: And I'm thinking about what you said about the Suzuki finding the Suzuki teacher that's local. There's so much today that we do that's online that yeah, you can actually find local teachers, but probably of the things that you might be looking for as an online instructor.

Andrew Pudewa: even someone who would just mark papers for you.

Julie Walker: Is that true, Denise? Can we do that too?

Denise Kelley: We have graders, we have tutors, we have people offering all different types of classes. And the profiles allow the instructor to go in and even mark what they're teaching. So if they're teaching one of the theme-based books or one of the video programs, like all of that is listed out. And some of the different instructors that I've clicked on just recently, just big, long list of things that they offer, classes that they offer, and it's pretty exciting.

Julie Walker: I would be remiss if I did not now mention as Chief Marketing Officer, one of the really cool tools that we are using to help teachers become accredited and that is IEW Gradebook. So Denise, talk about that. I'm super excited about this.

Denise Kelley: Well, the IEW Gradebook is something that we have been using in online classes now for a couple of years. And again, I feel like it is a step up with the fidelity of the way teachers are able to grade IEW papers. It is an online subscription. Many of our instructors outside of our own online department have been using IEW Gradebook, and it's almost like once you start using it, you don't want to quit. It's kind of addictive.

It's a beautiful way of being able to move through a paper. It's meticulous in the different, different things that you are looking for while you're grading that student paper. And it really allows for even more feedback because the Gradebook itself gives suggestions for feedback where it will mark things for you to look at that maybe if you were in a hurry because you had forty papers to grade, you might have missed.

So that is something that the instructors who are updating their profile, if they have subscribed to Gradebook, they can mark that and there's a special badge that will show that particular instructor uses IEW Gradebook, and you can also search just for instructors who use IEW Gradebook.

Julie Walker: I would say that that's in some ways a category unto itself because the level of fidelity that they're using, not that Gradebook, is replacing the human element at all. It's just like this teacher's aid that can say, Hey, did you want to note that this who/which clause isn't underlined? Well, yeah, I do.

Andrew Pudewa: Online teachers that I've talked to that are using the Gradebook, I guess

Julie Walker: web-based app. Yep.

Andrew Pudewa: Have commented to me how much time it is saving them and how much more detailed it is allowing them to be in the feedback they give to students. Those seem almost contradictory. Like, well, if you're giving more feedback, that's going to take you more time. But this thing evidently lets people sail through and grade with excellence, which is of course our goal. So I do think we're going to see more people really appreciating the time saving element of that tool.

Julie Walker: Yes, and I know you're saying it as if you haven't used it, Andrew, and I should just mention that in order to be using Gradebook, you have to submit typed papers, and the class that you're teaching right now doesn't allow for that. Hopefully in the future we'll be able to have some type of reader that can read really the worst of all cursive.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, I think the technology is getting close.

Julie Walker: We're getting close. Yeah,

Andrew Pudewa: But right now, yes, the papers do have to be electronically submitted. In my case, yes, I want my students, because they're all in the younger category, I want them writing on paper.

Julie Walker: Absolutely.

Andrew Pudewa: I don't have a whole lot of students, so I'm not, I'm not dealing with four sections of sixteen kids.

Julie Walker: Yes, exactly. Well, and Denise, I also want you to speak to how an accredited instructor submits their paper using the tools that we now have.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, their paper meaning all the practicum assignments.

Julie Walker: Exactly, so if I want to apply to become an trained instructor. What's the process?

Denise Kelley: So, of course the first thing that you would do is go to the website IEW.com and under the Services tab, there's the Accreditation program, and Apply for Accreditation. It's right there. So that's the very first step is you're going to fill out that application. And I feel like one of the most beautiful things about the new program is once you follow the directions for sending in your application and you get started, it is set up so that you can easily see where you're at in the process.

So if you're working on Unit 1, you can get up and walk away for a couple of weeks, come back, open it up and see exactly where you're at, what you've submitted. It will show you that you have submitted it. It hasn't been graded yet. It will show you that it has been graded, and it has been returned, and it just keeps moving you to the next step.

And it's just the organization of it I feel like just removes what we had for years where you had to keep track of yourself, you had to keep track of all the paperwork. You even had to find a box that would fit your big notebook into the box to mail it off for somebody else to wade through it. And so it's organized because we've gone all digital. But that in the long run is really, I think, going to give better quality on both ends for the actual process.

Andrew Pudewa: Now,, if they do say the unit three practicum, writing out the story, three paragraphs, all the dress up, they didn't get all the dress ups, they discover that right away and then can fix it and move on to Unit 4 that higher level of understanding and confidence. Whereas it used to be, people would send in all nine practicum assignments at once, and if there was a problem in Unit 3, there's probably that same thing going on in unit seven. So this should make I think, a lower stress way for everyone to do it.

Denise Kelley: Exactly. And another layer to that is we have, it's really like a built in editor, whereas before, way back in the day when I was working on my accreditation, the person that was sending back, you missed this. You need to fix that. Well, now we have like a built-in editor and they can actually run their paper through Gradebook and it will, it will say You don't have a who-which clause marked.

They can see, oh, I have a who-which clause. I just need to tap on that to make sure that it's marked. So it's that you would've gotten that feedback from a person in the office. Now we've just made it so that you can get that feedback faster and fix it. Now, if you really didn't do the particular work that it's saying isn't there, then you would have to work on it again and then re-upload it. So it's not like it does the work for you, but it is a bit of a built-in editor that saves a little bit of the back and forth that took such a long time before, and so that's good too.

Julie Walker: So this was a pretty laborious project for both the person submitting the work and for the person that was evaluating all of the papers. Andrew, this reminds me of two things that you often say. One is the idea of short frequent assignments. The accreditation program is doing exactly that now. It's not just this one long project that you have to complete after completing the *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style* course, but the other thing that you said, I don't know a hundred times to those students in *Structure and Style for Students*. Check what you do and do what you check.

Denise Kelley: What has helped us to come up with the different ideas we've come up with. We hear Andrew's voice in our ear all the time.

Julie Walker: Well, this is exciting. You know, in some ways, Andrew, it's a little bit sad to see that original work go away, but I quickly get past it when I realize how much easier it will be and how much better this will be for new instructors.

Andrew Pudewa: It's like getting a new car after you've had the same car for 10 years. different you do have to adjust to it. After a short period of time, you're grateful for the

features, unless of course you have a video screen in the backseat, which shouldn't exist, but that's a different subject.

Julie Walker: That's a different topic for another day. Well, Denise, thank you so much for specifically this work that you and your team have done to really streamline the process of becoming an accredited instructor. I know we kind of hit the pause button for several months, trying to have time to think about this and even renaming the levels was very intentional. So thank you for your work on this, and also thank you for all that you do to help oversee the curriculum development. I just think that it's so much easier now to be an accredited IEW instructor because the curriculum now is so much easier to use.

Andrew Pudewa: The end benefit is hopefully students have a better experience from all the teachers that are trying to do it, and that that better experience translates into better writing and better thinking.

Denise Kelley: Well, thank you for having me. I've enjoyed it.

Julie Walker: Thank you, Denise.

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.