

Podcast 534: Virtual Teaching Writing: Structure and Style

Episode Transcript

Jeff Nease: It's all for the kids. I say that a lot. And so getting students to be able to communicate effectively, confidently. And we always say when teachers and parents feel supported, that's just going to naturally trickle down to those students, and that's what we want

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: I'd like for you, Andrew, to give a little bit of history lesson to our listeners today about the *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style* workshop. You used to go around and teach...

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah, in 1492, Columbus... Oh, wait!

Julie Walker: Oh

Andrew Pudewa: No, we don't go back that far. Well, that's how we really started IEW back in the late '90s. We didn't know a lot of people. There was no internet, really, and so we mailed flyers to people, and I would go to a city. And the first few years, it was a one-day seminar, and I tried to cram all nine units in an 8:30 to 4:30 day, and everyone was overloaded and exhausted.

And then I added to that teaching kids the day before, so we could have some demonstration classes. And then when we made the first iteration of the good recordings of the TWSS, I said, "Let's do it over two days," and that would've been right around the year 2000.

Julie Walker: It was very close to the time that you and I first met because you did one of these *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style* workshops for my team of teachers and parents at Biola University.

Andrew Pudewa: Was it one day or two days?

Julie Walker: It was a two-day.

Andrew Pudewa: Two days. So right, it was right then, and so then we did a Friday and a Saturday, and we were able to end at a more reasonable time, and people were able to absorb, sleep a little in between, but it was still a lot. And then I started adding more student classes. So for several years, maybe almost a decade, I would go to a city for six days, teach kids for

four days, the *Student Writing Intensive*, and teach the parents for two days. And I remember sitting in a hotel putting notebooks together for 36 kids that I was going to teach. It was kind of the Wild West there.

Julie Walker: Yes, it was. There was one time, Andrew, I don't even know if you know this, but we were not sure... This is now the Biola days. This is pre-me-working actually for you. Of course, I kinda felt like I was working for you then too. But at the time, your director of operations, Pete, met me halfway with the seminar notebooks because I wasn't sure you had them, and you're like, "Of course I have them."

I'm like, "Well, we just needed to be sure." So yeah, definitely the Wild West, and it was wild, and it was in the West, so.

Andrew Pudewa: But it worked well in terms of getting word out. Around that time, the late '90s, I started to get some invitations to do professional development at different schools or school districts, mostly in that part of the country where I was living at the time, northern Idaho. So I did some for Seattle, Tri-Cities, did quite a bit in Alaska, actually, and then gradually California.

And so it was a case where just doing it, consistently, once or twice a month, year after year. And then there were groups that said, "Well, could you come?" And I-- my answer was, "No, I can't. I'm-- But we have these videos, so you could show these videos to your teachers or to the group, whatever." And so that's when we started to really kind of promote that idea since I was not and still am not able to be in two places at once, although my grandchildren certainly wish that were possible.

Julie Walker: This is very true, and I want to speak to something really quickly here just so that it's not lost on our listeners. We are pretty careful about who we allow to teach this teacher training course. We want to be sure that the problem of watering down the content and not catching some of the nuances of, for example, the topic literature rule, and do I need to include every dress up in every paragraph, including this introduction and conclusion? I mean, those are the things that we want to be sure that is being taught. And so watch the video, or get Andrew Pudewa or . . .

Andrew Pudewa: Well, and we have had a very small number of people over the years that have done it, and of course, part of your great influence on our policy, on our success has been to build consistency. That way the questions get answered in the same way by whoever. So yes, and, and as that's grown, particularly in the schools world, we've reached now a point where, yes, we still do some live on-location PD, but we have some other options, which I think is what you're planning to talk about today.

Julie Walker: Yes, it's pretty obvious to you, Andrew, because we have a guest, not really a guest, but we have one of our team members in the podcast studio with us, and that is Jeff Nease. Jeff, welcome to our podcast.

Jeff Nease: Thank you for having me.

Julie Walker: So Jeff, you have been working with IEW, for IEW for now four years?

Jeff Nease: Three years now

Julie Walker: Three years, and when he came on, Andrew, we knew that we had someone that could actually be trained to go out and teach this methodology with fidelity, but also had that experience in the classroom so that he could connect with those school teachers.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, we believed that.

Julie Walker: We did believe that.

Andrew Pudewa: And then through testing by fire, now we know that.

Julie Walker: This is true. This is true. And of course, today we are here specifically to talk about the Virtual Teaching Writing: Structure and Style workshop, Jeff, that you are doing the first week of August. So talk about that a little bit. What are you hoping to accomplish in those three days, Andrew? Don't you wish?

Andrew Pudewa: What a luxury.

Jeff Nease: Yes. Well, I always look forward to teaching. I love doing it, and this Virtual Teaching Writing: Structure and Style workshop is, thank goodness, over three days. I could not imagine going through everything in one day. It's already a fire hose of information. But what I'm hoping to accomplish is really focus on the methodology, getting teachers to understand our methodology, and getting them to teach with fidelity.

And the last thing, especially we say this a lot in the schools department, is that we don't want anybody to try IEW and think, "You know what? It just doesn't work for me." And they may not be teaching it correctly or understanding our methodology. And so being able to go through for three days at a little bit more of a slower pace, understand and explain these concepts to the teachers—and it is really targeted towards classroom teachers—but we welcome everybody, so homeschool parents and families, and everyone in between.

Tutors-

Andrew Pudewa: Tutors, teachers in Pakistan we've had even

Julie Walker: Exactly.

Jeff Nease: Co-ops, homeschoolers, classroom teachers, you name it, micro schools. So really just having those folks sit in here, understand what we're doing here, and really hear my heart behind what we do. It's all for the kids. I say that a lot. And so getting students to be able to communicate effectively, confidently. And we always say when teachers and parents

feel supported, that's just going to naturally trickle down to those students, and that's what we want.

Julie Walker: That's what we want. Andrew, you talk in your talk and in an article that you wrote, the *Four Deadly Errors of Teaching Writing*, and one of those, of course, is withholding help. And this workshop is us attempting to provide the correct amount of help to these teachers.

Andrew Pudewa: Right. Well, and one thing I love about Jeff is he's got a lot of classroom experience, which I never had. I taught in a very small school for a very short period of time, and I taught homeschool group kids, my kids mostly. But to be there five days a week on the front lines, ninth grade social studies?

Jeff Nease: Ninth grade social studies. Yeah

Andrew Pudewa: So he brings that side of his experience to the assisting classroom teachers in how to make this work. And then, of course, you've got kids of various ages. Your wife is a teacher too, so you've been living and breathing education.

Jeff Nease: For a very long time, yeah. Yeah, the school that I actually taught in, we had, it was about 1,300 students in that one building, and it was a

Julie Walker: And that was just ninth grade, right?

Jeff Nease: Just ninth grade. It was a freshman academy, and so the senior high, which was 10th, 11th, and 12th grade, had about 4,200 students. Yeah, our classrooms were bursting at the seams.

Andrew Pudewa: So I, I know just from listening to Jeff that he does have these kind of classroom management tips that he is able to offer during the virtual TWSS or talking to teachers who call up and say...and sometimes it's a case where "our school is making us do this." So the attitude is not necessarily, "I really want to learn."

And so there's a certain kind of gentle assisting. Yes, it's a new thing, but it's not like all the new things that are a burden. This might be a new thing that is a blessing

Jeff Nease: Exactly, and that's what we hope to accomplish even outside of the VTWSS. We talk to teachers, administrators, decision-makers day to day, and it is very much that. It's, "Hey, I bought into the program. We love it. We're implementing it into our school." And then the teachers are, "Okay, how do I do this?"

And so we really want to come alongside them and, and help them. And we've talked about this on different podcasts too, that educational consultants aren't just there to help, place orders, but we're here for coaching and tips and advice, and that's what I love about our schools department.

Andrew Pudewa: I'm always encouraging everybody who has any question, not just about the products, but about actually teaching the system. "Does Unit 5 really have a topic-clincher? How does that work?" That's the level of question that we can get into the weeds with.

Julie Walker: Yep, exactly. Well, and sometimes I hear, "Your program, your methodology for teaching writing, it must be hard because you have to do teacher training in order to use the student curriculum." And the answer is, it's not hard. It's different. And it's actually once you understand what it is we're trying to do, it is so much easier, and the kids enjoy it. So it's enjoyable for the teacher, it's enjoyable for the students.

Jeff Nease: It's so fun, and I was recently, and I shared this with Julie a couple weeks ago, I was in Montana for a coaching and observation day, and I got to sit in on multiple classes, third grade, ninth grade, eighth grade. Every one of those classes, students were enjoying the curriculum, the product.

I sat in on a third-grade class, and they were doing *Adventures in Writing*, and they were talking about Leif Eriksson. They tied it into one of their classmates that was of Norwegian descent, so they did a little case study on the background of names. And the teacher just said, she said, "I never knew writing could be this fun," and really meant it.

So, we're here day-to-day helping teachers, but to be able to go out and actually see students work with the curriculum, work with topic-clincher rules in a fun way. And that's the one thing that we really, really try to do is, yes, there is a lot of things to learn, but once you get it, it's so fun and so effective

Andrew Pudewa: It's an investment in yourself that never fails to pay. And we sometimes meet teachers and, and they don't like the way things are, and the reason is they haven't really learned it. And you can't teach something well unless you have that more personal experience of having learned it. And I think that's one thing that does differentiate us from a lot of curriculum providers is that we start with the teacher training.

It's not, "Here, buy all this stuff for your kids." It's, "Learn this system, then we'll help you figure out what do we have that can help you be successful." But the other thing is, I've been doing this so long, I am now meeting people at conferences and stuff who've been teaching this for twenty years, which makes me feel particularly young. But they always say, "This is the best thing that I ever learned, and I've been teaching it all these years, and every year it gets better, and it's such a great way to help my kids with their vocabulary, and the reluctant, the hesitant writers, they don't know what to do, and we can help them so clearly, so tangibly."

The joy, I think, that people want to share with me is notable. I don't know that there's too many teacher in-service types of things where people will look back 10 years and say, "That was one of the best things I ever did."

Julie Walker: How many times have you heard, Andrew, in the past from people that are enlisting you to teach, do teacher training, the expectation that they're not going to really be able to take away anything from this?

Andrew Pudewa: Well, quite honestly, I think we all have a little experience with in-services or PD where we walked out and thought, "Maybe one or two good ideas, but was it worth that whole day?" So I think we're kind of the opposite. It's like, "I can't believe how many good ideas I have now."

Julie Walker: I've heard both of you say this, you can start using this Monday morning. It's like, "Go home, you've got this." And they're like, "Oh, that's so awesome." So I want to talk about actually the two different ways people can attend, because this is kinda new. We've not done this before.

The virtual Teaching Writing: Structure and Style, the core of it is, shocker, virtual. So you can be anywhere in the world and watch it. We have special links where you're watching a video of Jeff live in the studio, and you will be mailed the *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style*, third edition. We're really excited to be able to share with our teachers the third edition.

This is just part of your registration fees, is you receive these materials, and they will be shipped to you, and then you'll receive a link and the schedule, and you'll know when to show up. And all of our times listed are Central Time. So if you live in Pakistan, you'll have to figure out what time that is in Oklahoma because we are in Oklahoma.

But then the second way that we're offering it now this year, and this is going to shock you, Andrew, because I don't even think I told you this, but I did it for Jeff like, just like I would do it for you. Do you like speaking, Andrew, to just a camera?

Andrew Pudewa: No, I kind of got used to it.

Julie Walker: Yes.

Andrew Pudewa: But it's hard to get the same energy as if you-- So you're going to do this with in-studio

Julie Walker: We are not only going to have an in-studio audience, and the space is really limited. We can only accommodate 20 people because we want them at tables, Andrew, so they can actually do writing as a part of the workshop. This is a workshop. You will be working. But we're reducing the cost. So the virtual fee, it's \$399 if you register early. If you miss the early registration deadline of July 7th, which is exactly one month before this starts, then your price is up by \$100, just because we have to get you those materials more quickly, and we have to expedite that.

But the people who come live, just because Jeff wants them here, we're going to incentivize them. So... And also accommodating the fact that people might travel. Hey, if you want to fly

in and pay for a hotel and pay for your flight, then we know that you've spent a little bit of extra money. Your price is significantly reduced.

Andrew Pudewa: Or drive in and camp in a tent.

Julie Walker: That would be pretty low cost, but I don't think you would want to be camping.

Jeff Nease: I think we have plenty of land for some tents out here.

Julie Walker: Well, in August

Jeff Nease: In August, yeah. Maybe not

Julie Walker: You don't want to camp in August. But the cost is half. If you want to attend virtually, it's \$399, and it's actually less than half. And then we have another little surprise thing that we're including with this. And that's because, Andrew, you say, and you kinda just said it right now, it is so important for the teachers to actually do the assignment. So we want these instructors that go through this course to become accredited at the trained level, and we're going to help you out with that.

Andrew Pudewa: We're giving a coupon?

Julie Walker: We are.

Andrew Pudewa: For the accreditation fee. That's good. I'm glad.

Julie Walker: I thought you would like that. So that's kinda what we're talking about here today, how far we've come, Andrew, from one day to three days with only you to now Jeff doing it, to be able to offer it virtually to anyone in the world, literally, or to be able to offer it on-site for anybody that wants to make the trip in to Bixby, Oklahoma.

Andrew Pudewa: And one more thing to mention how this is in a way qualitatively different than just watching the videos is you have live chat going on the whole time. So people are listening at home, they may have a question, they can chat in, and then Jeff's team of our ECs will be on hand in the room to immediately answer those questions.

And in a way, that's even better because I remember being out there. Well, the one-day format was kind of like, any questions? No, good. Thank you. Let's move on because I was just trying to cram it all in.

And then with a little more relaxed, you can have questions, but you're still limited, and only one person can ask a question at one time and one answer, whereas several people may have questions that are happening somewhat at the same time and they can all get individualized answers. So I think that that is really the best of all worlds there.

Julie Walker: I'm looking forward to the best ever virtual Teaching Writing: Structure and Style course for a variety of reasons. I love that we're having these two options. I love that we're using the third edition, and I love that teachers who attend this not only get Jeff's training, they get you, Andrew, on video forever.

Andrew Pudewa: To review whenever they may have a need for a refresher. Yeah.

Best deal out there.

Julie Walker: Best deal. Come on down. Thank you, Jeff. Thank you, Andrew.

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.