

Podcast 553: Streamline Grading with IEW Gradebook

Episode Transcript

Andrew Pudewa: One of the things I'm constantly trying to remind teachers is, you know, take time to acknowledge those things that you like because then you'll get more of that

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.

So Andrew, this is part three of our four-part series on IEW writing tools—tools that we make available to teachers and students to help them on this how to write IEW-style, Structure, and Style Method. Okay?

Andrew Pudewa: Well, it's a good thing you keep me informed about that because I don't necessarily know that we're in a four-part series. Well, the last, the last episode The podcasts just go on forever. They just go on. Like, there's a, it's like a 500-part series.

Julie Walker: Well, we actually had a conversation yesterday with our marketing team of what are we going to do for the 600th episode? Which actually comes out next August?

Andrew Pudewa: I don't know. It's like your 60th birthday. It's no big deal. You're just one year older. Only for 100 episodes, it's more like two years older.

Julie Walker: Anyway, we try to make a big deal on the 100th episodes.

Andrew Pudewa: Okay. Well, it better be fun.

Julie Walker: The 600th one.

Andrew Pudewa: Yes, yes. I'll leave it to you.

Julie Walker: Okay. I actually... want to hear what the plan is? You guys want to know what the plan is for the 600th?

Andrew Pudewa: Go ahead.

Julie Walker: We are going to record it in July at our Annual Educators' Conference. Oh. . So it will be an Ask Andrew Anything with a live audience, and we'll do it right here in the studio.

Andrew Pudewa: And people can come for that if they want to make a road trip.

Julie Walker: You are all welcome to come.

Andrew Pudewa: to Tulsa, Oklahoma. It's a great city. It is a great city. More people should visit.

Julie Walker: Probably, though, not in July.

Andrew Pudewa: No, July's fine. It's not that bad. It's hot, but it's hot in a lot of places.

Julie Walker: This is true.

Andrew Pudewa: It's better here in July than Texas, Alabama, Florida. Unless you're right on the beach. South Carolina, gosh. .

Julie Walker: It's so humid.

Andrew Pudewa: That's just painful. Yes. In, in the summer. You know, even Virginia

Julie Walker: Well, you and I grew up in Southern California, so.

Andrew Pudewa: But that doesn't count. It's perfect. It's like a paradise. It's a socialist paradise, but I would say to come to Tulsa in July, it's not any worse than a lot of places. And it's a lot better than many, and we have a lot of great things here.

Julie Walker: We do have a lot of great things, a lot of them outdoors, which whether or not you want to experience them In July, I keep going back to that.

Andrew Pudewa: But, one of the great places is our studio right here, which is indoors.

Julie Walker: It's true, and we always have a great time together, and we serve good food and great talks. And now, the 600th episode will be recorded. All right. And now you go.

Andrew Pudewa: So So make your plan to come to

Julie Walker: Save the date

Andrew Pudewa: Tulsa in July. If you've got nothing better to do.

Julie Walker: Link in the show notes. Now our team will have to get that registration open early.

So part three of a four-part series, and actually, the last one we did... Well, let me name the first two so that you know where we're going. Okay. So the first one we talked about was the IEW Checklist Generator.

Andrew Pudewa: Right. I remember that.

Julie Walker: That is a part of our Premium membership. And then you said In that one, I believe, that it accomplishes two, one of your two favorite things that you would like to see technology help solve. The first one is to make those lines and be able to customize the checklist, checklists at the touch of a button.

The second one, and this is not the third one, this is not the second thing you asked for. That's what we're going to talk about. That's what we're going to talk about today. The second thing you asked for, which is our third part, third episode.

Andrew Pudewa: I, I'm totally confused now.

Julie Walker: The second thing we talked about was our writing toolbox app that serves as reminders of structure and style, but also has a built-in thesaurus Right where we have a member of our team vet each of the words to make sure that they're useful, helpful, and appropriate for our writing students.

Andrew Pudewa: Okay. So So we've got the checklist generator and the app. . That was two parts of four. Yes. So what are you going to talk about today?

Julie Walker: I'm going to talk today, we are going to talk about today IEW Gradebook. Now we've talked about this before many times, and it's a really helpful tool, but I'm going to read the opening description and see if you can pick out, Andrew, that second thing that you were hoping for that we could accomplish with an app. And here it is. "IEW Gradebook is your grading assistant. This online tool" And by the way, when I say app, I mean kind of generically. This is only accessible on a through a website through a website. . . This is browser-based.

Andrew Pudewa: So what do they call it? Web app. Web app, .

Julie Walker: Web app. Exactly. "This online tool is a subscription-based program that organizes your workload and manages student submissions, identifies elements from the IEW checklist, and provides comments that you can insert with just a single click."

Andrew Pudewa: Yes. I always dreamed when I was sitting there writing on student papers, wouldn't it be nice if there was a master list of comments, and then you could just put them in or give the kids a code, and then they could go look it up? But I'm not sure the kids read the comments anyway. But I did like that idea, because you end up writing the same thing again, and again, and again, and again. So this is a good side of technology. We hope.

Julie Walker: So that's, there you go. We check, done, next. Well, we'll get to..there's no next, but here we go.

So you can find what I'm about to read to you, a few things that I'm going to read to you, on the website IEW.com/gradebook. We try to make our URLs pretty intuitive. You can also try Gradebook for free at IEW.com/try. And there's a whole list of things that you can try. There

is a couple videos on the IEW.com Gradebook page, where we provide instruction of how it works.

And one thing that I think is really important to mention, that especially in light of all of our conversations that we've had about AI and the problem and the challenges with AI, when you're talking about something as simple as writing a paper, it's not that simple. Let's just get AI to help you. Well, you're outsourcing your thinking when you're doing that. Same with the teachers. We want the teachers to control this tool. There is no AI in this tool. So we're trying to be very careful, very cautious about when and how we use AI at IEW, and this tool is AI free. But we'll get to that more because that's also something that you had asked for with our part four, which is the next one that we'll talk about in a following week.

But I want to just share a couple things. I mentioned subscription-based, which means there's a price tag with these. There's some technology involved and some hosting applications, and well, there's a lot of work that goes into something. And when you have a lot of work, you wind up having to pay for it a little bit. A lot, in some cases.

So we have several levels of subscriptions. One is the basic level, one is plus, one is enhanced, and one is premier. And what these are based on is how many students' papers are you grading? Because we have some teachers that it's just mom, and she at most would be grading 50 papers a month. That's what it's per month. How many papers are you going to grade in a month? A homeschool mom probably wouldn't grade that many, but that's the lowest level.

Andrew Pudewa: We hope not.

Julie Walker: No. But, , but then we also price it, and I'm just going to tell you the basic prices. I don't want to get too into the weeds of it, but I want you to hear how we priced it.

We expect a school year to last about 10 months, right? So we said it's \$25 a month for Gradebook to help you grade 50 papers. So that's about 50 cents a paper. Or if you buy it for the whole year, it's \$125, so you see that we've discounted it significantly so that you've got the whole year experience.

So try it for a month. You'll love it, then go ahead and subscribe for the whole year, and this is a renewing membership, new renewing subscription. Okay. And then just the number of papers. Basic plus, this might be a co-op teacher, she might grade, he might grade 100 papers a month.

Enhanced might be a small school or an elementary, upper elementary program. I mean, the papers do have to be typed, and we've had many conversations about the value of pen and paper Right and why we want to keep kids on pen and paper as long as possible, including high school key word outline, rough draft in paper if you can get away with it, and then maybe final draft in pen.

And it's the, when the students are doing the final draft is when it, when they're doing final draft typing and they could submit it online, that's when Gradebook kicks in, and that's when it's helpful.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, and a lot of people who are teaching online, all of our instructors for example and then other people who have online programs , those are all coming in through, you know, what is it? Electronically. A PDF or Word doc or what format does it have to be?

Julie Walker: Well, there's two and a secret third one. You have to wait for episode four to hear about the secret third one. So it's Word documents, Google Docs, and then the secret third one.

Andrew Pudewa: Okay. So PDF doesn't work.

Julie Walker: PDF does not work. Okay. Well. And then Enhanced is 500 papers, and then we've got some high school teachers who are grading more than 500 papers, and we said, "What?" We actually asked one of our educational consultants who taught in high school for nine years, and we said, "How many papers is the most you could grade in a month?"

Julie Walker: And he said, "Eh, probably 900 or so." And I said, "All right, we'll make it 1,000."

Andrew Pudewa: That's that's unbelievable. There's there's gotta be a special place in writing teacher heaven for people who manage that. But we're trying to help.

Julie Walker: Yes, we are. . We are. And then the other feature that we have that's a really simple thing that we've added on, and that is that classroom management.

So if you're teaching multiple classes, it is really handy to have the classroom tool because it helps you organize the student's submission. Did Susie do it? No, she didn't. Did Johnny do it? Yes, he did. And it keeps track of that. It's a learning management system, or an LMS Okay which is essentially what Gradebook is in the classroom add-on.

And that's a pretty nominal price because, again, we want teachers to be helped, but we need to cover our costs. So that's kind of the quick broad brush of Gradebook. I want to share that we have our IEW curriculum that is supported by Gradebook. You can't just write your own lessons because we've put in the checklist for these Gradebook submissions. And so all of the Structure and Style for Students courses, year one, year two, and for our year three level B course, so there are seven Structure and Style for Students courses, they are all, of course, in Gradebook.

Andrew Pudewa: So the checklist that we have in the curriculum are the ones that are available in the Gradebook?

Julie Walker: Correct. Correct.

Andrew Pudewa: And you don't have to sign up for a specific one, you have access to any of them?

Julie Walker: Correct. Okay. Right. Yep. So I wanted to add just almost in closing, and then just any comments that you want to make, some of the things that teachers are saying. "Weekends are mine again."

"This on this online tool has changed how I grade for the better. I am more methodical about my grading and more efficient so that I'm able to leave meaningful feedback for both my reluctant writers and my strong students."

"Within a week of using Gradebook, I determined I would grade all of my classes with it. As I have Tuesday classes, weekends are mine again."

So that's very nice. "A huge help and time-saver. I just graded two papers the old way. Heavens, how did I survive grading without Gradebook?"

Andrew Pudewa: It's like technology. It's true. Once, once you adopt it, it's hard to go back.

Julie Walker: "It's a huge help, a time-saver. I don't want to grade without it." So, you know, a little pressure there for us to make sure this platform is running smoothly. . And we have a great technology team that's able to help us with this.

"All of my papers are graded and returned. If I were a poet, I would write you a sonnet. It is 9:00 AM on a Friday, and all of my papers are graded and returned. I have the weekend to play."

So this is kind of our theme, you know. We've been saying, "Teachers, get your weekends back," and we're starting to see that from the feedback.

And the last one I'm going to read is from one of our Hillsdale teachers. She says, "I'm really loving Gradebook. It has helped lighten the paper workload. I'm also loving the classroom function of IEW Gradebook. It is a wonderful grading tool and certainly helps streamline the grading process." So skeptical at first. I said I was going to read my last one, but this is my last one. Okay. "I'm really enjoying IEW Gradebook. I was skeptical at first because you know IEW teachers are set in their ways." They get it from this guy. Mm.

"Now I only want to use Gradebook to do all my grading." And I think it's really, just really important to note that even though it is a tool, just like a hammer is a tool to pound in a nail, it makes it easier, the person that swings the hammer has got to know IEW well enough to be able to use the tool successfully. So we expect our teachers who know IEW to be able to be successful in Gradebook. If you're brand new to IEW, and you've gone through the teacher training that you provide with the *Teaching Writing: Structure and Style*, you'll do fine with Gradebook. But if you've never been taught IEW methods, I could say it won't work as well because you won't know how to make these accommodations, but I would then at the other

hand, on the other hand, what I, what didn't come out in any of these testimonies, which I know from personal experience, is the consistency that you can provide. The very student, first student paper that you're looking at will have the same, have to, prompts. I'll just say it that way. Did this person get that -ly adverb right? It will prompt you, and it will check. . Because it will check to see if that's an -ly adverb. It will check to see if it's a verb. Now, you have to make a determination whether or not it's a strong verb, and if you don't know IEW, you wouldn't know that necessarily. But if you do IEW, do know IEW, you would know that.

Andrew Pudewa: We certainly wouldn't be recommending this for anyone who hasn't gone through the TWSS training, and I think the certification process also uses the Gradebook tool to give feedback to those who are involved in getting IEW accreditation.

Julie Walker: Right. Yes, and in fact, when applicants are submitting their units, one unit at a time, they get the feedback before they can go on, it will send you through and prompt you, "Where's your -ly adverb?" And you've got to underline it and check it off. So it's kind of doing what Gradebook does for the teacher's side, only as an applicant, you're kind of seeing firsthand what that Gradebook experience is like.

So it's super helpful. And then of course, the people who are evaluating our accreditation team are using not just Gradebook to evaluate the papers, but they're using that database of comments to be able to give helpful suggestions as well as positive feedback.

Andrew Pudewa: And teachers can always add in any comments, suggestions, things they want to say to the student. They like something in particular. I think too often our marking of student papers tends to be just about all the things that are wrong or should've been better. Right. Whereas one of the things I'm constantly trying to remind teachers is, you know, take time to acknowledge those things that you like. . Because then you'll get more of that. Yep. So. Yep. It's very good.

Julie Walker: So there's our third tool in our writing tools toolbox that is more technology-based I would say. We have part four coming up. See you next week.

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