

The Continuing Impact of SSS-1C Transcript of E393

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, do you have a chance to read our blog posts that we write?

Andrew Pudewa: Oh, if I do, it's generally speed reading. Occasionally there'll be one, and I'll just have time and look through it. We do a lot of blog posting.

Julie Walker: Well, we have some great content that we put out.

Andrew Pudewa: My favorites are the Where are They Now ones.

Julie Walker: That’s exactly what this podcast is about. We've never done a Where Are They Now podcast, but we looked around our office.

Andrew Pudewa: We saw; we have some.

Julie Walker: We have some.

Andrew Pudewa: We know where they are right now.

Julie Walker: We do. Where are they now? They are here in our podcast studio, and we are actually talking to Drew and Kathleen, who were our students in *Structure and Style for Students* Year 1 Level C and Year 2 Level C.

So welcome Drew and Kathleen to our podcast. So we would love to hear first of all, what your experience was when you were, oh, many, many, many years ago when you were just little kids. Not that little, you were in high school. What was your experience? How did you get roped into doing the 1C to start with?

Kathleen Ray: My story is actually kind of interesting. We were kind of just hanging around the office because my mom used to work here, and I didn't start 1C at the very beginning. I kind of got roped into Unit 6, which was really challenging for me. That was really difficult to jump into. I think we had some people that left and they needed kind of people to fill in. So that's how I heard about it. We were here every week and saw all the kids having fun, watched it on TV out in the commons area. So it was super fun to join that in halfway through the year.

Julie Walker: And what about you, Drew? How did you get roped in?

Drew Stafford: Yeah. So I had done Classical Conversations for a few years and I'd done their *Lost Tools of Writing* program and quickly right around, I think it was 10th grade.

my mom had heard somehow about IEW. And I don't really remember much from that time about curriculum picking because I kind of left that to mom, but she let me know that I had an interview at some random building kind of right out in the edge of Tulsa and showed up. I interviewed with Laura, still didn't know really what I was doing and what I was signing up for, but all of a sudden, I was here, Tuesday mornings, doing the videos, and I enjoyed it. It was a new experience, a different writing program, but I really enjoyed it. From where I was at to where it took me a little bit, so.

Andrew Pudewa: Had you done the IEW Structure and Style in Essentials in CC, or did you join CC later in the Challenge levels?

Drew Stafford: I joined right into Challenge, so I missed all the Essentials IEW work, just started Lost Tools of Writing.

Julie Walker: Well, and we were looking for students that didn't have a lot of IEW experience for that year one class because...

Andrew Pudewa: We didn't want everybody to know everything

Julie Walker: Well, and I know how you teach. You teach to the students that are in front of you. So if they already knew IEW, this was not going to be a beginning class. So what are some of your most significant memories?

Andrew Pudewa: I, I would get a little more specific. I would like to know what surprised you the most about the class, whether it was like a source text or the process or something that was just, "Wow, that's different than I would have thought" kind of reaction.

Kathleen Ray: I would say definitely both the process, mainly the process honestly. I came from Seton Homeschool where every year we would write a five-paragraph book report. That was it. We did not do writing.

Andrew Pudewa: One a year?

Kathleen Ray: Yeah, or no, sorry, actually it was one a quarter, so it was four a year. Okay. And they had a book, they would assign you, and you'd write five paragraphs on the book, and that was it, no direction, nothing.

And so I did not realize that you could write so many different ways. I also did not expect it to be that easy, either. So, easy in the sense of, I do very well with specific direction. And so for someone to be able to tell me exactly what I needed to write was very surprising. It's not something you really see a lot of.

Drew Stafford: So for me, at first the surprise was, man, this class is really easy. All I have to do this week is an outline. This is incredible.

Julie Walker: We start off pretty easy, don't we? Yes, we do.

Drew Stafford: And then for *Lost Tools of Writing*, it was one paper every three weeks. The first week was you kind of form an outline. The second week was you're kind of finishing the rough draft. And then the third week was the final draft. So kind of like the IW method, but

broken apart more. But the, for IEW at first it was just an outline and then it was all of it in one week. And that caught me off guard as well. The difference between the two for me was it's like Kathleen was saying, the structure made it so much easier to do it all in one week. When I realized quickly into the class that there was an essay each week, I kind of panicked for a moment, but yeah, the structure made it really easy to make that doable and not an overwhelming task for me. And so kind of surprised on both ends of the spectrum there.

Julie Walker: One of the things that you would say, Andrew, because we did a little interviews after the class and you can see, if you're a premium member with IEW, you can see those little interviews that I did with you, Andrew. And one of the things that you said was, my goal is to make sure that students leave this class knowing what to write because so often writing programs start with that blank page. I think of Kathleen's story of reading a book and then having to write a book report. I don't know what to do. And even some of these other curriculums, they don't know what to do. And that is your goal. Even though we're telling them what to write, you want to make sure that they've done an outline in class. So all they have to do is go home and turn that outline into.

Andrew Pudewa: Right, well, and knowing students, and myself, as I do, there could be a tendency to wait a few or several days before actually starting in. So class on Tuesday, well, you could wait till Thursday or Friday or Monday, and then it's all fuzzy. And I think I very often encourage people, go home and work on this now while it's fresh in your mind. Which is just good life experience advice as well.

Julie Walker: Well, and I, I would like to kind of run with that a little bit. What type of life lesson did you learn from taking these classes outside of learning how to write?

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah, I was gonna ask similarly how Mrs. Ingham talks about the intangibles. The things that you learn from the environment and the experience, rather than from the direct information or instruction part.

Kathleen Ray: My biggest thing probably was I realized I could accomplish way more in a small amount of time than I originally thought. Because when we were working on those five paragraph book reports, I mean, you were spending the entire quarter, which was, I don't even remember how many weeks in a quarter, but you'd read the book, take notes, write your outline. I'd never done anything like write a 12 paragraph research report in a week, two weeks, so I definitely learned I can actually accomplish it which actually ended up helping me with my college application essay because I applied very late. I was originally going to go the following school year, but they wanted me to apply that school year. So I had, I think, one or two days to get in my college application essay, and I could do it. And I did it. And that's not something I ever would have thought that I could have done.

Drew Stafford: Yeah, and for me, I at the time was not the most disciplined, which meant, waiting till Monday night to do the essays and all the homework. And I don't think I really realized it at the time, but the easily broken down, broken into how many days you're supposed to do it and the structure of each week's assignment. And it was planned ahead of time for me. At that time it was split up into different days, how to attack it and break it down into little tasks at a time. And so kind of that structure into writing allowed me to recognize I didn't even notice at the time, but I would do a structure for math and a structure for whatever else it was in my life at the time that I had to do, started breaking it down into little tasks and

working on being more consistent with those tasks as opposed to doing it all at the last moment.

Julie Walker: Wow Drew, that's amazing.

Drew Stafford: Which is, yeah, the structure helped me move that into my life, and I didn't catch it, I don't think, until a few years after I did Structure and Style, in college specifically, but it definitely helped guide me in making sure I was disciplined, whether I realized it or not.

Andrew Pudewa: That's priceless.

Julie Walker: I know,

Andrew Pudewa: I mean how they have that Visa commercial, like, you could buy this and that, you could pay for the course, you could do it, but to learn this lesson, priceless.

Julie Walker: Exactly. Exactly. So where are they now? Kathleen, what has your IEW writing journey brought you to?

Kathleen Ray: Honestly, so many different experiences. I got into the college of my choice. Full ride scholarship. Decided not to go and then was working here at IEW for many years. I've been teaching online classes, doing lots of tutoring. Last year I taught three online classes, had one or two tutoring students, and then I'm now a first grade teacher at a local private school of course using IEW.

Julie Walker: As much as you can in first grade, there's not a lot of writing at that age.

Andrew Pudewa: Poetry memorization.

Kathleen Ray: Lots of poetry memorization.

Julie Walker: That's wonderful. And what about you, Drew?

Drew Stafford: Yeah, similarly to Kathleen, I, I've worked with IEW here since those 1C classes pretty much got out. I started as a junior way back when and have slowly kind of moved up. And now I'm a customer service agent working full time, and I've done some college as well during that time and been able to use that IEW writing help through those college courses, which has been such a blessing. But now I'm a customer service agent and plan to be for as long as I can.

Julie Walker: And you also help us out with some IT support, which is great. "Drew, this printer isn't working. Help me. Oh, it just needs paper."

Andrew Pudewa: and, and the both of you got married at a fairly young age compared to many people today. That makes me super happy. But I think for some listeners, a lot of parents might be very concerned if they had this child who said, "Yeah, I want to get married at 18 or 19, 20." "Why don't you grow up some more?"

And I've often said you don't grow up so you can get married. You get married so you can grow up. But talk a little bit about getting married at a young age. I think that would be of interest.

Kathleen Ray: It's definitely been a very interesting experience. My dad absolutely was all for it. He believes very much the same. He thought it was a great idea, and it's just been such a great opportunity to kind of be able to grow together without kind of already having grown up. There's a lot of room for just being able to kind of work together before you're set in your ways. And I think that, honestly, is just such a great opportunity. And, yeah, it's been awesome. And we have a sweet one year old daughter now. She just turned one. So, yeah, it's been, it's been awesome. Yeah, I got married at 19. Yeah. Yeah, it's been great.

Drew Stafford: Yeah, for me, it was actually almost an opposite experience. I was kind of told by lots that getting married at such a young age might cause some problems and could be some challenges, bring some challenges. Which I knew going into it that there's gonna be challenges whether you get married at 20, or you get married at 40 there's going to be problems that arise just because you're merging two lives into one. There's a lot to kind of consider when doing that. You've got finances and dreams and families that you're all bringing together. It's a big process, but my family, luckily they were even at first they were not necessarily on board when I mentioned it early, but quickly, were a huge help to me. And yeah, my wife and I have gotten to, like Kathleen was saying, grow together even more. And just being married at a young age, you still have time to do schooling together and you get to see life dreams kind of come true both now and years in the future, kind of work together as a team towards those dreams, which has been really awesome. And so, yeah, she's been a great help to me and getting me where I'm at now. And I hope I can say the same for her. And so it's been excellent.

Julie Walker: And both of you, though, were fortunate and discerning enough to find the right one. My sister also got married very young, and they've been married almost 50 years and she's not that much older than me and I think she got married when she was 10 because no, really. They grew up together and had a lot of life experiences and traveling and having children and just been, just been a real delight.

Andrew, I wanted to transition to something a little bit different, and I don't know if the two of you had an opportunity to take advantage of this, but I wanted to talk about this dual enrollment thing that we've got going now with the Level 1C class. And I love that both of you have said, "Wow, this, this was really easy." But yet we have learned that this Year 1 Level C class, which to us is a high school level class, is actually rigorous enough for some universities to give college credit to that. And I know because you have both worked in customer service, Drew currently and Kathleen just previously, not too long ago. Tell us what you know about the Christian Halls International.

And I'm actually going to pitch this one to Kathleen because I know your mom is also involved in working with Christian Halls and helping oversee the *Structure and Style for Students: Year 1 Level C* and helping these students get college credit for that. How does that work?

Kathleen Ray: Yeah, it's the coolest thing. And I actually was working for them last year as well. And honestly, Nick Ellis' whole vision for Christian Halls is just absolutely amazing. I mean, what he's doing there is awesome. Basically, the way that it works is students purchase Year 1 Level C, and they have a lot of different ways to go through that course. They can do

it at home on their own. They can enroll in one of our online classes. They can hire a private tutor, but they complete that course and submit their assignments to the college each week. Right now we're paired with Southeastern University and Donnelly College. You can choose either one of those.

Structure and Style: Year 1 Level C covers English Comp I and English Comp II. So you complete that whole course in one year and you get credits for Comp I and Comp II. They hire their own graders, and you submit it to them, and they give you the college credit for it each week.

Julie Walker: And what's exciting to me is that these are fully accredited schools. So you could either transfer into Southeastern University or Donnelly College or transfer to any university, because these are fully transferable, fully accredited courses.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah, that's what CHI does, is it serves as a facilitator between various universities and the individual to bank the credits and then ultimately probably transfer and get a bachelor's degree of some sort at some place.

Julie Walker: I know, listener, that you've heard Andrew and I talk about dual enrollment many times on this podcast, probably because we're both a little envious that we didn't have the opportunity to do it with our own kids,

Andrew Pudewa: I wish I could have been born and be 20 years old right now. Not really. I mean, I'm very happy with my life and I wouldn't want to go back, but there are so many great opportunities right now that just didn't exist back then.

Julie Walker: To double dip, to get high school credit and college credit is just a real opportunity for homeschool families, but also full time families. I mean, families who've got their kids in school too.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah, I have a question for them. So one of the things that parents will say to me at a convention or something is, Oh, I just want my child to like writing. I want them to enjoy expressing themselves on paper. And my response is a little bit radical. My response is that's not a good goal, right? If you, if your goal is to say you have to like this, well, what are you going to end up doing?

So I generally say a better goal is to get better at doing something. And in the process of getting better, you might dislike it less. You might even start liking it a bit. But that's almost the side product of the getting better at doing it. Would you say that rings true for you in any way there?

Kathleen Ray: Yes, for sure. I specifically remember being in those classes. And I mean, we had some amazing writers in those classes. It was incredibly intimidating. We had some of the students just wrote these incredible stories. Oh my goodness. And no, I was never one of those students. I still, I'm not going to go write a novel. I don't particularly like writing. I can do it. And it doesn't intimidate me anymore. And so I hate it less than before, because for me, my personality, I don't like to do anything that I'm not good at. And so before I would have probably been one of those people that really hated it because I had no clue what I was doing. So I hate it less, but I don't love it by any means.

Drew Stafford: means. Yeah. For me, I think that saying really rang true because I became comfortable in my ability to write. Before Structure and Style, I kind of had this vague understanding of what was supposed to be put on a paper. There really wasn't... With math, there's always a correct answer to the equation. There's always one solution, and it's this puzzle to find it. With writing, there's not necessarily a correct solution, just something that makes you look more professional or more knowledgeable or whatever it ends up being for the... for the writer there. And so I always struggled with finding out how to demonstrate that I knew what I was talking about.

And it's still a problem now. It's still trying to figure out exactly how to do that. But at least now I have the tools to write well, and I can have confidence that my writing is done well. And so the challenge for me then becomes what am I writing about and doing the research before the writing, as opposed to putting it on the paper as much and that comfortability and knowing that I have the ability to put what I'm thinking on the paper because I've got questions given to me to ask myself and outlines that I can work from really makes it there's definitely, I don't hate writing by any means now and instead I kind of look forward to the actual writing process because I have the answers. It's there in front of me. I know what I'm going to do. And so it's no longer stressful. And at this point, it's practiced enough for me that I've come through comfortable and enjoy it.

Andrew Pudewa: Have you developed the kind of habit of making a mental outline before you start typing the first sentences of whatever you're writing, whether it's an email or I don't know what else you would write.

Kathleen Ray: For sure. And kind of depending on the situation for emails, which I do constantly, it's definitely more of a mental outline kind of. And it also has helped me be way more clear, especially in email format, really conveying exactly what you're trying to say in a good sequential format. When it comes to kind of more professional-type writing, it's almost a two-step key word outline. It's kind of that mental list first and then the second really formal key word outline where you're really outlining everything that you want.

Drew Stafford: So for me, that process, I think honestly, the key word outline process specifically for me has led both into note taking and producing, whether it be a speech or a essay, an email, even a text at this point. Sometimes it's mental or I'm breaking it down in my head. Okay, how do I want to start this? What are the kind of the key words I'm trying to get across here? And I'll mentally key word outline it. Or sometimes when I'm having a conversation with somebody, I'm keeping a mental key word outline of what they're telling me because it's important to notate, but it's really difficult to remember the full conversation, but by keeping a key word outline mentally of that conversation in my head, it allows me to track what they've said for the most part and the important parts of what they were trying to inform me with.

And then for longer meetings or longer emails, essays, anything along that type, I like bringing a notepad with me and writing out a key word outline either as notes or as a plan for what I'm going to write. But definitely that key word outline kind of concept as a whole has helped me both in short form conversations, texts, little emails, or longer conversations, meetings, and emails, essays, whatever it ends up being.

Andrew Pudewa: I love that. He should write a blog post about

Julie Walker: He absolutely should. And what's so funny is you have a notepad and pen in your hand right now. I don't see any notes on there, but that's because we're asking you the questions and you're doing a great job.

Andrew Pudewa: That's excellent. I am also curious to know what you are interested in these days, because some other buzzwords I don't really like, along with critical thinking, because it's overused and people don't think about it correctly, but “lifelong learner.” That's like this super goal of a school is we want to create lifelong learners. But again, I'm not sure that you do that by saying that's my goal. I think that would be a byproduct. And I get the impression that both of you are kind of always learning, always interested, always studying something. So what are you most interested in learning about these days?

Kathleen Ray: So, for me, it's actually been kind of crazy having a baby, really, just kind of puts a lot of things into perspective. So the things that I'm just constantly learning right now is just nutrition, health. It's crazy. You suddenly have a kid, and you want the best for them. And I've just been reading all the labels and learning everything about every ingredient. And it's honestly been very life changing. I have taken the stance of just not believing anything anyone tells me essentially and just doing my own research. And so just reading the labels on things that we've eliminated, so many things from our household, and I'm always learning new things because you can't do it all at once. You can't learn everything at once.

Julie Walker: EZ+1?

Kathleen Ray: Yes, absolutely. So that's kind of been my biggest thing lately is just getting really into kind of health and nutrition and the effects, especially on child brain development. I've been really into child brain development, the Montessori style, just how children learn, how they perceive the world. And it's been really the coolest experience.

Andrew Pudewa: When you're getting a lot of experience now around other people's young children. So you can kind of see what's the best direction to go in various ways.

Kathleen Ray: That has been the craziest thing for me. I did not realize that was something that I was ever going to think about. So, I know lots of people with little kids, anywhere from one year old all the way up to three, four years old, and the differences in the way they parent, the way they do anything really has such drastic effects on their children, and it's been very interesting to kind of just watch that.

Andrew Pudewa: I kind of have to restrain myself from being judgmental because I will watch someone giving a two year old a donut. “Do you realize what that has in it?” And, ignorance is bliss, but not really. How about you, Drew? What, what do you love to learn about these days

Drew Stafford: So for me, it's been a little bit of a journey here the last few years. I've taken some time and dove deep into the world of finance and done my best to soak up what I could there.

And then after that, it was kind of health with gym related activities and, and physical activity, as opposed to nutrition specifically dove into that for a little bit. And right now I've kind of implemented a little bit of both of those into my life currently, but right now it's a lot

of IT work. And so our world is constantly changing with more and more computers being introduced and added to everyday things each day. And I want to be kind of ahead of the curve there and know what the background for those different computers. I'd rather be in the knowledge and be prepared as opposed to figuring out after it happens and not knowing how to react. And so yeah, I'm diving deep into specifically cybersecurity and making sure I'm safe.

Julie Walker: And you're taking university classes for that.

Andrew Pudewa: And working full time?

Julie Walker: And a husband.

Andrew Pudewa: And a husband, not a dad yet

Drew Stafford: Not a dad, no.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. Here's an interesting thing. I don't know if you've ever heard this. I just heard this term last week. And I was talking to someone about AI and how that affects the changes we're going to see in the next years and decade in particular. And they used a term like this is going to be a career: prompt engineer.

Julie Walker: Oh, interesting. Sure.

Andrew Pudewa: And I just saw on Groupon this thing, or I know one of these buy it cheap here now. 1,000 AI prompts you can buy. And what made me think about this was how we have always said the trick of learning to think is the trick of learning to ask the good questions. And so the coding jockey job is going to fade because the AI can do that. The real trick is going to be who can think well enough to ask the right questions to maximize the technology that is going to be available and growing very rapidly. So, I think we'll hold our place. Even though AI can write essays for you, it can't necessarily help you learn to ask the best questions about what you want to learn.

Julie Walker: So what was the, what was the career?

Andrew Pudewa: Prompt engineer.

Julie Walker: Prompt engineer. Wow. That doesn't mean that they're on time

Andrew Pudewa: I don't know that anyone would necessarily make that connection, but I suppose in the bigger sense, you need to ask the right question at the right time.

Julie Walker: Yes. I like it.

Andrew Pudewa: So, that's, have you, have you got into this looking at AI and what it can do and playing with it at all yet?

Drew Stafford: Nothing more than just my own trying to figure out what it is. And I've fiddled with it kind of seeing what I can do. I do use it to help me solve problems by knowing what to ask it or asking it what to ask, which has been a learning curve for me. Definitely not

quite as experienced as I want to be there yet, but by asking it, how do I, what am I looking for to solve this problem? It gives me a few things. I can do the research into finding that it may not be able to provide me with. And it gives me kind of a like we mentioned with the structure for big tasks, it breaks it down into little tasks for me and gives me that structure to follow along with that I can break down and do on my own. And so I've been using it to help me with that and whatever I can, too. I'm not trying to lean too heavily on it because I don't want to lose any. Ability of my own, but definitely there's a balance in finding how can I use it to help me without using it to hurt me?

Julie Walker: No, that's perfect.

Andrew Pudewa: What's so delightful about this conversation is here we have very young people. But they have so much wisdom, and good practical life experience and judgment about things. That's so encouraging, isn't it, for the future? It'd be fun to revisit this a year later and find out what Kathleen thinks about...

Julie Walker: Teaching first grade!

Andrew Pudewa: having finished a whole year in first grade and find out what Drew has figured out about AI and applications and working in customer service a year from now. And then kind of the before after, only what happens in a year's worth of time.

Julie Walker: Well thank you so much for taking time away from your busy schedules to be here with us today.

Kathleen Ray: Thank you for having us.

Drew Stafford: Thank you for having us.

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, Google podcasts, 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.