

While Julie's Away – Talking Accreditation with Evan Smith

Transcript of Podcast Episode 332

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.

Andrew Pudewa: So this is a podcast without Julie Walker. I don’t think I have ever done this before. She’s done them without me, but it’s a Julie’s-away. She’s helping take care of her parents in California. And so we are joined by my good friend and coworker, Evan Smith. And Evan, why don’t you just briefly tell our listeners what you do here at IEW.

Evan Smith: Sure. So in 2017, I’d climbed aboard and started in customer service and worked on a number of projects, including *Structure and Style for Students*, getting to sit in on the entirety of the filming. Some of my kids got to be a part of that as well, which was fantastic. After a wonderful tenure in customer service, I moved to the Schools Division this year. So I’m working with full-time schools and hybrid schools as well, along with the accreditation department, which we’re continuing to tighten and make everything clearer.

Andrew Pudewa: When you say “tighten,” you don’t mean harder for people to get their accreditation.

Evan Smith: I suppose we’d want to make it a little more accessible for them to, you know, make that commitment.

Andrew Pudewa: Also there are some requirements. Can you just give an overview of our accreditation program and the requirements for the first level?

Evan Smith: Sure. Yeah. So at the Registered Level it’s essentially working through the entirety of the [TWSS] seminar, watching you on the videos, doing the work along with you and the teachers that are there, submitting all of that work, so that it can be assessed. And sometimes you will have to do some corrections, which is good—all part of the process. You can truly “feel your students’ pain” as Andrew says in those videos.

Andrew Pudewa: Because we use kind of the *A/I* grading method on this. It’s either accepted (accomplished) or incomplete. Right. And so you get the not so enviable job of having to send things back and tell people redo, blah, blah, blah ...

Evan Smith: It’s true. Yeah. Try to just keep it at the sections. You know, didn’t quite get the topic-clincher. So why don’t you go back and watch that part of the video? Look in your *Seminar Workbook* and try it again, you know, and just send me that part. It’ll be okay. You know, it might take a few weeks, might take one more try, but you know, that’s the idea. And then you can teach it all the better.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. And I think that I had that story I've shared on the podcast before of working super hard to get a 100% from Dr. James B. Webster at the summer training many years ago, and ending up with a 99% because what did I forget? The date on the paper. And that just fazed me, but it was a good lesson.

Evan Smith: You know, it's on the checklist. So put the date on there, but if you miss a date, we'll let you through.

Andrew Pudewa: Well, you know, it's that thing we said to the students in the SSS was, "Do what you check, and check what you do."

Evan Smith: You do.

Andrew Pudewa: Double check yourself both ways, which is more than just a writing thing. It's a life skill.

Evan Smith: That's what I was going to say. A good practice for life as well, just being thorough and on your game there. So you have ... I think we'll send it ... We'll give you two chances to make corrections. And after that, you just have to kind of try again at a later time if it came to that, but that doesn't typically happen. Most people will get it after once, maybe twice, you know, but ...

Andrew Pudewa: And of course, you know, we can go back in history and talk about why we felt it necessary to create this accreditation program, which was really to protect the integrity, the fidelity of the way people are teaching because anybody could hang out their shingle and say, "I'm teaching IEW."

And for years, you know, that was like, okay, I don't really care. Whatever anyone wants to do is okay with me. But then we discovered people were not quite following the syllabus with the units and the details, or they're kind of making up some rules, innovations. I think the one that bothered me the most was, "Oh, you don't have to do all the dress-ups; just do whichever two or three you wish." And that was not the way we've done it and not the way to get the best results.

Evan Smith: Exactly. Yeah. It's all about the process, even when it's a longer process by the end of the year. There's a lot of steps there, but that's why it's all the more important to work through and truly work through the seminar, not just watch the seminar, not just read about it in the *Seminar Workbook*, by engaging with it. And that's how you can, well, equip yourself to empower your students, I like to say.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. You know, it's one thing to see something or listen to something, but it's a completely different experience actually doing it.

Evan Smith: Right, right.

Andrew Pudewa: What are some of the most interesting comments you have heard or read from people who go through this accreditation process?

Evan Smith: Well, generally, they're pretty relieved to be done, you know.

Andrew Pudewa: Like a college class!

Evan Smith: It's nice because you send, we send all the information for approval and try to point out a few specific things that they did in their papers. Unit 5 tends to be the one that gives the most to comment on, you know.

Andrew Pudewa: Writing from Pictures, yes.

Evan Smith: Getting that lady mixing and the mistress, child, or whatever they decide comes in and makes a mess. Actually we try to comment on that or specific use ... I remember one Unit 3. Those are fairly similar, but one just really stood out. They just were so descriptive in the big, juicy bugs, and it was fun to read.

And so I had a lot to say. So when they get our approval, typically people are kind. They say thank you. One lady that I most ... One schoolteacher, I believe, actually she noted that it was so encouraging to get some specific feedback, and sometimes I'll point to a podcast or something as well.

Just say, hey, brush up here maybe a little bit. You know, you've got it. And that was helpful to her to then make sure she's doing that with her students as much as possible at all times. So it's enjoyable. Even having to send something back, I mean, you're giving them a hand with it. You're telling them exactly what they need to do so that they can do it with their kids.

They obviously want to do this right. So it's not as negative as it may seem. And generally people are grateful for that as well.

Andrew Pudewa: Good. And we are finishing up The Great Adventure.

Evan Smith: Right. I guess that's why I got tapped for this today since I've been hosting that this year.

Andrew Pudewa: Any thoughts on how that works for people? We've done it, I think, four or five years in a row now.

Evan Smith: I think this is one of the most helpful things we could offer to have these videos that go a little bit further and kind of focus in on these specific points, especially that can be problematic for folks doing this the first time.

Andrew Pudewa: And answering questions, right, because we do it live simultaneously on YouTube and Facebook. And so people can join in, ask questions live, and we try to answer them. And of course, I try to tell a joke every now and then, but people can also watch the recordings pretty easily. So those aren't replacing in any way the TWSS videos, but trying to refine a little bit.

Evan Smith: Yeah. Introduction or an overview. Then they watch you; do some work. If they need help, they can go back to the video, email, call. I mean, we're here to help. That's the whole point. That's what this company does. We don't just give you a box and some videos, and say you're on your own.

You know, we're here through that process and whatever kind of setting that you have. That's what you've set up for us to do so that this system: everyone can have the optimal results that we know it offers.

Andrew Pudewa: And so many school administrators I have talked to over the decades of me ... That sounds like I'm really old, but yes, it's been over two decades. One of the frustrations, I think, is they will want to adopt a curriculum, and then they will give that to teachers, who then may or may not feel competent or have the time or even know what to do with it.

And so we've shifted more and more to the point where we don't want to just sell books to schools. We want to be sure that the teachers using those materials are really well equipped to apply them with success in the classroom. So you've talked to a good number of schools people, now that you've shifted over from the general customer service to the front lines, I mean, the Schools Division, right? Any insights from administrators or teachers that you have talked to in the last ...

Evan Smith: It's interesting. You bring about, you know, the different types of curriculum. Most people are used to just, "Hey, I found this; I'm going to order this, and that's it." And there's not much of a relationship there, but the minute they call or email, or I make a contact for the first time, that's an open door that this is going to be something mutual, really, for as long as you're going to work with our stuff, you know.

And talking about, well, we have a few options for training. Of course, there's the videos, but live training. We do virtual workshops for schools in the summertime. That's not something people are used to, but once they figure out what this is, and especially if they actually engage with those, just how valuable that is, and they want to do it again.

You know, we'll have our implementation coaches go out there for a Review and Refinement Day the following year or whenever they'd like to, whenever they'd like to have us. And they want to keep doing it because that's the way you do it right. And really, you know, teaching through this just the first year takes you to a whole, another level.

It's one thing to get the *Seminar Workbook*, to watch the videos, to do the practicum, but then actually engaging with it ... I mean, I probably didn't really ... There's a whole lot I didn't really grasp until I sat through *Structure and Style for Students* that first or second year that I was doing it. And it started to click more and more, so it's always worth going back through like Great Adventure, like what we offer for the training. And that's what I hear though, from teachers and administrators, that once they are on board, it's something that continues. And it's worth continuing to develop with.

Andrew Pudewa: And *Structure and Style for Students* reminds me that after each class that we recorded, I did a short little, I don't know, five, seven minute interview with Julie. She would ask me questions that she thought teachers who are watching the class might have. And we call that "TTAP."

Evan Smith: *Teaching Tips with Andrew Pudewa*

Andrew Pudewa: And that's available for ...

Evan Smith: It's Premium Membership. That's right. I've been talking that up because folks who have had it for a little while, they say, "Oh, I love all those talks; I love all the PDFs." And we've updated a few things or switched some things out: Checklist Generator™, of course.

Huge. But to throw that one in there for ... And really you address issues at all levels, but primarily elementary, middle, and high school. And then just some specific handwriting, all sorts of great, great things that they'll have. They'll be able to spend a lot of time digging into if they wish. But it's all there for them to enhance what they're already doing all the more.

Andrew Pudewa: And I think we have a few schools that have kind of made instructor accreditation a requirement for the teachers.

Evan Smith: Some do. Some do. Yeah. And that's ...

Andrew Pudewa: It seems a little stiff, but if you're running a school, and you want to be sure as best you can that everyone's going to do it right, get the results they're hoping and paying for ...

Evan Smith: That's right. And we have a school registry that we're developing, which ... There'll be more on that coming because it's in the works. But primarily schools that have had live training, or Linda Mikottis or Ericka McClelland have come out to be there and show them over the course of days.

Andrew Pudewa: And of course, we have tutors, hybrid school teachers, and parents who decide, yes, I want to do this accreditation process. And one thing I thought was a good service was, if people do go through that accreditation process, we will then if they wish, list them and their contact information on our website so that, say, a homeschool or hybrid school family who wants to enroll in an IEW class with an accredited instructor, they can contact those folks directly.

Evan Smith: Right.

Andrew Pudewa: And that would be either a live, in person, geographically limited class or online. What's the link if people want to find accredited instructors in their area?

Evan Smith: IEW.com/accreditation or IEWschools.com/accreditation. There's a link to find an accredited instructor. So you can kind of narrow that down a little bit. And with the school

registry I mentioned, schools that we know are teaching with fidelity, we'll have available so that people who are looking for that setting know that they can get IEW ... to get the real deal of IEW from a certain school in their area.

So that's exciting as well. I think the biggest thing with that though, is that we have this list of people of all settings of school, whether it is someone in just the homeschool, one family, co-op, hybrid school ... The point of that is that you can do it though. You're not limited to somebody else who already knows. I would just encourage anyone to at least watch and maybe try key word outlining from the "Booklice."

And then before you know it, you'll be working through the whole thing and realize that this thing works in any setting. Incredibly empowering for your family, your class, wherever you are. And you can do it, and you'll get better and better. And you kind of learn together even with your kids or your students wherever you are at.

And everybody's ultimately better off. I know my family was with our different experience.

Andrew Pudewa: And we require pretty much everyone who works in our customer service or anything except probably part-time people in production ... But almost everyone on our team has to do this as the first thing when they come on board. You probably remember that.

Evan Smith: That's right. Yeah. Mine got a little broken up because they needed me on the phone a little bit quicker than I could finish this, so I kind of paused for a little bit and then came back, which actually made it harder because then I was kind of disconnected. But of course, you're steeped in it when you're working with this.

So like I say, actually working with *Structure and Style for Students* made all the more and actually helped me tremendously to finish all of my practicum assignments and all of that. But yes, that's a handy thing. We're all on board here. We all really believe in what Structure and Style can do for the world.

Andrew Pudewa: I was at a teacher's conference last month. And this particular organization seemed to attract a fair number of teachers who had been involved in homeschooling their own children. But now they were coming back into teaching as a primary profession full-time either because their kids grew up, or their children were going to attend the school where they are working: charter school, private schools, pretty large network.

And one of the things, of course, I was most delighted to hear was these people coming up saying, oh, I just have to tell you about my kid or my children. And how they did this when they were young, and then they went off to college, and now they're doing great. And you just hear all these stories. And those people having had firsthand experience are the most excited now about bringing it to a whole classroom of students.

Evan Smith: Well, one more story before we wrap it up, but my oldest son is in high school now. We haven't been able to do this formally for some time but obviously had a number of

years being able to do it. And you know, sometimes you wonder what sticks and what really ... And then the whole different system in his school and all of that stuff.

But one thing that really made me happy was he was talking about having to write this report, and all the kids in his class ... basically they're copying and pasting from the internet and all of that. But he didn't need to. He knew some researching skills that gave him a better product for that assignment. And since he knew those tools ... He didn't necessarily want to or have fun with it, but he knew he could do something well. And so he did it. And that's a good story. That shows just how powerful this can be, hanging on to something that he hadn't practiced for a few years. But obviously it made sense to him to pull it back out at that time.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. And I've experienced this case where children are kind of at this sensitive period for forming the way of doing things. And so you may do it for two or three years in that sensitive period. And then they grow up, and you're not requiring or forcing, but they remember processes. They remember processes more than information in most cases. And so, well, I'm happy to hear he is doing decently well with that. Give him my best regards.

Evan Smith: Very good. Well, this was fun. It's great to be in the podcast.

Andrew Pudewa: If we can get rid of Julie more often, we'll do it again.

Evan Smith: All right, well, we've got The Great Adventure going on. We'll wrap up The Great Adventure with a Zoom call all about accreditation. So we'll get into all the nitty-gritty about that.

Andrew Pudewa: So if anyone has questions, they can look for that. And if they want to contact us, just ...

Evan Smith: Info@IEW.com schools@IEW.com accreditation@IEW.com are the most relevant ones. IEW.com/accreditation IEW.com/great-adventure

Andrew Pudewa: And if they really wanted to talk to you, they just put "attention: Evan" in the message.

Evan Smith: You could say that.

Andrew Pudewa: Yeah. well, thank you.

Evan Smith: 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, 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.