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CPL Podcast: Creating Writers for Life K-6

Host: Carly Boreland

With: Jenny Williams and Sandra Rowan

INTRODUCTION:

You are listening to the JPL Podcast from the Centre for Professional Learning, here is your host Carly Boreland.

Carly Boreland:

Welcome to the JPL podcast for the New South Wales Teacher Federation Centre for Professional Learning. I'm Carly Boreland and I'm the editor of the JPL. Today, I'm talking with Sandra Rowan and Jenny Williams and we're talking about how you can *Create Writers for Life in Your K-6 Classroom*. Sandra, Jenny, welcome.

Jenny Williams & Sandra Rowan:

Thank you. Nice to be here.

Carly Boreland:

We want to talk about writing in a different way, perhaps to sometimes how it is approached in schools, and we're thinking about that in the context of NAPLAN and the pressures that schools will often find themselves under to improve writing. Today we're not saying that improving writing is not important, but we want to talk about how we can encourage students to embrace writing and enjoy it as something that they do for their whole lives, and how we're setting them up for lifelong success. Can you tell us about why writing is such an important lifelong skill?

Jenny Williams:

Well, it's interesting that you say that because I think that our focus as teachers needs to be in the fact that it is a lifelong skill that all of us need to be able to use throughout the course of our lives in a variety of different ways, and that's because writing is one aspect of communicating; [and] as citizens in a global world, we need to be able to communicate by computer across to different countries, we need to be able to make ourselves understood in formal and informal settings in a variety of different ways. So I think, thinking about the ways we teach in the classroom K-6, as being an aspect of effective communication, is a really important way to think about it; and this is actually outlined in our English syllabus. When we look at the aim of the syllabus, and we see that represented in the circle diagram which is on page 24 of the hard copy, the summary of the aim is right in the middle of that circle, and it says "Make meaning through language", and writing is one of the ways that we make meaning through language.



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Sandra Rowan:

And I suppose Jenny, the other thing is that we have to make explicit connections to the real world - so if we say to the students we might need to be writing this text for this purpose (if I was emailing somebody a message about something), it would look different to a different type of text. So, it's about purpose and audience as well, and, thinking about the jobs that people are doing and where writing, or composing, fits into that job.

Jenny Williams:

Not only that, but how we communicate changes when we are communicating to a different audience. So, the way I talk to my friends is very different to the way I might share (even the same experience) with a group of teachers, or, how I might explain that to the principal; and certainly by Stage 3, students need to be able to vary their messages and change them for a variety of different audiences, as well as be able to write for a variety of different purposes.

Carly Boreland:

Can I ask you a little bit about that purpose and audience - I am always fascinated with teachers about the way we are with our class (I think that if our friends saw us talking to our class, they would laugh and think it's a bit funny). And similar thing for you Jenny, if you were at a dinner party talking about the circle diagram in the English syllabus, you might use it in different ways. But I know it is something you are passionate about. Can you tell us more about this diagram and what it means and why it so captures the important things about the English syllabus? I think it would be fair to say, for our listeners, that page 24 is very important to you.

Jenny Williams:

Yes! Page 24 is important to me in the syllabus (it will be on a different page if you are looking at an online version). What I'm referencing is the circle diagram that we find with each of our syllabus documents and I think it's a really nice visual of what it is we are trying to do as we teach English. At the very centre of that circle is a summary of the aim of the syllabus document and that's where the writing says, "Make meaning through language" - that's our learning intention in any lesson that we're having as part of what we're doing in our English block. Second to that is two other circles that have been coloured gold and silver (so they must be important because they've been given really important colours) and what they summarise are the key processes of this syllabus document. The first circle is the key processes of "Responding and Composing", and what that is saying is that this syllabus, has at its core, an understanding that reading and responding to text is part of a reciprocity with composing text, and that as teachers, there's a lot of power for us in making sure that we are connecting what we do in reading and responding to what we're doing in writing. And I think that is something that K-2 teachers have long understood; that there is reciprocity for students of 'What I know in reading, I can use in writing; what I know in writing, I can use in reading'. I suspect that in teaching 3-6, we've lost some of that tight connection, and so seeing this key process outlined on that circle diagram on page 24 reminds



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us that there is a strong connection between the *reading* and the *teaching* of ‘reading and responding’, and the *teaching* of ‘composing’ (of which writing with a pen and paper is part of that ‘composing’).

Sandra Rowan:

What I think is also (in this digital world) is that the way we write is starting to change. So, we might be writing a text message to a friend, we might be writing a caption under an Instagram photo, or we might be composing a video, and we’re planning that as well as, doing the normal pen and paper writing. So composing is very big in terms of what the possibilities are in what we can choose to engage our kids; and tapping into their interests and needs are very important (“What are they interested in the moment?” “What are they reading?” “What are they viewing?” “What’s the latest movie, movie clip?” “What happening in their world?”). We build on the known and we build on something they’re interested in to get them to respond to those texts and compose text, perhaps appropriating some parts of those text, or creating a different text based on that.

Carly Boreland:

And, can people write for the pleasure of writing? Is that still OK in 2019? It is for me, but I just wonder.

Jenny Williams:

I think it is very much alive and well in this syllabus, and certainly I have heard people say poetry’s back, creative writing’s back. I don’t think they ever went away, but I think in some ways we misread the previous syllabus and simplified it to be all about text types; and what this syllabus is saying it that being a writer involves all kinds of writing for all kinds of purposes, and all kinds of audiences; and we can support students and improve their writing and develop their writing, and composing skills, by writing all manner of different information, and, [by] different types of imaginative writing. I think one of the things that we have forgotten about a bit is the importance of the composing of visual text. We live in a very visual world and we want students to be able to understand the visuals they see, and part of that understanding comes from producing effective visuals. As I visit schools, I often see posters up around the schools that have been created by students. It might be a poster about putting your rubbish in the bin. It might be a poster about where lost property goes, or something advertising fundraising for Year 6. Often those posters look like something produced in a Friday afternoon free time, rather than us taking the time and effort to teach the components that make an effective visual, of having the discussion of ‘Is this a persuasive text?’, ‘Is this poster about providing readers or viewers with information?’, thinking about the type of font, thinking about the placement of the text and the images, thinking about the use of rhyme or repetition that we would find in a lot of professional posters, and showing students how they can be incorporated into their composing.

Carly Boreland:

Before we get too far into how you can set your class up on how to be a good writer, I think it might be helpful to get out on the table (it might be cathartic) some of the challenges we find in day to day life



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of school in creating these good writing situations (or setting up our classroom up at the beginning of the year), to be focused on writing well and writing for big reasons, not simply for improvement on a particular test or for something to complete of a Friday afternoon.

Sandra Rowan:

One way of setting something up at the beginning of the year is to set up a writer's notebook where students are able to record their thinking and beautiful phrases from novels they're reading, or ideas about what they might like to write, and that writer's notebook is *their* notebook. It's not marked, it's an ideas book - writers all have a writer's notebook. It's really great if you're going to have an author come to the school; ask them to bring their writer's notebook because that shows the kids what real writers use as a tool to get their thinking clarified. That's a good start as a thing to put into place right at the beginning of the year - you don't mark it, you just check it to make sure it's appropriate throughout the year, and they own it. And valuing the drawing, planning drawings, words that are beautiful, all those things they can do that is part of writing.

Jenny Williams:

I'd say a couple of things about a writer's notebook – I like the idea of you personalizing it, of students putting their own cover on it and making it their own so there is a sense of ownership about that book. If you're in a school where you feel that parents wouldn't like a book that's not marked, put a little sticker on the inside of the cover that says this is a draft writing book and that while you'll provide oral feedback to the student, it won't be officially marked in the way that other books are marked. The other thing I would like to say about a writer's notebook is that if you want it to work, you need, as the teacher, to have one yourself. And too, like everything that we do in our classroom, explicitly model how it works and show them how you're putting in ideas for writing. Take them outside and sit and write things you can hear or see or feel or taste or smell. Note down words as you're reading in class of language that you find as particularly beautiful and might want to include in your own writing. Where how to use a writer's notebook is modelled, it can be a wonderful tool in really unlocking a student's creative sense around writing and providing them with numerous opportunities to jot down thoughts for writing and draft pieces of writing. We've seen it used very effectively as an independent tool as part of a rotation (where guided reading might be happening and the teacher might be taking a guided reading group and some students are engaged in independent reading, and some students are engaged in independent writing), the writer's notebook can be a very effective tool for that.

Carly Boreland:

It sounds that the syllabus is really trying to get us to have authentic and varied writing opportunities. Can you help us with how we can create a situation in our classrooms where this is established from the beginning of the year? Where this is just normalized for students so that [something that we've planned from the start of the year] this is what our class looks like when it comes to writing?



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Jenny Williams:

I think there are several things we can put in place around creating that sense of being a writing classroom. Culture and creating a culture is a very tricky thing but I think any way in which you can construct within your room that positive sense that we're engaged together as a community of learners is really worthwhile, and I think part of that is having resources in the room that writers can use. I'm a great believer in having a word wall, and while a word wall would look very different in Year 6 to in Kindergarten, I still think it is very relevant, and I think that the words that go onto the word wall become the "not negotiable" words that need to be spelt correctly in student writing. If you have a particular topic that you're addressing in a KLA and you want students to be writing about that, then the *key* words (whether it's the language of maths to write in their maths learning journal, whether it's words relating to your current science or history topic, or whether it's words related to the English unit), they should be around so that students have access to the correct spelling of those *key* words that they might want to use in the writing for that particular unit.

Carly Boreland:

And how often (I know that it may vary) do you change the word wall? Do you have words up there all year? How do you pick words, or how do they get up there? And how do the students know they're there? Also, how do students know how to use those words? I can imagine you could have a class of kids wondering around the room looking for the word wall and getting into all kinds of mischief.

Sandra Rowan:

If you look at Kindergarten, you're taking words to fluency; so you're reading them in the text and saying "OK, this book is about pets" so the word might be "pet". You're going to put that word on the word wall because we're going to write about our pets or a pet we'd like to have, so the word wall can be on a wall. But there are a lot of situations in schools where it's very hard to do because of glass doors, and all sorts of things, so sometimes you can have the words on a word tower or on a mat in front of the students. You might put up a word wall in those situations which is just chart paper for the moment and list all the words that are going to be needed while doing this topic, and high frequency words might be on a word chart, if you are lucky to have a room where there is a big wall you can do it in. I've seen it done beautifully where [the class] were doing "Sophie Scott Goes South". It was all the technical language from that text, and that was a Stage 3. They had a photo of the iceberg, for example, they had the name of the iceberg and then they had the definition of what this means. They also had the name of the boat and the technical equipment, and so you had picture, meaning and the word - they had the three up there and the kids (this was in a high population of EAL/D students so it is absolutely crucial) would use that when they were doing composing and responding to texts.

Carly Boreland:

So word walls can help. They can take on all kinds of shapes and forms but the idea is that you're providing definitions where it's something they may have to come back to, or you're providing a range



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of vocabulary so that they can use the things that you've been teaching; it's not only about making sure they spell the word right, but it supports writing in lots of different ways.

Jenny Williams:

It's giving you a visual for the key words that you want students to be including in their writing as well as [perhaps] the hundred most common words that you want students to be able to access because we use them so frequently in our writing. My advice is always to arrange that word wall alphabetically. The reason for that is you are then you are modelling how a dictionary works. Even though you may not have them all strictly in alphabetical order, you would have all the words that start with [the letter] 'A' together [and so on]. I have been in rooms where there might be a set of red words that everybody is learning, and that is followed by a set of yellow words, but if you group your words on the word wall that way, the child has to think "Is the word I want a red word or a yellow word?; Where do I look to find it?"; whereas having them listed alphabetically gives a very easy hook for students to find that word and be able to use it. The other sort of practical things are the words have to be big enough for students to be able to see them, and if you haven't got somewhere [for the word wall], then as Sandra said, having a word tower on the desk is probably a good alternative.

Sandra Rowan:

And we've got to be careful about cognitive overload because if they're looking up and trying to scan a hundred words, it's nearly impossible for them to do it; and if they're little and in Kindergarten and they get up and they go to the word wall and it's too high, then they can't see up. There are a whole lot of things you need to be mindful of and you've got to make it work for you. You can't have kids wondering out of their seats going "Well, what does it start with; where is it?", so think about how you meet the needs of your cohort and what they need at the moment. If you've got differentiated learning for some kids, it might be that some kids need those [high frequency] words right on the table, right in front of them, because they can't get up and wonder around looking for them. Or, you might have kids that are working beyond stage expectations and they're asking for very sophisticated language that the rest of the class might not necessarily use, and so you can put those words down on their own individual word list.

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Carly Boreland:

So far we've talked about (when we set up our classrooms at the beginning of the year) word walls on the wall, and all around the classroom, and we've got a writer's notebook which is quite an individual thing that students are working on. We haven't talked about extended pieces of writing yet, or assessment, or any of the things that people might obviously jump to when they think about improving



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student writing. Can you tell us a bit more about those very beginning stages for setting up your classroom for success?

Jenny Williams:

That's interesting because as well as physical resources around the room, can I just mention plenty of supplies (even for K-2 - having different coloured pens or a variety of different coloured paper) so it can spark a bit of added interest or engagement in young writers. Also, as we've already mentioned, because there's such a strong connection in this syllabus between *reading and responding* and *composing*, we want a classroom that is rich in reading materials - lots of books, posters, different types of text - that students can access. When it comes to the actual teaching, the syllabus is very clear on what should be our starting point. If we look inside the glossary at types of texts, we find that our syllabus distinguishes three different types of texts. It talks about text that are *imaginative, persuasive, or informative* and that those texts are varied depending on their *purpose*, so if we think about the *purpose* of writing and the intended audience, it helps us to get a sense of the shape of writing that is most effective for that particular purpose. The words our syllabus uses are *text structure* and *language features*. So, if my *purpose* for instance is to "inform", then there is a *structure* that best suits my being able to "inform" my reader, and there are certain *language features* that most commonly connected with that *purpose*, that is writing purpose. So I think one of the best things we can do with students is find a way to make sure at whatever year level they're at, that they're able to unpack the *purpose* for a piece of writing and therefore the *text structure* that is effective for that, and the *language features*.

Sandra Rowan:

There's a great resource for that Jenny. If you look at the ACARA website and have a look at their assessment tasks based on their year level, there is an excellent one for Year 3 where it's an information report.

Jenny Williams:

In that information report (as well as having the information report) there was a second element added to that work sample which I think really raises the bar and makes it a rich task. [The second element] is that [after] having written the information report, students were then asked (quite a short piece of writing with just 5 questions) to identify some *text structure* and *language features* that they'd used in their report. That indicates that that language of *text structure* and *language features* was language that was familiar to the Year 3 students writing these work samples. It also indicates the importance of peer feedback - of sharing your work with other students in the room and learning how to improve your text; of providing feedback to other students about how they can perhaps improve their text or make it more meaningful. So I think those work samples provide us with a very valuable tool as we think about what we can do to improve our writing tasks.



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Sandra Rowan:

And the reason why I like those samples too is that it gives you a *satisfactory*, and it gives you an *above* and a *below*, so you're looking at what was the expectations from the syllabus to be *satisfactory*, and that way you can moderate writing with your team, or your teachers next door, so you're all having the same ideas as what is "meeting the outcome" look like. It's a great resource and they also have digital [samples] on there as well so you can look at how you would assess those types of multimodal types of text.

Jenny Williams:

I think the good thing about that is that it's a very easy way to get a sense of what's happening in your school. But, what we really want to be accountable to is how students can be measured against the syllabus outcomes, and so that's a really nice way of being able to do that.

Carly Boreland:

And that's important because it could depend a lot on which school you're at, or which student you're talking about or what your class is like, because you can easily get a sense that everyone is struggling, but actually when compared to a different standard, they're doing quite well. Or vice-versa, you could imagine that your class is doing amazingly well, but it's good to have another perspective.

Jenny Williams:

I think that's why it's good to have the ACARA work samples that are attached to the Australian English Curriculum because we are all doing the Australian Curriculum (in NSW we have a particular version of it called the NSW Syllabus but we're meeting those same outcomes even though we're referencing them in a slightly different way). It gives us a sense of what is *satisfactory* across Australia, and, what is considered *above* and *below*.

Carly Boreland:

And sometimes it can be nice when you're talking about somebody else's assessment task that's not one of the four people sitting in your group because then it's not about what you've done, or what they did that you don't like, or what you like; it sort of depersonalizes it a little bit and lets you talk in the same way as the work samples because (it's not about this student who you know and adore, or otherwise) it's about working on something that no-one is overly personally connected to.

Jenny Williams:

And I think you've hit the hammer on the nail here. It's the conversations that you have with your staff, with your teams, (if you're an executive) with the team you are managing, about looking at the writing samples and saying "What can these kids do?", "What have they got a really great foundation of?", "This is fantastic; what are the next steps?", so having points of time within the year that you allow for everyone to bring a *top*, *middle* and *bottom* piece of writing sample and having a look at it and going "Here's the strengths [and] here is where to go in the future to improve this piece of writing."



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Carly Boreland:

So far, we've talked about (to summarise) the importance of setting up our classroom and our students as writers beyond Year 6 [and even] beyond Year 12 that's going to take them to a place where they're going to see a piece of writing as something that they're good at, that they can do confidently, that they can do in whatever the situation is that needs it - including for the pure joy of writing; [a skill] they can do into the future and for the rest of their lives. We've talked about some ways that we can make that happen, which include making sure there's plenty of good quality writing materials and papers, and things that are interesting to write with, and on, in the classroom. Making sure there are lots or rich reading material that is available; giving students access to writing by creating effective word walls and also by making sure that students clearly understand that what they are doing is connected to the real world. That they understand the purpose of audience, and that they can confidently use text structures and language features; and that they can talk about their own writing using those things as well. And that through this whole process that they can be encouraged to have their writer's notebooks (which they're adding to and taking from all of the time) and the teacher could do that too. Is there anything else we should talk about?

Jenny Williams:

I think there are two other aspects that are important. Sandra might want to talk about *choice* and *having choice*, and then we could also talk about the whole writing and process.

Sandra Rowan:

So thinking about *choice*, often in a classroom you have a very big range of cohort of interests, and you'll have some reluctant writers and some who are fabulous writers. So, how do we get them all engaged? It's about student engagement and if we offer them *choice* - even if it's as simple as A or B. You could perhaps write an imaginative story about this aspect or you could write a persuasive [one], so you've got a *choice* in how you're doing that. Even that choice of A and B, when they have to stop and decide "What do I want to do?", "Do I want to do this or do I want to do that?", once they've made the decision, they own it. It's really important (that brain research is saying) - giving them *choice* increases student engagement. The other thing about that is that often, as teachers, we think we're really enthusiastic about this certain topic as an adult, but actually the kids aren't that excited about it, so we have to listen to what are their interests. So when the syllabus says "Go to page 4", we have to look at the needs and abilities and interests of our students when we're deciding what we're going to teach. Now, if we ask kids what they're interested in ("What are you watching on TV?", "What are you interested in sport?", "What are you reading at home?") and we build on that enthusiasm. We can say "Let's look at the rules of how you play soccer while the World Cup is on", and "Let's look at what movie you're watching on TV, because maybe it was a book", like "Winnie the Pooh", and we can look at the text that was written about "Winnie the Pooh", even though you've seen the movie. [These are ways] we are making a connection with what's happening currently and what they are watching. If you can get them connected to what's important to them, then you're going to get a much better product and you're going to get student engagement.



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Carly Boreland:

On *choice*, can I clarify with you, *choice* is kind of like “faux choice”; like choice within the realm of what teachers are OK with. It’s not like “free choice”, like “do anything you want”, but it’s obviously about *choice* where you’ve given a range of options and you’re OK with all of them [and] it’s not as though you haven’t thought about this. It’s just that it’s structured in a way that means students can do it and enjoy it, and feel like it’s something they want to do.

Sandra Rowan:

We’re teaching the outcomes from the syllabus and the *choice* might be in the way that we’re responding to that outcome (the *choice* might be about the text you’re creating, it might be about the book you’re reading); we’re actually teaching as everybody is learning the same dot point of content, or we’re covering the same outcome. The way we do it, the way we come into it, could be from different points. It’s just like differentiation, where you might be thinking about differentiation in [terms of] “on grade”, “above grade” and “ones who have learning support needs”. The same thing about when we’re talking about writing, we might be thinking “I know these kids have an interest in a particular thing so I’m going to let that group do that; I know that these kids might have a certain thing they’re really interested in and they want to go on with that”, so it’s about being a little flexible by saying “You don’t have to all write an information report about a cauliflower.”.

Carly Boreland:

What seems like an obvious extension from that is, like any real writers, the point is to get writing and then it’s what happens next - the refining, the conversation, the reflection, the discussion - which is the next part of the process.

Jenny Williams:

The writing process is definitely something that we’re addressing, and the writing process (as people well know is the idea of generating ideas, of planning your writing, of constructing a draft, and then rethinking/revising, followed by editing, lastly proof reading, publishing and hopefully sharing that with an audience). Those steps in the writing process are well known and there are certainly times for every grade level where students need to take something from the very start of generating an idea through to publishing and sharing. I think when I think about that writing process, that part that requires the most effort on behalf of teachers, is the revising and editing. I’ve never met a student that when editing, say’s “Yay, let’s do it” and I think most of us, when we’ve done the writing task, that’s it; we put it down and we’re glad that it’s completed. So, we have to model it, of course, and model it in the steps of revising a draft, but we also need to raise the bar around editing and praise when we see students doing that, and becoming self-motivated as editors, so it becomes something that’s part of the writing, that it’s a natural part of the writing process and that students consider it as important, and their responsibility.



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Sandra Rowen:

And so Jenny, I think we have to bring it back to the real world, and we have to get students to understand that all authors that publish anything, it's not [the case] that I did it once and then it's published. If they understand the process and get people who have published books, or anything, to talk about how that went ([to understand] the process can take a year) and if you get to that understanding that it is a long process, but it's worth it; because you want the best piece of writing at the end. If you did have an author come to the school, it's worth asking "How long was your book in the editing process?" and the kids get really shocked when they say "2-3 years".

Carly Boreland:

I'm pretty sure that these authors keep what it was before and they keep the different versions. I know for high school level writing you can certainly find famous original manuscripts with all the crossing out and editing. (I think it was Ernest Hemingway who says "In the morning, I put in a comma; in the afternoon, I removed it" and that's the real writing process). It's all the things that get left on the cutting floor; it's all the times you screw up the piece of paper and throw it away; that are the times that are the writing process – the scratching out and the starting again. Maybe it's about getting the balance right too because I can imagine some of this stuff can potentially take a long time; you don't want to make this thing become something onerous and boring that students don't like writing, or like editing - I guess it's getting that balance right. There can be as much joy in crafting and perfecting one sentence as there is in writing 100 words.

Jenny Williams:

Yes. And I think taking shorter text through the whole publishing process is a good idea for exactly that reason - that you don't want students to lose that enthusiasm for the text because it's so long and there is so much editing that needs to be done.

Carly Boreland:

Can we talk about something that I know can be burdensome for teachers; what about marking and assessing and carrying piles of papers home and reading stuff on the weekends and things like that? Can you suggest some ways that make assessing writing manageable and that can mean that teachers want to do a lot of writing at school and don't have to then carry books (and things like that) home every time?

Sandra Rowan:

The syllabus says that students should be peer assessing as well, but you need very specific criteria for assessment. If, for example, you were looking at interesting words in a text, or maybe even punctuation (Is the text being punctuated correctly?), you could do a peer assessment with a buddy that's next to you and say "Have you got your full stops and capital letters in here; because I can't read it without them.", so there are simple things like that. There are also other reasons for teachers taking home writing – it could be that they've done a whole stage writing for the reporting process and they have specific criteria that they might have a look at. But you're looking at that couple of dot points of



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specific criteria just to make you feel confident that when you're reporting on that, that you've got that. That's a different purpose to what you would do in the classroom where you would say "We're looking at this dot point of content and I'm giving feedback on that. So, if it's on interesting noun groups, I am going around looking, and asking students, "Show me your interesting noun group? Or "Oh look at that!", so you've achieved that [dot point]. You're only giving [feedback] for what you are teaching explicitly at that point and if you're trying to mark like the NAPLAN marking guide, that process is just so long and so tedious, we don't need to do that in the classroom for pieces of writing – it's already been done.

Carly Boreland:

And I suppose it's a way of thinking about assessment, which is that "I am always assessing my students on different things at different times and I'm collecting that information in an ongoing way." And I guess that makes the feedback more immediate and useable for students too because if they get something back that got your assessment of every single thing all over it, they're probably not going to take all of that onboard. Whereas, if there is one thing that they know you're looking for, and they've tried to focus on that and that's what they get back, that kind of makes everyone's life easier but it's also better pedagogically as well.

Sandra Rowan:

If you're learning intention is about writing a range of different sentences and the first thing you say to the child is "Look at that spelling", you're sending a mixed message because what I taught today is that stories that have a variety of sentences are interesting. And what we're doing in writing is writing of sentences, you've got to keep it to what you've taught because it becomes confusing for kids if they think they're doing one thing and you're giving feedback on something else.

Jenny Williams:

A couple of comments around that – I think a lot of teachers feel concerned that if a parent sees an error in a piece of writing that hasn't been corrected in some way, that the parent will find fault with the teacher. I think it's really about us, as teachers, educating parents about the role of our assessment and the way in which we are addressing the assessment of student work - the fact that sometimes we will be providing oral feedback without putting marks all over the page, that sometimes we will be perhaps marking a piece of work but our focus will be (as Sandra said) on what it is that we've taught.

Carly Boreland:

I suppose in the same way that you're setting up your class that might sometimes include the families as well at the beginning of the year. It's those explanations and conversations about how our class operates and what we're trying to achieve so that it's a little bit less like parents as consumers of whatever we're doing (deciding which bits they like and which bits they don't like) and more like parents as partners where we understand each other and what we're trying to achieve.



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CPL Podcast: Creating Writers for Life K-6

People are coming to teaching writing at different stages of their career (some people are beginning teachers, some people have been doing this for a long time) and they're thinking about a new way of how they would like to introduce something or slightly change what they're doing. Can you suggest some resources for people at different levels and different stages of their careers of where to go to, and what you recommend based on your experiences of working with writing?

Sandra Rowan:

Obviously, going to the Teachers Federation library and borrowing books about writing. Libby Gleeson has got some from PETAA - it is an excellent book on writing and it's got a great chapter on characters, which I absolutely love. So, having a look at those types of text that are coming out of places like PETAA, ALIA and reliable sources on how to teach writing would be great, and I know the Federation library has got a lot of them.

Carly Boreland:

We should also add that at the Journal of Professional Learning, teachers can now search under English, Primary English, and they can find all sorts of information there, and articles also with links and practical advice as well.

Sandra Rowan:

The other thing is the overview of grammar and punctuation which is found on the NESA website underneath the syllabus.

Jenny Williams:

It's a part of the syllabus support documents, but if you just Google *Overview of Grammar and Punctuation of K-6*, you can find it as well. I have to say Carly that that's something I keep beside me whenever I'm programming; it's grouped in ways that make it clear why I would be teaching these different aspects, because that document is such a clear and ready reference.

Carly Boreland:

Well, thank you for coming in and sharing with us what you love about writing and why you think it's so important for our students to leave school as confident writers, and to have the joy of writing stay with them for their adult lives, as well as their primary school years.

Jenny Williams:

Thank you, Carly.

Sandra Rowan:

Thanks Carly.



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CPL Podcast: Creating Writers for Life K-6

Carly Boreland:

You've been listening to the JPL podcast for the Teachers Federation Centre for Professional Learning. I'm Carly Boreland, and I'm the editor of the JPL. I've been talking with Sandra Rowan and Jenny Williams about *Creating Writers for Life in Primary Classrooms*. And to find out more and to listen to further podcasts, you can go to our website at cpl.asn.au/podcasts

CONCLUSION:

The JPL Podcast is produced by the Centre for Professional Learning and the New South Wales Teachers' Federation. All opinions expressed in this podcast are those of the individual speakers, and do not necessarily represent the views of their employer or associated organisations. The host was Carly Boreland; technical direction by Jason Nicholas.

Sandra Rowan was previously a Deputy Principal in an inner west Sydney school. She is an experienced K-6 classroom teacher and school leader. She has been a literacy consultant in western Sydney and a teacher mentor working with beginning teachers to develop best practice. She spent four years working in New York schools as a maths and literacy consultant. In New York she supported schools as they prepared for school reviews.

Sandra has published eight teacher resource books that provide explicit units of work across the key learning areas. She provides teacher professional learning at a school level as well as having presented at conferences on literacy and maths.

Jenny Williams has extensive teaching experience including secondary English and primary K-6. In addition she has worked as a support teacher learning difficulties. Her enthusiasm for early literacy and working with students whose literacy is at risk led her to train as a Reading Recovery teacher and subsequently work as a Reading Recovery tutor.

As an educational consultant she has worked in Western Sydney and New York supporting teachers as they developed their literacy practice, quality teaching pedagogy and mathematics instruction. She has supported whole school improvement in a number of schools in Australia and overseas, working with school executive teams and school staff to invigorate teaching practice leading to whole school change.

In recent years she has presented at several literacy conferences and co-authored literacy-teaching resources.