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## CPL Podcast: Early Career Teaching K-6

**Host: Carly Boreland**

**With: Jenny Williams and Mary-Ellen Betts**

### **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's Centre for Professional Learning. I'm Carly Boreland and I'm the Editor of the JPL. Today, I'm talking with Jenny Williams and Mary-Ellen Betts and we're talking about the beginning years of being a primary school teacher. [We will be discussing] how it can feel like going from "inspiration" to "reality" and what you can do to make sure that (in a pedagogical and organizational way) your beginning years are a good experience for you and for your students. Jenny and Mary-Ellen, welcome.

#### **Jenny Williams & Mary-Ellen Betts:**

Thanks Carly.

#### **Carly Boreland:**

We need to start this podcast by outing ourselves a little bit. I am at least a decade away from having had my first years of teaching and I know you guys are at least a decade away from your first years.

#### **Mary-Ellen Betts:**

That is a really polite way of saying we're really old. It's been four decades!

#### **Carly Boreland:**

All of us have been in schools for a bit of time and we know that it gets better over time, but we also know that you have to do some things to make it get better for yourself. I wanted to ask you first about your first experiences and what you remember of your first years of teaching. And maybe that might provide our listeners a bit of reassurance too that it won't always be that way.

#### **Jenny Williams:**

I started teaching in 1976 (so it was a while ago now) and my first position was as a Secondary English and History teacher. While I have always loved teaching, and I did love it, even in those early days, I do look back and think (in particular) of a group of Year 10 students for whom I killed the study of *To Kill a Mockingbird* stone dead. There's a wonderful quote from Maya Angelou that says "Do the best you know how to do. And when you know better; do better." I think we're only capable of only doing what we know how to do and that's what I did. But now I know differently; so I teach differently. I think the key to being a successful teacher is seeing yourself as a constant learner and learning from what the



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students in front of you have to say about their needs and their interests; whether they're learning and taking into long term memory the things you're teaching them. I think seeing yourself as a student of continuing to try and refine your practice is the secret to being a successful teacher.

### **Mary-Ellen Betts:**

I started earlier than Jenny. Unlike Jenny, there is about a hundred kids in those first few years [to whom I say] "I'm sorry!" But, as they're now my doctors, I have to get over that. As TRIO, we work with a lot of beginning teachers in schools, and we got a real wake-up call when we went to work in New York. I can say with strong feeling that our teachers here in Australia go into the classroom with fantastic training; a really good background in theory; some lovely work on philosophy; and, at least, they go in with a teaching degree of some sort. My experience in New York was to meet (on my third day in a school in New York) with someone on his first day. He was a charming young man (and ten years on he is a very experienced teacher now – I think he is a Principal now). But Matthew's background was that of Government Policy (so he had a degree in Government Policy) and his most recent work experience was working on the recount in Florida back in 2000 – so I'm going back a bit. But he had Kindergarten and his entire experience of teaching was a five week Summer School where he stood, in someone else's classroom, as an apprentice, and watched. Unfortunately, that classroom was Year 5. And he had 20 little possums from the Bronx rolling around his ankles. And the conversation went along the line of "Hello. How do I teach them to read?" and all I could say was, "It'll be OK. It'll take time! And breathe!" I say that to our beginning teachers now. You can't teach kids to read on Day One but you can find out where the toilets are, and the staffroom, and a teacher on the staff that you want to buddy up with as a mentor, and you can just "breathe".

### **Carly Boreland:**

It's so important to point that out. Because sometimes, when you're a new teacher, you can feel like everything is hard. Sometimes your colleagues, in the staffroom, don't help you too much. Because they agree with you that things are hard and it used to be so much better – almost like there was a "golden age" of teaching. But what you're describing in the US that was how it was in Australia about 100 years ago, and we've certainly come a long way. And the experiences of our beginning teachers (in lots of ways) are much better than they were in the past.

### **Mary-Ellen Betts:**

I think, in schools, we need to do a better job for, and with, our beginning teachers. I've heard our profession is described as "the only profession that eats its young!" Because (exactly what you say) it was always better before. Well, you know, it's not. It's pretty cool in those classrooms and our teachers are young and well trained. And I think we should acknowledge that they come with a lot of strengths; it's just that, in the first three minutes, no-one knows how to control thirty kids who don't want to be controlled.



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### **Carly Boreland:**

You're right to point out our university training does give us lots of great things and in those early years you can sometimes feel as though "I wasn't prepared for the 'immediate' things that I wish I knew". But as times goes on, you do realize that all [that training] (especially the pedagogical stuff) has been essential to making those days better. You draw back on that and revisit it.

### **Jenny Williams:**

I think the study of pedagogies is a really important part of that. Because it's about "I believe this about how students learn; therefore, this is what I do in my classroom." And, I think, it takes a long time. You are constantly revisiting those ideas that will refine and make your teaching better. We meet a lot of teachers, in the course of our work with CPL, and in schools, and sometimes those teachers say "It's not (at the school I'm at); it's not like it was in uni.! What they were talking about at uni was very different!"

And you can come into a school that has a lot of its own traditions and its own ways of doing things. And I guess that with any job that's possible. But in schools you have to navigate: school tradition; policy documents; syllabus documents; the fact that there are only 24 hours in a day, and some of that can be very overwhelming. I think Mary-Ellen's advice of 'just keep breathing' and "keep giving it a go." Over the course of your first year, there will be a lot of experimenting and a lot of trying things out and that's just the way it is. You will observe policies and programs and things that are being done in your particular school that you will agree with, or might want to change, or make different in some way. You will hasten slowly as you're learning more about being on the ground with students, and, understanding the learning process.

### **Mary-Ellen Betts:**

These days, lots of our early career teachers have access to funding for professional learning and I would urge anyone, in those early years, to seek out as much as you can get, and then adapt it and adopt it to what you can do. Also, I want to go back to the idea of "mentor". In schools, usually there's more than just you (unless you're at the one teacher school out at 'Bullamakanka West'), there's likely to be someone else. So, you look for someone that you can see, and respect as a teacher, and say "I like the way they operate". This is not a conversation you have around the photocopier when someone says "Here's a stencil I've prepared and I've used it in this week, every week, for the last 30 years". One of the things that is really important for us to come to teaching with is the idea of "Every year is a new year".

I've taught for forty-odd years but I didn't teach one year forty times. And it's really important to think about "Where you are", "Who you're with", "Who's in front of you", and do it differently each time and just reflect. So, the lesson didn't go that well, as chaos erupts around you. [Ask yourself] what are you going to say differently next time? And it's just a matter of "breathe" and, as long as there is no physical damage, you're fine.



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### **Carly Boreland:**

So, it's not going to get better just by having a birthday; it's not going to get better each year just as we get older. There are things that we have to, actually, focus on, and do, that create that space for ourselves. And probably revisiting those public education values that we started out with, and staying true to those, is going to be really important along the way as well. And that practice of being allocated a mentor, and have it said "this is the person who look after you. And that's nice! But you're probably going to need to find your own mentors as well – the people that you aspire to be like who might be different people for different situations as well (for example, Jenny's mentor for Mathematics is Mary-Ellen but maybe someone else for teaching something else).

### **Jenny Williams:**

I think there are certainly some key areas that a new career teacher can be thinking about that will make a difference. And one of those is I group a whole lot of thoughts around the idea of *creating a community of learners* and building that notion around your classroom. I think that happens in lots of ways but having that as an area of your thinking (particularly early on) – "How am I going to create, out of this group of students who have appeared in front of me (who will be like a family together over the next twelve months), a community of learners?"

### **Mary-Ellen Betts:**

Would you believe that the syllabus actually helps with that? One of the things that I've noticed working with young teachers is they're hugely enthusiastic (and I love that!) and they're keen to do as many hours as they need to. Usually, that's – "I want to program; I want to program the first term!" But – "Hang on; hang on! Do you actually know what you can get through in a lesson?"

So, I would go back, in terms of thinking through my day, at daybook level, and being really clear as to what I'm going to teach. So that every lesson I go into, I know what it is I want the kids to know at the end of it. And that "*creating a community of learners*" is that body of content around getting the kids to be respectful listeners; strategies like *turn and talk*. You can ask the teacher in the classroom next to you what their routines are and you can put in place some of those. But you're very rapidly going to find that you want your routines to be *your* routines. But you start and it's OK to devote time to teaching those really basic, early routines of how we enter and exit a room; how we speak to each other; how we *turn and talk*. There are heaps and heaps of things about being a "*community of learners*" – being respectful to each other and acknowledging that we all have a role in this learning process; students need to be active participants.

### **Jenny Williams:**

I agree with that, Mary-Ellen. I think explicit teaching around those elements that will make life easier, not just for you, but for your students in the classroom also. We all feel more comfortable when we know how something works. So *knowing how your classroom works* will support students and scaffold those that struggle to manage their behaviour or their learning. The really good thing, in what you are saying,



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is that they are represented in the syllabus. I'm thinking about the *speaking* and *listening* outcomes and what they have to say about being a good listener; being able to engage in a conversation; being able to disagree with someone in a conversation without having to hit them over the head; being able to add a point of view; [being able to] shift a conversation in a new direction. [These] are all skills which come into our English syllabus and which will support that "*building of community of learners*".

### Mary-Ellen Betts:

Taking time to establish that and not rushing to "I have to teach them '*War and Peace*' in Week 3!" "No, you don't! You have to teach them [first] how to operate within a classroom."

I also think that there are some podcasts, Carly, around classroom management strategies that we can refer people to?

### Carly Boreland:

Yes. The CPL has articles through the JPL and podcasts for K-6 that they can definitely listen to and get specific ideas about that, and specific strategies for all kinds of approaches to teaching English, Mathematics, Science and the subject specific things as well.

### MUSICAL INTERLUDE/ANNOUNCEMENT:

The Centre for Professional Learning offers a wide range of professional learning opportunities all around NSW at a fixed rate for members of the NSW Teachers Federation. For course information, dates, location and registration information, visit [cpl.asn.au](http://cpl.asn.au).

### Mary-Ellen Betts:

I wanted to move from "*community of learners*" into *an English block*. I think, particularly in primary classrooms, if teachers can get a handle on how to run *an English block* and if that is running smoothly in a logical way, it can make or break a teacher. There are some references to Departmental documents, such as "*An Introduction To Quality Literacy Teaching*" that talk about strategies like "*modelled*", "*guided*" and "*independent*" so that you can actually go, and reference, Departmental material that will support you in how to establish *an English block* in your classroom.

### Jenny Williams:

I agree with you, Mary-Ellen. I think if you know that shape of your day, and the students know what to expect, then everybody can be a lot calmer and things will run more smoothly. The English block, that sense of knowing that "I have 1.5 to 2 hours every day that I am going to devote to the study of English in the classroom", can make a big difference in terms of knowing how the day is going to proceed. I think what you're saying about bringing together the idea of "*modelled, guided and independent*" teaching strategies is particularly important. And I think finding a nice mix between "*modelled, guided and independent*" and what the English syllabus outlines as the key processes (being *reading* and *responding to text*, and *composing text*) and bringing those elements together into your *English block*, can make a huge difference.





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### Mary-Ellen Betts:

I was talking with some teachers in their first and second years yesterday and one of the things that they said, after trying a “*gnided*” strategy working with a group of kids, was that the kids felt successful. And that’s fabulous, because if kids are feeling successful, those kids are feeling engaged and it reduces some of the other “management” issues. But, what they also said was that *they* (the teacher) felt successful; so, success breeds success. And if you structure your lesson knowing what it is you want the kids to know, and if, at the end of it, you can see at least half of them have got it, *you* build confidence so you’re going to have another go at something new and different. So, it’s small steps. Celebrate the little achievements (sometime you blink and it’s gone – but hey, it’s there!) and it’s [about] just having a go; setting the kids up for success by knowing what it is you’re going to teach.

### Carly Boreland:

I was thinking, listening to you, that there is so much about *that* that is not just about the English block, but about how you can feel confident in yourself for your day. When you start teaching, everything is new and you feel like you have to be across everything. We’re often good at noticing what the students are improving on, but we sometimes forget, for ourselves, that every day we go to work, in the most part, we’re getting better too. And the thing that annoyed us today, we weren’t even up to thinking about yesterday, or the year before, and progressively you start to think like that. And if you can acknowledge that teachers always have goals for themselves (and we always want to be getting better) then you can pick some goals that you want to focus on. The *English block* may be a nice one to start with because if you are going to start with 1.5 hours to 2 hours a day. Can we clarify that? What is meant to be? If you start off teaching in a school, what’s the plan for the *English block* each day? What are you supposed to be doing, according to the Department?

### Mary-Ellen Betts:

You’re supposed to be teaching *reading* and *writing* and *speaking* and *listening*. NESA will give you an outline of how many hours or minutes to devote to each key learning area (but I will warn you, that NESA’s minute limit actually adds up to more hours than there are in a day). So, you go into this planning, knowing that there are not enough hours in a day, but that’s OK, we’re all in that block. We’re then going to say “I’m going to work around some *modelled teaching* and *reading* (and that can be about a half hour block); then I am going to do some *guided reading* with a group of kids, but before that, I would have taught my kids how to *read independently*.”

(And sometimes we think “Oh...I need to mess with them; they’re actually sitting there quietly and reading!” “Hallelujah! Well done! Bravo!” That’s the sort of thing that you do hand stands down the hall; if you’ve got kids reading quietly.)

So, you’re devoting about an hour to *responding* and then you’re going to devote 30 minutes to an hour on *composing*, which is the students then putting into place things that real authors do.



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**Carly Boreland:**

How much time do you think teachers should spend developing worksheets for the English block?

**Mary-Ellen Betts:**

Oh, I'd say zero.

**Carly Boreland:**

That's a nice liberation for a new teacher to say: "Don't spend any of your time making worksheets in your first few years of teaching".

**Mary-Ellen Betts:**

Everyone will offer them to you – take them and say "Thank you" and use them to line the budgie cage.

**Jenny Williams:**

I think the problem with worksheets is that they can distract from the real learning. So, we're teaching students to read and so that's about engaging with rich and authentic text. And so the time spent, by you, in preparation – by looking at the text; reading it; analysing it for yourself so that you can help students unpack it in a rich engaging way – is far more important than time spent on a worksheet.

**Carly Boreland:**

So you could spend your time thinking about effective ways to make notes about your students' progress, and you could ask about ways you can keep some of those records of how things are going without necessarily spending your time creating the worksheet, collecting the worksheet, marking the worksheet, and so on.

**Jenny Williams:**

I think the same way about assessment; assessment can become a huge issue. Whereas really, one of the lesson sequences, that you choose to meet your outcome that you are currently looking at, could just be treated as an assessment task rather than feeling like you have to have a separate assessment week unrelated to what you're teaching. It needs to be connected to what you are teaching because the idea is to see that your students are learning what you are teaching. So, in both of those areas teachers can spend a lot of time trying to get it right. Whereas if they get the "*modelled teaching*" right and are actually looking for evidence of student learning (through the way they talk; through the way they engage with text), that's much more powerful.

**Carly Boreland:**

Can I ask you about "*guided reading*" along those same lines in the *English block*? Because it's one of those areas where, I've noticed in CPL courses, we get a lot of questions about what the "*guided reading*" is



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meant to look like as part of the *English block*. And we've got a whole separate podcast on teaching reading, but could we talk a little bit about that because I think that can make or break a teacher in their first years depending on how they set that up?

### Mary-Ellen Betts:

What you're looking at is identifying a group of kids with whom you are going to have a conversation with about text. In the early years, you're going to have a conversation to set them up, in terms of – they are going to be able read this book successfully: on their own; by themselves; in their own head or whisper reading (that's the little guys). [With] the big guys, you're going to have a conversation to set them up, so they will be able to read a designated amount of pages or chapters, in silence, by themselves. Because the really, cool thing that happens with *independent reading* is the rich discussion. We put it to teachers constantly that if you're in a book club, or over the holidays, if we said "You need to read this book and answer 25 questions about it", they all look at us and say "Well, we'd severely limited the amount of books we read". So, you want rich conversations. And, again, that comes to using authentic texts; quality texts; sometimes you're using short texts. But you are just working with a group of kids on *reading*. As a teacher, in my first or second year, I would only attempt to work with *one* group a day in *reading*. There are a number of approaches out there that will insist that you work in different ways (and that is something that has to be sorted out at "school level". But you're better off doing a really good *guided reading* session for ten minutes with one group and then moving on. Part of the difficulty for teachers in their early years is "What do I do with the other twenty-five that are out there willing to riot?" It's an issue! So, you can teach them how to read first – in terms of *reading independently*. But you can also set up some easy thing to do in terms of let them read for a few minutes, until they become restless, and then it becomes something like writing in their journal, or going to a writing station.

### Jenny Williams:

I agree with what you're saying Mary-Ellen and I think there are a couple of key things about "*guided reading*". It's something that should happen from Kindergarten to Year 6, it should happen regularly, and the idea of it is to take the teaching that you gave to the whole class in "*modelled*", and if you can, apply that same teaching focus to the *guided reading* group. But more importantly, when you're doing "*guided reading*", that's the moment where you have that group of students grouped together for a particular reason and you're going to address their specific learning needs. There's no rule about the size that the group needs to be: the one rule is that each student need to have their own copy of the book. So, if you have four copies of each text in your guided reading supplies, then you will have groups of four students. If you have six copies (I wouldn't really have more than 6 in a group) then you could have six in a group. We're grouping students as carefully as we can, either around their instructional reading level, or around a particular teaching need that that group has, and we're also being realistic – none of us can manage eight groups in a classroom, so better to have four groups that are as closely matched as we can [rather] than eight groups that are very specifically matched but become unmanageable.





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### Carly Boreland:

Can I ask you a question about the level that students are at for reading and the books that you might use? I've been reading a few things lately about "PM Readers" and how they're sometimes an "imperfect" way of picking a book. Should we put out a warning about that or is it worth the discussion?

### Jenny Williams:

No, no. I think there is definitely a place for "level text". And certainly, for readers in Kindergarten and for Stage 1, we want opportunities for them to experience as much success as possible, and so a text that's closely matched to their abilities is in many ways a good thing. One of the lovely things about our syllabus document is the way it is really demanding that we engage in a rich variety of text. There's a whole lot of instructions to teachers about text and text selection (on page 24 of the English Syllabus) and for any teacher across a year or a stage, to be able to expose students to the rich range of *poetry*, *spoken text*, *visual text*, *print text*, *multimodal text*, we need to really have a rich range of text that students are looking at.

### Carly Boreland:

And so, in those first years of teaching, the two things going on are: you're going to know *your* students, *your* class, *your* community, building the relationships in the school (which are essential) and, simultaneously, starting with the syllabus and going back to it every time you are trying to decide "What will I teach this group of people that I know?"

Can we have a go at Mathematics too? And we're focusing on English and Mathematics because in those first years of teaching, you have to prioritise somehow to survive. So we're saying that everything is important and we're just trying to pick up some key things that you could do to make you feel like *you're* having a good day at school, as much as your students are as well.

### Jenny Williams:

I think there are some lovely things about the Maths syllabus so it is worth us stopping a moment and having a chat about that. For each outcome, there is a section about background knowledge, so even if you don't feel confident about what you're going to teach in that particular dot point of content or outcome, the background information will help you, as a teacher, to have a handle on what it is that you're trying to help your students to achieve. The other little area that is a wonderful resource in the Mathematics Syllabus is a section called "*Language*" and it looks at the Mathematical vocab that we want students to be using. In that section there'll be some words written in normal font and they're words that relate to this particular topic you're about to address but have been introduced previously. And then there'll be words in bold that are new to this particular outcome and they definitely should be addressed and looked at. Because one of the things about building that "*community of learners*" is having support within the room for students. Things like a *word wall*, and I think that is very important for K-6 (although it's going to look very different [for each year]) And some of the words you want to be up and around, and explained, is the language of Maths, or the language of your current Science topic, or



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the technical language that is related to the novel you've chosen to look at. And, perhaps definitions of those words, perhaps charts about the grammar you're currently learning and ALL of that supports the community that you have within your room.

### **Carly Boreland:**

And I guess part of that is when you are doing part of the Science lesson is to remind that "Over here is where the Science words are that we need", and when you're doing History, "Over here is where the History [words are]".

### **Jenny Williams:**

Yes. Like anything, it's not going to work if you don't, as the teacher, refer to it and teach to it.

### **Carly Boreland:**

And so, much of those first years of teaching is really prioritising – "what am I going to really focus on and what are going to be the things that are really the most valuable things for my students to get out of this?"

We should also point out that [as primary school teachers] you have to teach everything (it's easy for me to say that because I am a high school History teacher). And we don't get to pick and choose the things we like, and the things we don't like in terms to the KLAS. So, we have to teach "lovely" History (and you should be very selective about the way you do that) and we do want to teach Creative Arts and all of those things. So, we need to spend some time prioritising professional learning in those spaces where we're not as confident, or where it might not be our particular passion or interest.

### **Mary-Ellen Betts:**

One other thing we can reflect on every day is (and I do this after forty years) now work with a group of kids and stop and think "That would have been a really good thing to say at the beginning". Just be aware of it, when chaos reigns around your ankles, it's OK to go "Hang on...this is not working: let's stop it; let's pull it back; breathe; and we'll think about it." Then go home and reflect on what you would do differently next time because if you just keep reflecting like that, it's those "little" changes that are going to make the big difference.

### **Carly Boreland:**

And it's OK to say "That was terrible! I don't want to do any of that again!" That's OK?

### **Mary-Ellen Betts:**

Yes, or "That didn't work for me. I still have to teach that content point but I'm not going to do it that way."



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### Jenny Williams:

I think it's very important because we want students to be resilient and we want them to understand that it's OK to make a mistake because that's how you learn. So, being able to own up and having a "*community of learners*" where not only they can do that, but you, as the teacher, can do that, I think is really important. For me, I think the most challenging word in the documents around how to teach is "*explicit*" teaching and I think every day, being in front of a group of students, I learn something more about what being "*explicit*" means. And I am doing my level best to unpack that in my mind, and with my colleagues, so that I'm coming to a really, clear sense of how I can be "*explicit*" as I teach in the classroom.

### Carly Boreland:

So today we've talked about the beginning stages of your career. How to go from being inspired to bumping into reality in those first few years but keeping up the inspiration and going back to the values that led you to teaching and that should guide you throughout your career. And we've also talked about "keeping it real" to make sure that we can prioritise those things that we know we should be doing, mostly and first, and that we learned at university. We've also talked about trying to create a "*community of learners*" within your classroom and working together; we've talked about how you can focus on the syllabus to determine what you're going to teach and the way that you'll teach it; and particularly, we've talked about the *English block* and *guided reading*. We've talked about the Mathematics syllabus and we've talked about that word "*explicit*" and how, even after several decades of being involved in education, you can still find new ways that you wish you may have been more "*explicit*" when the lesson began, and how you can teach the class all of those behaviours, whether they're about "*learning*" or whether they're about "*behaviour*". We've talked about setting goals for yourself and being realistic about noticing what *you've* achieved and what *your* students have achieved. Is there anything else you want to say to those teachers who are just starting out, and who, we hope, will go on to have half century careers in public education?

### Jenny Williams:

I think, give it a go! Have fun! I still enjoy my time in the classroom and I still get a buzz out of listening to kids and hearing them talk and seeing them learn, so good luck with your career!

### Carly Boreland:

And thank you for *your* careers and we look forward to hearing so much more from you at the CPL and through our podcasts as well!

### Carly Boreland:

You've been listening to the JPL podcast for the Teachers Federation's Centre for Professional Learning. I'm Carly Boreland, and I'm the Editor of the JPL. I've been talking with Jenny Williams and Mary-Ellen Betts about inspiration and the reality of beginning teaching in primary schools. And to find out more and to listen to further podcasts, you can go to our website at [cpl.asn.au/podcasts](http://cpl.asn.au/podcasts).



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### 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 only, and do not necessarily represent the views of their employer or associated organisations. The host was Carly Boreland; technical direction by Jason Nicholas.

*Mary-Ellen Betts* has over 30 years experience in K-6 schools as a school leader, classroom teacher and consultant. She has developed expertise in literacy education and co-authored a teacher resource book. From 2000 – 2006 Mary-Ellen worked as a literacy consultant in Australia and New York City. The focus of this work was to support schools in improving educational outcomes for all students. She worked with teachers and principals at school and district level to improve pedagogy in literacy and to analyse data to inform instruction.

Mary-Ellen is currently working as independent Educational Consultant for schools in NSW.

*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.