



[www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts](http://www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts)

## CPL Podcast: Teaching Spelling K-6

**Host:** Carly Boreland

**With:** Sandra Rowan and Mary-Ellen Betts

### INTRODUCTION:

You are listening to the JPL podcast from the Centre for Professional Learning. Here's your host Carly Boreland.

### **Carly Boreland:**

Welcome to this JPL podcast, I'm with Sandra Rowan and Mary-Ellen Betts and they are two parts of Trio Professional Learning. I'm Carly Boreland and I'm the Assistant Director of the Centre for Professional Learning and Editor of the Journal of Professional Learning and it's my pleasure to be with them today and talk about Spelling.

Off the bat, and immediately, you might think "Wow chatting about spelling; a conversation about spelling. How interesting is that?" In fact, we've been at a course today where people have talked for hours about spelling and have even confessed to me that they love spelling. Why is spelling so important? Why do we need to teach spelling and teach it well?

### **Sandra Rowan:**

I think one of the reasons it's important to have correct spelling is that people are judged by their spelling. We've often seen signs on the streets, or on bulletin boards, that are spelt incorrectly and the first thing we do is *notice* that spelling and point it out. So, if students are going to be successful in their life, they have to be able to write a CV that is correctly spelt to get that job. And, unfortunately, people think that a bad speller is, therefore, a person who is not competent. And that's not correct.

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

The other reason is at the heart of the English syllabus which is *To Make Meaning*. So, in order to communicate your message, you are going to have to spell it so people actually get the meaning you intend, rather than trying to put their own interpretation on what you have written. So correct spelling is respecting the reader and ensuring you are getting your message across accurately.

### **Sandra Rowan:**

Well the other thing about spelling to is - it's part of the New South Wales *English K – 6 Syllabus* (it is one part of it) and so it connected to all the other elements of learning English. It's part of a bigger picture.

### **Carly Boreland:**

I think that's really important; it does matter. And I know spelling has been one of those points of controversy over the years. And teaching spelling – "Do you teach it? Does it matter?" And I think



[www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts](http://www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts)

## CPL Podcast: Teaching Spelling K-6

we're back now in that place where it matters for all kinds of reasons to do with how a person is interpreted and how they are perceived.

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

And again it comes back to how they are able to pick up the message of others and how they are able to convey their own message correctly. These days we're working with kids to get the first draft as accurate as possible because we want them to have a whole body of words that they can spell automatically. So they are not constantly dragging themselves trying to work out every word as they go so, we need a body of words that they can just spell automatically to make it easy. Put yourself in the brain of a 5-year-old boy, it is very messy in there and you want to make it as easy as possible for him to get his message out.

### **Carly Boreland:**

And I think there's a real connection in your course making the link between *vocabulary* and spelling. I wonder if you wanted to talk a little bit about that?

### **Sandra Rowan:**

It's incredibly important that students have a developing range of *vocabulary* to express themselves. And in that, as the words become more sophisticated, the rules of spelling are needed at times. And also, we need to be teaching where those words originated from. So if we understand the Latin root then we're likely to be able to understand other words that are the same as that. Teaching vocab in the classroom is an element of spelling, and an element of the English syllabus relating to writing - to get students to improve their message and develop a sophisticated way of communicating.

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

Can I come back into that issue of (we spent a lot of time this morning talking about) "what makes an effective speller?" Vocab is part of it and we used the words *effective spellers* rather than *good* because *good spellers* implies that you either get it right, or not. An *effective speller* has a range of strategies so that they will have a go at difficult words, exciting words, but they then have ways to get to the correct spelling of it. We want kids who are willing to take a risk; who are willing to expand their vocab and try and use it without constantly thinking "is this correct? Am I a *good speller*?" It's more important to think about it in terms of *effective spellers*.

### **Carly Boreland:**

You need to have something to say and then get that out; but firstly thinking "what is it that I want to say?"



[www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts](http://www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts)

## CPL Podcast: Teaching Spelling K-6

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

And the other thing is, we sort of say, that for kids to be effective spellers the first thing they've got to do it actually care about getting their message across. And then to understand that the reader needs to be able to get it. So that you've got kids, who might be writing a whole lot of letters on pages, but, because they're not worried about the reader, (we talk sometimes about disrespecting the reader) they're not *effective spellers* that way. You've really got to work at getting kids to think about *spelling*. And one of the things we've also done is we've renamed *spelling*. *Spelling* has got a bad rap: we've all done *spelling lists*; we've all had *spelling tests*; we've all suffered. So if we talk about *word work* we can talk about – “we need to understand how words work”. There is all this exciting, fun stuff, about the history of words: where they've come from; their derivation. That's all exciting so if we talk in terms of that: being aware of that; being interested in that. Then you're more likely to be an *effective speller* than otherwise.

### **Carly Boreland:**

That appeals so much to me, I'm a History teacher and I love when you get into the origins of words. Not just as an academic, or intellectual, pursuit but because it can help you figure out how to spell the word that you want to say. I really like that; I found that so appealing and I think that would be a real *in* for some students as well.

### **Sandra Rowan:**

It absolutely is an *in*. I think, especially in Stage Two and Three, they're starting to really get excited about making connections to the world. And we start our course off saying that “kindergarten spells like the Saxons” which is, they're spelling, the sound they can hear, like in the word *cat*, it's got the three sounds, and they write that sound. And then they develop, through the stages, till they get to the very sophisticated level, in Stage Three, where they're looking at the Greek and Latin roots and saying “ok, so that helps me understand the word. If I know that *aqua* means *water*, then every time I see that, I'll understand that that's got some relation to water.”

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

One of the ways we finished the day with our *etymological tree* where we give the participants the base word *tract* and let them go for five minutes. And the record, I think, that teachers produced is about 30 words; but kids can produce over 100.

### **Carly Boreland:**

Wow! Out of one word.

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

Yes and *tract*, *retracted*, *retractable*, *contract*.



[www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts](http://www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts)

## CPL Podcast: Teaching Spelling K-6

### **Sandra Rowan:**

And that, Mary-Ellen, is why it is important not to have *spelling lists* as such. But *learning how words work* because you could not write 120 words in your spelling list that has *tract* in them (that's not sensible). But, if you know what *tract* means, and you see that in new words, then you've got an *in*. And then you can look at the rest of it to see what it might *mean* then. So you're getting *meaning* as well. When we are teaching spelling, it's not about memorizing word lists, it's about *thinking* about how words work, and that *thinking* is the student doing all the work; not the teacher. We want the kids to think about words in the classroom and how they work: what they look like usually? How do they sound? How do I pronounce that? And where do I see those words in rich text?

If you're reading a very rich text in Stage Three, the language in those books would be of a level where kids have to really think – “what does that mean?” and then use their knowledge, of where words have come from, to decode those words. We're really looking for students who are taking *responsibility* for their learning, their thinking about words. And not just memorizing by a *rote* spelling lists. Because, when you memorize by *rote*, it's like learning a song; you can sing that song. You can say your phone number, you can learn those words and memorise them. But there are so many words in the English language, it doesn't matter how many lists you do, you're never going to have 127 *tract* words. So they need to know how to manage the increasing number of words in our English language.

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

There's some bizarre statistics about how many words Shakespeare had to use and how many words are in the English language now.

### **Sandra Rowan:**

It's increasing all the time, technology is making it increase as well. But also we're taking words from other countries because we're a global society. So we're introducing words from around the world into our everyday language. For example we use the one about *ketchup* in the course, so when I say, “where do you think the word ketchup comes from?” the teachers normally say “America”. But actually it comes from the words *kecap manis*; so it's an Indonesian word and it means sauce. If you have students that have culturally diverse backgrounds it's really great to ask them - “what words have we used from your language that we're using in our everyday English?” and that connection is really important and understanding that words are being introduced all the time and where do they come from.

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

One of the things we've talked about today is moving away from lists of words (and Sandra's observation about rote learning) into looking at strategies that are effective. And that boils down to basically teaching kids there are a range of strategies you can use: such as *spell it like it sounds* (that works in the early days for the littlest kids); and then you want it by *pattern*; and then you want it by *generalisations*; then *analogy* ( you know, if you can spell *car*, you can spell a whole lot of other words); spelling it like *chunking*. Using a *secondary source* - kids seem to think it's cheating if they go and look at



[www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts](http://www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts)

## CPL Podcast: Teaching Spelling K-6

the word on the wall or in the book, - no it's a good secondary source, use it, let's celebrate it, let's teach them how to do it. Sometimes we can use it from *memory* and then *mnemonics* and all of those - you have to have a *pie* before you can have a *piece*. You have to think carefully about that.

So there are some strategies that we need to be teaching kids to do. Rather than "here's a list of words to learn", let's teach them how to go about *working with the words*, so when they're faced with writing an unknown word they've got a whole list of strategies they can draw on.

### **Carly Boreland:**

Then to me it sounds a bit like teaching spelling, you approach just like teaching anything- you have a sense of "where do I want to end up? What am I trying to achieve here? Why am I bothering in the first place?" and then looking back to the syllabus and saying "ok what am I required to be aiming for?" Are there some suggestions you can give for ways to do all of this that are smart, that are efficient, that allow teachers to build up that big repertoire and have time to do that? Because, having talked to primary teachers now (and slowly I'm immersing myself more in the world of a primary school teacher), you have a lot to do and not much time and English is one subject, I wonder have you got any suggestions for people about?

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

The first thing we suggest is that you start looking at what the students are writing. If you look at student writing, you are looking at what they *know* and then the writing will tell you what they *don't know* and what they *need to learn next*. Now we can keep ourselves engaged with a whole lot of testing and various assessments that people invariably tell us they are put in the drawer. So we want to set up systems where we can easily look at student writing, analyse it and then use that information. Now the other thing that we need to be doing is drawing threads from *reading*, through into our *writing*, into our *word work*. So that we're using quality text: we're pulling out *non-fiction; imaginative; informative*, all the rest of it. We're using real language, real texts and then showing the kids how those words work through reading and through writing.

### **Sandra Rowan:**

And I think another aspect is the syllabus is requiring the students to be *self-assessing* their own work and *peer-assessing*. So the responsibility isn't all the teacher to mark out the incorrect spelling word in the text; they should be able to do that first. What we're doing is shifting the responsibility onto the students, and onto their peers. So part of that means that they're going to *take responsibility* for identifying where a word doesn't look right and not rely on us, the teachers, to tell them. And that's what we want as a real life skill: there's nobody sitting there holding your hand when you're writing your work, (although spellcheck). We're thinking about creating students that are going to be *lifelong learners*.



[www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts](http://www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts)

## CPL Podcast: Teaching Spelling K-6

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

And that's something that we can support kids to do in terms of how we *lead* them to that point. If as teachers we are taking home sets of books and marking kids work, we are doing no one any positives - it's not good for us, it's not good for the kids. So we need be working systems where we are *conferencing* and working with kids *at the point of learning*. No child has ever said "thank you for spending your Sunday afternoon marking these books, I really appreciate it".

### **Carly Boreland:**

I suppose in History (in archaeology) we would say, we want to notice the source *in situ*. And I suppose, in a way, for student too, you want them *in that moment* where you can talk to them about –“what are you trying to do here?” and “what do we know about what we could do to actually get the point across that you want to get across?”

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

Yes, and one of the things we need to teach them then are the *spelling knowledges*. They've been around forever; it's not new. What is new is the fact that we should be using, referring to, specifically teaching the *spelling knowledges* of *visual, phonological, morphemic and etymological*. That is a way of getting kids into words, in terms of – “so how do you think you can work out this word? How are you going to be able to repeat this word, by yourself, in a little while?” So teaching the kids that knowledge over time and then getting them to use the language.

### **Sandra Rowan:**

And how we did that today was with *words sorts*. We had read the book *Parachute* and then we had taken out the words, from that book, to use and then we had the teachers *sort* them under the four headings. Now, the reason why *sorting* is so good is because the brain is looking for *patterns*, and it's looking to categorise things. We talked about *tract* being a *pattern* (in terms of words). And so the same thing is in the *word sorts*; what you want the students to be able to do is to identify where there is a pattern. So “I know this pattern from previous and here's an example of it again, and, therefore, I know where to put it; where I'm sorting it in categories.” And actually, having been in a lot of classrooms, I've seen students incredibly excited about doing *word sorts* and the talk and the language as they sit on the floor and sort these little cards. It's in the Department of Education's document on teaching spelling, which is called what Mary-Ellen?

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

Teaching Spelling K – 6

### **Sandra Rowan:**

Teaching Spelling K – 6



[www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts](http://www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts)

## CPL Podcast: Teaching Spelling K-6

**Mary-Ellen Betts:**

Novel little title that.

**Sandra Rowan:**

Which came out a long time ago, which talks about *word sorts* and it's finally come to the front of our teaching at the moment. How do we engage students in getting excited about language and words? And using *word sorts* is one way.

**Mary-Ellen Betts:**

What we find when kids are *sorting* words (and the teachers were able to articulate the process today), when they were sorting: they were looking *closely* at the words so that they were using *visual strategies*; they were *analysing* the words; they were *categorising* the words. And the bit that was exciting for them was that they got to talk to a partner about where it should be and have interesting arguments about where the words should be. But it's that whole process of bringing spelling away from the dryness of writing a list, or writing out words into "let's talk about words! Let's talk about where they've come from. Let's find the way authors are using words." If you want to be an author, like Kenneth Grahame, because we read a little bit of *Wind in the Willows* today, and there was a long and interesting discussion about *sinuous*. But it's that opportunity to get excited about words: to think about it and to play with words. We can give kids a stencil and they'll do it once. But if we can get them to *play around* with these sort of things and have conversations, the learning is so much deeper.

**Carly Boreland:**

I think it could be helpful to talk about some great books you can use to hook students into spelling. You talked about *Parachute*.

**Mary-Ellen Betts:**

Any book on the *Children's Book Week Award* list, nominated or awarded: your librarian is your best resource, you go into your library and you say, "I'm thinking about teaching this sort of big idea. What text have you got?"

**Sandra Rowan:**

When we're doing *persuasive text* (and we're looking at how advertisements manipulate language to persuade you in the most subtle of ways), that use of language is something kids should be analysing and thinking about. And also *informative text*: it's about academic language. We talked about a little bit today about mathematics and the language of mathematics has to be taught because it's not something kids are going to hear in their everyday life. You don't hear anybody talking about an *inverse operation* at the supermarket, or in any other situation. So the academic languages need to be taught specifically. And so having kids actually unpack that vocab: and have a diagram; and have a definition; and have a synonym; put it in a sentence; say it. Trying to get them to manipulate that word in many ways as



[www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts](http://www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts)

## CPL Podcast: Teaching Spelling K-6

possible, so that becomes stored in *long term memory* and they've got an understanding of what that word means. If you're going to ask students – “what is the *perimeter* of something,?” They'll say – “you add the sides of the objects together to get the total. Yeah I understand that!” But what does *perimeter* mean? where does it come from? What does *meter* mean? So that type of delving deeper into understanding how words work, then help them understand the mathematics of what they're doing, so spending the time unpacking vocab is incredibly important, especially in the academic subjects

### **Carly Boreland:**

That makes me think about a common theme that we've talked about in lots of different courses; that notion that students are doing this thing because they care about it. That they're not working out the perimeter, or how to spell something, or write a piece of work, because “the teacher said I have to, so do it quickly and here it is!” But “I'm actually thinking about the words; I'm thinking about what I'm doing.”

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

If kids are doing it for the teacher, they will do it to just what the teacher expects. If they are doing it for themselves, because they are getting something out of it, there is much more *buy in*. And we need to get kids to *buy in* to the fact that learning about words can be such an interesting, exciting thing to do. If we keep going, “today we're going to be looking at 10 words: and you're going to write them in alphabetical order; and you're going to put them in a sentence; and then you're going to do a whole lot of other things.” *Find a word* is my particular peeve. There is no research that says that words need to be detected in amongst a muddle of other letters. English doesn't work like that! We don't write it like that! We put word spaces.

### **Sandra Rowan:**

No, because we make *meaning* from where that word sits in a *sentence*, and other words around it. So we need to be reading the *sentence* to get the *meaning*. And sometimes kids are able to do that but if you put that on the board in a list and says “what does it mean?” They don't have anything to help them unpack it.

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

And again there is no *buy in*. Whereas, if you are getting words from the text that you are sharing ( that you're reading) the kids are finding that (once you start opening kids eyes to the derivations of words) it becomes a dynamic environment. We've had kids sort of interrupt *modelled readings*, at various stages saying - “wait, wait, wait! That's a beautiful word! I need to go and put that in my learning journal!” and you go - “oh be still my beating heart!” But it's that level of excitement about this can be great. There are fabulous things happening and I can get so much from this, that I don't get from – “and here's another word list.”





[www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts](http://www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts)

## CPL Podcast: Teaching Spelling K-6

### **Carly Boreland:**

I teach high school. Oh I don't know what I would do. I long for the day when the student says "oh what a great word! I need to keep that word and use it later". Wow.

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

Of course, what happened the next day is that ten children leapt up and said "that's a great word!"

### **MUSICAL INTERLUDE/ANNOUNCEMENT:**

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

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

One of our starting points, when thinking about the spelling course, is the fact that we have both experienced kids in Year 6 who are still misspelling really common words that they were taught in Kindergarten. And so part of our thinking has been - "so when do you think that child is going to take responsibility?" We, as teachers, need to be putting it back on the kids. It is *not ok* to be misspelling words they were taught in Kindergarten (that are in the rooms). So there is an element of drawing the line, as in - "why do we keep doing it for the kids?"

### **Sandra Rowan:**

And the other thing is, you also need to take those kids that need extension. So, if you've got that range in your classroom (where some are still struggling to write simple words and others are romping ahead), you need to pull those kids into that group as well and say "let's have a look at some of these words that you are trying to have a go at, which are great" and encourage them to have a go at difficult words.

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

That's an interesting issue, Sandra, in terms of the data is showing us across Australia that we are not doing a good enough job with those kids towards the top. They are not making the progress; almost as if we're teaching down to them. So within our groupings, we need to pay attention to that group of kids who need to be extended, who need to have fun reading those rich words (having a go at authenticity). The kids in the class are not all the same: the kids all come from different backgrounds; they all come from different starting points. So we're doing disservice to the top kids, and we're doing a disservice to the bottom kids, and the ones in the middle - there's nothing to engage them there. So it's trying to shake up, and revitalize, our thinking around spelling. We need to teach kids to spell accurately. We need to have our kids writing with a degree of accuracy the first time. So we need to think smarter in



[www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts](http://www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts)

## CPL Podcast: Teaching Spelling K-6

terms of “we can’t keep doing things the way we’ve always done them”. There are aspects that we need to keep and there are aspects that we need to review.

### **Sandra Rowan:**

And I think the new syllabus has given us the opportunity to rethink how we are teaching. Because of the students *being responsible for their learning* and *self-assessing* and so, therefore, we’ve got an opportunity now to change the way we used to teach previously (in the old century) and how we teach now. The other thing about the kids, Mary-Ellen, is, we want to see students having a go and making mistakes. If they are writing pieces of writing, without an error in it, there’s not anecdotal evidence for you to say, “well this is the next step for the child.” And there is a perception, amongst some high achieving children, that “if I make a mistake in my writing, I’m not a good writer. So, therefore, I’ll dumb the word down and so I have a perfect piece of work!” What we want to see is *where* the mistake is. So “I can teach you the next thing.” And so it’s not a great piece of writing, or a good spelling test, if there are no errors because what are you going to teach next from that?

### **Carly Boreland:**

That follows on, into high school, where we have those same students, who end up not submitting formal assessment work because they’re so concerned that it won’t be *perfect*. But it ends up not existing and it actually creates some big problems for some very, very capable kids in older years.

We have NAPLAN, which is an external assessment, and it’s something that all students in New South Wales public schools will do, and that all teachers will engage with when they think about spelling. I wonder what you could do for us, in terms of, where that fits in when you approach planning, spelling and how you might approach it in your classroom?

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

Firstly, NAPLAN is something that kids only do twice in their primary school. So we as teachers need to make sure that we contain it and don’t buy in to the hysteria. We can use the NAPLAN data to give us *broad brush* information in terms of what might be happening for our kids. Now various things we’ve noticed in schools [are such thing as] a school might score poorly in spelling and that’s because the kids are frightened to use the harder words. So there’s that issue. There is - also kids not understanding that bits of NAPLAN *are* assessing their spelling. We had a group of kids who said, - “does the spelling count?” in one of the tests, and we sort of said, - “Well yeah, you might want to think about it!”

### **Sandra Rowan:**

We’ve seen situations where students have to write the word, in the language part of the test, and will leave it blank because they are so worried that, if they make a mistake, they’ll look bad. So they don’t even have a go. So we’ve got to change that mindset (which I think is happening with kids) that they feel that if they’re a good speller then they don’t make a mistake. So, when it’s reflected in the NAPLAN, they don’t even have a go.



[www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts](http://www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts)

## CPL Podcast: Teaching Spelling K-6

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

We can reference NAPLAN to give us some core information. But, when working in classrooms with kids, we need to be building the *resilience* for kids to be confident to *have a go* and that “it is ok to make a mistake and those mistakes will help us move forward”. So, I think, as professionals, we’ve got to put NAPLAN in its place.

### **Sandra Rowan:**

I think, the thing about *having a go* too is the *struggle*. If you’re struggling; you’re learning. Your brain is growing, and stretching. So that’s how I sell it to the class. I say – “ok, if this is a bit tricky that means you’re *really* thinking about it and you’re growing your brain” and that’s all they need as encouragement to *have a go*.

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

That leads straight into the *Growth Mindset* in terms of - if you’re not struggling, at the bottom of that pit, at some stage during the day, you haven’t added any new learning.

### **Carly Boreland:**

Good, and I love where that potentially leads you to - that the students might go home very tired from having worked very hard, their teachers might go home tired too. But I’d like it if the students go home feeling like – “phew, that was a tough day of learning; my brain feels like it’s done some things!”

### **Sandra Rowan:**

So *struggle* is important for them to understand: that learning is a struggle. And for some kids they struggle *all* the time, and they know how hard it is! But, unfortunately, the ones at the top of our class often don’t struggle at all! And if they do struggle they don’t like it because “it should just come to me naturally because I find all the work in the room so easy! I can just do it!” So we have to start giving *academic rigour*, at the top end, in spelling as well; so that they’re struggling as well.

### **Carly Boreland:**

Sandra and Mary-Ellen thank you for coming in and talking with us today about spelling. It’s been really good to get your insights and we hope teachers will appreciate some new approaches to teaching this really important part of the New South Wales K – 6 English syllabus.

I’m Carly Boreland and you’ve been listening to the JPL podcast for the New South Wales Teachers Federation Centre for Professional Learning. To find out more and to listen to further podcast you can visit our website at [www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts](http://www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts)



[www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts](http://www.cpl.asn.au/podcasts)

## **CPL Podcast: Teaching Spelling K-6**

### 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 key learning areas. She provides teacher professional learning at a school level as well as having presented at conferences on Literacy and Maths.*

*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 an independent Educational Consultant for schools in NSW.*