CPL Podcast: Multimodal and Digital Texts in English 7-12

Host: Carly Boreland
With: Rosemary Henzell

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 NSW Teachers Federation's Centre for Professional Learning, I'm Carly Boreland and I'm the Editor of the JPL. Today I'm talking to Rosemary Henzell about the new part of the English Syllabus which is a multimodal text in Advanced and Standard and we are going to have a chat about what you what you can do with those in your senior classes but also how can start working that into that with year 7 and how you can have not only a fun time but you can do some really rewarding work with assessment as well. Rosemary welcome.

Rosemary Henzell:
Thank you

Carly Boreland:
Rosemary, now can you start of by telling us a little bit about your background? You are an English teacher but you have a varied experience in education and also some connections with working in film as well. So can you tell us a little bit of why you came to be so interested in Multimodal Texts?

Rosemary Henzell:
Sure, so yes I am a career change teacher and I'm in my sixth year as a teacher. So I'm mainly English I'm also ESL trained, or now EAL/D, and teaching junior drama as well. I started off in the film industry. I did a degree in film production I worked in technical operations in TV. I was an Assistant Director for 5 or 6 years freelance in the industry. So yes, my passion and my background for film came about from there. I don't know, I kind of got over that and got into education because my sister moved to Japan and I decided to go over and be an ESL teacher and I fell in love with teaching. So when I came back, a few years later, I retrained and English is a passion of mine. And yes, I just discovered that teaching is just that vocation where all those other skills have come together kind of beautifully.

Carly Boreland:
So when you say "fell in loving with teaching", I'm assuming you mean with teaching the students?

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Rosemary Henzell:
Yes, with teaching the students as there is something magical about being in a classroom with young people. I think I chose high school because it is that stage of adolescence. As trying as they can be, there is something really amazing about watching those young people discover the world. And being a part of their journey is something I am really passionate about.

Carly Boreland:
There are so many things I want to ask you about this particular genre. One of the first things is that we are talking about is young people and there is often an assumption that they are really good on technology and at the same time there can be a bit of an assumption that Multimodal texts is a bit of a gimmick as well. Can you kind of help us understand how you see these two things in school and how your passion for English and English Literature comes through and can be made live?

Rosemary Henzell:
Yes sure, absolutely in my experience I think we have this term "digital natives" that we apply to young people. We assume they have been brought up with technology and that, therefore, they are just naturally masters of it. But my experience doesn't bear that out and they actually don't have a lot of the skills we might assume. They do pick things up quickly and they do feel comfortable in those spaces but they do still need the training and the development. Multimodality is not just going to be a gimmick because it is where the world is now; so much of what we do is online. - things like YouTube. There is massive potential in Multimodality for our world, in general, and I think, we have a responsibility, as teachers, to develop those skills in our students as responders and composers. Because we want to put out kind of critical citizens and people who can read multimodal texts critically and understand them on a number of levels. But I think it is also important that they have the opportunity to compose, because as an English teacher, I am a big believer that you learn most through doing. Even in writing, if you want students to understand literary techniques, well let's write and let's experiment and let's see what does and doesn't work. Then, when we come to analyze someone else's text, we are going to be more open to it. That is why I think multimodality needs to be brought in kind of regularly, and early, and experimented with, before the high stakes nature of Stage 6 English - where it is now mandatory. This of course panics a lot of people I think. So yes, I am a big believer that it is here to stay; it is something now we have been told we must do and we all need to get more comfortable with that.

Carly Boreland:
I have been reading a really good book recommended to me, by Jason, actually, who edits our Podcasts, Hugh Mackay's *Australia Re-Imagined* . He talks in their about the generation differences as a part of Australian diversity. I suppose it is kind of our responsibility, if we don't want these next generations to be only good at texting, or putting the latest though bubble in a few characters.

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Rosemary Henzell:
Yes absolutely and I haven't actually read the book but I saw him Hugh Mackay speak about it at launch and he talked about the anxiety epidemic that is happening in Australia and how young people are really at the crux of that and because they live so much of their lives online. So in a way, it is a really great "in" for teachers because it is meaningful for them and it is relevant and if we can find a way to harness their world and their kind of consumption of that online space. If we can harness that energy, we can actually build in some meaningful projects. And we can link in to some of maybe our favorites, some of the classics, you know, Shakespeare and Dickens and Austen and all that kind of stuff that we love we can find connections for them and teach them to re-make things in a way that is meaningful for them.

Carly Boreland:
Let's talk about the 'Englishness' of the English Syllabus and where your thinking, around what you are doing with English, is at the moment in 7-12 and then how you are trying to work in some of those things. Because, I think, that teachers will know their school; they know their context; they know what they are doing. Maybe, if you can tell us what you are doing first, and then we can have a think about how we can apply that in different settings and different situations.

Rosemary Henzell:
For me, in English, whenever I am programming, or planning a new unit, we are a little bit lucky, in our subject, that we don't have all those content dot points that are very set it is about skills based and understanding based goals.

Carly Boreland:
It's also the only syllabus where you are not just a little bit lucky but you have the word "joy" in your syllabus.

Rosemary Henzell:
We do, I love that I actually in our syllabus and I think we need to remember those words and there and that is ok. Whenever I am planning I begin with – "What is the big idea? What is the big question I would like my students to wonder about the world?" and then I try to find those texts. No matter what form they are in, or what genre they are, that might help them to explore those questions. For example if I have done a sci-fi unit, we will look at some great sci-fi films but we will look at some of the old sort stories or the novel we will look at graphic novels. We will go exploring for different texts that might help us answer those questions. In English when we go for understanding, as opposed for just skills, that is where some of the magic and that is where we can engage students in texts they might not have otherwise have loved. So I know that one of the great modules that we do currently at my school in year 10 is on pre 20th century literature and most of the kids have never picked up a classic novel

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before and we give them these novels and they take one look at the words and they go "there is no way! what have you given me?" But, we get into the issues, and we get into the context, and we look for these connections. And by the end, kids you never thought would finish one of those books, they have finished before everyone else; they are explaining what is happening to the rest of the class. They are incensed by some of the ideas that these books present and the societies that they portray. It opens up this fantastic debate about the relevance to their own worlds. So I think, with English, (that is one of the reasons that I love it is) it is because human beings are essentially narrative based beings and we love a story; we learn through story; and we teach through story. So what better subject to bring in those big life lessons than one that is all about narrative and all about story.

Carly Boreland:
The power of a good yarn is the primary thing and that is true for so many subjects not just English. Can you tell us about some of the books; what are some of your "go to" books?

Rosemary Henzell:
One book that I first taught on my first English Prac and that I have taught regularly is the *Boy in Striped Pajamas*. It's accessible is simple it's a good length but there is something about that novel that captures classes and captures their empathy. I always try to read the last two chapters aloud to them because, when you read it to them, there is this silence in the room and this horror. And I often bring, within that, a poem called *Vultures*. I think it is a Nigerian poet who wrote this a beautiful poem called *Vultures* that we do alongside [the novel] about the nature of good and evil within human beings. They are young (because we do this in Year 8 or 9) but they are old enough to understand that sometimes the world is not fair and sometimes bad things happen and I think it is really powerful.

Going back to the Year 10 unit, I always teach *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* which, when I first encountered it as a young person, I thought it was the most depressing novel on earth. I have never yet had a class fail to get completely involved. Even if they don't maybe love, it because it is pretty dark, they resonate with it. I have actually just taught a new novel, which came out last year, called *Terra Nullius* which is quite a spectacular book. I am teaching it to an Advanced Year 9 class but you could do it from anywhere from Year 10, 11, up. Yes, it is just really interesting, and I am not going to say too much about it, but very interesting.

Carly Boreland:
I wanted to ask you more about when you said "the big questions *I* want them to think about." I like how you put that emphasis on that they're *your* questions and *you are* posing them to students. Sometimes, and I know you are really interested in things like Project Based Learning, I worry that a lot of that stuff can take children down the track of where they have to think of everything themselves.

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I think it is really important, and I like that you said *you have* an idea of what you want them to grapple with, and come to an understanding of. That it is not just them generating ideas out of thin air.

Rosemary Henzell:
Yes, I think, obviously student choice is massively important. But I think we also need to remember always that we are dealing with young people. Young people need enough guidance and enough scaffolding. If we going to get technical the *Vygotsky Zone of Proximal Development* and all these research that we know that kids need just enough scaffolding to push them into a higher level of achievement. I think questions come with that. Also, particularly, depending on the age level that they are at, the younger kids they don't know what they don't know; they are not aware of issues they are not aware of. So, we may be able to help bring those in, and develop that awareness, and that then might lead them on to a new passion that they had never discovered, or may not have found out, unless we had created that environment in the classroom. So I think we are well placed to come up with questions that we believe will interest them. Because, obviously, when I am picking a big question or a generative topic, I am thinking: "where are my student at? ; What do they care about?; What do I know about them and, therefore, what is going to interest them? But, I am also thinking: but where do I want them to be as human beings? ; What are some of things I want them to learn and understand and guide them towards? I base my questions on that. I think that is a really positive way to shape a classroom; is when you are focusing your students on what we don't know, and finding out more of what we don't know, and never allowing the learning to stop, or feeling that the only purpose for us being there is to finish an essay, or do a test, and "Tick! We're done and we are moving on", because that is going to kill anyone's passion for a subject.

Carly Boreland:
I think it kills the teacher as well if you start in a different place. So I can see such an advantage in saying "well first we do - what is the big question for this class; for my class?" (and that might be different from class to class or year to year) and then you say "OK well then I can more easily pull together the things I need." Because I can imagine it is hard if you have already decided the book, or you have already decided the particular Multimodal forms you are going to be using, and you then try and somehow pluck relevant questions out of that. It sounds like a kind of hard way to approach programming and your work

Rosemary Henzell:
Yes, I always think big questions come first and I was very fortunate that in my *M* teacher at Sydney University to have as my tutor and Lecturer Dr. Jackie Manuel who is amazing and she always taught us what do I want my students to learn. How will I know when they have learnt it and what can I do to help them get there So I have always approached programming from this idea of "what is the understanding or the knowledge that I hope they gain and why is it important?" and then begin to draw

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in the resources and the texts that we need. It can be harder if schools are limited, in terms of their resources, and they have only a few different options. But again, if it can be where Multimodal can help, if they do have access to even a little bit of technology because we can do group work. It does not have to be every student with their own device. Even with a bit of ingenuity and a little bit of tech. we can actually create some amazing learning experiences and I think a lot of teachers are really stuck on the [idea that] to do digital texts and Multimodality every student needs to have a brand new device with full capabilities. That is part of our job; is to be creative and to go –"what have I access to and then what can we make of that?"

Carly Boreland:
I want to ask you about that too. Sometimes I think Multimodal and digital just get put together into one - because if you just do a digital text that is not Multimodal.

Rosemary Henzell:
It might not be, no. I mean, yes, we think about MultiModality; it is essentially where the modes of listening, viewing, writing, and representing are somehow coming together and making something that's more than they would be apart. When I was in film school, the way that I really learnt the power of Multimodality was in a sound engineering lecture, where our sound lecturer showed us the famous car chase scene, from the movie *Psycho*. It is a classic scene; it is one of the most tense and brilliant moments of editing in cinema and it is held up as an incredible example. We watched it and it's amazing and it grabs you. And then we watched it again, and he just turned the sound down, and all of a sudden it becomes a five minutes scene of someone driving and looking in their rear view mirror and it is the most boring thing you have ever seen. I think, that is one of the things that we need to understand with Multimodality – as long as at least two modes are combining to make something a whole, that is greater than the sum of its parts, we are doing multimodal. So it doesn't have to be technical, there can be no technology involved in multimodality. Similarly, if you can do a digital texts and it is all pictures, you are not really doing a multimodal texts. So, obviously, often they do combine because digital texts involve audio as well as visuals and it can be interactive. But they are not one of the same and I think we get freaked out by the notion with modality when we go "Oh my Gosh! And suddenly we have to make websites and do all these incredible animations!" No you don't, and it can be very low tech.

Carly Boreland:
Can you give me some low tech. examples?

Rosemary Henzell:
Choose Your Own Adventure picture books: really, because there is an interaction a choice with the reader you are obviously going to be using texts, and using representation through visuals, and there are so

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many choices to make just in those two. There is great adult picture book call *Requiem for a Beast* and it comes with a CD. So you can just read the picture book, and it is for older readers and it is quite a complex book. But, then if you play the CD with it, you suddenly have this very different experience. Kids can make things like finger puppets and little *stop motion animation* stuff could be really cool. Back to basic stuff: teaching styles like character boxes; play lists for characters with an explanation of why this character would listen to these songs. The old kind of creative approaches, often they are multimodal, and they are not hard, and they are not complicated to do, but they work really well.

Carly Boreland:
Once you have that element of choice happening, students can then take things to where they want and where they are ready - I imagine as well.

Rosemary Henzell:
Absolutely, you can kind of build in some of the notions for Project Based Learning here. So you create parameters for students to work in, so you have student choice. You don't mandate - "it must look like this"; "it must be done in exactly this form." You say, "Here are your parameters that you have to meet; here is a list of criteria that your product must have; and here are the boundaries that you are allowed to play in – Go Forth!" I think that is one of the really great things because different students will approach Multimodal assignments in different ways and I think that is a good thing. I think often if we try to have too much control, and if we get freaked out about – "what are we going to get? How are we going to judge it? How we are going to assess different things?" If you have criteria, and you have made it clear to students the things that matter; how they go about creating that is part of the joy for them.

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Carly Boreland:
So essentially when we do Multimodal we are approaching it like we do anything else with our teaching - we start with "what is our purpose?" and then we use the syllabus to get there. Can I ask you particularly about assessment? Because I know there are some new components; all the Stage 6 syllabuses have got some new assessment things happening, but this multimodal might be a particular vexed issue for some teachers - I can imagine.

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Rosemary Henzell:
Yes, so we now mandated multimodal assessment tasks for Standard and Advanced and Year 11 standard has a whole module called *Contemporary Possibilities*, which is all about digital and multimodal texts.

Carly Boreland:
I should mention too that you have written an article for the JPL about *Contemporary Possibilities* so people can obviously go to our website and read that too and it is loaded up with links.

Rosemary Henzell:
I tried to put as many links into that as possible. Yes, it is new and for a lot of teachers it is overwhelming. And this notion that we need to somehow now to teach digital texts and to have students do multimodal presentations. 1t is harder in Stage 6 sometimes to make it feel authentic because we are really bound by preparing for the HSC and by a far more proscriptive syllabus than in our junior years.

Carly Boreland:
So we might be more cautious in Stage 6 and that could be ok to begin with?

Rosemary Henzell:
Yes, I think, take baby steps if that is where you are more comfortable. We have got to be aware that generally in a faculty you have teachers from a range of experience levels; a range of ages; and who have a range of comfort factors with this kind of stuff. And I think it's always dangerous to try and jump in and take on too much and to have people feel completely overwhelmed when something is really new. And the stakes are high; so it does kind of scare us. "What if we get this wrong? What if we don't get our students through because we are not kind of as comfortable with it?" We don't want to that to be a thing that teachers are feeling and it is a really understandable thing. It kind of comes back to what I said before, in terms of maybe not assuming that students are as talented with some of the digital stuff that we imagine they are; that they do still need some scaffolding; and relaxing into the fact that we can learn together. So [go with] that notion of the classroom is a *learning community* where everyone is thinking and everyone is learning rather than the *transmission style* where the teacher has to have all the answers and has to know.

Carly Boreland:
So I guess a way to solve some of that anxiety could be to provide some student choice around the particular mode, or the particular platform that they use. Is that going to be realistic for Stage 6 level assessment?

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Rosemary Henzell:
It can be and that is really going to depend on the school and what they are going to do with that unit. Often you will find people will be more proscriptive with assessment in multimodal. And for me, it is one of the shames of the fact that they have mandated multimodal. I think you are going to get kind of a lot of videos, or little speech "Ted Talk" tasks – a bit pedestrian. I think people are not going to be willing to take risks in the early stages which is a shame because there is real potential there. But, we acknowledge the system we are in (that means high stakes exams) tend to make us more cautious about doing crazy stuff. I imagine that what people mandate are kind of narrow number of options for students, but I'm hoping that over time that we will get a bit more courageous and more willing to take risks as we get comfortable.

Carly Boreland:
Can you tell me then what are you doing with your own teaching? What are you thinking here? What is this new approach (it doesn't have to be new) but this way of thinking about assessment especially? Because I think that is where the pressure point is. What does that look like all the way back to Year 7? Because, if you have students in Year 7, and we should also remember primary school, (because they are doing multimodal texts in primary schools) who are coming from Kindergarten all the way through with these skills that they are slowly developing.

Rosemary Henzell:
So I think, more and more I know that at our school, we do have students who are really focused on assessment and results. That comes along with anxiety and stress levels and that is something we are absolutely trying to focus on and reduce. And we are trying to re-imagine assessment in a number of different ways, because we do get that question "Is that going to be on the test?" "Are we being assessed on this?" and if the answer is "no" there is that classic - lean back in the chair; pen down; laptop down. So, in my programming and my teaching, I really try to make sure that it is all going to count; everything we do is going to matter and that they see the connections between things. Again using the *Teaching For Understanding Framework*, one of the ideas of it - is what we call "opportunities for feedback" and "performances for understanding" It is not one final summative task, but you try to plan it out: so that there is lots of little things; and you are getting a lot data along the way; and students are showing "developing mastery" along the way and I think that can make it easier; to make it authentic and make it meaningful. And also sometimes, if the final product does not work out as well as the student had hoped, if you have got that process there, you can see that they have learnt; and you can see that they have met outcomes; and you can reward them from that.

Carly Boreland:
Obviously, we are, all the way from 7-11, grading them based on the common grade scales and things like that. So that it is not three assessment tasks and a mini - HSC that adds up to a certain mark that

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goes anywhere. So, we probably need to remind ourselves that what we are actually trying to do when we collect all this data and information.

Rosemary Henzell:
I am a big fan of not re-creating the HSC in junior years. I totally understand why people fall into that, but I think we do ourselves and disservice and our students a disservice by not focusing on the "joy" (that key word in our syllabus) the joy and the pleasure of English and to try to develop learning opportunities for them that spark enthusiasm and spark passion and spark interest. And that is why I am an increasingly a really big fan of *process* and things like *reflection logbooks* and *process portfolios* (where they are recording their thinking; where they are recording their drafting; they are recording their conversations with other students). I am trying to build in a lot of *peer feedback circles* and lot of self-assessment opportunities. So that they are getting feedback and we are moving them forward without it being hugely onerous on me, as a teacher. Because, workload, we all know, the workload is massive, and it just keeps getting bigger.,

Carly Boreland:
The Department has this really great assessment policy which has words in it like "manageable". And, so everyone is on the same side on this; it is just that, somehow, we end up getting ourselves so over-confused I think about what we are supposed to be doing or what we are required to do.

Rosemary Henzell:
Yes, I think there is an element of guilt, maybe, in there, where we go - "well if I don't give the feedback ,I am not really doing my job." I think again it is about re-imagining assessment a little bit.

Carly Boreland:
Can I ask you about, what your mark book looks like then? Because I know that is one tricky thing for teachers - it's like "Well, if I don't have a set of marks or numbers or something" How do you do that?

Rosemary Henzell:
Well, when I did my degree, my little research project was on rubrics and how they can help to move learning forward. I am a fan because you can use it in a number of ways. So that I can have the same rubric that I give to students at the very beginning of a unit, that outlines the different criteria and the different levels of achievement, and as they are drafting work and doing work I can show them where they are at on the rubric, in each criteria. But what that also shows them is what is next? what do they need to do to get one level up or to improve overall? Obviously, it's a time thing because you can actually develop rubrics with students. So that it is in their language and they can understand what that is. What you can then have is copies of rubrics so you can see their progression. So if you take kind of a snapshot of their process, and their movements through that same rubric, you can where they have,

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and have not, progressed an for me it's probably more meaningful when I am doing things like writing reports and thinking about class placement than just a letter or a number on a page. Because at the end of the day yes, absolutely, we have to give them a grade, and we have to give them a number, and they care about that very much. I don't think it helps them in terms of their learning particularly. There are numbers; there are grades; but, more importantly, there are samples of their work; and that is why I love the ideas of log-books, because I can see their process through.

Carly Boreland:
So, would you take a photo of their work, or a photocopy of something, or would you have a folder for each kid? How complicated does this get?

Rosemary Henzell:
I think it depends on the teacher. So, I know what I often do. I have my iPad with me in class, so I take photos of stuff, a lot. And I also use Google Drive and Google Classroom so I will get kids to upload work to me and, therefore, it is just kind of there in different assessment folders or I can make folders for each student, which is fine. I do photocopy or scan work sometimes, so I have got that when I need it. I don't have a perfect solution yet: it is tricky; and it is trial and error. And I know that I try a whole bunch of things. And yet scanning and emailing, or photos, has really worked for me, because I can flick back and find them.

Carly Boreland:
I mean I know you don't have to have proof of every single thing that has every happened. Obviously that is where professional judgment comes in.

Rosemary Henzell:
We did, in our Year 9 Project Based Learning unit, in which they have to write a short story and we have got check points and milestones that they have to meet. So I made a really simple spreadsheet (and I am very basic on spreadsheets). And it just has kids' names down one column, and then the different milestones and I could colour code them. And if I needed to put a grade in, or put a number in, I could. I could add comments and I would colour code them -in terms of "totally complete", "on track", "halfway there", "not on track", "keep an eye". Which became more manageable than, maybe trying to keep lots of photocopies from all these students, doing really big projects (because they would have their logbook, and I could flick through that). But that gave me a little overview, so I knew that every time I had checked one element or one milestone, I had that snapshot. I knew who was where, and who I was going to need to support more, and who I could maybe extend a little bit. So, I found that a really helpful thing too.

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Carly Boreland:
So I suppose the point is that once you have decided to that you are committed to (that is actually having useful information that you can use yourself) then you can solve the other problems. But. if you don't have that purpose really in your own mind, and if you are just collecting sheets and sheets of numbers because you think someone wants you to, that is when it gets a bit complicated, perhaps.

Rosemary Henzell:
It is that idea of re-thinking the notion of assessment and why we assess. And, hopefully, it is for far more than for a report twice a year. Our students often ask – "What is the average of the class?, What is the class mean?" And I don't actually give it to them anymore, because they are a bit competitive and I've actually just stopped giving it to them. Either I pretend I don't know, and if they keep on pushing, I say "I am not going to tell you because it tells you nothing! Either you find out that you are above average (and you relax), or you find out that you are below average (and you feel a bit crap), but none of that tells you what to do next. The comment that I have written for you at the bottom of that page and the notes that I have written for you on your work, that is what tells you what to do next."
 So I don't care about grade, or a number, I care about where next from here and I really try to teach my students the importance of – "yes, look at the number; have the feelings; then please read the feedback and then let's go through the feedback; let's talk about this and unpack it.

Carly Boreland:
And the lesson after the formal assessment task counts as much as the task itself, I suppose. That goes back to what you were saying before about "everything matters". I hear so often from teachers, and they are genuinely exasperated by this concern, that students come into classrooms and it is as if "it is not on a formal assessment, it doesn't count" Almost as though the children were born that way; like it wasn't adults and teachers, at school, who made them this way. And it is amazing - we created that culture (that is us that did that) and we are the only ones that are going to be able to change that somehow.

Rosemary Henzell:
Absolutely, it is a big issue: the notion of school culture and community culture. Because, we might have the best intentions, as an individual classroom teacher, but then we need to be aware that we are in a school culture, we could be within a faculty culture, and then we have parental expectations. And changing all of those, and getting them all on to the same page, in terms of a new approach to assessment, is really hard. But I think we have to start somewhere: we have to be aware of our own impact and the way that we model behaviour to our students, and thinking to our students. And I know I really value the feedback stage with students, and I spend a lot of time on it. I model "excitement about it and interest in it" and I have activities where they have to go through their feedback, and really engage with it, and we do a reflection on it. We do have one student, and she was

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in my class in Year 9 and the next year, in Year 10, she told her English teacher, "I don't care about the mark so much because Ms. Henzell taught me that it is the feedback that counts and I used to hate it and then I understood it and now I always focus on the comment."
Yes, victory!

Carly Boreland:
That is so great, well done that is one.
Can you give us some of your "go to" recommendations for resources, texts, ideas that work really well to help teachers who are thinking well I want to do better at this, or I want to do something new?

Rosemary Henzell:
So, in the JPL article that I did, I talked a lot about Google - the Google App suite, and the potential of it, for teachers. It is available through the Portal; you can actually create your link and you get given a new Google email address and it is all there for you. It is easy to use: it is open; it is on the Cloud; it saves automatically; you can never lose work and, with a little bit of experimentation, you can do quite incredible things very simply. So in terms of *making texts* I think that is one that I think is really great. *Finding texts* - SBS interactive, I think is one of the most extraordinary resources. They make just fabulous content -some of it is not always appropriate for all cohorts and all year groups. So you have to be careful what you look at, what you are wanting to show. If you google SBS interactive, it comes to a website that got all their online stuff and it from little animations like "*My Grandmother's lingo*" which is one of the most beautiful multimodal texts that showcases very simply the power of this kind of digital work. Then really fascinating works like *Exit Australia* (a *choose your own adventure* style) where you take the place of a refugee. Australia has descended into civil war and your family has been targeted. You are trying to leave and you are trying to make choices, with limited information, in trying to leave the country and it is just a really engaging text. So I did a little kind of round robin with my Year 11 in *Contemporary Possibilities* this year, where I gave them a number of multimodal texts and then they had to spend kind of ½ hour with each: trying it out; playing with it; thinking about how to use different modes to create meaning to engage us. That is a really important first step. We need to understand that composers choose modes to have an impact on us; to shape our understanding. As with everything in English, that is what we talk about – "How is a composer shaping our understanding?" And, so digital and multimodal texts are no different. We do need to think about well how is each mode working and then how do they work together? So, I think, any kind of diagram, or worksheet, where you have got the different modes listed, in some way, and then you have the ability to draw those together. Kind of like, if you had a flower - with like the petals being the different modes and the centre being the overall shaping of understanding, you can get students to visually map out what is happening in each mode and how they feel they are being affected, as responders, by that.

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Carly Boreland:
And so then I think, (I am a History teacher, so I am more than happy to be wrong) but I think there maybe a good possibility for going forward would be what I learned through *reading, experiencing* then I apply to my own *creation.* So, give them some kind of chance to do some of their own creating?

Rosemary Henzell:
Absolutely, and again, this is why I think what Project Based Learning is really kind of powerful in this space, because it gives purpose to the analysis of text. One of the worst kind of traps that we can fall into is – "read this, answer these questions and let's move on". Because – "Why? Why does it matter? Why would we do this? What would we learn? (apart from how we would do better at our assessment task.)

Whereas if you would say "ok, you are going to create a multimodal, or digital, text about something that is interesting to you, or that you care about. In order to do that, we need some skills, we need to understand some things." So, suddenly you have created *purpose* and *value* for those analysis activities. Where if students go - "Yeah! Ok I want to make this kind of text!"

"Well let's have a look at what other people done: what do you like? what don't you like? what works? why does it work? how is it operating on us? How can you make that happen?"

I think that is a really key component, because just analyzing any text for no real reason, becomes a disconnected and un-authentic act, and if you have compliant students- they will just do it, because that is the thing to do; but if you have less compliant students, then we are going to get into a lack of engagement and issues. I work in a school where we have compliant students, and that is a problem for us, because we want engagement and we want to be sure that we are doing matters. And it can be hard sometimes, when you are not completely sure if you have got them. So, when you get that wonderful energy and there is that buzz when you can feel that true engagement is happening. It is what inspires us and makes us come back into the classroom every day.

Carly Boreland:
So, you were talking about using the Google resources, that the Department has available to us, and exploring all these different things. I wanted to ask you - how do you approach your own professional development around these things? Obviously, there are courses you could attend and there arethings that are organized around that. Could you tell us what you do?

Rosemary Henzell:
Sure, like many people these days, YouTube is amazing. It is quite incredible; you can learn a lot about, things like Google, on YouTube. Some videos are more useful, or more professional than others, but if you are wanting a basic overview, they are great. You can always find a basic tutorial that works for you and figure it out that way. Experimentation! I am lucky that I am someone who is very comfortable not

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knowing and having a go. I will work through a tutorial, and I will give it a go, and try and work it out. I don't always figure it out. But I take that attitude that I don't have to be an expert. Google actually do offer, (I haven't done it yet, it is on my "to do" list); they actually offer online training courses, which you can do anytime, anywhere. If you go to the main Google Homepage for Education, they have this list, and I saw it once and thought "this is amazing!" You can actually learn a huge amount, and do these different little courses that will upskill you.

Carly Boreland:
I am imagining there are many teachers out there who can already thinking – "this is a perfect proposal to put forward for school professional learning". So you could be a couple of teachers working together, or you could put together an idea, where it would be totally legitimate to use school based professional learning time to figure out how do we use this stuff and how are we going to use it with our students.

Rosemary Henzell:
Absolutely,

Carly Boreland:
And do some of that together.

Rosemary Henzell:
I think there is a lot of potential. I think with digital stuff, it is sometimes easier do it together: and try to learn it and figure it out together; and try to make a little project together. As opposed to struggling on your own, or trying to find that time outside (because we don't have a lot of that) and I think it is important for us to value that training as something that we need to learn about. We need to discover some new ways of doing things and that is really a legitimate use of PD time.

Carly Boreland:
Fantastic I think we should mention how teachers can use that as *teacher identified professional learning* for *maintenance of accreditation* as well, which is triply handy. Thank you so much for coming in. We have had a big chat about, well what we were going to talk about was digital texts: but what we haven't really spoken about is the English Syllabus, how you can bring it alive for your students, tap into their interests and start by asking big questions that really matter and then build the rest around that.

Rosemary Henzell:
With all the stress and pressure and the marking that all English teachers are suffering under, I just think it is really important for us always to remember the joy and the passion that we can find in the English syllabus and in our classrooms and the power and joy of story. And I think if we hold on to

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that notion of how incredibly powerful a narrative can be and that we might be bringing narrative to our students' lives, that they might not get anywhere else. I think it is such a beautiful responsibility for us, and I think we can bring some amazing things to our students' lives, if we hold onto that, that notion of joy and of pleasure in the study of English.

Carly Boreland:
Thank you Rosemary and we have loved hearing a bit about your story and also what you are doing at your school is that we are really happy to have you here.

Rosemary Henzell:
Thank you for having me

Carly Boreland:
You have been listening to the JPL Podcast for the NSW Teachers Federation's Centre for Professional Learning. I am Carly Boreland and I am the Editor of the JPL and I have been speaking with Rosemary Henzell about how you can use Multimodal and Digital Texts in your English classroom and to find out more and listen to further Podcasts you can visit our website at cpl.asn.au\podcasts.

CONCLUSION:
The JPL podcast is produced by the Centre for Professional Learning and the NSW Teachers Federation all opinions expressed in the Podcast are those of the individual speakers only and do not represent the views of their employer or their associated organisations. Your host was Carly Boreland; technical direction by Jason Nicholas.

Rosemary Henzell is an English and Drama Teacher at Willoughby Girls High School. Rosemary has a keen interest in project based learning, and has designed and implemented several units ranging from individual creative writing projects to building a whole-grade website exploring the modern relevance of Shakespeare. As a senior member of her school's Professional Learning Team, she is helping lead the school-wide implementation of Costa's Habits of Mind, and Project Zero's Cultures of Thinking Project. Rosemary has also contributed to the Journal of Professional Learning.