

Nick: Hello and welcome to our first ever episode of our Apple Professional Learning podcast with me, Nick, APLS and Partner Technologist for Apple at Aspire 2Be and our lovely guest, Vickie Bacon. Hello Vickie, how are you?

Vickie: Hi there, Nick. I'm very well and I feel very honoured to be asked so what a lovely start to the day!

Nick: Vickie it's an absolute pleasure to have you on the podcast to kick start our series. It's a real honour for us at Aspire 2Be as an Apple Professional Learning Provider to host this Innovation in Professional Learning podcast. So as we all know there are plenty of great things going out there in the Apple Education world and over the course of this series we'll be speaking to various guests to cover a broad range of topics and highlight the ways in which schools, leaders, Apple Professional Learning Specialists have designed and implemented effective professional learning model strategies and approaches to instigate change. So if you like what you hear or if you would like to join the conversation, please engage with us and ask any questions you have via Twitter using the hashtag #I2PD. So Vickie, here we go. Let's get stuck in! We all know you are very experienced and you've been a very successful teacher and you obviously bring your own experiences directly from the classroom at 25 years at the coalface, I take my hat off to you. I certainly couldn't last that long. Ten years was just about there for me. Alongside many other roles and you've also worked at a strategic level with Multi Academy Trusts. You also advise Apple distinguished schools across EMEA and you're the lead Apple Professional Learning Specialist across the UK, an awful lot in there! Why don't you give our listeners a little bit of insight into your professional background and then maybe tell us a little bit about your Apple journey. Course I'd love to and thanks for that lovely introduction!

Vickie: Of course. Yes, I've been teaching a wee while now and I think in all that time it wasn't until about 2010 when the first iPad came out that my eyes were really open to the possibilities of using technology to support learning. So I kind of took that right on board and took it straight back to the college that I was an academic head of at that time and we started to really look at how we could make that happen for our students. So we were one of the first adopters of one to one back then and had the support of Apple to be a kind of a lighthouse school so we were able to share our experiences and that was so invaluable because when you build a community of learners, it really continues your journey. I continued along that way. So now I actually am an independent education consultant and so the DPC in my Twitter handle stands for 'Digital Pencil Case' which was the name of my first inaugural project. So since then, I've had such incredible opportunities to meet amazing people and work in education. So yeah, that's where I am at the moment.

Nick: That's great, and hopefully over this episode now, I'm going to lean on some of that insight and gain some knowledge from you. So as an APLS myself, we're really looking and hope to see if we can get some information on how you kind of helped build community within those settings you've worked with. So you've mentioned that you've worked on many education projects. I wonder if you could tell us as listeners what the biggest challenges that you face when you talk to leaders as an APLS? Are there any Apple Professional Learning resources to help support you through that process?

Vickie: Absolutely. I think the first thing to have in mind as any APLS going in to meet a new leadership team or in a new setting is to start to build a relationship with those people, to start to empathise with them, because being their critical friend will allow you to ask the tricky questions. It will allow you to give them the confidence that you have experienced something similar or that you have access to the people that can help them on their journey. So that idea of tailoring their plan to their setting is all about really listening carefully and hearing what they want to achieve at their school. As APLS, I'm so blessed to be able to have the support of an incredible amount of resources that I can draw upon, much of which is research based. So that gives confidence again to the leaders who are looking to sustain any project moving forward. So the leadership series of books are, to me, an invaluable way of starting that conversation.

Nick: Yeah, I would agree with you in terms of I think the most important thing is that relationship. Once you've built that relationship and trust, you can then move forward and start to work on the vision in which that school will be moving forward.

Vickie: You know, sorry, the vision I was going to say is essential and to make sure that you have a really good structure to what you want to do.

Nick: Yeah, exactly. So as we know, most of everything good that comes in a school is all built around that culture. A good culture in a school will generally harvest rewards. From your experience though Vickie, what difference would you say coaching and mentoring makes building confidence and strengthening the culture of learning within an educational setting?

Vickie: I just think it's essential. It's kind of the umbrella that goes over all of the things as APLS that we try to achieve. Coaching and mentoring is in itself so valuable because it allows that personal touch and allows people to develop professionally, but also to carry that confidence through to the rest of their community, whether that is disseminating a staff meeting or then going on to train other staff or colleagues in the same kind of vein. I've also found that working with leaders that actually, that coaching and mentoring model is absolutely essential for

them as leaders as well because they feel that I'm working with them as much as working with their colleagues. So they feel that they can really build a shared understanding and a kind of a shared vocabulary that allows that culture to shine through in all aspects of their school. So to me, culture is absolutely key.

Nick: Yeah, I agree. I mean, I've got so many questions I could pick out for you in terms of how we build that community, but I suppose as an APLS myself, I'm sure there's going to be many APLS listening to this podcast series. Tell us how an Apple Professional Learning Specialist can support the school's vision to ensure that the journey towards that vision is achieved?

Vickie: Absolutely. OK, so the first thing is to get involved early in the process and get involved and start to listen and ask those questions to the stakeholders. That's not just the leaders, but the IT manager, the staff, the students, governors, trustees, the board, whoever it is on that and in that community that needs to have a voice because the more you deepen that, the more that you strengthen the strategy.

Nick: So building relationships is part of that as we've mentioned before. So what I kind of really feel when you're talking to any school at the beginning is just to understand how technology is going to be used. What do they see the role of it being?

Vickie: For me, it's all about the teaching and the learning. It's not any way a gimmick or any way to attract more students into their school in terms of that monetary value. It's all about increasing the ability for that student to personalise their learning and to love learning. I think that's for me, the best thing.

Nick: Yeah. Again, talking about relationships, it's all stakeholders. For me, that's one of the most important things. So, you know, including a teaching staff and support staff and making sure they buy into the process because you want to, you don't want them to feel like they're having something done to them. You want them to be part of that journey. Something we do quite often when we start working with the schools is to try and find the best of what they do now, to inform the kind of where they want to go if that makes sense. So we take all the good. Yeah, that's. What they do and then we will move forward with them if that makes sense.

Vickie: Well, that's a great point because especially coming out of such a strange couple of years when actually perceptions of technology have changed and for parents, the perception of the way that schools interact with their children they've seen it first hand and there's so much good that now has come from it that needs to be continued and developed in the schools. So absolutely Nick, taking the best and moving forward is absolutely good and a key thing to do.

Nick: So come on then for all our listeners out there Vickie, what are your top tips for advising others in building a robust culture and community? Are there any resources you could potentially signpost us to for the community to make best use of?

Vickie: So the first thing, the first tip would be to get all those leaders in the same place at the same time as early in the process as possible because then you really have the best chance of making that a sustained project. Secondly, is to involve the students as well in that to give them a voice, because communicating any idea of a project out via the students is going to be your best way, you know they're your best asset in the school. So get them involved! In terms of resources as an APLS, I would always go to 'Innovation in Schools' and the widgets in that are amazing because it opens people's eyes to the fact that innovation isn't a one off sparking or let's just do this, it continues. In order to sustain and reach goals, you have to continually build.

Nick: Yeah, that's great I'd definitely recommend that others look at that 'Innovation in Schools' book as part of the leadership series, the widgets in there and interactivity in there can really help to inform that conversation I suppose, moving forward. So Vickie, we've come to the part of the episode that will become a regular feature throughout the series. We're going to be asking all of our guests to share with us and recommend someone to follow on Twitter to help others develop and grow their professional learning network as we've already mentioned, really Twitter is great in terms of developing that network and I certainly go on there to magpie lots of ideas and the Apple EDU community is huge and is forever growing with Apple teachers, ADE's, APLS are all contributing into the conversations, really. So is there anyone really who you could pinpoint to our listeners to say, yeah, go check them out, go and have a follow, because they do some fantastic things out there?

Vickie: Well, Nick that's you know, you're asking a big question there; there are like you say, so many to choose from. I personally go on Twitter to check out when I'm not feeling quite so confident in something. Maybe a bit of AR or maybe, you know, along those lines. So I'm always on the lookout for innovative people, but I do work quite closely with another APLS, Mat Pullen and his Think Creative site is incredible because for me it allows the teachers and leaders to get confidence quickly. So it's always up to date and he has such an easy way of talking and explaining what is possible with supporting technology. I love his videos. So absolutely Mat Pullen on Creative Thinking is a definite follow!

Nick: Well, I would agree with you. We've done some great work with Mat and also, Mat's going to be one of our guests on the series later on, so please listen out for him. But Vickie, as I said, I could sit and speak to you all day this time getting as much information out of you, however, unfortunately, our time is running away with

us. It's been a real pleasure to have you on the podcast. As we said, the first ever one. Very quickly, if you could give our listeners just two key takeaways really, what would it be? What would they be?

Vickie: Essential to engage with the leaders so you see sustainable outcomes and I would say the second thing is start building that like minded community and concentrate on the culture and keep that conversation going.

Nick: Vickie, it's been brilliant! Thank you so much for being on the podcast series with us today. We look forward to working with you again in the future Vickie, thank you for your time. For all of our listeners, please don't forget to engage with us and ask any questions on Twitter by tagging us and using the hashtag #I2PD. Vickie, do you want to remind our listeners of your Twitter handle once more?

Vickie: Thanks very much, Nick. It's been fun!

Nick: Perfect, thanks Vickie! Please join me next time for the next episode of the Innovationin Professional Development Podcast. Bye for now, thanks for listening!