

Nick: Hello and welcome to another episode of the Innovation in Apple Professional Learning Podcast with me, Nick Evans and in today's episode I'm absolutely delighted to welcome Greg Hughes as our lovely guest today. Hello, Greg. How are you?

Greg: Good morning, Nick I'm good, yourself?

Nick: I'm very well thanks Greg. Now then, so for our listeners Greg, who might not be too familiar with you or the work that you do, you are an Apple Professional Learning Specialist and you are the Vice Principal for Curriculum and Learning Technologies at de Ferrers Academy, based in a lovely part of the world, Burton upon Trent! So since joining the economy, Greg, you've overseen IT developments and you've helped the digital transformation, which has led to recognition as both an Apple Regional Training Centre and an Apple Distinguished School which is fantastic. So good news, and this is why we're going to be leaning on you today, Greg, in this episode to try and find out as much information as we can out of you. So no doubt you've had a huge amount of support along the journey and you have a wealth of experience. As I say, we're going to try our best to tap into you for the next 10 to 12 minutes or so. So as always, if you're listening at home and you like what you hear, please feel free to join the conversation and ask us your questions via Twitter using the hashtag #I2PD. You can follow and tag myself and Greg on the Twitter handles... So Greg, I've given a bit of a flavor of your experience and your expertise in rolling out the one to one iPad program and leading digital change. You're obviously a well trusted practitioner in developing digital strategy along with online CPD. I wonder if you could share with us and for our listeners a little bit more about your role at the trust and your kind of journey, if you like, where it all started.

Greg: Yeah. Thanks, Nick. Well, you know, one of the first things we've always said is de Ferrers is a really big school where nearly two and a half thousand students across three campuses so it's quite crucial to get things absolutely right first time. We often liken it to a large oil tanker where it's very hard to change course once you get going. So, you know, we try to do it, do it right from the start. So my background, I'm a failed guitar player songwriter. I did an Astrophysics degree, I've taught Physics for 33 years. I've been in various roles, including Head of Physics and Science, College Director and working on school improvement things in Birmingham. Throughout all of that, I've always used IT a lot so early learning platforms and things like that. So I'm now Vice Principal at de Ferrers. I lead on digital strategy across our trust of seven schools and also oversee the iPad program at three of them, including here at de Ferrers. So we've got something like 5700 iPads across the trust so it's a lot! So trying to maintain that, I've been using Apple since probably about 2005 with Macbook, and then we all latched on to iPads in 2012. I became an Apple

Distinguished Educator and a trainer and then did early work with ADE chat and things on Twitter and as you say, you know, really a lot of the stuff I do is being focused on assessment for learning and big scale CPD and you know, the overall, I guess holistic strategy to try and make sure that the technology links it with the curriculum, with the CPD, with online safety and so on.

Nick: Well, after that introduction Greg, I think it's fair to say there's a wealth of experience behind you. Should we put it and I think you're certainly being very modest in your accomplishments and accolades. A little birdie tells me also, Greg, that you have ten. Yeah, that's ten digital books out there on all things physics and EdTech leadership also you're also a very renowned international speaker, so yeah, a lot of experience

Greg: Yeah, I try to do my bit!

Nick: So now then, as you said, you've led the digital transformation at de Ferrers Academy for quite some years, and it's clearly been hugely successful I wonder if you could give us an indication of the time it's taken to get to the point where you're at today. For example, how did you introduce some of the devices? What stages were they introduced and what were some of the reasons maybe in introducing them in certain year groups, maybe before others? Just a bit of a timeline of that journey, I suppose.

Greg: Yes. So we we started planning a one to one about ten years ago, and we were very focused on assessment for learning. And then how we would act as a catalyst. We started with 17 to 18 year olds and then worked our way down, which is not normal, and mainly on the proviso that if you couldn't get right with the older students then you know, you would struggle more with younger ones with all the other issues. So we started with sort of 17,18 year olds, we migrated to 14, 15, 16 year olds, and then we come down to all the way from 11 to 18. So that's, that's quite an unusual step, but we're based on three campuses, so it's quite easy to sort of do it campus by campus in a way, and then make sure that it was seamless transitioning and using it across all three. In terms of the pitch, we did a very hands on pitch to the governors ten years ago where we just went for it and did AirPlay and lots of assessment, you know, what do you know about your local area? Not a lot at the time, which is quite funny and we were able to show, you know, how well these things could work in a classroom, but by literally doing it, the governance is like they're in class. They were really impressed and they greenlit a big pilot, 300 which is not the norm, and then we just really gone from strength to strength. The last few years we've tried to scale up a lot of the best stuff that we've done and then map that out across the other trust secondary schools as well. So, you know, we implement the same approaches and we align lots of things. So the iPad program,

most of it is aligned across all three secondaries, the curriculum is aligned, CPD is aligned. So that makes it a lot easier, especially when you're dealing with a big number of staff.

Nick: Yeah, I mean, I must admit, I don't think and I might be wrong, but I don't think I've seen a rollout, a one to one rollout on quite such a large scale as it is your trust in the Academy and as we know, things like that just don't happen overnight. You said it's been a ten year program, I suppose, and I like the way you pitched it to your governors I'm also a huge-

Greg: Yeah, I, I was just going to say, Nick, I mean, the other thing is it's, you know, I think it's, it's quite a natural process that you have plateaus in what you do. You know, you get so far and you, you know, so I think constantly making these course corrections and adapting, you know, the approaches and CPD is a really crucial part of that.

Nick: Yeah. So obviously there's going to be a vast amount of CPD that goes into programs such as this. So I wonder if you could tell us you know, how do we maximise efficiency of the limited time we get and the resources when it comes to CPD? Especially when it comes to implementing it over large teams across, in your case, multiple schools and in academy trusts and so on and so fourth and then more importantly, how do we get it to stick for our staff to use the devices effectively?

Greg: Yeah, so we we've tried everything like lots of schools. We've had drop in surgeries, Brekky Tech, you know, got a croissant and some training, but they often only pick up a couple of people. We've tried having champions, but, you know, big schools, they're not able to have a massive impact, I don't think, as they are in some smaller schools so in the end, you know, we realise the best approach is to actually target that big majority in the middle, not your super keen people and not your people are reluctant, but go for the largest critical mass and the way to get that buy in is really to tie in as closely as possible to what you do in everyday teaching and learning. So we try to mirror a lot of the pedagogy training that we have on building question ratio and retrieval practice and, you know, modelling and thinking and looking at misconceptions and then we find how the technology allows staff to do that better, faster, more effectively. That I think gets a lot more buy in, which is really good we've targeted faculties a lot for specific training. So rather than, you know, everyone this term will do this app, which I don't think works very well in big schools. You know, what do design and technology teachers really need training on? Is it computer design? Is it, you know, presentation sorts of stuff? What do you Art need? What does Math need? So though, there's generic stuff that works in any lesson There's also, you know, very faculty specific stuff, and again, where we work with those teams, I think we see a lot more impact. The other thing that you

mentioned, Nick, about how you then scale it up to large staff? So we've got three sites, we can't get everyone together all the time on each site. So what we've been doing the last year or so is more web based training and webinars, which obviously in lockdown a lot of people did, but then making that part of an online CPD portal. So we have a big repository now of videos, but the video is matched to research, it's matched to specific pedagogies of how that should be implemented in the classroom. So we will assign staff some time to do those activities, there's a little quiz at the end so we can check if they've actually got it and understood it and there are for more complex ones for those that can go further. What it means is you've got a really easy one stop shop for everything to do with CPD. So it doesn't matter how many schools you got, it serves the same purpose. If staff join, they can pick it up from, you know, what they've missed so that's been really, really promising and you can see some of the stuff for it sitting behind me on the wall. Mapping that out and liaising closely with my colleagues that do you know, the teaching and learning side and the CPD side I think has been really, really effective.

Nick: Yeah. I knew you were going to touch on that CPD portal, and you mentioned earlier about having to be not only bold but also confident in your planning for ICT strategy and the need to get it right first time. Obviously such a big school getting that right. That CPD portal though, obviously successful across the trust. 24/7. What would you say the big impact has that had on the teaching staff and more importantly maybe the impact it's had on teaching and learning that takes place?

Greg: Yeah, I mean the biggest one as you said because it's 24/7, it can work asynchronously. So you don't have to try and get everyone, you know, the old style, everyone in the hall at the same time it's increasingly hard to do. But also, you know, you can't do that with 200 staff, 300 and getting hands on it's it just won't support, you know amount of interaction. So I think giving them those initial first steps and really good ideas to take away to try in the classroom and then you know, going in with teams to then support them as they need to in faculties you know brings the best in and as I said is tying into that research as well is really helpful. So, you know, we can put those videos with related research videos on cognitive science, on dual coding and on the best ways to build some of those things into the curriculum. So it's, you know, it's using the right language, it's providing affordances that we couldn't do before and if you've got small teams that, you know, increasingly we do because there's lots of other demands, it gets around that problem I think.

Nick: You've obviously done things right as a strategy in a rollout that doesn't come along by chance. Very, very briefly, what would you say has been the biggest learning point, a learning curve about the whole process of doing something like you like you've done?

Greg: Oh, gosh. I think ten years ago we focussed a lot on assessment for learning and, you know, key things teachers do like modeling, thinking and assessment learning, collaborate and feedback. I think that was, you know, that was absolutely the right thing to do because we're still using most of those ideas. We tried to focus on a small number of mostly free apps that do those things well. Again, they're still the most common ones we use. I think just always trying to integrate the tech in not as a bolt on or not as a "It's a tech lesson", just as the natural part of what you do. It almost becomes boring if you're doing it well. It's just, you know, it's just another tool within your arsenal of things that you use. So that definitely helped and when we got to lockdown, it was easy because we already do, you know, lots of blended learning and online learning. So it didn't really make any difference for most of our staff and students it was business as normal.

Nick: That's great. Now, Greg, a huge part of why we are running this Innovation in Professional Development Podcast series is for educators like yourself to share some of the wonderful work in which you're doing, but also to share some fantastic resources. So I know over lockdown, you became a National Geographic Certified Educator. So so firstly, very briefly, how did that come about? But secondly, are there any resources in which you would like to signpost and any of our listeners to?

Greg: Yeah. So I mean, I always liked National Geographic. I didn't realise they did an educator program and I think I just came across it by chance and looked into it. What was quite nice is it's a really well structured approach to developing and exploring mindsets in young people from ages 4 to 20, and it just fits so well with technology. You know, not everyone is doing that side of it but for me it was a natural branch out. So we started looking at apps to use global maps and to measure the areas of land features and things that you couldn't do in, you know, in those sort of lessons before. So I, you know, I have quite a mixed lot of students, a lot of them have never travelled very far at all. So to go and, you know, virtually explore the other side of the planet and measure the size of solar farms and why these are so important, you know, that was just a fantastic thing. So I love that their website has some amazing free resources and tools for educators. You know, there's so much there, I think, to dip into and lots of good lesson examples that you can take and adapt and layer technology and embed it within it. So I would definitely say, you know, seek it out, but it's a nice you know, very positive community, very much like the Apple community of sharing great ideas and encouraging other people.

Nick: That's great, and I'm sure many listeners will now go and check out the National Geographic website. I'm also sure, though, that our listeners would be thinking long and hard now about the CPD model of their school and they're probably wondering where they can go to seek advice on creating that sustainable CPD

model. Things that we talked about, like the portal. No doubt we can find some great ideas on your Twitter and some other socials you have. So do want to remind or let people know where, what your handle is and where they can find you on socials?

Greg: Yeah. So for reasons we will not go into, to do with my old job title... That's the best way. A lot of our AFL resources that we use, you can actually get free on also the 50 digital books that we've created, that are free. They're all linked and downloadable from there as well. So there's some great resources out there! So please make sure you go check them out.

Nick: As well as all your socials Greg, we're also promoting some other great educators in what's now become our regular feature. So for those wanting to expand their professional learning network, who for you are the guys and girls on the ground that are doing some great things in the Apple world, is there anyone in particular you'd recommend our listeners follow?

Greg: I mean, there are so many people to choose from. You know, I could go on all day, just some people I, you know, I know a lot. Really it's the global community. So Sari Lantto is Head Teacher at a small school in Lapland, but they are an outstanding Apple school. 1 to 1 iPad school, and I think Sari does some amazing projects there and they've been quite isolated where they are. Miriam Walsh in Ireland is a genius at coding and media. Martin Coutts in Scotland the same you know, that Martin is Mr. Apple, knows everything. They've produced some fantastic work! Matt Pullen in Wales so I'm going quite you know, across the rest of the UK here but they're all such good examples and they're all easily accessible and visible on Twitter, very active you know and I think you pick up so many great ideas from looking at what they put out there.

Nick: Yeah you certainly picked some great educators there in that they're all certainly worth a follow if our listeners are not doing already doing so! Listen Greg, your wealth of experience and your passion certainly comes through. I would love to continue the conversation, but sadly time is getting the better of us. Before I let you go, I thought what would you say would be the two key takeaways from today's session for everyone listening?

Greg: So I think, number one, think about your CPD in long term. You talked about stick-ability I think, you know, how are you going to make it last and stick and make the most out of the resources you've got without having to keep, you know, repeating stuff and involving lots of people. So I think going for that that efficient, you know, any time approach is great. The other key one for me, as I said earlier, is it's easy to forget the majority of staff in the middle who are you know, they're OK but they're not

super keen and they're not the most reluctant because we often focus on the extremes. But, you know, those people are the key I think, to getting whole subjects and big groups moving. So I you know, I think for me it's better to get the average teacher quite a bit better than a few of them exceptionally good, because I think that's how you demonstrate school improvement more.

Nick: Perfect. Well, Greg, my thanks go to you for joining today. It's been absolutely wonderful to have you and listen to some of your top tips there. Thank you very much.

Greg: Absolute pleasure. Thank you, Nick!

Nick: Please don't forget, you can engage in the conversation by asking your questions and leaving your comments on Twitter by tagging @NickEvans11 Greg, it's been a pleasure. Bye for now!

Greg: Thank you. Thank you. Bye!