Nick: Hello and welcome to another episode of the Apple Professional Learning Podcast with me, Nick. Today I'm joined by Apple Professional Learning Specialist, Mat Pullen. Hello, Mat. How are you?

Mat: Hi Nick, very well thank you.

Nick: Good. It's great to have you with me today. I'm sure many of our listeners are going to be familiar with you and your subtle tones from the great work you do already within the Apple community. Very briefly, for those who don't know you, Mat's been honing his skills for quite some years now. He's been an Apple Professional Learning Specialist since 2015… working as part of his 'Think Creativity' consultancy. He's also a part time senior lecturer in initial teacher education, specialising in digital learning. He also works with local authorities and academy trusts to help with the implementation of digital strategy. Now then, so for all of our listeners at home, you can get involved in the conversation and engage with what Mat and I have to say by using the hashtag #I2PD on Twitter. Please tag us in your tweets and give us a follow If you don't already do so. You'll be able to find us using the handles… So then Mat, I've given a brief introduction, but I thought maybe you could tell us a little bit more about your professional background and the exciting things you get up to these days. I'm sure there will be plenty of people out there who would love to hear more about your Apple journey and how you got to the position you hold today as Senior Lecturer.

Mat: So I'll give you the short version, so I traditionally started out as a PE teacher back in 2001. No IT background whatsoever other than using a mobile phone for myself. Then in 2010, I was on my honeymoon in New York and the iPad came out and I decided I was going to get one. My wife, who never usually shows that much of an interest in the things I do asked me why I was getting an iPad so I said "Well, I need it for school." and again, she doesn't usually ask me about what I do for work, but this time she did. She said, "What are you going to use it for?" So, on the spot I kind of had to come up with a reason why iPad would would support me in the classroom. As a PE teacher, I have to model the things to the students and so I just said that having an iPad allows me to be able to model professional athletes doing activities. I can show it as many times I want you know, the iPad doesn't get tired, so therefore it can constantly be showing those things. We were quite fortunate in the school that I worked at that we had TV screens in the sports hall so I could just showcase the activities that I wanted the students to do and they could constantly reflect on that on the board. Then with iPad 2, it had the camera and that changed things again because then the students could be filmed, they could see themselves performing, and then you could compare that to professional athletes and it became a different aspect to learning in the classroom.That kind of gave me a buzz then

for showcasing this to the rest of the team within PE but equally the rest of the school. I started to see an opportunity there for an alternative, a way to approach teaching and learning. So if I fast forward that a few years, I became an Apple Professional Learning Specialist, like you said in 2015. I moved away from the school I was working at. Initially working for the local authority in South Wales and then had an opportunity funnily enough to work for Aspire 2Be, when Aspire 2Be was starting out. That was where I kind of got the bug for working directly with schools, thinking about how they were utilising their technology. I then eventually moved into initial teacher education to kind of do that on a rolling basis I suppose. Working with students at that initial point of entry so rather than working on bad habits, hopefully getting them into good habits before they can develop bad habits I suppose. So yeah, that's, kind of the journey and then now it's as you said, it's working with local authorities, working with multi academy trusts, working with governments to kind of support them in their understanding of how technology can be a learning and teaching tool in the classroom beyond that just use of ICT.

Nick: Yes that's quite a wealth of experience you have there Mat, and we're going to dip into, or attempt to dip our toes into, discussing whole school digital transformation you kind of briefly touched on there. Quite a feat in such a short space of time I appreciate but we'll try and get as much in as we can. So I suppose the best way to start is by asking how do we get all of our staff to see a need for that change? So you obviously talked about you bought into it yourself there personally and then got your team involved. So how do we get them all to buy into it, what's probably been one of the biggest challenges for you?

Mat: I've always found that the way to get staff to buy into it is, is for it to become a whole school initiative. It can't be you know, I think the biggest challenge I had as that lone wolf in a school trying to influence others was what position did I have to tell anybody else how learning and teaching should look? For it to be effective, it needs to be a whole school approach, obviously led by the senior leadership in the school. That then develops the culture. You know, if you've got the people at the top that are saying "This is an approach, we want to do" then you've got everybody kind of in that same route and it's not a challenge of it's one person's ideal versus another person's ideal, it's the culture of the school, it's the vision of the school. Everyone can get behind that you know, even to recruitment for new teachers, we get turnovers of staff all the time. It's part of the reason you go to work in the school because you know that's what the school is about. The other thing I think is to make sure that it's talked about a lot, you know, that it is something that's shared. It's not an inset session once a year, but it's something that is discussed over a cup of coffee in the staffroom. It's seen in lessons, students discuss it. It's open in parents evenings to see the school and everybody uses it for their reason to use technology so that it's not just in the classroom, it's also something the admin might use. So it's

prevalent throughout the school because you're showcasing that this is something which can change how we do things.

Nick: Yeah, that's great. I think that's the big thing there that you've mentioned, the culture and vision, and it all kind of ties in together, as it were. I mean, I've talked previously about kind of getting everyone, all stakeholders really buying into it and doing it together as opposed to having it done to you if that make sense? That was the big thing there for me. I suppose when we start talking about digital transformation, a lot of the success of the process will depend on that culture. So where does our culture start and what can be done to help create that positive culture within the education setting?

Mat: I think for me, the first thing to consider is the professional learning. I think you'll know as well as me that staff confidence is a huge thing and culture comes from the fact that people want to be part of it. When you introduce something new and it's scary, you can cause a divide, right? So making sure that you have considered the professional learning that's going to support staff and like I said, not a one off introduction to iPad and off you go and you know, that's all you're ever going to get. The ongoing support that you can get to make sure that it becomes an integrated tool in the classroom. You know, the times that I've gone into schools and, and you'll be the same, you kind of meet teachers that instantly put the barriers up to like, "I don't know, technology.I don't like technology,I'm too old for it." Whatever their excuse is and it's about understanding one, the vision of the school, which is potentially, or should always be about learning and teaching and not the technology itself. So you talk about the impact this will have on students in the classroom, but equally knowing that this doesn't all have to be, or in fact never really should be iPad lessons. It's about how does the tool in the classroom simplify the workload for the teacher and the work process for the student. I think once you break it down into that and teachers start to realise that their existing planning can just be adapted slightly, they don't have to become IT teachers themselves, they just need to know what the possibilities are. As most teachers always say to me, "Students know more than we do about the technology." Absolutely. So you just have to give them permission and structure and scaffold it to allow them to use it in a productive way. I think that comes through the coaching model of professional learning that I'll help you, I'll support you, let you know it's not about creating a new version of us as the professional learning specialists, it's about giving them the tools in themselves to realise how it can support them in their life. I think when you do that, that becomes the culture because it's small, quick wins that you then want them to to do the next lesson, the next lesson, and not something that they have to go away and practice for hours in order to to replicate in a one off lesson, but things that they'll do in every single lesson and tell other people around.

Nick: Yeah, I think one thing to pick on is when teachers say to me and you can say to them, yeah, but the students know more about me and more than me on the iPad and that's great, that's fine, but do they understand how to use an iPad to impact their learning? No is generally the answer to that. So, you say it's how does an educator then, even though you might not be as skillful on that iPad, how does that educator then tap into that knowledge, I suppose that the student may have? So I suppose then for many schools, going through those early stages of that digital transformation, or for those schools, identify the need to make the change, there'd probably be lots of questions whizzing around, one of which would probably be support in the staff with varying levels of confidence pretty much as we've just said isn't it? So how can we support these schools and the staff who might have concerns with those kind of confidence levels?

Mat: I think the key thing for me is approaching professional learning in the same way we approach teaching in the classroom. You're going to have teachers at different levels of confidence, of competence and being able to meet them where they are on their journey. You're going to have the teachers that love it, you walk into a classroom or a training session with a group of teachers, and you'll get the ones that are there with their technology or ready to go going, Yeah, look what I can do, look what I can do. Then you've got the ones, like I said at the other end of the spectrum that are like, you know, "I haven't even taken it out of the box yet." I think if we consider professional learning in the way that it's not one size fits all, that it's differentiated the same as we would differentiate for anybody, and think about those opportunities that you can do to scaffold that. So is it about pairing good staff up with less confident staff? Is it about making sure there's different routes to learning? So if we consider things like the Apple Teacher Badging System and the Apple Teacher Learning Center in itself, there's a reference point to go to. You can use it to scaffold directly with someone, but for those really keen people, there's a place that they can go through and work at their own pace. That's an important thing because you don't want to hold anyone back, but equally you don't want to leave anyone behind. So I think if you utilise those different platforms and different approaches, be it like I said, staff working together, I always like to pair staff up. I think it's a really, really nice way to get them to talk about things because you know, even as an educator myself, I'm fairly confident with using technology. I'll always learn something from someone who's just started using technology because they look at it in a different way. I think that's a really important thing too, to realise that it's not always about that cutting edge use of technology like someone could just simply find a quick win that they've unlocked potential in a student because they've used the device in a different way, and that's great.That's learning for everybody. That shows that teacher that it's not about being I.T literate all the time, it's about knowing the potential uses for the technology. You know, like I said, as a PE teacher, the camera unlocked

so much opportunity for me. That's not a planned lesson. It's not knowing all the ins and outs of every single app that's available on the market. It's knowing how that one app will actually impact on my teaching.

Nick: Yeah. That's a great insight into kind of that whole school change I suppose. Very quickly, I wonder if you could talk about, so you mentioned CPD then the Apple Teacher Learning Center, what would you say is the biggest impact of skill development at that scale then? So we're talking whole school Transformation, what's the biggest impact of that skill development on the scale?

Mat: I think having a plan, having a plan for your professional learning that supports staff. Like I mentioned, Apple Teacher Learning Center is a great tool to give those core skills. It's going to enable everybody in the school to work off the same platform and at the end of that accreditation process, all understand the basics of what the device can do for you. Including those core apps that might support in the classroom. I think alongside that, where I've seen it successfully implemented is the celebrating the success as teachers go through that. You know, it's I think teachers sometimes can get a bit embarrassed about celebrating their success. Equally, I think students really benefit from seeing us as educators, learning ourselves and the struggles that we might go through and the fact that we want to celebrate success. You know, consider secondary school students, maybe 14 year old boys don't necessarily want to celebrate when they do something good but then if they see their teacher celebrating, maybe it becomes a different aspect. So we can model learning to our students in a new way as well. The other thing as well, is the Apple Teacher Portfolio, which kind of takes it to that next step and that's what I mean about planning your CPD so there is a journey for people. So the Apple Teacher Portfolio just allows people to start to think about the integration. You know, how do I start a lesson? How do I evidence learning in different ways and it's just a snapshot really. Again, it gets you to think about what you're doing and what I love about the portfolio is there's also that way of sharing that with, with my other teachers, my colleagues, to say this is something I did. That's as easy as it was. I just did, you know, a five minute activity, here's the outcome. You can see it all in one place. So again, it's celebrating success amongst the student body, the staff body. That adds to the culture again, doesn't it? That's if we if we want staff to talk about the good things they're doing, we're celebrating the culture of our success as educators. Indeed.

Nick: Yeah, that's great. So you've mentioned there Apple Teacher Learning Centre, I would agree is a really great place to kind of start. Maybe if you just started out in your journey, maybe considering becoming an Apple Teacher personally, also you've talked about there in terms of a whole school approach, but likewise then it's a great resource for more experienced practitioners. So I know you and I will still tap into it. For people who are looking to be more innovative in their approach to kind of

teaching and learning, there's lots of really great resources on there. So if you haven't already done so for you listening at home, please go and check it out. there's plenty available on there for you to view! Right then, Mat it's feature time now! So time to shine the spotlight on another member of the Apple community, which is forever growing, or another educator, someone you've seen that's great for others to follow on Twitter. So as we all know, Twitter's kind of quickly becoming that go to place to develop your professional network. So, Matt, who in your eyes should we be giving a little follow?

Mat: So kind of sticking with this kind of theme of differentiated learning, someone for me who I think you should absolutely follow is a chap who's based out in Cornwall called Jacob Wilcock. He's an educator who I think probably just before COVID, but definitely throughout COVID started making a YouTube channel full of quick wins, like things that you can do with the device, they're like some of them are like a minute long. I think if you're just wanting to explore the potential for iPad in the classroom, he's a great person to follow. Just to be inspired to say, "Oh, I can see how I could do that." You know, he shares an awful lot of the things he does in his classroom, but equally shares an awful lot of inspirational ideas of things that that permeate across different age groups and different curriculum areas as well. So absolutely one to follow and one to be inspired by.

Nick: Brilliant, thanks, Mat. I'll be sure to go and check them out. Look, I said at the start with our difficult challenge to talk whole school digital transformation is such a short space of time, I think we've done OK. You've given some valuable information and a good insight I suppose. I'd love to chat more, but before we wrap it up, if you could leave our listeners just kind of two key takeaways around leading a successful whole school digital transformation, what would they be?

Mat: The first thing is make sure that it's, it's inspired by all the senses. It should be something that you can see, hear, feel, taste, smell if you walk into a school, into a classroom, you know, don't bring it out for inspectors, don't bring it out for visitors. It should be something which is just living and breathing the whole time. Give time for the discussions around it. So again, I've seen some great examples of schools just having 10 minutes in a briefing meeting in the morning to just highlight something someone's done that's really, really effective. So again, just give time and space to it so it becomes it becomes part of the culture because we talk about it all the time.

Nick: Perfect, there we are, that's Mat's top tips! Now then Mat, before I let you go, can you give us a quick reminder of where our listeners can go if they want to read or hear any more of your online content or get to find out some more top tips?

Mat: *Links Needed*

Nick: Yeah, that's great. Definitely go and check out Mat's YouTube channel some great stuff on there. Right then, just a quick reminder then for everyone listening at home. Don't forget, you can engage and join in the conversation on Twitter with the hashtag, #I2PD. Mat, Thank you so much for your company today. It's been a pleasure.

Mat: Yeah, thank you as well. Been great to discuss things.

Nick: Thank you, brilliant and I look forward to speaking to you again soon. To everyone else, thank you very much for listening. Please join me next time for the next episode of this Innovation in Professional Development Podcast. Bye for now!