Pedagogy Matters: Episode 23 Transcript

Hello and welcome to the latest episode of the

Pedagogy Matters Podcast. The purpose of the podcast is to

bring to the fore some key topics of conversation in

relation to learning and teaching, to discuss and

breakdown aspects of practice and provide snippets, advice and

guidance as to how to integrate these into our daily practice.

Today I'm delighted we joined by Hazel Brady, director for

Business, Creative and Enterprise at West Lothian

College, and we'll be talking around West Lothian's approaches

to professional development. So Hazel, good morning. How are

you?

Good morning, Jody. I'm great. Thank you.

And I think the first Test did I get your job rule correct? Is

that the right title?

Yes, that that's absolutely correct.

Because I know roles often evolve and things get added on

or things grow, but no. Well that that's a good start. So

anyway, what we talk about today really is some of your

approaches, professional development, which I know I kind

of really quite I'm going to say unique quite innovative. So I

think the best place to start is there. So I guess if you don't

kick this off and telling us about what the college is doing,

but about the journey and we'll take it from there.

Yeah, sure. OK. So I can talk him. Yeah. I'm director for a

faculty of Business Creative Enterprise. But I've been given

the pleasure of leading some cross college projects since I

took on the role back in August 2020.

So the starting point really was the people strategy. So at the

college we have people strategy and and really that's a good

starting point because we have a head and which is learning and

development culture and this is where all staff have the

opportunity for to further their learning and development to

which the college invest significantly and the college

offer range of development opportunities which is

underpinned by a commitment on time and financial terms for

these to be undertaken. So.

We feel as a college that by equipping staff with the

necessary skills, then we would ensure excellence, shouldn't

experience and attainment, and some recent examples would

include to be developed and enhanced induction for new

lecturers, which is separate from our mandatory training for

all new staff.

And we also link this to the professional standards we

introduced a learning champions, which we'll talk about today.

And we also introduced Wesley and Wednesdays.

So the rationale really was about support. We wanted to do

this in a supportive way, and we've learned a lot. We've

advanced the law and learned so much from when we went and

talked down in March 2020.

That it was key to ensure that staff.

Were developed and I really supportively, so we also tie in

the rationale that we made these changes into our own college

values, which were we have welcoming to all students at the

center of everything that we do and always striving for a

better. And also we tie this into the professional standards.

Wow, where to start? No, I think it sounds fantastic in the

So.

Hello.

outset. And yeah, there's lots of, I'm gonna say keywords and

phrases there, which you would hope to be at the forefront of

of practice. And I guess my cynical view sometimes have kind

Umm.

of my own lives been to work in different colleges as sometimes

Uh-huh.

those words are there, but can it may not be lived and

breathed. But I think it would be useful to start really maybe

at the end and work backwards as to how we got there. So I know

you touched upon West Lothian and Wednesdays.

So I I think maybe should we start there and kind of look at

kind of what is that or kind of what does that mean was looking

Yeah.

at practice and what yeah that's how I chat about that.

Yeah. So we am. We've talked about this a lot. We talked a

lot about where we could carve out some time for staff to be

able to come together and do professional learning. And when

you talk about things, it's difficult sometimes to to get it

into action. And I think because of what happened in March 2020

Yeah.

where we were using platforms and you know, we were using

Microsoft Teams. So we already had a great way of bringing

stuff together. But what we did is we carved out a Wednesday as

the time.

To be allocated for professional developments, that meant that

nobody was to be timetabled on a Wednesday where possible, and

that was a significant chunk of activity that we made sure that

that students were not timetabled which allowed staff

to be freed during that time. So we made it at a slot on a

Wednesday to offer training. In 2122 we were doing it every

Wednesday and it could range from 30 minutes to 60 minutes

Yeah.

and now what we've done based on student staff feedback is we now

do every 3 Wednesdays.

So every third week we do the the training, it's still

mandatory and what we do is we.

We we have a mix of external agencies and we also have some

staff that come and do different training sessions and that

Wednesday too. So it's peer-to-peer support that we

offer and the training is you know certainly based on the

staff feedback, it was really important that we heard their

voice about how regular we had them, how long they could be and

then what the content was. So that's really what weds Wessel,

their weddings is that about.

No, that's great. I'm gonna ask a really specific question.

Typically what terminal Wednesday does this take place?

And all the people we think look the time deals well, how do how

do we make it fit? So typically kind of went on a Wednesday or

has that taken place or has it evolved is at the same time.

So when I have them from 4:00 PM till 4:30, that's the 30 minutes

Yep.

is protected and what we do is there are sometimes we need a

bit longer and what we do is we try and plan the sessions across

Yeah.

the whole year and by by doing that then we can try and offer

Yep.

students alternatives and we can do that better now again since

you know we've learned so much about a blended approach to

learning and teaching. So we can say so in a good example was we

had little iceberg here and just before that October break and we

needed.

A bigger chunk of time, 30 minutes wasn't gonna be enough,

and we offered a workshop to staff during that period, so we

needed to sort of protect a little bit more than 30 minutes.

But the general, the general plan for the year is to do 30

minutes every three weeks.

That's really interesting and you care touched upon that was

shaped by staff. So you mentioned in previous years last

year that was every week.

So the idea was that kind of too much of a burden on staff in

terms of not burden might be the wrong phrase was a kind of too

much of a commitment sometimes in terms of impinging on the

student experience or kind of what the thoughts of rationales

for changing, maybe from the every week to every other week

or every third week.

And there's two reasons we were we were driving forward to

sustainability, Dr, which meant that we were only going to open

the campus and the evening on a Tuesday and Thursday. So we used

to open Monday to Thursday 6 till nine. We were all. So we

Yeah.

really changed our timetables, you know quite drastically from

the year before when they were available every Wednesday.

That's when it became a bit more of a challenge. How do we free

up a full afternoon and we've already cut down to you. And so

Yeah.

that was that was part of the reason, but it was about staff

feedback. We asked them, you know, what days.

What times, how frequent? And we we took the staff feedback to

Yep.

ensure that we were offering training that was relevant to

them and that that everybody had a say in that as well about the

content. But what sort of things that we should be offering?

Yeah, I think that's really interesting. And I'm gonna say

probably one of the most difficult questions answer

what's been the impact of this of kind of this protected

technologies were protected before, what's been the impact

of that protected time?

Uh on staff or on student experience that you can try and

put your fingers on because quite hard to.

Got some tangibles in this case.

Umm.

I like the the biggest thing for us is about the student

experience, you know, so we we get the student voice through

our various, you know, various ways and and and through we have

sparkle, we do, you know, a student feedback they students

come to our course team meeting. So it's student feedback that's

really important for us to to make sure that it's having an

impact. PI's is not always the the best indication. But we are

Yeah.

seeing improvement there as well. But I suppose the biggest

thing is about the support that we have for staff for each

other.

And you know, because it can be quite a lonely job, especially

if you're new lecturer. You're brand new to this. It can be

really lonely. So we we really wanted to think about how could

we do this supportively. So, you know, Wessel them Wednesdays is

just a part of that. There's a whole load of changes that we've

made to ensure that we support each other and because we need

to be able to collaborate, we need to learn from each other.

And also it's the peer-to-peer support that we give during

these sessions because that's much more impactful. And you

know then sending somebody off in a course.

They've got to set online for half an hour and do something

that's actually allows people to have conversation, ask questions

and you know, so go back and watch them. We record the

lessons so. So we can go back and watch them. If you're not

sure, you can go back and watch it again. So there's a there's a

whole load of things that we we can see in terms of the impact.

It's a really positive way to approach learning and

development for staff.

No, I think it's fascinating that and have totally agree with

you. And yeah, I'm keen just to explore that a little bit more

in terms of that peer-to-peer support. So I guess again other

questions people may have is well, what sort of sessions are

offered to stuff or what sort of things happen within this time?

So you able to kind of share any more different examples of some

Umm.

of the things that may have happened within The West Wing

Wednesdays?

Yeah, I mean the the there's been lots of as I mentioned

Gerry, we have you know external agencies that come. So that's

really important. That's the real sort of training part. So

we've had, you know, smile counselling, we've had education

Scotland, we've had GTCS. So it's really helping prepare us

Yeah.

and as a as a college for GTCS registration. So there's been a

whole lot of things that have come externally but internally

you know we do a lot of sessions about quality, so quality

improvement and professional standards or values or college

values and behaviors are a number of sessions that go on

during that period.

But I think lesser than Wednesdays is.

Is is very much a focused half an hour that that we we try and

carve out across the year that is suitable for all staff and

all delivery staff and that's just a that's just one bit of

Yeah.

it. But we're we're we're really proud because we've we've we've

been successful in carving out that time and also getting the

commitment from staff to attend because you know it's very easy

to say Oh well we'll put them on but then if nobody comes what's

the point so but we have you know hundreds of staff that are

coming every week every.

Three weeks to these sessions. And so there's commitment on

both sides to to improve learning and development and

professional training, which ties in really nicely with GTCS

and the professional update. So and I and that's a little bit of

it, I suppose, expanded on that is the lemon champions. That's

will probably talk about today as well and that's really key in

terms of the peer-to-peer support that's given.

Absolutely. I think you've kind of stole my phone and store my

script. Yes, learning champions is exactly where I was going to

go next in terms of support. So yeah, often initiatives like

this are are quite difficult to put in place and to have an

impact and.

And it's again my cynical hat on for myself, being a College in

the past is. It's one thing's in as a lot of training, it's

another thing. Then contextualize that into your own

world and reflecting and so on and so forth. And I agree that

kind of support there is kind of really fundamental. So you've

touched upon learning champions. Can you tell us a little bit

kind of what they are, what they look like and what their rules

are?

Yeah, so the learning champions, we, we, we did a lot of work and

during COVID and and we created a team which was specifically

for digital upskill and that was more about that was a learning

continued support team and that was really, really specific to

the digital upskilling of staff especially during that crucial

time. But what that group did is they were tasked with also

coming up with recommendations and they came up with a number

of recommendations. And one of those recommendations where

learning champions because.

There was a gap there to really support, particularly new staff

about, you know, when you come in, took her college, you've

never been a like you've never taught before. How do you pull

Yeah.

things together? So then champions were brought about to

really improve pedagogical approaches. But but it's it's

it's become more than their staff it's for all staff you

know it's all staff so learning champions are the focus of is

really at the early stages of an academic year on our new staff.

And helping them to, you know, how do you prepare a lesson? How

do you plan for 12 weeks? What are your challenges if you've

got, you know, behavioral challenges, it's everything that

can be a little bit of quality in there. How? What does, where

does quality work? How does that tie in? But it's really about

supporting staff with their approaches to learning, teaching

and assessment. And then they're great because they they can then

direct them to the other resources, which are quite new

to us, for example. And in technologists, they can really

start to enhance their learning.

Teacher and I say this one, but what we've also done is we have.

Stopped the lesson observations in their traditional sense, and

we've created professional discussion. So all staff now.

They they don't all have a, you know, somebody comes into their

class and does the traditional observation. What we do now is

we get all staff to record something from a lesson. They

then upload that lesson. They do their own professional sort of

reflection. And then we sample a third across the year. So it's

not everybody, but everybody has to still do the the actual, you

know, do their own record and do their professional reflection,

Yeah.

get their student feedback and then they'll be sampled. And

it's the learning champions that do the sample.

It's not a manager, it's done by the learning champions, so

Yeah.

that's a peer-to-peer support which is so important because

they are in the classes themselves. 11 Champions have

been given some remitted time, but they are remitted lecturer

Yeah.

posts and so they're they're everyday they're having the

challenges with students. They understand, you know, the

challenges with, you know, attainment, retention, all of

these things. And then how do you make your lessons engage in?

How do you still keep up with technology to maybe enhance

that? How do you reduce assessment burden? There's a

whole lot of things that come with that. So the learning

champions.

I really busy. I really busy at all. It's such a brilliant role

to have on our college and that peer-to-peer support is is

definitely welcomed by staff, particularly new staff.

No, that all sounds great. Haste and and I would totally agree in

the learning champions. How long have they been?

And as part of your structure for is that just the recent

thing and it can last couple months. Is that maybe? Yeah,

passed. How long have you had those rules as part of your?

Ohh the college.

So we've had them just for a this is as good into the second

year of having them. So this is and and what we've done is we've

Yeah.

really we've given them our remits. So we've been really

clear about what is the role, because if you can imagine

Yeah.

there's a learning champion comes in, they could be asked to

do 100 things and but we've been really clear about what they're

Absolutely.

remit and it's really about pedicle approaches and helping

staff to, you know, gain confidence and being creative

and innovative and to try things out as well. And that's where

the.

The professional discussion that works really well because we're

really encouraging staff, not tolls, sending their best,

sometimes send in the challenges, and when you're

Yeah.

working with your peers, those conversations are.

Are easier to have because you're not. You're not feeling

that it's part of, you know.

Yeah, professional learning discussion that happens every

year. It's really not. It's not the learning and skills managers

that are doing this. It's, it's your peers and it's a great

opportunity to get.

And staff out of their department, so are learning

champions are arraigned range across all of the faculties. So

we've got some great examples of one of the business lecturers

had gone over to engineering. We've got another lecture from

business who's gone out into the forest classroom. When would

they ever have had that opportunity? And now what they

do is they bring it back to their own practice and they

think.

I could do something outdoor learning, so you know they're

learning from from from each other. So it's it's a real. It's

Absolutely.

a really great model to have a very lucky to have it in the

college and and it is very new, but we'd like Morland and

champions if that was possible.

No, I would totally green. And I've been fortunate in a

previous role where I introduced, it was a large

college, but I think it was seven FT E of of teaching and

learning coaches for exactly that reason. They were peers,

they were colleagues who were.

UM, strong and confident in learning and teaching, and their

role exactly. Exactly as you've said is they had currency

Uh-huh.

because they were still practicing extras and they could

Uh-huh.

go out there and support their peers. And for me to keep it is.

When observing or when can engaging with peers across the

college, you pick up so much information and it's really

important to try and share that across the board as you just

Ohh.

alluded to there and these individuals have got that real

opportunity to do that. But from a critical friend, the support

of perspective and it's really important and whilst we want a

maybe expect online just to be able to do that, sometimes it's

a different relationship. So I think it's an absolutely vital

Uh-huh.

And.

role to try and help break down any myths, I'll to spell any,

any kind of negatives around.

Yeah, yeah.

Sorry, carry on.

Are always going to do with the Lennon champions are, you know,

they apply for this? They don't. They don't. Go ahead, hunt

So.

anybody they are. They have to go through an application

process. And part of that process is, you know what? What

could you bring to the table as a learning champion? What? What

innovative practices have you got that you could share? And so

that that's how the application process be removed their name.

So it is, you know, it's really done on the basis of the

Absolutely.

questions that are asked and that application so airline and

champions are, you know, they're all on board based on.

The great part is that they're already doing so as you you

mentioned about, you know, really strong, really confident

in their learning and teaching and they're really keen 10

partly and knowledge with others. But the the professional

discussions was quite new. We, we we introduced that quite late

last year. So this is our first year of doing it as a you know

across the full academic year because we were we're trying to

think about how do we do it differently because we had such

a lot of classes, you know somewhere on site somewhere were

not. So how do we do the traditional observation.

And so we, we made a significant change to that. Education

Scotland were happy with that change and staff are are really

engaging in that process as well.

No, that sounds fantastic. I know other colleges have similar

rules in place, whether they be named mentors or different

titles, but going back to those rules, I think it's really

important as well. That's from my experience. Again, I'm going

to say significant proportion of individuals in those rules that

helps make them more rounded and helps them progress. The next

Uh-huh.

stage of their career, if that's what they wish to do. So or they

take that back into the election. So I think it's kind

of a win win for all because it's more people to talk about

As.

learning and teaching and can improve. Learning and teaching

is everybody wants to. But there are a lot of things that are

Uh-huh.

teams that detract from managers.

Ability to be able to do that because of processes and so on

No.

and so forth. So I'm just really important. But no, that's

fascinating. And I think really what I'm keen to when picking

now is kind of come towards the end of the podcast is you've

done a lot of the hard work, you've done a lot of the legwork

already. What advice do you have for other colleges that may be

looking to introduce a similar model, whether that be learning

champions or whether that be the protector time? What are your

thoughts or ideas that if you can kind of share some of the

Umm.

bits that you've learned, that would be great?

Umm of limbos. Lots and lots. I think they they.

I guess thing is you need to really think about you know

who's at the top of the tree, and it's really important that

you get there buying and we've been really lucky at least. So

then college, our our executive, we just leadership team have

been so supportive of you know, ideas, suggestions that we've

made really passionate about learning and teaching really

understand everything that that comes with that and how

challenging it can be. You know for for new lectures but also

for lecturers that are experienced, they, they they hit

challenges. So the biggest thing for me is about getting the buy

in and don't be frightened to share those changes they might.

You know you can share them and they might. People might say

that that doesn't sound right. Keep going.

Keep talking about it. You know, get get groups of people as well

that work together. So let him continue to support Team Dinger

Group together. That's cross college. Be confident to do

Yeah.

that. So we have, you know, in learning continent, it's put

team, there's we have some different digital infrastructure

quality. And the key thing in there is we did ask for the

linen development Officer from HR to be part of that as well.

So that our real crossover and then that crosses over to

everything. So they're in champions feed into Lennon

continuity. Everything's all threaded through really nicely.

And but the the biggest thing is the buy in and and Sarah Jane

Mintons are, you know, are VP here as you know she is.

The VP for Entertainment and and it's Sarah Jane that's driven

forwards. The success of the Wesseling wedding season. You

know, she's really lessened to to what we need and and really

help to to find a way to carve that out, cause to to change a

timetable significantly like that. Needs great leadership. So

I think for us it's definitely from the top and it's across

college approach. It's involving cross college people that you

know and and then back down to the end champions it's.

Yeah.

Bringing in other other staff who are confident in learning

and teaching and really, really keen to share their their

practice and you know we can't, we can't do this job on our own.

We can't do it in silos. We have to keep collaborating with each

other. And so I suppose for me, you know, even next steps as we

need to look at how we can do this with other colleges because

we're doing it really well in our college across the

faculties. How can we do across colleges that would be really

impactful to be able to start doing more of that. But yeah go

to the top.

Speak to them, share your ideas, get their buy in, have really

robust presentations. You know the when you take the ideas to

the teams and but yes, definitely from the top. We've

had great support with the with all of this.

No. Great thanks. Yes, I'm keen to stone pick there in terms of

the wider workforce, you know, so lecturers who may have been

used to working in a certain way or maybe didn't watch in their

timetables, how did you get there by, in or kind of how did

you not convince But yeah kind of what steps were taken or how

did that journey look to try and get that kind of wider

engagement?

It wasn't easy. I never did. When you're, you know, not

everybody adapts to change really well. So it wasn't easy,

but it's it's, you know, again, it's back to the top. It's a

leadership and then it's a leadership that filters down and

it's it's it's.

Trying to get the buy in because it's a good thing and you know

OK.

it's not. It's not for the sake of it's really to help people

understand why we're doing it and so that they can see the,

the, the vision and the bigger picture and understand that it's

all fitting in. So I think I think we've done a lot of work

as a college on our values and behaviors and those values that

I mentioned at the beginning, it's, you know, reminding staff

of our values and and especially where we put students at the

centre and then tying into our professional standards.

There should. I don't know. I think I think for everybody.

It can be difficult to change, but we've had staff that we're

selling college have really made this change and and there

there's been a few things of not pushed back. I don't know.

Yeah.

That's the right word of questions and why and and but

it's having the answers and then it's back to that vision. It's

really sharing the vision and the learning skills managers who

work really closely with directors. They're really close

to the teaching team. And so it's helping them leave their

meetings at team meetings and and taking their team through this change.

Yeah. So be prepared for some pushback and but, but if you have an idea, go for it. Try it. And we've tried it. And in the first year we were, you know, we did it and we've changed it even already in the second year, but we've still carved out that protected time to ensure that we can find a place for staff to come together and add ask that actually see the Jane. She's she's the she she has, you know really really helped support us to take this forward. And I asked her for a quote because I said there was doing this podcast today.

But you know, she had said about.

You know, developing a great respect and understand and free each other as staff pass on breadth of knowledge and support to students. Would everybody wins and that that says it all really.

Yeah. No, I think that's, yeah, that does say at all. And I think that's come through in every conversation you've had is actually it's not a standalone process put in place is not a new idea. It's part of the way that pitch and the wider ethos around putting students at the heart of everything that you do.

Uh-huh.

And as we all know, effective teaching practice underpins

large parts of that and it's part of that wider cology thus

no. So I think it's fantastic and yeah, I totally agree with

you again for my own experience, it's not an easy journey because

everyone has their own perspective as to how they want

to learn or some people don't want change and.

So and so forth. And again, I'd also echo the point as one of

the key points is it's about there's two really one is

communicating that clearly to to the whole workforce. So everyone

understands what we're doing and why we're doing it.

Uh-huh.

Absolutely. Mm-hmm.

And secondly, equally importantly, it's getting the

right people as those learning champions are understand

learning and learning and teaching and can then translate

that across to the wider masses in many different ways. So now I

Uh.

think that's fantastic. I think it's really interesting and I'm

going to see the final bit. I'm going to Chip on is I'm sure

you're aware, but small this may not be is that CDN when engaging

some action research on professional learning to try and

look at how professional learning is being delivered

across the college sector exactly for that reason as

you've touched upon.

To try and encourage, enable, allow for greater collaboration

Uh-huh.

across colleges.

Uh-huh.

Because.

Again, in a really simplistic term, in my head if then we

discover or discover rather that 5 colleges have a same model,

will actually might be at those 5. College may say well, why

didn't we all try and get a similar time? Because then that

may allow for some cross pollination twice a year or so.

Uh-huh.

It doesn't have to be. But if strategies are already in place

then it may allow for that. So but also the purpose of that is

to allow other colleges to understand different models in

place and think oh actually that sounds great. Let's learn a bit

more how can we implement something they have to work for

our workforce.

So I think that that's really interesting.

Umm.

And yeah, there's a there's a lot of unpick now, and we've

been talking for nearly half an hour and and and times flown by,

we'll talk for another half an hour, another hour about all of

those things. But we're control. Keep this podcast relatively

Well.

short. So before we come to a close here, is there anything

else from you? Either one final thing for people to consider or

kind of final bit of learning from you that you kind of think

would be useful to share.

From you, collaboration is really important and we don't do

enough within our own colleges. So if we can do more of that and

Yeah.

you know we're doing this much, we're starting to really

increase the amount of collaboration across the

faculties, across staff, bring in different groups of people

together to lead on projects.

The pace of which we've done that has been really fast and

really successful, so I think.

If all colleges could do more of that and her confident enough to

do that, then we might even improve the cross collaborative

approach across our colleges. We need to bring our, you know, our

teams out of their departments first. And and we've certainly

Yeah.

made a huge step forward with that. And if we can do that

across the the colleges, I think it would really give us a

collaborative approach to.

To do so much more together.

I think that's a really good final point, even though I kind

of made you think that, I think it's absolutely fantastic,

absolutely spot on. And I guess the final punch from me, I'm

gonna reflect on a former colleague of mine. Whenever

something new was introduced, he said, well, what do we not do?

And again, I would, I would urge you this thing actually, what do

Uh-huh.

you do that actually you don't need to do that could free up a

protect time for conversations like this or this is like this

to take place within your college to aid that

collaboration that you've just mentioned. So Hazel thank you

very much friend of once again find out more for you for to get

in touch with Hazel and colleagues West Lothian but

Hazel thank you very much for your time.

Thanks for having me. It's been a pleasure. Thank you.

Thank you.