

**A Brief introduction to APEX
from the APEX Website Bath and
North East Somerset Council**

Schools

Abilities, Gifts and Talents

Philosophy of APEX

Creating Gifts and Developing
Talents in Bath and North East
Somerset



In this Authority we are working to improve the inclusive educational experience of all children and young people learning to develop and enhance talents to create and offer, as gifts, knowledge.

This is based on the assumptions that everyone is capable of:

- Being an expert in their own learning;
- Developing and enhancing talents;
- Creating, offering and accepting knowledge, as a gift, to improve their own wellbeing and that of others;
- Improving, describing and explaining their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of other people and the communities that they live and work in.

www.bathnes.gov.uk/BathNES/educationandlearning/

Creativity as a process in learning

APEX

**All Pupils Extending
Possibilities**

CreativityWORKS

**Lead Artist
Andrew Henon**

**Supporting Artist
Karen Dews**

Contexts

**APEX Programme at
Ralph Alan School,
University of Bath
workshop days and
collaborative enquiries,
Bathwick St Marys
Primary School, Guildhall
seminar days and APEX
Summer School at
Heysfield School**

APEX

by
Marie Huxtable

**APEX, CreativityWORKS
and nesa**



Who or what is APEX?

APEX is not one person or just the little group of people called the APEX team. It is the pooling of the energies of a lot of people, from various services, departments and organisations. The development and coordination of APEX is lead by Marie Huxtable (a senior educational psychologist) working with a small, dedicated team (who also have other jobs); Michelle Sims, Dan Barwise, Jane Hill and Victoria Bailey. Highly qualified, and similarly dedicated educators from schools, universities, and the world beyond, provide APEX workshops and learning opportunities. Bath and North East Somerset local authority staff, such as Christine Jones (Senior Inclusion Officer), Andrew Barker (14-19 Strategy Adviser), Lindsey Braidley (Education officer, Heritage Services), Rosie Dill (Young People participation officer), and those from other organisations, such as Sonia Hutchinson (Off The Record, Young Carers Service), provides support that enables schools and the local authority to respond coherently to the numerous national strategies, such as the national gifted and talented education strategy, and keep connection between practice, provision and inclusive educational values.

Everyone has the capacity for learning to develop talents to create, offer and accept valued and valuable gifts of their learning and knowledge. What you will see here are illustrative examples of the contribution **nesa** has made to extend the palette of educational possibilities for learning, which foster and enhance these abilities



What does APEX do?

Bath and North East Somerset authority has an inclusive vision of education:

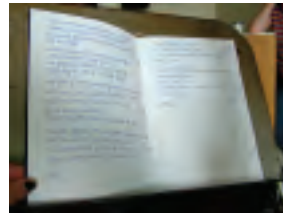
'We want all Children and Young People to do better in life than they ever thought they could. We will give children and young people the help that they need to do this' (Bath and North East Somerset Local Authority, 2005)

APEX contributes to the realization of this vision by working with others, such as Andrew Henon and Karen Dews from **nesa**, to develop educational relationships, spaces and opportunities. These include workshops, meetings, resources, information, events, collaborative creative enquiries, research groups and so on, for learners, young and old, and educators, in the physical world and on the web. The focus of APEX learning opportunities is on extending the young person's abilities to create new knowledge about themselves, the world and themselves in the world.

The work of APEX rests on the belief that everyone is capable of:

- Being an expert in their own learning;
- Developing and enhancing talents;
- Creating, offering and accepting valued and valuable knowledge of themselves, the world and themselves in the world, as gifts, which can enhance personal and communal wellbeing and wellbecoming.

...and as one of our 9 year old pupils said, "Nothing is impossible to a child with imagination."



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Aims



The approaches, and methods

How



How has CreativityWORKS worked with APEX?

Everyone has the capacity to develop talents and create, offer and accept valued and valuable gifts. APEX is about maximizing opportunities, which foster these capacities to enable all children to thrive. Creativity**WORKS** and APEX have collaborated to enhance opportunities for children and young people to find their passions for learning, gain insights into what motivates them, maintain a joy in learning, education and exploration of the world and develop their abilities to contribute.

Many people have been involved with the organisation and provision of these learning opportunities and approximately 500 learners have taken part, ranging in age from 7 to 64 years.

You will get an idea about the 'who, how, why, what and when' as I show you a little of what the participants have been doing in some of these workshops and collaborative creative enquiries. These spaces are not little islands. Each is interconnected with each other and the variety of educational relationships, spaces and opportunities we are all involved in and are part of.

Creativity**WORKS** and APEX have worked together directly to enhance opportunities for collaborative creative enquiries for scientists, artists and researchers and on the APEX 2009 Summer Opportunity.



Collaborative Creative Enquiry for Artists

There were two sessions with a Year 3 class teacher, who is also responsible for leading improving gifted and talented education in the school, her pupils and one of her colleagues. The sessions had two aims; to provide an opportunity for children and adults to experience themselves as artists, collaboratively developing talents with an artist, and second, to provide an opportunity for them to develop their talents as researchers creating, offering and accepting gifts of knowledge of themselves and the world.

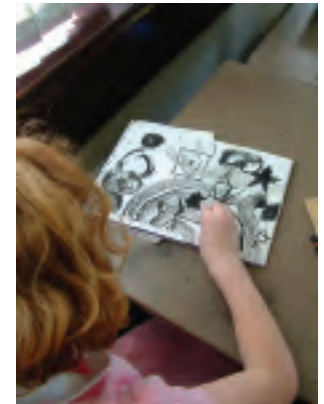
In the first classroom-based session Andrew, Marie, the teachers and children worked on asking research questions that interested them. Andrew introduced sketchbooks for the children to use as researchers to collect data and clarify and stimulate their creative thinking. He drew on his expertise as a socially engaged artist, living educational theory researcher and educator to introduce us to new ideas, materials and techniques we could use to develop our talents as researchers and artists.

We experimented with charcoal as the oldest material humans have used as artists and researchers recording data and sharing the knowledge they created.



Enabling expression and enquiry

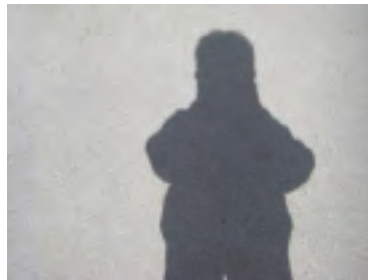
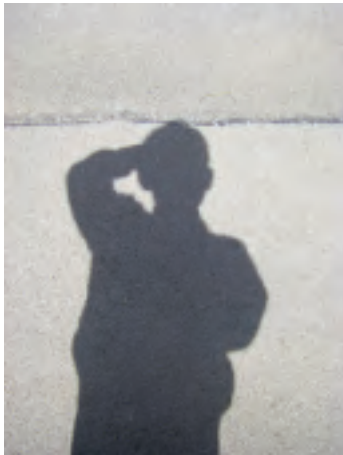
reflection and
documentation



An insight into self and others

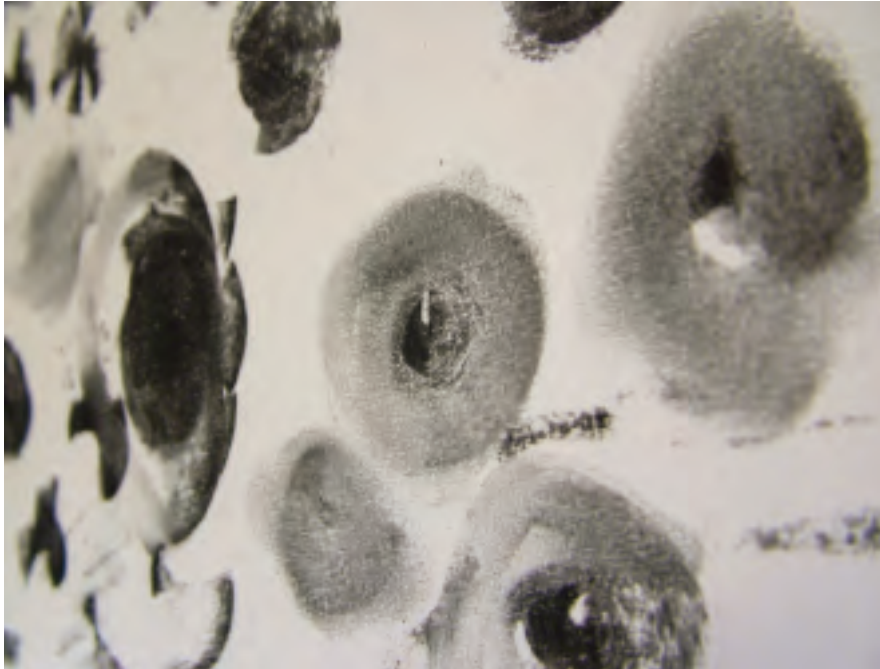
In the previous session we had worked on asking research questions that interested us. Andrew had introduced sketchbooks to collect data, some ideas drawn from the field of art that could be used to represent and develop thinking, and some techniques for using charcoal. In the second session we were building on this beginning and Karen introduced digital photography to stimulate creative thinking and as another way of recording data.

Karen introduced digital photography as one of the most modern 'materials' Many children now have phones with cameras and use various digital devices for storing and sharing their thinking, such as Facebook and YouTube. Participants experimented with the earliest and most modern forms of 'equipment' used by artists and researchers. Karen took groups out and encouraged experimentation with the cameras. In the classroom the children worked with their sketchbooks and charcoal.



We noticed that many children were using the charcoal as they would a pencil rather than venturing somewhere new with their learning. Andrew did not want to return to the traditional 'Masters School of Art approach' to present a demonstration that needs to be mimicked, replicated and reproduced by the student.

The learner becomes exceptional in one technique but is unable to move on or away from that particular school of activity and or thinking. Andrew searched for a way to create a worthwhile multi layered participatory learning environment and experience. We are going to need creative people who can make decisions for themselves, create conditions of change, continue learning and have the confidence to contribute the gifts they create to the common good.



This principle is made manifest in the charcoal workshop example. Individual children make their own unique marks relating to and embedded with a question of inquiry, the individuals share their work making 34 unique contributions shared with 1,156 possibilities of knowledge exchange between permutations of pairs. What is good for an individual and supporting that individual becomes good for everyone.

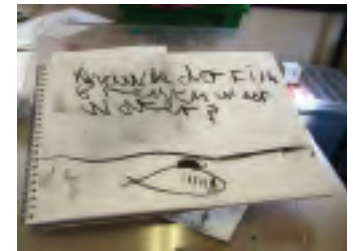
A creative question of enquiry

Increased individual enquiry

A co-creative enquiry

Group enquiry

Social enquiry



Above
'How do fish breathe

Creating shared experiences

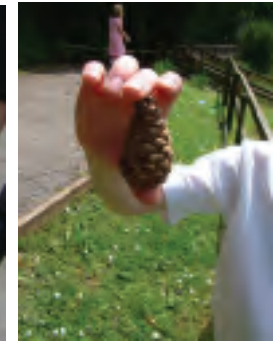
strong social networks

Sharing creativity increases creativity



Andrew interrupted and invited everyone to share their unique marks with us all. In this simple act he has enabled each to be affirmed as an artist and creator of knowledge.

Andrew provided a safe public space for them all to offer and accept the gift of the knowledge they had created. The children are so attentive so full of life enhancing energy, a joy full energy still young and questioning, exploring, curious, inquisitive, attentive and innocently impressionable, absolutely wonderful.



Collaborative creative enquiry for teenagers and teachers as researchers

Our intention on this day in June was to share in a co-creative educational space with participants, offering some of the knowledge as living theory researchers (Whitehead, 1989) we have created over time and enabling participants to offer theirs. I said no space is an island. 'Opportunities to learn within and across both formal and informal settings occur in the complex ecologies of peoples' lives, not isolated in a single setting such as a school or family. These complex ecologies include people's participation within and across multiple settings, from families to peer and intergenerational social networks, to schools and a variety of community organizations; and participation within and across these settings may be either physical or virtual'. (Lee and Rochon, 2009).



APEX has run a number of days for educators, children and young people as researchers with Jack Whitehead (University of Bath and visiting professor Ninxia Teachers University). Jack is an educator, researcher and academic. He has developed a living educational theory approach to researching questions such as, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' widely used by people in diverse walks of life. In living educational theory research the focus is on questions of importance to the researcher. The emphasis is on generating knowledge of improving understanding of why do I improve what I am doing, not just how.

Through researching in this way we come to a better understanding of what is important to us, what we do that is effective and our embodied living theory of the educational influence we have in our learning and lives and that of other people. Look on <http://www.actionresearch.net> for more information.

Co-creativity in collaborative enquiry

CreativityWORKS

Living Educational Theory

Inclusionality



Living creativity

The influence and relevance of enabling, supporting and facilitating individual questions.

A reflective process



“What is nothing?”
A question asked as part of an individual enquiry

The living theory approach using action research is a similar enquiry process to TASC (Thinking Actively in a Social Context) developed by Belle Wallace.

TASC is familiar to many learners in local schools having been introduced by APEX over many years.

Focussing on the ‘lets tell someone’ and ‘what have I learned’ stages on the TASC wheel enables participants to offer their learning as gifts to enhance the learning of others and their own. Many of the questions that emerged, even in that short time, were profound.



Andrew has used Jack’s work in his Masters. Sally Cartwright (teacher and MA student with Jack) has worked with students on their AS Extended Project as a research group as she experiences working with Jack on her Masters. The students had developed insights about this process of research they were prepared to offer as gifts.

Bringing Andrew, Karen, Jack, Sally and her students together created a new opportunity for young people and their teachers to work collaboratively developing talents together, through researching their passions and what matters to them. Andrew introduced sketchbooks as research journals and some of the techniques he had successfully introduced on the collaborative, creative artist sessions. Karen’s photographs and Jack’s video helps us to ‘walk our own talk’ and learn from our practice as research.

56 young people, their teachers, the 14-19 Adviser and university researchers shared the day with us. Jack facilitated the day moving participants through the research process by providing, in Andrew’s words, ‘points of disturbance along a reflective process’.

Many of the questions that emerged, even in that short time, were profound. They experimented with their sketchbooks as research journals using art based techniques they knew and Andrew introduced them to and created different ways of shaping research questions.

Many of the students subsequently spent the following five weeks researching the question they have begun to formulate on that day and made a presentation to Jack, Marie, their teachers and peers.

You can see the presentation of one student an example of what the young people took from the day.

It is 11:22 long and can be accessed from

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=enBOlcGicX4> and <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZAHkhaKxQYs>

'The Wellsway Dance Experiment – Official Video' (2:59 long) to which she refers is accessed from

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tyHSyU6Zs1k>

Collaborative creative enquiry for pupils, students and educators as researchers

The second event in the Guildhall, Making A Difference That Matters In Learning And Lives, ran with teachers and educators forming the majority of participants and a small number of 8 year olds and teenagers. Our active learning together focussed on: developing and sharing what really matters to each of us and how we might improve our own learning and practice and contribute to the learning of each other. We developed our values based practice through improving our skills and understandings of a living theory approach to action research. Andrew, Jack, Marie, Simon Riding (Deputy Head, Bitterne Park School, Southampton) and Karen Riding (Director of Language College, Parkstone School, Poole) lead the day. Simon and Karen had worked with Jack on their doctoral research programmes and introduced how they had developed and sustained collaborative, supportive research communities of pupils and colleagues.



Left image of Sketchbook and question. Is control necessary? Is there such a thing as positive chaos? And if there is? How is it achieved in an out of control world?



Right image of Sketchbook and question. Does systematic academic study reduce independence and motivation to learn?

Cover story in part Revisited

**Another creative question
generated by a child for
themselves**

**What are
flowers made of?**



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A Summer school to remember



APEX 2009 Summer Opportunities for children and young people

The APEX summer learning opportunities have run since 2000 and together with the Saturday workshops and collaborative enquiries complement and extend the provision made by schools and clusters. Ten, four day modules run in parallel catering for diverse interest but with the common intention of providing children and young people opportunities to enjoy:

- Meeting and working with others with similar interests and abilities;
- Developing their subject, presentation, research, and ICT skills and their ability to work with others in a team;
- The cognitive, social, physical, emotional and personal challenge of going beyond the familiar;
- Learning alongside enthusiastic adults with diverse skills, expertise and learning passions;
- Extending and creating their knowledge about themselves, the world, and themselves in the world and feeling a sense of accomplishment.

Andrew and Karen introduced the providers to using sketchbooks and digital photography and supported the providers to introduce them to the young people. Each year we have tried to improve the quality of the learning opportunity the modules offer. This year Andrew and Karen have enabled us to take a huge stride forward.

The sketchbooks and techniques introduced for the children and young people to use as researchers, to develop their thinking and collect data was variously developed by them over the four days.



“In sharing our ideas, our productions, our creative gifts we increase the flow of creative activity, we increase the potential and opportunities by a vast amount. If we keep what we do to ourselves the creative process withers, atrophies and does not grow. The myth of the artist working alone is just that a myth, an artist is influenced by others, their work, their creativity as well as the creativity of life all around us both human made, synthetic and part of the processes of nature” Andrew Henon

Communication of ideas, sharing the creative potential is a key element of how creativity works. To be creative “We need strong supportive social networks” Helen Philips.



The creative work during the APEX summer school complimented and added value to the different summer schools running. This programme spanned the disciplines from Dance and Drama through Music to Business, Design, Science and Cultural studies and Archaeology. This portfolio of opportunities were supported with the provision of sketchbooks that each participant including the learning providers could use as there individual documentation, and ideas notebook resources.

Karen Dews and Andrew Henon worked together to provide digital photography tutorials and documentation together with ideas on sketchbook use and reflective practice in learning.

The presentations at the end were put together by the young people and providers in an exciting presentation setting at the Forum in Bath. An event attended by families and friends of the 250 young people involved. This project was an example of how Creativity**WORKS** across curricular activities, here creativity and arts are not seen as a separate discipline but integrated into all areas of learning both as an approach and methodology and as a documentary and recording process.

Provides an experience

A shared and individual
enquiry

Lead Artist
Andrew Henon

Supporting Artist
Karen Dews