

Dynamic Dunescapes Dune Engagement Case Study

Rap & hip-hop on the dunes – Summer 2022

Sand dune system	Studland Bay
Case Study Subject	Rap & hip-hop on the dunes
Engaging the disengaged teenager, who quote ‘finds nature gross’	

Site background information

A key success to this project was the already strong relationship we hold with Swanage Secondary School and Purbeck Youth and Community Foundation. This is by no means the first and will not be the last project we do with these two institutions. By having a trusted and enthusiastic relationship in place, it meant that the educators were up for trying something very new.

What was the issue/change you hoped to make?

When we surveyed the secondary school students at Swanage School last year, we were surprised to see how many individual responses there were about thinking the outdoors and nature is a ‘gross’ or ‘boring’ place. There were comments such as ‘there is nothing to do’ and ‘I would rather be playing video games’. We already have a number of nature engagement projects underway for teenagers, but none that would engage someone who is entirely disengaged.

What was the suggested intervention?

We understood the problem and we had the relationships to begin working with a solution. Alongside Activate Performing Arts, Dunescapes funded two young artists to work with school students and create an artistic performance piece with the dunes as the inspiration!

What did you do and how?

Going straight in with a field trip would not have worked, we needed to come to the students on their grounds and their terms. So the artists first visited the school with a number of workshops on rapping and hip-hop dancing. Building this relationship and trust was crucial to these artists then acting as the facilitator to nature. We then took a trip to the dunes and what a day it was! We explored the habitat, searched for sand lizard burrows, wrote lyrics with the dunes as inspiration, listened to the sound walk (specifically the clip that records the sounds inside a pine tree) and in the end we created a hip-hop dance routine to the sounds of the ocean!

What consents and permissions were needed prior to doing the works?

Photo release forms.

What modifications, if any, did you make to your initial plan and why?

We found that the teenagers were harder to engage at Purbeck Youth and Community Foundation than at the school. As such we did shorter but more frequent sessions to build confidence and also number of those that attended.

How much did the intervention cost?

£5,000

Did the intervention work?

Please describe how. What has changed?

It is hard to say exactly the impact on nature engagement with the individual teenagers. What can be said is that the trip to the sand dunes was very positively received. There was one student who was determined to hate the whole experience and complained for a large part of the morning (particularly hated sand in the shoes!), after lunch she actually came and apologized and said how much she enjoyed the day. These are small moments which will nonetheless have a strong and lasting impact on the young people, likely only to be really seen or noted in many years to come!

External feedback

Instagram post here: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CloVJ7MAVnt/>

Article here: [Rap and hip-hop project finale | The Swanage School](#)

What could be done differently next time?

It would have been great to have been able to record a final piece on the dunes and publish it on some social media. Sadly due to policy restrictions and time limitations this was not possible – next time!