



Behind The Scenery
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Eleventh Grade
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Participants became documentary filmmakers by connecting with industry professionals, selecting and studying ecosystems, preparing storyboards and shot lists, interviewing experts and executing a cinematic vision, editing footage and screening for an audience. By engaging with the history of the land, the people who inhabit it, and the environment itself, students asked powerful questions that allow the stories of this land to express themselves in new and important ways, shaping the way San Diegans see, advocate, and care for the most precious resource we have: the earth beneath our feet.

Participants also became expert ecologists and field surveyors of San Diego landscapes. They each conducted biodiversity surveys, keep nature journals, analyze maps, and discovered plant specimens at the microscopic level to gain a better understanding of the story of San Diego's land. To build a deeper connection with our ecosystems and to see land through a different lens, participants conduct a microscopy lab where they examine plant specimens and soil samples at a microscopic level.

Teacher Reflection

I learned that deeply integrated projects are not only possible, but incredibly valuable and rewarding. When deeply invested in the content and quality of their films, students stepped up to schedule, execute, and utilize interviews with scientists and researchers, politicians and business leaders, park rangers and historians, filmmakers and archeologists. They were thoughtful, focused, and reflective both about what they were learning and how they were learning it. Additionally, we noticed that through these connections to real professionals and an off-site Exhibition, our students FELT like their work was REAL. As a result, the quality was inspiring!

—David Roney

Student Reflection

I learned how to push out of my comfort zone in multiple ways. With the check in presentations, the documentary as a whole, and how this project was greatly led by our groups.

—Ella

The storyboard, scripting, and found footage actually is what helped us find what the best driving question was that made most sense for what we wanted to do.

—Dayja



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