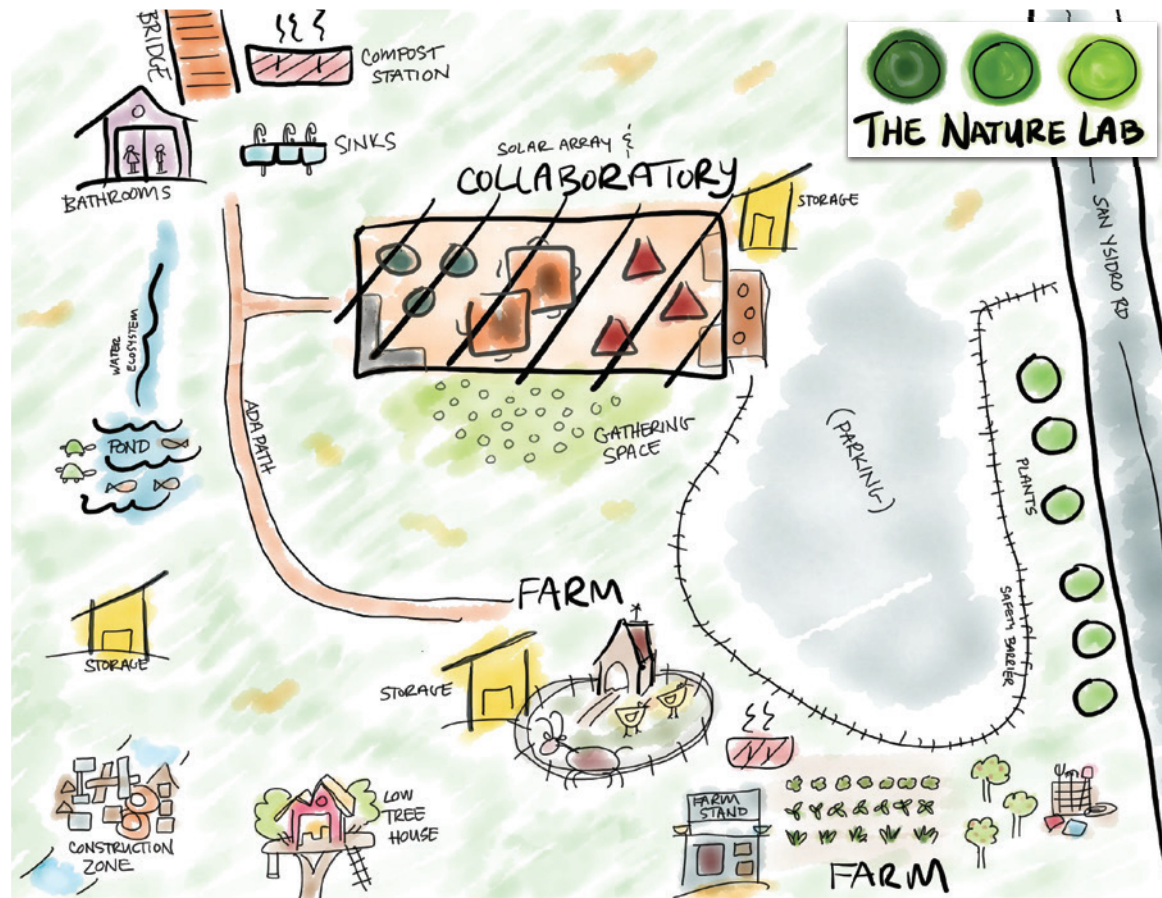


Learning, Naturally



Vanessa Scarlett, a science specialist at Montecito Union School, bubbles with excitement at the plans for a 2.5-acre parcel of land adjacent to the school's bucolic campus.

Over the next two years, the raw space will be transformed into the Nature Lab replete with a pond, plant beds, and even some chickens. For the elementary schoolers the lab will provide both unstructured play and rare opportunities to integrate their learning.

Scarlett gives the example of students building owl boxes. First the students would model their designs in the Innovation Lab, and then use the CNC laser cutter to make those designs a reality. Once installed, they could take motion detecting cameras from the Science Lab and study whether the owls used the boxes and if so, how often.

"There are these two important parts of the Nature Lab," Scarlett says. "Giving kids freedom in a space that is so magical, and being there with intent and purpose."

"Research has shown for decades that people learn best by doing. It's not by sitting and listening to a lecture, or reading a book. It is about doing."

For Montecito Union's Superintendent, Anthony

Ranii, the Nature Lab is a critical piece of ensuring his students are ready to make positive contributions in a fast changing world.

"When our students become adults, the most complex problems they will have to face stand at the intersections between nature and technology," Ranii says. "Climate change, wildfires, disease control, waste management, water conservation: all of these require both facility with technology and a deep knowledge of the natural world."

The organizing force behind the Nature Lab is the Montecito Union School Foundation (MUSF), the school's charitable arm comprised primarily of parents. The foundation has invested \$200,000 in the project thus far, and is looking to raise an additional \$400,000 to get it done.

Not only will this latest amelioration further cement Montecito Union School's status as one of the nation's premier public schools, but also it promises to seed generations of problem-solving youngsters with deep knowledge of the natural world.

"The world is counting on our students to develop these skills to solve the most complex problems in the world today," Ranii says.



"The Nature Lab provides children at MUS an opportunity to not only advance the cause of STEM learning, but it also lets them get a little dirty! That's how you really learn. Our community's children are our most important asset. Contributing to their education and to their appreciation of our natural world is a very solid investment that is a worthwhile cause."

— Buck Joffrey, MD,
Host of the Wealth Formula Podcast,
and the father of three MUS girls

AN INTERDEPENDENT + SYNERGETIC ECOSYSTEM



Naming Rights

Over the next two years, MUSF will build a chicken coop, vegetable beds, a sun shade, a pond, and paths throughout.

The Montecito Union School Foundation is offering naming rights to any and all of these structures to help them reach their fundraising goal. You can contact MUSFboard@gmail.com directly to find out more details.

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