

Nueva's wild acreage has served a fundamental role in our students' lives since the school's beginning. Zubin, our PE teacher and a Nueva alum, remembers how important the trails were for him as a student. Now, as an educator, he wants to enable the current generation to **get their hands dirty** and **"learn by digging."** Last year, fourth- through eighth-grade students signed up for the Trailblazing academy, with the plan to make Nueva's natural environment and trails more accessible to everyone.

## COURSE SUMMARY



### surveying

Students spent several Fridays surveying the hills and walking the topography.

The need to connect Crocker Road to the Lower Meadow inspired the search for a suitable new path.

Goals included learning safe tool use, identifying plant species, and collaboratively dividing the labor to construct a new, walkable trail.



### trimming

Some students preferred sawing and trimming bushes and branches, while others elected to forage an elaborate miner's lettuce salad.

Each week, the trail would grow by twenty or so feet.

Students hoed the soil flat, hauled buckets of mulch, sawed through fallen logs, and even got a healthy dose of urushiol from the leaves and branches of the budding poison oak!

Through persistence and friendship — and rain — students completed half of a viable trail down the hillside towards the chain across Crocker Road.



### foraging

The next phase for development of the campus focuses on *environment as teacher*, and includes the reinvention of the outdoor program.

As our school grows in size, we hope to rediscover the Hillsborough hinterlands, allowing students, teachers, staff, parents, and alumni the opportunity to walk for miles across the coastal foothills.

Through classes such as this, our students will continue to cultivate an active role in the stewardship of their vast and complex environment.

## COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS

**"Nature is not a place to visit.  
It is home."  
— Gary Snyder**



### enjoying

Zubin followed up with students each week in his blog posts:

"After an intense safety lecture, you went to work beginning the new trail we plotted. You all exceeded my expectations, both in how maturely you wielded your tools and in the progress made on the trail in a single hour!

"The foraged miner's lettuce salad was the perfect way to end our academy. Heartfelt thanks for your hard work."



### designing

"Friday's rain provided a relaxing break indoors, giving us the chance to begin drafting our plant signs.

"Your unshakable motivation and diligence led you to coordinate which species you chose, research them, and design placards that the I-Lab laser cutter could engrave onto wood."

