

Opinion: MetroED is one of Santa Clara County's best-kept secrets

New programs provide job training for today's market



Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian, right, checks out an electric vehicle at the Metropolitan Education District's new EV program, designed to train students to address the rising need for service in that market. MetroEd has also launched a nursing science program to support the growing demand for healthcare workers in the county. (Courtesy photo)

By [JOE SIMITIAN](#) |

PUBLISHED: October 22, 2023 at 7:01 a.m. | UPDATED: October 23, 2023 at 4:13 a.m.

In our ever-changing job market, there's no such thing anymore as traditional pathways to success. While higher education remains a worthy aspiration for many, there is a growing recognition of the equally important role that career and technical education (CTE) plays in shaping a well-rounded and skilled workforce. More than just an alternative pathway, CTE

provides myriad opportunities for fostering innovation and learning, economic growth and prosperous communities.

But even CTE has to keep pace with changing times. I know a lot of folks grew up taking auto shop or wood shop or home economics. Today, though, it's a different world—a world that requires a different set of skills and talents that are in demand. So, we have to do more.

Recognizing this need, last year I proposed a one-time county grant to the Metropolitan Education District (MetroED) to establish two new CTE programs: a nursing science program to support the growing demand for healthcare workers in our county, and an electrical vehicle program to address the rising need for service in that market. We know we have a critical nursing shortage, and we know electric vehicles are a rapidly growing share of the automotive market. So investing in these two programs provides a great return on investment for our local economy.

MetroED was prepared to take the leap, and just needed some financial support to do it. They deserve to be commended for assessing the needs of the community and the market and then addressing them. The outcome is good for the community, and absolutely great for the young people who hope to be employable, and who now will be employable once they complete these programs.

Over the years it has been immensely frustrating to me when I talk to local employers who tell me that they can't find the talent they need for their businesses, even when unemployment rates are at higher levels. At the same time, I hear from people who tell me they want to work. When I ask myself where the disconnect is, I realize we're not always matching our vocational education and career training with the current and emerging trends in the market. The skills and training we're giving folks may not necessarily be the right skills and training for the current demands here in Silicon Valley.

Again, to MetroED's credit, they're thinking about how they can meet the real-world, day-to-day demand in emerging industries and then equipping students with practical, hands-on skills to bridge the gap between education and employment. The result is that students are better prepared to enter the workforce with confidence and competence.

