

# The Mercury News

## New programs give Santa Clara County teens healthy career options

High school students can learn nursing, electric vehicle repair at Metropolitan Education District



Local high school students enrolled in Metropolitan Education District's new nursing careers program demonstrate how to move a patient using a mechanical lift as Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian, right, looks on during the program's grand opening on Oct. 27. Pictured are Jolie Castro, left, Sydney Fong, center, and Stephanie Torres Sainz, center right. The event also celebrated the launch of MetroEd's electrical vehicles programs at the Silicon Valley Career Technical Education campus in San Jose. Simitian was instrumental in securing county funding to get the programs off the ground (Dai Sugano/Bay Area News Group)

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Leigh High School student Isiah McGee had both personal and pragmatic reasons for enrolling in the new electrical vehicle program offered by the Metropolitan Education District.

As to the former, he told those assembled for the program's grand opening celebration on Oct. 27 he was inspired to learn how to repair and maintain EVs by watching his dad fix his own truck and work on other people's cars. As to the latter, he said, "Regular school wasn't doing it for me."

The Metropolitan Education District, aka MetroED, launched the [EV program](#) along with a nursing careers program at its San Jose campus to help Santa Clara County students who don't thrive in a regular classroom setting find a career path, focusing on two job sectors where the demand for employees currently outstrips the supply. The grand opening marked the first new programs at MetroED since 2017.

"MetroED saw the real-world trend in emerging sectors like EVs," said Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian, who led the effort to secure a one-time county grant for \$250,000 to get the programs off the ground. "These 21st-century programs provide a great return on investment for the local economy."

State Assemblymember Alex Lee, who represents Milpitas, pointed out that MetroED is one of only two districts of its kind in California. As to state funding for its curriculum, Lee said, "Sometimes the budget...is staged really by your passion locally."

The programs also give students the opportunity to move on, to college-level courses. Sonya Prabhoo, a Leland High School student enrolled in the nursing careers program, said students have the option of taking free nursing certification classes at Mission College in Santa Clara after they've completed the program.

While MetroED has always provided job training, its focus on getting students on a college track is an integral part of its Silicon Valley Career Technical Education (SVCTE) course offerings. The two new programs are among 25 free SVCTE courses available to juniors and seniors in Santa Clara County. MetroED has a joint powers agreement with the Campbell Union, East Side Union, Los Gatos-Saratoga Union, Milpitas Unified, San Jose Unified and Santa Clara Unified high school districts.

Cynthia Chang, who stepped down last year after 24 years on the Los Gatos-Saratoga district board, helped convince Simitian to find the funding for the EV and nursing programs. In her time on the board, Chang said, she watched people's perception of what MetroED has to offer change along with its course offerings.

"Before, it was for kids who couldn't make it to college," she said in an interview. "But now it's college and career. Kids are proud to be here."

In the electric vehicles program, Tom Nemeth teaches his students skills that are applicable both on and off the job. When they're not working on cars, Nemeth's students do activities meant to highlight team building and collaboration.

"It's everything to do with problem solving, critical thinking and working together, and that's what working in a shop is about," Nemeth said.