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## Olympic High adds nursing assistant course

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**OLYMPIC HIGH** A forthcoming Olympic High School course will prepare students for possible jobs as certified nursing assistants, exemplifying the state's push for more career-focused education.

The class, which will combine science principles and hands-on training, was approved by the Santa Monica-Malibu school board during its Feb. 19 meeting.

The program could be up and running as soon as mid-March, according to Olympic principal Janie Yuguchi Gates, and will be categorized as a science elective under the umbrella of career technical education.

"Students will learn the health care giver's role in caring for patients and will acquire vocational skills that will take them into a well-paying position upon graduation with their high school diploma," officials said in a Santa Monica-Malibu Unified School District report.

The class came to fruition through a partnership with WISE & Healthy Aging, a local nonprofit agency that serves senior citizens and their caregivers, and it arrives at a time of anticipated demand for health care workers.

According to the nonprofit's president, Grace Cheng Braun, the nation's 65-and-older population is expected to climb from 43 million in 2012 to 84 million by 2050.

"With the unprecedented growth

in the number and proportion of older adults in the history of the U.S. — longer life spans and aging baby boomers — there's just not enough quality caregivers in the pipeline," she said.

Concerns about that trend led to the creation of the nonprofit group's training academy, which has graduated two classes since launching less than a year ago. The academy already included a state-approved course for certified nursing assistants and home health aides, whose curriculum is derived from the University of Arkansas senior health center.

It will soon be adopted at Olympic High School, the district's continuation campus. As many as 12 students will be able to complete the 190-hour vocational class, which will be taught by a registered nurse.

The curriculum covers everything from ethics and confidentiality, patients' rights and interpersonal skills to patient care, emergency management, body mechanics, medical and surgical procedures, nutrition and charting.

Students who take the class at Olympic will do clinical training at Fireside Convalescent Hospital in Santa Monica, where they will be supervised by a nurse.

Students who successfully complete the course will be qualified to take board exams for certified nursing assistance and home health assistance.

"WISE & Healthy Aging saw an ideal opportunity to offer vocational

training for young people in the caregiving field," Cheng Braun said. "It's also an excellent entry point into the healthcare field. Many CNAs go on to become nurses, physician assistants, even physicians. Compared to the minimum wage that the young people can earn, if they can find a job, this opportunity to gain training and a state certification — which is portable across all 50 states in the U.S. — offers them the opportunity to earn at a higher pay rate."

The nonprofit organization will use donated funds to pay for the Olympic class, which could cost more than \$2,000 per student through American Red Cross or private vocational institutes.

Officials said the class will provide students with tools they'll need in the job market. According to Ryan Iwamoto, a WISE & Healthy Aging board member, his home care agency turns away four out of five caregiver applicants for not having the proper skills.

"We are very excited to pilot this special vocational training project at Olympic High School," Cheng Braun said. "What's so wonderful is that the Olympic students chosen for this special vocational training project will be able to earn credits toward graduation while meeting the state requirements ... to obtain certification and while gaining valuable life skills."

"While they're finishing up high school, they can find part-time, higher-paying caregiver jobs and be better qualified for full-time work when they're ready."