

Dear Dr. Mars,

We are writing today on behalf of the tech parents, teachers and most importantly, the students. As you know, the past year has been very trying and difficult for the entire Technical Theater department. We hope that we can work together and get these very important issues, outlined below, addressed immediately. It is imperative that the students and teachers needs are in place by September, in order to have a productive and less stressful Technical Theater program.

Losing the Assistant Principal last year, along with some key teachers is the biggest issue that needs your immediate attention. While Mr. Swope and Ms. Shea have been doing a heroic job in educating our students, they are overwhelmed and the students deserve more. The absence of an AP has disrupted the tech schedule with canceled rehearsals and permits. It also has jeopardized the students' CTE certification. The absence of an AP has left the students and teachers with no one to advocate for them, causing unnecessary stress and aggravation for all.

This doesn't have to be this way! The students, especially the growing numbers of underclassmen, deserve adequate instruction with quality teachers in the technical arts. As the students and teachers have expressed to you numerous times over the past few months, in order for this program to work, the following issues must be addressed.

In our prior meetings with you, you have agreed to hire these additional teachers and an AP by the start of the school year. We know this is a process and we want to work with you to ensure this happens.

The second set of issues labeled "Scheduling/Permits" are somewhat easier to address. You have the ability to enact these changes immediately.

We look forward to future discussions to enact these changes. We don't want our kids to miss out on the wonderful opportunities LaGuardia has to offer.

List of issues that must be addressed:

FACULTY:

1. With double the number of students in Technical Theater, we need additional teachers to make sure the curriculum is followed and CTE requirements met.

The requirements are:

1 Teacher in costumes

2-3 Teachers in props, carpentry and scenic technology (currently filled by Mr Wolfe and Mr. Castaldo)

1 Teacher/lighting designer (currently filled by Mr. Swope)

- 1 Teacher/scenic designer (currently filled by Ms. Shea)
- 1 Teacher in stage management.

As you can see, we currently have a deficit of 2-3 teachers. No one is in stage management and costumes has a part time consultant. With the additional students we will also need another teacher in the props and carpentry category.

In short, **we need you to hire a minimum of 3 teachers before September.**

2. In addition to the teachers, we need the following positions filled immediately before the start of the school year.
 - **An Assistant Principal (AP) of Technical Theater.** As stated above this is non-negotiable.
 - **A Guidance Counselor (GC)** dedicated to the Technical Theater students. The students deserve a consistent GC, not only to advocate for them and help them with the normal stressors of high school, but to help them navigate the college admissions process. This person needs to know them and understand Technical Theater.
 - **A Facilities Manager** who is in charge of all performance and equipment needs throughout the building. We understand funds have already been allocated for this, so this needs addressing as soon as possible. This will benefit the entire school.

SCHEDULING/CALENDAR/PERMITS:

3. It is imperative that **all the students have three consecutive period, tech blocks.** This is crucial to adequately teaching Technical Theater. It is not logical or time efficient for the students to set up tools, paint, sewing machines, etc. and then clean up and have to set up again. By keeping the block as it has been for years, and as the teachers and students have requested, you are increasing productivity and most importantly, relieving the students of unnecessary stressors.

The schedule was structured this way when the program was developed because it is integral to the functioning of the program. We have attached a suggested schedule created by Mr. Swope for next year. He feels that it is imperative that we keep the tech blocks as consecutive periods.

4. Calendar/Scheduling transparency – **we are also requesting that our Technical Theater AP be included in the calendar meetings.** We need someone who understands the timeframe it takes to build and produce LaGuardia's productions. We need a voice in these meetings for the Tech department.
5. Tech permits. **We are requesting that a permit schedule be posted for all students and teachers, and which AP is covering for all after-school tech days.** This should be finalized along with the schedule of shows. Once the shows are confirmed, the tech schedule should be planned along with it, and be posted accordingly.

6. The CTE certificate and internships. We need someone to oversee this critical part of the Tech program. **We need to assure that the requirements are being met for CTE and that monies are in place for internships.** This is one of the best programs LaGuardia has to offer and we need to make sure the DOE is funding the internships and the school is meeting the criteria. The tech parents are willing to help make sure these requirements are met, and will even take a lead on organizing speakers for next year. Please don't let this CTE certification and internship funding fail.

7. Tech studio and/or other building reassignment plans going forward should be updated at the Tech studio monthly PA meetings. Communication is key.

In conclusion, we feel that these specific asks are critical for the Technical Theater program. They must be put in place before the start of the school year. We as parents are willing to help for the sake of the students and teachers. We understand we are a public school, but nothing addressed above is unreasonable. Please make this list a priority as we believe implementation will make LaGuardia a much more harmonious and functioning environment for everyone.

We thank you for your time and we look forward to hearing from you with positive next steps. We are making this our summer mission, please make it yours.

Best,

Jill Bernstein
Lisa Dabney
Pamela French
Meg Kearns-Stanley

PS

We just received the Weekly Bulletin and see that you have sent a draft of the calendar. This is a very positive step in the right direction. Let's hope we can develop a better partnership in the future. Thank you.