

Wayzata students interested in being on a tech crew,

Hello everyone! I have heard from several students, and have also heard that others may have some concerns as well, about the tech application that was released this week for *Failure: A Love Story*. If you will give me a few minutes of your time during what I know is a busy week for you, I'd like to explain what I'm hoping to accomplish with that process and hopefully put your concerns and worries at ease.

The purpose of the application is largely so that I can learn about you, your interests, your capabilities, and even just how many of you there are! I want to see what expectations you have and I want to learn from the mass of paperwork I'm hoping to receive next week. Some things I'm looking for include discovering who among you is interested in leadership roles and who has lots of experience already.

In NO WAY is it meant to hinder someone's ability to participate in the program. In NO WAY is it meant to put aside the atmosphere and community already present and start from scratch. It IS my attempt to get to know what is there right now and to discover ways I can find my part and my vision within the program. I currently work in a program that is 5th grade to 12th grade. As the 5th graders usually enter without any theatrical experience at all, this application process allows me to help them find their best place within the ensemble. It works very well to ensure an enjoyable and attainable experience for all students involved.

I understand that change can be difficult. I am certainly going to experience my own difficulties as I join your program and experience change myself. I have been learning from Mrs. Gerber and also Zach over the last few weeks. I also hope to learn from you and other students about how things have been done in the past so that I can best incorporate myself and my style and process into the team. I want to assure you, however, that I am not new to doing this work. I have worked at several schools across the twin cities metro area including Breck School, White Bear Lake schools, Delasalle High School, Norwood-Young America, and others in northern Minnesota as well. I have attended national conferences on working with students featuring some of the greatest theatrical technicians in the country AND conferences featuring some of the greatest teachers in the country. I have guided hundreds of students through a technical theater education, many of whom are working professionally now. Many of whom were only involved for the sake of enjoyment. I have a pretty good understanding of how I want to build a program.

You have a right to be concerned about what is happening, I think it's important that you know that I intend to be at Wayzata for a very long time and have the best interests of the program at heart. That means that I need to make changes that will be sustainable long term as well as provide as many opportunities as possible for all students. Changes will happen. I hope we can work together and you feel that you can voice your concerns with me regarding those changes. I am a very good listener, respect all viewpoints, and will consider your remarks carefully. Please do give me the opportunity to show you that these changes will make the theater experience better.

The most emotional concern brought to me thus far seems to be on the topic of requiring all students fill out the application regardless of their commitment level. For the inconvenience in that fact, I sincerely apologize. Thank you for understanding that the application is for my benefit and knowledge. Planning is an important factor in making a safe and exhilarating experience for you. If I don't have enough people to run spotlights, then we're going to talk about doing the show without spotlight operators and making the design best fit the resources we have available. If only 5 students are signed up to build the set, then the set will only be complicated or sizable enough to challenge those students while still being an attainable goal

for the group as well. As you are very well aware of this week, creating a show takes a lot of hard work and effort. Knowing WHO is doing that work will allow us to plan appropriately and give us a certain amount of peace of mind and allow all to feel confident in it's timely completion.

It seems as though the biggest confusion is the set building schedule. Shop sessions will be available every day. They are not required on an every day basis. If you or others are only available on two days a week, please include that in your list of conflicts. Making tech available every day is an attempt to allow others who are not available on those two days to still have an opportunity to participate. It's an attempt to allow others to join, and not an attempt to overwork and "turn off" the students who do not wish to put in more than their current level of commitment. At my current location, I have a handful of students who attend every day, but largely they attend twice per week. Some are only available on Mondays and Wednesdays. Others only on Thursdays and Fridays. Some on Tuesdays and Fridays. Whatever. I am available to accommodate all of those students.

On a similar note, I want to mention that people auditioning for the show and people in the cast will continue to have the opportunities to work with the tech crews as they are available. I will contact those individuals once we discern who they are and give them further instructions. It is important to me that all people who are interested in participating in the show (and specifically tech) have that opportunity.

And finally, It is my belief that "Strike" is more than just taking the set down and putting props away. It is a final opportunity to gather as an ensemble and close our collective experience on that production. As such, I would like to see all members of the cast and crew be at strike. If you have a conflict with the date & time, please list that accordingly. With that said, if we have more people than we can accommodate, we may "unschedule" certain groups/individuals from the required strike and simply *invite* them to the "closing" component of the experience.

Doing theater is a magical and complicated process. There are so many facets that go into making it something we all love and each of us likes to do it in a different way. *Failure: A Love Story* is my 215th production over 23 years of doing theater. I am quite sure I have never seen this art form done the same way twice.

I have enjoyed and cherished the concerns and questions that have been brought to me thus far by several individuals. Thank you for your passion for making Wayzata Theater what it is, and thank you for working with me as I learn about what currently exists and offer ways that I can help tweak and strengthen your great program and establish some needed and desired consistency amongst it's practices.

With my deepest admiration,

Dennis Joslyn