

Students get behind-the-scenes training for technical theater jobs

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It takes more than just a star to put on a show – there's a lot of behind-the-scenes work too.

And so [the Latino Theater Company's Play at Work program](#) is teaching local high school students and young adults the skills they need to get technical work in the entertainment industry.

The program meets three times a week, for six weeks. While there, the students rotate through workshops where they learn skills like adjusting and programming stage lights, or setting up microphones and sound for an event.

"If they have these basic skills understood, then they are able to apply that in real world situations," explained Noah Gamboa, who oversees lighting at the Los Angeles Theatre Center and teaches Play at Work students.

By "real world situations," Gamboa means jobs. When the students finish the program, the Los Angeles Theatre Center and the Latino Theater Company take them on as apprentices and pay them to work the theater's shows and events. According to the program's coordinator, they make above minimum wage.

That has made all the difference for Los Angeles Academy of Arts and Enterprise senior Jakelinne Gonzalez.

"I live in South Central," Gonzalez said. "If it weren't [for the] programs they offer for theater and for stage managing and all that, I don't know where else I would have gotten an internship, or met friends that have all these different arts skills."

Gonzalez says she loves art. She has starred in one of her high school's plays – and she's even written one – but she didn't think she'd be the type of person to set up microphones for a show.

"I never took sound into consideration," she explained. "I thought it was just a few buttons."

But now she's almost half-way through her training through Play at Work, and she's seeing things differently. She says she notices the technical aspects of productions more now, and she hopes to use these skills future shows.

"I learned how to do codes for lights, how to program and install lights properly in a theater. In sound, I'm learning how to mix now, " Gonzalez said. "Also, I learned how to tie cords and stuff, because that's really important, apparently. If you don't know how to do that, you don't get hired even. It's that important."

Gonzalez doesn't quite know what she wants to do as a career. As she puts it, she's "just all over the arts," juggling between fashion design, directing, and cinematography. But, she says she knows that the skills she's learning will make her more hireable in whatever art-related field she chooses.

And, they'll help her get into college. She says it's always been both her dream and her mother's dream for her to go to school.

"I'm first-generation, so you know how in college, you need a lot of extracurricular activities? If it weren't to be for this, I honestly don't know what I'd be doing," Gonzalez said.