

**BRYAN TOWNSEND**  
STATE SENATOR  
11<sup>TH</sup> District



SENATE  
STATE OF DELAWARE  
411 LEGISLATIVE AVENUE  
DOVER, DELAWARE 19901

Secretary Mark Murphy  
Delaware Department of Education  
Fourth Floor  
820 N. French St.  
Wilmington, DE 19801

VIA HAND DELIVERY AND EMAIL

December 3, 2014

Dear Secretary Murphy,

I write in support of Gateway Lab Charter School (“Gateway”) and ask that you too support renewal of Gateway's charter notwithstanding the recent recommendations of the Charter School Accountability Committee. I am unable to attend the public meeting scheduled for December 10. I trust you will accept this letter and the concerns I express, and will take the same responsive actions, as if I had spoken these words on December 10.

From inception in 2009, Gateway has been a school focused on meeting the needs of students with Individualized Education Plans and special needs. The percentage of these students among the total of all Gateway students clearly shows that Gateway has remained focused on its mission, even though Gateway did not seek a special interest preference (and to be measured by alternative goals and metrics) until this past summer. With Gateway now slated to be evaluated under an alternative framework upon the conclusion of this school year—and with Gateway just recently having completed a comprehensive analysis and begun a thorough implementation of recommended changes—a decision to close Gateway is premature.

It is important to consider several changes Gateway has made, including: investing in a high-quality leader with experience leading a school serving primarily special education students; revamping its curriculum; and revising staffing and focusing professional development for staffing to address the specific needs of student learning. Additionally, the path Gateway is traveling is similar to the journey of Positive Outcomes Charter School. Positive Outcomes is the only other charter school measured by an alternate performance framework. Positive

Outcomes was granted renewal even though the school had not met standards of academic performance under the alternate metrics. Importantly, Positive Outcomes had shown growth toward meeting the standards, and in fact met the standard this year under the alternate measures.

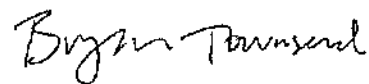
A comparison of Gateway's recent performance to the standards under the alternate framework suggests that Gateway is on a trajectory similar to Positive Outcomes at the time of the latter's renewal: trending towards meeting the standard and likely to meet that standard within two years. It also is laudable that Gateway has begun to hold itself to an even higher standard. As part of a commitment to monitoring and impacting student learning and academic growth and to developing student-specific interventions, Gateway has gone above and beyond State requirements (and other charter schools) by monitoring specific instructional growth metrics for Gateway students and formalizing this approach in the Gateway charter agreement and contract. We should permit this approach to develop momentum and realize the full potential it so clearly holds.

I close on a note of deep concern but equally deep hope. Upon announcement of the Charter School Accountability Committee's decision to recommend non-renewal of Gateway's charter, the community of northern Delaware was flooded with the words and tears of Gateway parents, who feared their children would have to attend public schools that they assert will not (and did not) serve their children well. No matter how laudable and specialized Gateway's mission and efforts are, no parent or child should ever have to fear attendance at a traditional public school. Yet this is the reaction we invite every day with the laws, regulations, policies, and approaches that have taken hold here in Delaware. The reaction of the Gateway community evidences to me the deep, tragic schisms that exist in Delaware public education. This schism stems from a failure over the years to be proactive in utilizing the mechanisms of charter schools and school choice to develop cutting-edge, effective approaches to education that are immediately translated throughout the broader education system. Lessons learned at Gateway should be translated into effective practices at all Delaware public schools serving students with special needs, just as Gateway should be open to learning about the development of effective practices that are in fact occurring in traditional district schools. As I understand the status of special-needs education in Delaware, this kind of collaboration has not occurred, even as Delaware students and families desperately (even if unknowingly) await it. This aspect of the Gateway story is all too similar to many of the other charter school stories in Delaware. Under the current system, the full and true impact of an individual school on Delaware's public school system is not felt until: (1) a charter is recommended for non-renewal and parents express their concerns about alternatives, or (2) one of any number of issues reaches a boiling point in the broader education community. In either case, all parents and schoolchildren would have been better served by an education system that focuses on proactive collaboration and that does not resist a candid acknowledgment of the demographic trends that have taken on a life of their own

within the framework of charter schools and school choice in Delaware. These developments, trends, and (increasingly) culture within Delaware's public school system cause me grave concern. I sincerely hope you are willing and able to hear the cries of Gateway's parents as a call to action.

In conclusion, based on the work and improvements underway at Gateway and the passion of the entire Gateway community, I urge you to support renewal of Gateway's charter, to continue to monitor Gateway's performance improvements in the coming year, and to begin steering the Delaware public education system in a new direction of collaboration and optimism.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bryan Townsend".

Bryan Townsend

cc:

Mary Kate McLaughlin, Chief of Staff, Department of Education (via email)

Lindsey O'Mara, Education Policy Advisor to Governor Jack Markell (via email)

Catherine Dolan, Head of School, Gateway Lab Charter School (via letter and email)

**From:** [May Alison](#)  
**To:** [infocso](#)  
**Subject:** another Gateway letter  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 02, 2014 8:53:11 AM

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Constituent Name: Rhonda Berti-Hilt  
Constituent Email: rhonda629@gmail.com  
Constituent Phone: (302) 764-0657  
Constituent Address: 1 Corrinne Court , Wilmington, DE, 19809

Dear Governor Markell,

The renewal process, Charter School Accountability Committee has recommended Gateway Lab School be slated to close at the end of this school year 2014-2015. This is of great interest to me because I am the parent of a child who attends this school. This proposed closure directly impacts not only my daughter, but every student and future students of gateway Lab School.

Gateway Lab school serves a very specific student population. These students have not been able to perform well academically in a traditional inclusive public school setting. In the nearly four years my daughter has attended GLS, she has learned to read and write on grade level, has dramatically improved her attendance, and is meeting IEP goals.

My daughter came to Gateway at the age of 10, unable to read kindergarten level material, little to no writing abilities and very basic, first grade math skills. Even though she was not meeting her IEP goals and showing insufficient progress in learning and retaining basic skills, in her traditional inclusive public school setting, she was promoted each year. Her attendance at this traditional public school was sporadic, with long absences due to her long stays at residential treatment centers. Her instruction was constantly interrupted. When in school, my daughter was given basic accommodations to assist her in her learning. My daughter was in danger of never achieving even a basic education that she is legally entitled to.

Gateway Lab School has changed my daughters future. She no longer is consistently absent because of hospitalization, on the contrary, she has not been hospitalized since her enrollment at Gateway. Her medications have been reduced by half, she no longer suffers from the major symptoms of her disability, and her symptoms no longer interfere with her instruction. She no longer has behavior issues and is meeting developmental milestones appropriate for her age. She loves school, she loves learning, she loves the feeling of success and the empowerment that knowledge brings. She has learned to look to the future and make goals for her future, she wants to attend college. This is something her father and I never thought she would be able to even think about.

Secretary of Education, Mark Murphy, is on record of saying that Gateway Lab School, "after three years I feel you are on the growth track and that you are proficient in meeting your goals." He also mentioned that in three years we are on track for meeting proficiency. Gateway Lab School was also granted the alternative framework designation, but not for this year. We need more time! Mark Murphy needs to give us the three years he said we needed to meet our proficiency. Gateway Lab School is making a difference now and for the future, not only for the students, but for their families, future employers and our communities. Great students equal stronger communities and economic growth. We need this school and more schools like this.

I believe in this school, this issue. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Rhonda Berti-Hilt

**From:** [Joan Beers](#)  
**To:** [infocso](#)  
**Subject:** Closing of Gateway Lab School  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 02, 2014 8:55:23 PM

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My grandson attends the Gateway Lab School. The small class size and individual attention given to each student has been a tremendous asset and benefit to him as well as other students who need this type of instruction. Closing this school based on test results of all students in Delaware is unfair. These students need the programs they are getting at Gateway Lab School. Please reconsider your decision to close this wonderful school that really helps students with learning difficulties.

Sent from my iPad

**From:** [Lorenda Clemmons](#)  
**To:** [infocso](#)  
**Subject:** Concerning Gateway Lab School  
**Date:** Wednesday, December 03, 2014 3:11:33 PM

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To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Lorenda Clemmons. My son is Tye Clemmons, he just started attending Gateway Lab this fall. I have seen a big improvement in his learning and he understands his work. He was coming from another school last year and felt very lost in the classroom. This school has helped him feel more confident to answer questions in school and participate in class a lot. I am so pleased with his progress. He is doing very good in school. I finally found a place that works for him in his learning and understanding in school. I don't know what I would do if this school closes down. I can't send him to another public school.

Please do not close this school.

Thank you,  
Mrs. Lorenda Clemmons

**From:** [Stephen Scheinberg](#)  
**To:** [infocso](#)  
**Cc:** [gicreate@aol.com](#)  
**Subject:** Corrected : Gateway Lab School .  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 02, 2014 6:57:05 PM

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## Gateway Lab School Is A Critically Important Asset.

Gateway Lab School is a public charter school which follows the 45 year **proven model** of its parent, the highly successful Washington DC Lab School which charges approx. \$40,000/yr.

Gateway has more than once been denied a waiver from standardized testing and (I believe) has finally been allowed one starting September 2015. Why not give them the waiver immediately or even retroactively, rather than shutting them down?

Gateway Lab School's population is about 60% "high functioning with various cognitive disconnects", who are unable to relate to standardized and IQ testing, but are capable of learning, progressing and testing well, when individually taught and individually tested according to their IEP's.

If the State of Delaware closes Gateway Lab School, they will either be distributed to local feeder schools, or otherwise "warehoused". This will most likely condemn them to non-academic certificates as has been previously done with dyslexic students. Many if not most of these individuals will never graduate high school or college, never reach their potentials and the world may lose a possible Temple Grandin or Einstein.

If Gateway is closed, Delaware (the only state with an official autism program for young students) will be guilty of:

- negating early progress
- preventing them from becoming productive and contributing citizens
- pushing most of these children back into their shells, causing frustration, confusion and possible anger at those who will misunderstand and mistreat them.

Supporting and furthering Gateway will make Delaware a positive model



for the rest of the country.

**From:** [Johnson Donna R](#)  
**To:** [infocso](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Closing of Gateway Lab School  
**Date:** Wednesday, December 03, 2014 11:08:36 PM

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Donna Johnson  
(sent from my iPhone)

Executive Director  
State Board of Education  
401 Federal Street, Suite 2  
Dover, DE 19901-3639  
302-735-4010  
<http://www.destateboarded.k12.de.us>

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Nichole Smith <[nicholesmith768@yahoo.com](mailto:nicholesmith768@yahoo.com)>  
**Date:** December 3, 2014 at 5:04:07 PM PST  
**To:** "[donna.johnson@doe.k12.de.us](mailto:donna.johnson@doe.k12.de.us)" <[donna.johnson@doe.k12.de.us](mailto:donna.johnson@doe.k12.de.us)>, "[jennifer.nagourney@doe.k12.de.us](mailto:jennifer.nagourney@doe.k12.de.us)" <[jennifer.nagourney@doe.k12.de.us](mailto:jennifer.nagourney@doe.k12.de.us)>, "[mark.murphy@doe.k12.de.us](mailto:mark.murphy@doe.k12.de.us)" <[mark.murphy@doe.k12.de.us](mailto:mark.murphy@doe.k12.de.us)>  
**Subject: Closing of Gateway Lab School**  
**Reply-To:** Nichole Smith <[nicholesmith768@yahoo.com](mailto:nicholesmith768@yahoo.com)>

Our child was diagnosed with ADHD and Anxiety disorder when he was seven years old. From the time he was in preschool we have watched him struggle socially and academically in a public school setting. He was passed on from one grade to the next despite not being at grade level. In second grade we hired a tutor. After her initial evaluation she found that he was still at a kindergarten grade level. He continued to tutor all through second grade and began tutoring four days a week in third grade. Despite all of the tutoring our son was barely passing with C's and D's and fell twenty five percent below standards on the state test. As I had said before our son also struggled socially. He would not look you in the eye when you would talk to him, he did not socialize with other children and hated going to school. Since he did not pass the state test he was finally held back. I believe he was just moved on in kindergarten, first and second grade because they knew it would catch up to him in third grade because he had to pass the state test to be promoted.

Everything changed when my sister told me about Gateway Lab School. After taking a tour of the school we knew our child's experience with school was about to change for the better. When our son left traditional public school he had an IEP for academics, behavior and speech. By the

end of his third grade year at Gateway he only had an IEP for speech. He earned A's and B's the entire third grade year and only fell four percent below standards on the state test. Have you ever considered some children do not test well? A child's growth should not be measured by a test that occurs once a year but by what they are accomplishing all year. Our son received his first report card for fourth grade yesterday and he earned five A's one B and one C. That is growth!

The child we have now that he's in Gateway is not the child we had in traditional public school. He's happy, confident, loves going to school and has tons of friends. He's inspired at Gateway. He comes home and talks about Egypt, the artist Monet and how he liked to paint water lilies.

Gateway has not just had an effect on our sons life but our nieces as well. Prior to Gateway she would get physically ill before going to school. She was made to feel different not just by classmates but by teachers as well. She too has ADHD and struggled academically and socially in a traditional school setting. At Gateway she excels and is accepted for her differences. She too has been inspired. Just a few weeks ago she painted the life cycle of a plant because she just wanted something to do. Gateway is inspiring these children inside and outside of the school.

Putting these children back in a traditional public school is like trying to fit a square in a circle. It just doesn't fit. These children learn differently and deserve the best possible opportunity to be taught in an environment where they can succeed.

Thank you,  
Nathan and Shannan Smith

**From:** [Nagourney Jennifer](#)  
**To:** [infocso](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Gateway Lab School  
**Date:** Wednesday, December 03, 2014 2:28:16 PM

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Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Murphy Mark <[Mark.Murphy@DOE.K12.DE.US](mailto:Mark.Murphy@DOE.K12.DE.US)>  
**Date:** December 3, 2014 at 2:24:30 PM EST  
**To:** Nagourney Jennifer <[Jennifer.Nagourney@doe.k12.de.us](mailto:Jennifer.Nagourney@doe.k12.de.us)>  
**Subject: FW: Gateway Lab School**

Mark T. Murphy

Mark T. Murphy  
Secretary of Education  
Delaware Department of Education  
401 Federal Street, Suite #2  
Dover, DE 19901-3639  
302.735.4000 (T) 302.739.4654 (F)

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Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Sue Thompson [<mailto:sue@beexceptional.biz>]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 03, 2014 8:58 AM  
**To:** Murphy Mark  
**Subject:** Gateway Lab School

I just want to weigh in with my support of Gateway Lab School in Wilmington. I ask that you please keep in mind that these are special needs children. They aren't going to respond to test taking the way other kids are. Closing the school would put a significant number of special needs children in a tough situation--they have stability in a school they like with teachers who care, so to put them into the system where they have to start over would be simply unkind--truly uncharitable. If the Department of Education considers itself a caring institution, the school should remain open. Work with it to bring test scores up--don't shut it down. It would be a disservice to the community and a sincere hardship on parents who have found help for their special needs children.

Of course, if the Department of Education is not concerned with caring for special needs children, then certainly it should follow suit with whatever sensible, bottom-line philosophy it follows and close it down.

I urge you, however, to have a heart and half a mind for what the best course of action for these children should be. Keep Gateway Lab School open.

Sue Thompson  
120 Fairfax Blvd  
Wilmington, DE 19803  
302.723.1960

**From:** [Johnson Donna R](#)  
**To:** [infocso](#)  
**Subject:** Fwd: Please help Gateway Lab School remain open  
**Date:** Monday, December 01, 2014 11:02:35 PM

---

Donna Johnson (Sent from my iPad)  
Executive Director  
State Board of Education  
401 Federal Street, Suite 2  
Dover, DE 19901-3639  
302-735-4010  
[www.destateboarded.k12.de.us](http://www.destateboarded.k12.de.us)  
Twitter: @destateboarded

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Bonnie Kitts <[kitts@comcast.net](mailto:kitts@comcast.net)>  
**Date:** December 1, 2014 at 8:41:03 PM EST  
**To:** <[donna.johnson@doe.k12.de.us](mailto:donna.johnson@doe.k12.de.us)>  
**Cc:** Bonnie Kitts <[kitts@comcast.net](mailto:kitts@comcast.net)>, Dave Kitts  
<[dave\\_kitts@mannington.com](mailto:dave_kitts@mannington.com)>  
**Subject: Please help Gateway Lab School remain open**

Dear Ms. Johnson,

Please do not take away a relatively new and developing Delaware treasure. Please be part of keeping Gateway Lab School (GLS) open.

Our son is 10 with a rare genetic disorder. He is developmentally delayed primarily due to a partial chromosome deletion. Our world moves too fast for him, and it is all he can do to try and keep some semblance of its pace. He is behind in most aspects of a child's life – be it running, reading, writing, or socializing...things most of us take for granted. But he also advances, delights and surprises us each year. He must have closer and quite specific attention and learning accommodations or essential school lessons will simply pass him by. GLS is the setting that provides the unique and necessary structure, attention, and recognition to help him learn and improve versus getting swallowed up within a typical school. The small class size in GLS is of utmost importance to our son.

He is currently in fifth grade at GLS. He reads and writes at second/third grade level. Most everything he does takes much longer to accomplish. He and GLS are using new assistive technology on tools like an iPad. Please go to this

link, <http://voice.adobe.com/v/7v32MsWXqJ3>, to view and listen to a recent book report he completed. To hand write in classic form would have been virtually impossible, thus not allowing him to demonstrate an understanding of the material he read. A speech-to-text technology tool allowed him to produce a viable report on time, demonstrate his comprehension, and enjoy a moment of personal accomplishment. This is one of many specific and tangible examples of GLS working.

We write to plea for your active involvement in seeing to it that Gateway Lab School remains open as an excellent means for assuring students with diverse special needs have a viable place to learn here in Delaware.

It is impressive how quickly GLS has established its identity and school systems. We were shocked by the unexpected decision of the Charter School Accountability Committee to recommend non-renewal for Gateway's charter for the upcoming school year.

It is unclear why this decision was made and we are one of many families very interested in better understanding what is behind this and also changing this thinking. Yes, academically Gateway "failed on paper." However, as you are likely familiar, last spring the DOE urged Gateway to apply for an exemption for testing. Gateway did just that and the exemption was granted. It goes into effect on August 2015 at the exact time that GLS may cease to exist. It does not make sense that the DOE would make such a recommendation for this appropriate exemption only to now recommend closure and without any caution or interim plans.

GLS was designed specifically to help children (like our son). The progressive school and its systems include unique forms of instruction, individual caring, group socializing, and understanding. These are all essential elements for him, and other special need students, to learn and develop successful habits. These facets are often not reflected in standard test scores, but are so essential in establishing a foundation for learning throughout life.

You and the other DOE Administrators along with the Charter School Accountability Committee must know that children with learning differences/special needs will not score on standardized tests the way typical children do. Yet, that knowledge has seemingly been dismissed.

Please get involved with reversing the recommendation for non-renewal. Gateway Lab School should be given more time to grow. It is just getting started!

In addition, please get involved with addressing the absolutely poor timing of such an action. A month ago, the notion of attending a different school was not on the minds of any GLS family members. Now, as we all anxiously await the decision of Mark Murphy, Gateway families are scrambling. Delaware is not a simple state in regard to navigating its school system. There are choice, charters, magnets, public and private schools. Most parents have concerns about what the best school for their child is. The selection process takes time, and extra diligence by special needs parents is essential. Choice open houses are occurring now and winter break is just a few weeks away.

These children and this school need to be assessed by more than a test score and you have both the ability and influence to help make that happen. Time is of the essence. As you certainly know, a public meeting on this topic occurs on December 10<sup>th</sup> and a final decision is said to be imminent, on December 18<sup>th</sup>. Please help assure the right outcome of Gateway Lab School of remaining open occurs.

Sincerely,

Dave and Bonnie Kitts



**From:** [stcathwilm@comcast.net](mailto:stcathwilm@comcast.net)  
**To:** [infocso](#)  
**Subject:** Gateway Lab School  
**Date:** Wednesday, December 03, 2014 12:25:14 PM

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To Whom It May Concern:

The Gateway Lab School offers a wonderful opportunity for students with ADHD to get a good education in a safe, nurturing learning environment. They are under the leadership of a well-respected team, and the children appear to thrive in their surroundings. The recommendations of the DASL on strategies to improve instruction and academic performance were implemented earlier this year, and have resulted in a positive difference, both socially and academically, in the children's performance.

These children with special needs should not be evaluated against standardized tests. Please give them the chance to continue their education at this fine learning institution. Please give Gateway more time!

Respectfully submitted,

Theresa Tremble  
St. Catherine of Siena Church  
Wilmington, DE

**From:** [May Alison](#)  
**To:** [infocso](#)  
**Subject:** Gateway letter  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 02, 2014 8:49:56 AM

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Constituent Name: Elizabeth Upadhyaya  
Constituent Email: [liz.upadhyaya@gmail.com](mailto:liz.upadhyaya@gmail.com)

Dear Governor Markell,

My name is Elizabeth Upadhyaya and I am the stepmother of a sixth grade boy at Gateway Lab School in Wilmington. It is my stepson's second year at Gateway, and my husband, my stepson's mother, and I have been extremely pleased at the way in which our son has progressed academically, emotionally, and socially during his time there. I am very concerned about the possibility of the school closing and am urging you to keep Gateway's doors open.

My stepson is intellectually disabled and has a motor movement disorder, and like over half of the students at Gateway, he is a special education student. Standardized testing does not reflect the true intellect and talents of these unique students, and it would be short sighted to leave them with no educational options but feeder public schools where their needs would not be adequately addressed.

Moreover, as a Registered Nurse who has volunteered with Gateway's school nurse, I have seen first hand the inclusive and safe environment the school provides. Many of the students have medical needs (e.g., asthma, ADHD, seizure disorders, etc.) that could get lost in the shuffle at a larger public school. My stepson has been the recipient of excellent nursing care and monitoring when his movement disorder was at its worse, and I fear that the educational and health care needs of children like him will be ignored in the traditional public school system.

The societal barriers and accompanying struggles that those with special needs have faced are well-documented in the literature. Schools such as Gateway minimize these barriers by helping to meet its students unique needs, thus contributing to this special population's overall well-being. To that end, I urge you to renew Gateway Lab School's charter. Please feel free to contact me if you need additional information ([liz.upadhyaya@gmail.com](mailto:liz.upadhyaya@gmail.com); 215-888-5324).

Sincerely,

Elizabeth (Liz) A. Upadhyaya, BSN

**From:** [May Alison](#)  
**To:** [infocso](#)  
**Subject:** Gateway  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 02, 2014 9:00:32 AM

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Constituent Name: Dave Kitts  
Constituent Email: [kitts@comcast.net](mailto:kitts@comcast.net)  
Constituent Phone: (302) 427-8159  
Constituent Address: 1723 N Rodney Street , Wilmington, DE, 19806

Please do not take away a relatively new and developing Delaware treasure. Keep Gateway Lab School (GLS) open.

Our son is 10 with a rare genetic disorder. He is developmentally delayed primarily due to a partial chromosome deletion. Our world moves too fast for him, and it is all he can do to try and keep some semblance of its pace. He is behind in most aspects of a child's life – be it running, reading, writing, or socializing...things most of us take for granted.

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The Charter School Accountability Committee and the DOE Administrators must know that children with learning differences/special needs will not score on standardized tests the way typical children do. Yet, that knowledge has been seemingly dismissed.

Please help reverse the recommendation for non-renewal. Gateway Lab School should be given more time to grow. It is just getting started!

In addition, please get involved with addressing the absolutely poor timing of such an action. A month ago, the notion of attending a different school was not on the minds of any GLS family members. Now, as we all anxiously await the decision of Mark Murphy, Gateway families are scrambling. Delaware is not a simple state in regard to navigating its school system. There are choice, charters, magnets, public and private schools. Most parents have concerns about what the best school for their child is. The selection process takes time, and extra diligence by special needs parents is essential. Choice open houses are occurring now and winter break is just a few weeks away.

Please meet with Mark Murphy and urge wisdom about this treasure, Gateway Lab School.

As a parent, I invite you to visit Gateway Lab School. Please take a couple hours from your busy day to visit and interact with its students and teachers so that you can see first-hand the learning environment at Gateway.

These special children and this special school need to be assessed by more than a test score and you have both the ability and influence to help make that happen.

Sincerely,

Dave and Bonnie Kitts

**From:** [jennifer.nagourney@doe.k12.de.us](mailto:jennifer.nagourney@doe.k12.de.us)  
**To:** [infocso](#)  
**Subject:** New response for survey "Renewal Public Comment"  
**Date:** Tuesday, December 02, 2014 8:57:56 AM

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## GENERAL RESPONSE INFORMATION

Response Start Time: 12/2/2014 8:47:22 AM

Response End Time: 12/2/2014 8:57:45 AM

IP Address: 98.114.200.49

Completed Survey: Yes

Respondent: Anonymous

## SURVEY RESPONSES

SCORE: 0

1. Full Name  
Susan Jones

2. E-Mail Address  
msfj23@gmail.com

3. Which charter school renewal application do you wish to comment upon?  
Gateway Lab School

4. Comment:

Hello, I am writing on behalf of the STUDENTS at Gateway Lab School. I am asking that the school's charter be renewed and not denied. These students have learning disabilities; of course their test scores will be low. They do not learn or test in the traditional way. There will NOT BE any benefit to the students should this school be closed and they have to return to their feeder school. NO BENEFIT to the these students or the students and staff of the feeder school. How can you expect one teacher to meet all the needs present in the classroom. It's impossible. You are setting up for everyone to fail. You all have been given the tremendous opportunity to help make significant differences in children's lives. Please think about what is best for the students. These students need the learning environment that Gateway Lab school provides. Just listen to what the students here at Gateway and their parents have to say about their school and the benefits their kids are getting. If you shut this school down, you will shut students down....educationally, emotionally and socially. You will be responsible for their decline. Please do not shut this school down. Listen to the students, parents and staff here. They love their school, they are working so hard at helping these kids learn, these kids have found a place to feel safe and nurtured. Why would you take that away? If this were your child, wouldn't you want a school environment that provides an education for your child in a way that helps them? Please, please think about the kids, think about what is best for them. If you do that then you will easily conclude that Gateway needs to stay

open. Thank you.

**From:** [Joyce D. Henderson](mailto:Joyce.D.Henderson)  
**To:** [Nathaniel.R.Schwartz@dupont.com](mailto:Nathaniel.R.Schwartz@dupont.com)  
**Cc:** infocso; [Murphy Mark](#); [Nagourney Jennifer](#); [Johnson Donna R](#); [donnaellie@verizon.net](mailto:donnaellie@verizon.net)  
**Subject:** Re: Support for Gateway Lab School  
**Date:** Monday, December 01, 2014 11:16:43 PM  
**Attachments:** [image002.png](#)  
[image004.png](#)  
[image006.png](#)  
[image008.png](#)  
[image012.png](#)

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Well stated Nate...nice job!

Sent from my iPad

Joyce Dennis Henderson  
Assistant Director, Employer Partnerships  
University of Delaware

On Dec 1, 2014, at 10:52 PM, "[Nathaniel.R.Schwartz@dupont.com](mailto:Nathaniel.R.Schwartz@dupont.com)" <[Nathaniel.R.Schwartz@dupont.com](mailto:Nathaniel.R.Schwartz@dupont.com)> wrote:

Letter of Support for Gateway Lab School:

Dear DOE Secretary of Education Murphy, Executive Director Johnson (State Board of Education), and Executive Director Nagourney (Charter Office, DOE):

My name is Nate Schwartz and I am a proud parent of a 5<sup>th</sup> grader at Gateway Lab School. I am also one of the parents who personally showed up and spoke at the Wednesday, October 8<sup>th</sup> Renewal Hearing on behalf of my daughter's school. Our youngest daughter started attending the Gateway Lab School in Wilmington, DE. She was originally at RCCSD's Richardson Park Learning Center. I have been, and still am, very active in the RCCSD's Inclusion Implementation plans. We have been so impressed with Gateways staff and the new learning opportunities offered to our daughter. Since she has been attending Gateway, we have seen a dramatic improvement in her curricula. For the first time in her life she's been given opportunities to the types of projects typical children her age do. She recently wrote her first book report and stood up in class to present it. She's made a model car that involved physics and motion. She's written papers on current events in and given her opinion on how they impact the community. She's expanding her mind and abilities with the help and support of the wonderful teachers at Gateway. We have already had our daughter's first IEP meeting at Gateway and were so impressed at how well they seemed to know and understand her after only a few months. On Thursday, November 20<sup>th</sup> my wife and I sat in a packed room full of Gateway parents and listened to testimonies about happy thriving students.

Catherine Dolan, Head of School, held two Parent Meetings that evening to share the school's strategy moving forward. We heard from many parents who shared their

personal experiences of quantitative evidence of growth in both academic and social skills in each and every one of their children. Many of these children were unsuccessful in feeder pattern and parochial schools. Sadly, they were often socially ostracized and labelled disruptive. They lacked the support and understanding they needed and started to fall further and further behind. Often they dreaded school and didn't want to go. These kids had the odds stacked against them until they found a safe haven in Gateway. They are accepted, understood and enriched at this wonderful school. Now they hold their heads up high, look people in the eye and can't wait go to school every day to learn with their friends. These testimonials are to be heard in the upcoming hearing at the Carvel State Office Building on December 10<sup>th</sup> and via email submission of Public Comment.

Below is the Gateway Lab School's Mission Statement. It is very clear in its goals and objectives and, in many ways it is exceeding expectations of all the families with children attending today.

Mission Statement:

***To provide an extraordinary educational opportunity for children who are struggling to achieve academic success in a traditional school environment, utilizing research-based intervention strategies and a highly tailored, arts-based learning environment that seeks to identify and capitalize on a student's strengths and interests.***

In an email sent to State Representative Williams on Monday, November 24<sup>th</sup>, Ms. Nagourney, in response to Ms. Johnson's email to State Representative Williams on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, the following points were made:

"Even though Gateway was not put on formal review, it cannot be said that they did not have advance notice of poor academic performance or that they could be facing non-renewal. The ratings in the Academic Framework are very clear about where the school is performing in reference to the standard. For the last 3 years, Gateway's performance has been rated "Falls Far Below Standard" overall on the Academic Framework, but also received that rating in almost every category. On April 30, the DOE released a Renewal Report to the school that identified the low academic performance as a potential cause for non-renewal. I have also had conversations with Gateway's leadership team and several board members, where they confirmed that they understood that non-renewal was a possibility because of the Academic Framework ratings."

Again, referencing the CSAS Initial Meeting held on October 14<sup>th</sup> with the initial report published on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, page 6 of 9, Ms. Johnson asked about the percentage of intense and complex students at the school. Ms. Field Rogers stated: "there were 212 total units, of which 7 were complex, 41 intense, and 71 basic." Including the



additional 18-19 students with 504 Plans, a majority of the school is made up of Students with Disabilities (SWDs).

As reported in the 2014 Student Achievement Results Report (Dr. Gerri M. Marshall, Office of Research, Evaluation, and Professional Learning) as presented at the RCCSD Board Meeting on Wednesday, November 19<sup>th</sup>, it is very evident that there is understandably a huge gap in SWD students and non-SWD students:

<image002.png>

<image004.png>

Further breaking it down for SWD children:

<image006.png><image008.png>

<image010.jpg> <image012.png>

As a parent of a child 'classified' as SWD, I understand the responsibility of a school district and/or a charter school's responsibility, such as Gateway Lab School, to deliver my daughter the best opportunity to succeed in an educational setting. However, it takes ALL stakeholder participation, especially parents, to assure each individual child finds the right setting to assure their individual success. I am not a firm believer of over-emphasizing the importance of standardized testing to rate schools. More emphasis should be placed on individual achievement. One thing I have learned over the past year from my experience on the whole RCCSD Inclusion process is "looking at the Big Picture". There is no simple solution for rating children like my daughter. It takes hard work and dedication to guide her successfully on a daily basis. Gateway is helping tremendously in providing her this opportunity. The school's administration, staff, and Board are dedicated to the best outcome for all the students.

The school is only 4 years in existence. This is the first time its charter has gone up for renewal. Catherine Dolan took over as Head of School 1 year 3 months ago and has cleaned up many of the early start-up issues the school went through. Gateway reached out to the Delaware Academy for School Leadership from the University of Delaware to come in and review and provide feedback on the school's curriculum. Delaware Academy for School Leadership is usually called in to help fix a problem school's curriculum. Catherine and her team were proactive and had them come in and help assess and enhance the rigor of the curriculum at Gateway in ELA, Math, and all areas. This new curricula was implemented this fall.

Overall, the school needs more time! It is on the right track and working hard for the betterment of our children with Special Needs. If you have NOT personally had the opportunity to visit our school I would highly encourage you to do so prior to making such a fateful decision of our children's future. Come see the great workings of our school's leadership and staff.

Thank you, in advance, for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

## ***Nate Schwartz***

Nate Schwartz

Concerned Parent of a 5<sup>th</sup> Grader at Gateway Lab School

Nate Schwartz

Principal Investigator

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**From:** [Hale, Hunter T.](#)  
**To:** [infocso](#)  
**Cc:** ["Angela Hale"](#)  
**Subject:** Support for Gateway Lab School  
**Date:** Wednesday, December 03, 2014 9:36:38 AM

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To whom it may concern,

This email serves as a vote of support for the Gateway Lab School to retain its Charter.

My son Trey Hale is currently in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade. He started at Gateway Lab School in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade. We moved him from Brandywine Springs Elementary School to ensure that his special education needs can be facilitated in a more individualized and specialized approach. Since his transition to the Gateway Lab School he has excelled emotionally and academically. This year he is on honor roll. In addition, he enjoys going to school and is enthusiastic about his progress.

The closure of Gateway Lab School would be a disservice to him and the many students who are in desperate need of such a specialized learning environment. This type of learning environment cannot be provided at traditional public schools. I fear that my son's educational and emotional progress may regress if this school is closed.

I plead with those charged with the decision to close Gateway Lab School to thoroughly evaluate this situation. There is a need and a market for schools of this nature to provide a nurturing learning environment to a population of students who learn differently. Closure of this school will have detrimental life lasting affects for the future of many students these students at this school.

Sincerely,

Hunter Hale, S.E.O.  
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Bureau of Environmental Health Protection  
601 Westtown Road, Suite 288  
West Chester, Pa. 19380  
Tel. 610.344.6246  
Fax. 610-344-5934  
[hhale@chesco.org](mailto:hhale@chesco.org)

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reply e-mail and delete the message. Thank you very much.

**From:** [Sandy & Jim Meyer](#)  
**To:** [infocso](#)  
**Cc:** [angelahale75@gmail.com](#)  
**Subject:** Support for Gateway Lab School  
**Date:** Wednesday, December 03, 2014 2:39:25 PM

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Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing on behalf of a friend's child who has benefited greatly from his educational experience at Gateway Lab School. It is my understanding that you recently announced that the charter for this school will be revoked. I encourage you to reconsider your decision. As a result of the education my friend's child received at Gateway, he is now reading at grade level, enjoying school, and has been so supported by the staff and teachers that he now has the self-esteem to know that he can succeed and excel. Not only that, he has a greater compassion and empathy with those who have difficulty learning.

In addition, where there are children who may not fit the "average" description of a student, I also encourage you to find alternative ways of assessment for them and their schools. The last 21 years of my working career were spent in Adult Education, specifically English as a Foreign Language and Adult Literacy. Although we, as administrators, teachers, or tutors, knew the students were making great strides toward their goals, often standardized testing was inadequate to show that. I urge you to find better ways of assessing children who are struggling with learning differences and schools that are equipping them.

Lastly, I strongly urge you to **not** revoke the charter for Gateway Lab School and to continue to support them!

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Sandra Meyer