

Delaware Education Secretary Mark Murphy
Townsend Building
401 Federal Street, Suite 2
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Secretary Murphy,

December 10, 2014

It is our wish that our children could attend the school closest to our home, or ANY school in Newark (where we live) for that matter, and have the same exceptional, inclusive educational and social learning experiences as they have had at Gateway Lab School – but, in our experience as parents with school-aged children, that has just NOT been the case. Those options do not truly exist for children with learning differences. Yes, everyone IS different, and our children both know it's perfectly okay to be different, but it's NOT okay to be made to FEEL different and to receive a less comprehensive education due to those learning differences. That has been our children's collective experience prior to Gateway.

While no school may seem perfect, especially to “high-maintenance” students and their parents, the Gateway Lab School team diligently strives to meet the many faceted needs of ALL students, utilizing as many teaching strategies as necessary to patiently teach complex concepts to our children, and that's not lost on us. After the school day ends, many Gateway teachers and staff stay late and host extra-curricular clubs – everything from Math and Chess clubs, to Guitar Club and Band, to Basketball, Tennis and the Running Club, to the Hiking and Fishing Clubs – this is a far from complete list. These inclusive clubs cross gender, age, and disability lines, offering young impressionable children the invaluable opportunity to try something new, in a social setting with their peers (SO important for my daughter with Autism), without fear of failure. They also offer at-risk children an opportunity to spend quality time with adult mentors, outside of school, and learn positive ways to channel energy and ability. These clubs are the counter-part extension to the academic clubs held during the school day, as part of the unique arts-based teaching strategies employed at Gateway. The result: students look forward to new experiences, both in and out of school.

Thanks to Gateway, there IS an alternative to home-schooling your children when you think that you are out of options - because your child has fallen between the cracks and is failing to thrive in their neighborhood feeder school or in an expensive, inflexible private school. Thanks to Gateway, “typical children”, side-by-side with students who have - dyslexia, ADD, OCD, ODD, mental illness, Cerebral Palsy, Aspergers, Autism, and many other educational and medical diagnoses all receive a custom-tailored educational experience in one community-oriented school setting.

We, as their parents, carefully researched and chose Gateway Lab School for BOTH of our children, out of ALL the options available in New Castle County, and at great personal expense - often ferrying them to/from school and declining better paying jobs with less flexibility, to ensure that our children receive a good education in a nurturing environment. We have given up outside obligations to focus our time, energy, and passion into ensuring the successful future of Gateway Lab School, both for our children and others like them. If Gateway were to close, we don't know what we could possibly do to ensure the continuum of progression of our children's current educational and maturational growth.

You see, our family is entrenched in an educational journey with Gateway. Our son is three months into third grade while our daughter is in seventh grade. Both are thriving in this school. For the last three years, our daughter has been immersed in this arts-integrated, sensory-rich, responsive classroom. In this short span we've witnessed her grow and transform- a lost child who could only "mand" (please see attach doc for explanation of manding) for what she needed to a thriving teenager who is learning at school how to advocate for herself.

Autism had taken our child's voice, held hostage her innate ability to communicate and interact with the outside world. In five years, she attended four schools under the statewide Delaware Autism Program. While the early intervention of ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) had helped, the annual transition to a new school set her back, time and time again. By her 3rd grade year, she was fully integrated with her DAP peers in a lecture-based classroom in our home district - and she had begun to fail and fall behind. She had outlived, outlasted, and outsmarted ABA and DAP. We were left without options, save one... a new charter school, based on the teaching methodology of The Lab School of DC, serving students with moderate to high-level learning difficulties in an experiential and multisensory educational environment. We closely followed the charter application through the DOE process, read everything we could about the model, and embraced the opportunity to tour the Lab School in Washington D.C.

We knew we had found our next educational home - the vehicle to the next level - with Gateway Lab School, a free public charter school in Delaware.

Now, in seventh grade and in our fourth year with GLS, we want to share with you the data that WE use to gauge our daughter's success:

- Manding has morphed to conversation on preferred topics;
- Those conversation have transformed to self-advocacy and, after nine years of year-round school, our daughter was able to inform us that she needed a summer off - she was burnt-out;
- Her self-advocacy has helped her develop friendships - meaningful relationships with other children and with her mentors;
- She is almost always reality-oriented now - she is able to plug into the outside world, yours and mine, for hours on end, with only minor ticks and quiet scripted speeches as the only outward sign of her autism;
- She's perfecting her use of newly acquired obscenities and learning in which environments and situations it's acceptable to use them (although obscenities are an absolute affront to most parents of teenagers, this is still quite a feat for a child who once could not verbally communicate much of anything, especially feelings



of frustration, and was locked in her own world.)

- Because she can now communicate verbally, we are experiencing considerably fewer meltdowns – both at home and at school. Our daughter arrived at Gateway with a behavior plan from DAP that was an inch thick. Over the past few years, it's been reduced to just a few pages. With the proper motivation, she's developing the skills to moderate her negative behaviors.
- With her growing ability to verbally interact with her environment and peers, she's transformed into a child who loves coming to school and her attendance has improved dramatically. In the past, Delia has missed up to 24 days of school due to autism and its challenges. This year, she has only missed 2 days – both due to illness.
- We regularly see our daughter reading for pleasure now, a hobby that comes hand-in-hand with improved reading comprehension. Her Gateway team is helping to develop her mental map, creating synapse connections that help our daughter understand why it's important (and enjoyable) to comprehend what she reads.
- She eats what we eat! Within the past year, she's finally eased away from the all-white plate to eating a variety of meats, vegetables, and even bananas! She tries new foods regularly now. We are certain that this is related to the confidence and flexibility she has developed with the support and encouragement provided by her Gateway team.
- Finally, we are now the proud parents of a daughter who is immersed in the school culture by her own choice - who seeks out both in-school clubs and after-school activities without prompting. She has been a member of the chorus, plays the flute in band, and participates in the Running Club, Hiking Club, Tennis, and, most recently, Basketball. Gateway has given our daughter a sense of identity – she is a GATEWAY GLADIATOR, and proud of it!

Our daughter has had three and half years to hone her skills and craft her identity at Gateway. It is our hope that our son will receive the same opportunity. He is a twice-gifted Gateway third-grader. He comes to Gateway with sensory issues, limb pain, perceptual challenges, under-developed social skills, and school phobia (a severe form of separation anxiety that he's had since pre-school.) He does, however, pass "the test." For years, his over-developed verbal skills masked his other deficits. At Gateway, he is in classroom with eleven peers. His teacher actually has the time to work with him and address his social weaknesses while providing him with a challenging curriculum – individualized education at its best! Isn't that what we are all striving for?



Admittedly, it is still early in his Gateway journey – too soon to collect longitudinal data. But, we are

seeing improvements, especially with his school phobia. In the span of a few short months at Gateway, it has been almost completely eliminated. And, because his anxiety has decreased so significantly, we have eliminated his “lates to school” and the repeat warnings received by mail about his excessive absences. He only has two absences this year - both due to illness.

As you can see, we are thrilled with our children's educational, emotional, and maturational growth at Gateway and the gains seen therein. Standardized test scores just don't tell the whole story. We encourage you to get to know our children, and their exceptional school, and rate our achievement on more than one measure of success. Please support us in our journey through special education by recommending Gateway's renewal.

Sincerely,

Robert and Elizabeth Scheinberg

What is Manding?

ABA is a therapy which uses behavior theory that teaches people with autism how to respond appropriately, make requests, and behave as typically as possible. ABA therapy often begins with teaching clients how to make “mands” or requests (“mand” comes from the command) . When a client makes his request appropriately, he or she receives a “re-enforcer.”

What makes a mand different from a command? A mand is a request, but what matters is what comes before and after the request. Prior to the request comes some sort of deprivation or aversion.



Source: Abouthealth.com, What is Manding in Autism Therapy

Mr.Murphy

12/10/14

I am a teacher that lives in the Christina school district and teaches for Redclay. I have a son attending Gateway. He is halfway through his third grade year. Sir, I understand the politics of a situation such as this but I urge you and the board to reconsider the decision to close Gateway for these reasons.

First, I understand the inclusion movement at the High School level. I see its benefits for the students. But at this level of growth not all students are suited for traditional school settings. In a traditional setting my son was consistently left behind and frustrated. I do not blame the teachers; they can only perform so many miracles at that age, when they have 25 to 30 kids, plus IEP students and no Para to help.

Since attending Gateway, my son in three months is reading at his third grade level. His arithmetic comprehension has exceeded anything he did in a normal setting. The biggest accomplishment is the frustration blow ups are few and far between. Normally he would have two to three meltdowns a week at home from stress and not understanding. Now he may have one every two weeks. Normally he is very shy; he has participated in afterschool tennis and other afterschool activities. I can see the confidence. Normally he cannot make decisions for himself on what he would like to do. I can see he is becoming more self-confident and sure of himself.

These may not be test scores on paper, but as a parent I really do not care about test scores, what is most important to me is that my son is growing and learning. If you take this away from these kids you are doing a big disservice to these students. They are going to go back to their feeder schools and be lost.

Give Ms. Dolan the time she is asking for. She has shown growth in the last year. Look at the staff; they all take less pay then many of us to teach there. You have a dedicated staff that wants to be a part of something good. How many other schools can you say, the teachers will take less money to teach. They are devoted and inspired to reach these students.

Set these students up to succeed in High School and beyond by keeping Gateway alive. I know you have had some bad press in the past with decisions to keep certain Charters alive, but this is a good place for these kids. They are making a difference, maybe not on test score level yet, but in their lives Gateway is making a difference.

Thank you for your time

Julius A Rosato jr

Culinary Arts Educator

Rebecca Anne Girtten

1515 Delaware Ave. #3 • Wilmington, DE 19806 • (434) 221.9112 • rebecca.girtten@gmail.com

10 December 2014

Secretary Mark Murphy
Delaware Department of Education
The Townsend Building
401 Federal Street, Suite 2
Dover, DE 19901

Sent via email

Dear Secretary Murphy:

I strongly urge you and the Department of Education to reject the recommendation of the Charter School Accountability Committee regarding Gateway Lab School and to renew the school's charter for five years.

As a former member of Gateway's board of directors, continued supporter of the school, and a former educator, I can attest to both the positive impact that Gateway has on its students and their families and the tremendous changes the school leadership has instituted this school year. Their diligent work to provide a rigorous academic program that best meets the specific learning needs of *every* student is commendable, especially given the challenges of educating such a large and diverse population of special education students. As a former educator yourself, you well know that gains in student performance are never immediately apparent. It would set a terrible example if you were to decide that improvements a school makes too close in time to the consideration of a renewal application to be reflected in test scores is to be ignored.

Additionally, given the DOE's approval of Gateway's charter modification to be classified as a school serving an at-risk population, it is unreasonable to hold the school accountable for test scores that qualify as low against a benchmark that wasn't reflective of the student population.

Gateway proudly serves some of Delaware's neediest students, who are otherwise relegated to schools that fail to provide them with the services and supports they need. While that in and of itself is unlawful and I urge you to address that issue, I also urge you to see the significant and irrevocable damage that would be done to these students if you shutter the school. I respectfully request that you vote to renew Gateway's charter.

Sincerely,



Rebecca A. Girtten
Former Board Member

*you once trusted me
enough to ask me to
consult on marketing DE's
public schools. we hope
you will trust my judgment
again on this.
thank you!
-RAG*

XFINITY Connect

bevnickcam@comcast.net

+ Font Size -

Closure of Gateway Lab school

From : bevnickcam@comcast.net

Tue, Nov 25, 2014 12:01 PM

Subject : Closure of Gateway Lab school**To :** mark murphy <mark.murphy@doe.k12.de.us>

Please do not close Gateway lab School. This is a unique school which has been a godsend for the unique population that attends this school. My daughter was lost at other elementary schools, even with special education provided. At Gateway she has thrived academically, emotionally and socially. Before she was labelled as having ADD as she was lost in the classrooms exhibiting disinterest. At Gateway she is an involved student, she participates in classroom discussions, she has a voice, she isn't being judged on what she says or how she says it. Students work together to help compensate for each other's unique disabilities. She has never experienced any bullying in the 3 years she has been here. She comes home and tells me what she does at school which shows that she is interested in learning. My daughter was very introverted before, she now has friends from school and does not feel alienated. She has learning disability but here she feels empowered not disabled and I contribute the environment at Gateway for enabling this to occur. She gets the ability to join clubs and is not judged on whether she's a good artist or a good musician.

Thank you.

Beverley Pottinger.

XFINITY Connect

bevnickcam@comcast.net

+ Font Size -

Closing of Gateway Lab School

From : cpottinger1@comcast.net

Thu, Nov 27, 2014 09:14 PM

Subject : Closing of Gateway Lab School**To :** mark murphy <mark.murphy@doe.k12.de.us>**Cc :** Beverley Pottinger <bevnickcam@comcast.net>

Dear Mr. Murphy, Please do not close Gateway Lab School. Since starting at Gateway Lab School my niece reading skills has increased. She's not afraid to read anymore. The environment is very conducive to learning. She told me that the teachers understand that she is slow and don't make her feel stupid like teachers at other schools did. She has not experienced any bullying at this school like she and other kids who have a learning disability has at other schools. At your school, she and the other kids are taught to work together and help each other at all times. she has gained a lot of confidence as she goes before the class and read her weekly projects and isn't afraid the other kids in the classroom will laugh at her when she make mistakes.

She has began to socialize with her classmates where before she isolated herself. I have toured the school and have never heard a teacher raised their voice and the classmates are orderly. When I look in the classroom, she is focused and seems to be interested in participating in what was being taught. This is a healthy environment for my niece with her learning disability, the change with her academically and socially is remarkable, often-time I cant even believe this is the same niece I knew before she entered your learning facility.

Sincerely,

Courtney A. Pottinger (Uncle)

Pottinger, Beverley E

From: Melton, Tasha A.
Sent: Friday, November 28, 2014 9:51 AM
To: Pottinger, Beverley E
Subject: FW: Gateway Lab School

From: Nagourney Jennifer [<mailto:Jennifer.Nagourney@doe.k12.de.us>]
Sent: Tuesday, November 25, 2014 9:37 PM
To: Melton, Tasha A.
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Re: Gateway Lab School

Thank you very much for your comment. It will be entered into the public record for the renewal process, and will be reviewed by the Secretary of Education and the State Board of Education as part of the decision-making process.

My very best,

Jennifer M. Nagourney, J.D.
Executive Director, Charter School Office
Delaware Department of Education
401 Federal Street, Suite #2
Dover, DE 19901-3639
302.735.4020 (T) 302.739.4483 (F)

This email and any attachments are confidential or legally privileged. Any dissemination, copying or use of this communication by or to anyone other than the designated and intended recipient(s) is unauthorized. If you are not the intended recipient, please delete or destroy this communication immediately.

Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail

From: Melton, Tasha A. <Tasha.Melton@va.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, November 25, 2014 10:54 AM
To: 'donnajohnson@doe.k12.de.us'; Nagourney Jennifer; Murphy Mark
Subject: Gateway Lab School

To all it may concern,

Please don't close Gateway Lab School. My coworker commends this school all the time. She tells me about how well her daughter is progressing there. Before she started at Gateway Lab School, she was withdrawn and inverted. Now she socializes with her peers, she's made plenty of friends, and, she tells her mother how comfortable she feels when she's in school. Her daughter's reading and writing skills have improved tremendously since she began attending Gateway Lab School. My coworker was devastated when she heard the school was closing and if she feels that way then I am certain the other parents of children attending Gateway Lab school probably feel the same way. Please take a moment to consider the students involved in this matter.

Thank you in advance,
Mrs. Tasha Ervin

Gateway Lab School

Physical Education and Health Dept.

2501 Centerville Road, Wilmington, DE 19808 302-633-4091



Mr. Murphy,

When you walk into the doors at Gateway Lab School, you enter a magical place. Children's lives are being changed. They want to come to school. They want to be in the classroom. They want to do their best. Why? They are finally at a place where they are comfortable, accepted and feel loved.

Being one of the physical education teachers at GLS I get to see every student everyday. I get to watch every student grow each day. I have students who first came to school timid and scared to say two words in front of their peers. Now they are volunteering to lead a group of their peers and teach them skills that will prepare them for competition.

We have students who would do anything possible to get out of class when they first started. Now they get upset when they are not in class right as the bell rings. Even tears roll down their faces when they don't score as high as they wanted on testing, but the growth they showed is incredible.

This is only a small piece of Gateway Lab School. It does not matter who you are, administration, school board, teacher, paraprofessional, student, we are a unit. We are one team. I have attached letters from several of my students describing their story and feelings about Gateway Lab School. Their voices are the most important of them all. Our children are our future. Lets listen to them.

Sincerely,

Nicole Myers

Dear Mr. Murphy

I have a few reasons you shouldn't close down our school. Before this school I went to Olive B. Loss Elementary when I was there I had horrible grades and everyday I would go home and think to myself "I'm stupid" I thought I was the dumbest person ever and school days were constant struggles to pay attention. but here my grades flew from D's to A's.

To top it all off I got my self confidence back I hadn't had that since Kindergarten. So what I'm saying is please don't close our school

Sincerely, Matthew D

Dear, Mr. Murphey

Gateway Lab school is a great school to go to unlike other schools, we prevent bullying to help students feel safe and protected. The teachers here are sweet, kind and are there to help us when we need them the most. At my old school I always had trouble in many subjects, but now here at Gateway I understood and learned more than I did before. My grades here weren't perfect but they were better than before. When I first came to this school I was so scared because I didn't want to fail in my learning. But I soon felt like this was a second home to me. I made so many friends and I have learned so much, but Gateway is also a school to help children who need help because of their disability they need more attention to learn and Gateway gives them the attention but here every student is treated equally. I just hope I can come here next year.

Sincerely,

Cynthia C.

Dear Mr. Murphy

The reason I want this school to stay open is because at my other school I got bullied by kids, and the teachers were not helping me when I needed help. The kids and teachers were mean. It's better at gateway because my friends are nice, I get help when I need it, and the teachers are nice, I don't get bullied and it's fun at gateway. When I'm here I'm happy. I am starting to understand more academically at gateway because the teachers are helping me. With math I am able to understand it because I have an A as my grade compared to my other school.

Please
leave my school
open

Sincerely
Gabriella A

Dear Mr. Murphy

This School has helped me out
alot. I have gotten good grades
and I understand my work now.

I have good friend and I am
happy here. Alot of people need

this School. My decast scores are
alot higher than they used to be.

The teachers help you out
and they can help you understand.

This School is a bully free zone
and people treat you the way you

would want to be treated. So I
hope you can understand and keep

this School open next year.

Sincerely

Mather R.

Dear Mr. Murphy,

We are so happy at this school.

I have friends but, if the school closes I won't see them again and I have a hard time making friends. The teachers are awesome and kind. They make me understand more about learning and give me something to think about. My favorite thing to do in school is math. We do division and factors. Multiplication and exponents are my favorite things to do in math. I have a B in math and this is the beginning. At the end of this year I'm going for an A. I'm working really hard this year to improve my grades. I have a hard time with reading. Miss Campbell is my ELA teacher and she is working so hard to help me get better. She has taught me to go with the flow. She gave me a list of words and I had to study them. That helped a lot! I am a GLS student and I'm

proud to say it. If you close the school I might have a hard time making friends and good grades because I might not be comfortable.

I'm really shy when every thing is new. At the new school might not teach the same way and it will not be fun to me. It will be scary. I will buy a new uniform and it's a pain in the neck for my mom and dad. Please don't shut down the school. We need this school to stay. I need this school to stay.

6 grade student,
Gianne.*5

[Print](#)[Close](#)

Fwd: gateway lab school renewal

From: **jackie graham** (livviesmom@hotmail.com)
Sent: Thu 12/04/14 11:05 AM
To: nathaniel.r.schwartz@dupont.com (nathaniel.r.schwartz@dupont.com)

Sent from my iPad

Begin forwarded message:

From: Jackie <livviesmom@hotmail.com>
Date: November 19, 2014 at 9:39:39 PM EST
To: "infoCSO@doe.k12.de.us" <infoCSO@doe.k12.de.us>
Subject: gateway lab school renewal

Please find this email my vote to renew Gateway Lab Schools Charter. My daughter started 5th grade there this year, since her previous school failed in providing her appropriate IEP and OT services for her processing disorder. This school is the only school in DE that caters to children who cannot thrive and perform well in a traditional school setting. My daughter has gone from Cs last year, which she struggled to achieve, to straight As so far. She is excited to go to school and is eager to do her homework assignments because she is no longer struggling to comprehend her lessons. To take my child out of his setting, in which she is excelling, to put her back into the system where she was struggling, is a grave mistake and disservice to not only my child, but all of the children of Gateway. By closing this school you would be discriminating against special needs children who need this arts based education. In no other school has my daughter flourished as she has done at Gateway. She has become a confident, independent child whose grades and self esteem have sky rocketed in this unique atmosphere, the only of its kind in Delaware! Please do not make me, as a parent lose what little faith I have left in the DE school system. This school is much needed in the community and needs to remain an option for our children. It was my choice to send her here and it remains my choice to keep her here.

Jackie Graham, parent

Sent from my iPad



David R. DeJoseph
1814 Belfield Avenue
Wilmington, DE 19804

November 25, 2014

Mark Murphy
Secretary of Education
State Board of Education
401 Federal Street, Suite 2
Dover, DE 19901-3639

Dear Mr. Murphy:

I am writing to ask you to review and reconsider the Charter School Accountability Committee's recommendation *not* to renew Gateway Lab School charter. I realize that the committee has accountability not only to the State of Delaware but also to the community. Therefore, consideration of an excellent learning institution should not be based solely upon test results reflected in an Excel spreadsheet.

My granddaughter was fortunate enough to be enrolled in the Gateway Lab School this school year. She has a minor learning disability and at times struggled processing mathematical functions in step order. Since she has been at Gateway her teachers have been providing the attention and mentoring that she has not received anywhere else. Teachers at Gateway are extremely dedicated to their students and understand their individual needs and work to overcome their disabilities. My granddaughter has blossomed since she has been there. She has a better understanding of the lessons that are taught and her grades have improved.

The Gateway Lab School is a viable asset that serves its students, parents and community well and produces positive academic results and accountability to sponsors, parents who choose them, and the public that funds them.

Please reconsider the committee's recommendation and *extend* Gateway Labs charter and **DO NOT** leave these children behind.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

David. R. DeJoseph

After many downfalls and suspensions, we were referred to Gateway Lab School by the counselor at Marbrook Elementary. We were advised it would be a better fit for our oldest son, who was recently diagnosed Asperger's. I wasn't real sure but took the tour and was amazed at the environment that was offered. Small class sizes, teachers who love teaching and a staff that treated me like family when I walked in the door.

I was so impressed that I moved both my boys in their 3rd week of school. I was prepared to get a phone call about our oldest son, having a difficult time adjusting but was shocked when he came home his first day and told me about all the friends he made at school.

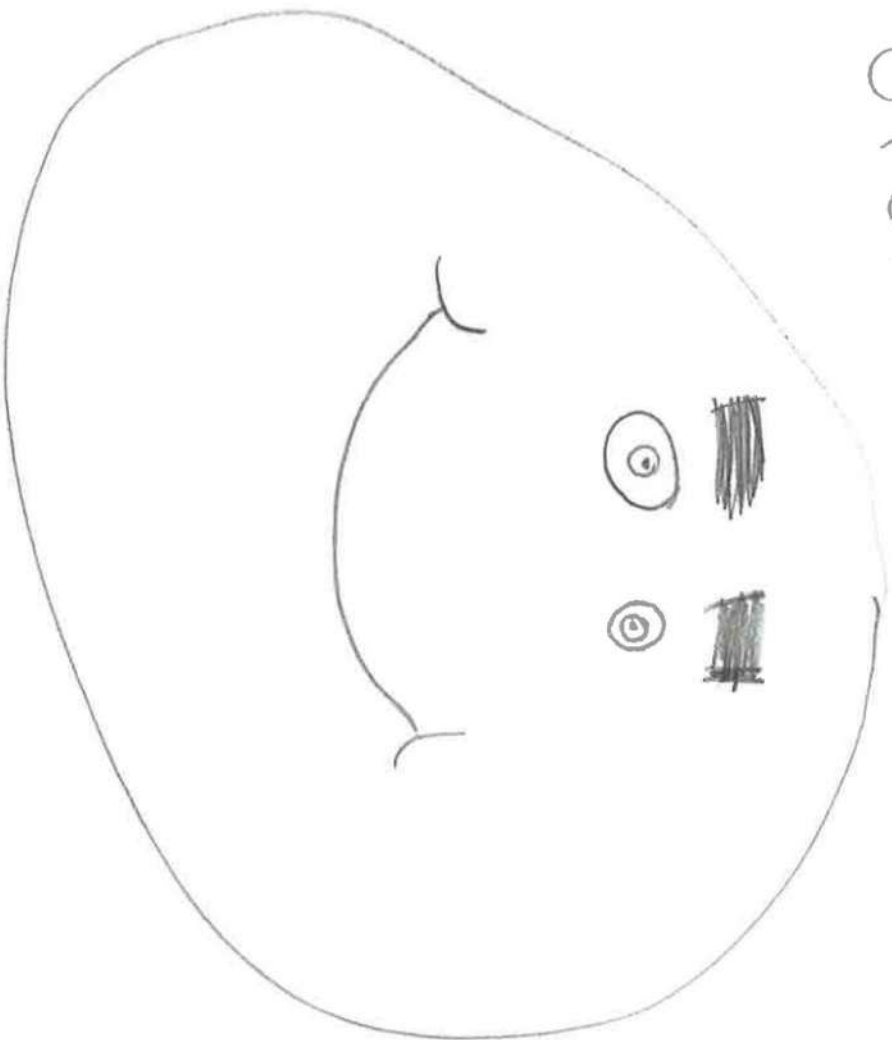
Before starting at Gateway, our youngest would have a meltdown in class when faced with any type of math problems. He was on his way of being labeled a behavior problem. Within the first 2 weeks at Gateway, I was advised that he had a learning disability in Math. The teacher promised me she would find a way to teach him - and guess who has an A in math now.

Gateway is a great "community" that truly offers a non discriminative group of people. And your differences do matter because not everyone is the same. Since starting at Gateway, I no longer worry about my son being bullied for being different.

Please reconsider your thoughts of closing Gateway Lab School.

Thank you,
Kathy and John Syva

I Think They Should Keep Our School Open
We Work Hard So We Can Keep Our School
Some Worked So So Hard To Keep Our
School We Are Hoping We Can Keep Our
School Open So We Can Learn More.



Tiffany
3rd grade
Gateway

Betsy A. Magnuson
1124 Musket Road
Newark, DE 19713

Secretary Mark Murphy
Delaware Department of Education
820 N French Street, 4th Floor
Wilmington, DE 19801

December 10, 2014

Dear Secretary Murphy:

I am writing this letter as a concerned grandmother of Zachary Campbell, who is currently a 6th grader at Gateway Lab School. Zachary has been a student there for the last three years and it saddens me that the progress he has made, and continues to make, is in jeopardy.

To close this charter school without any chance to amend the issues brought forward so abruptly is outrageous. Spend a week in this school and see for yourself the difference it is making. It is easy to be on the outside of this environment and make decisions based on test scores, etc., but spend some time in this school and I believe your opinion will change. It is not always about the numbers; in this case, it is about the students. These students, including my grandson, have found a community, a sense of belonging, a safe place where they can learn and not be afraid of being judged for their differences. Please do not take this away from him/them.

Allow Gateway the opportunity that has been afforded to other charter schools: the opportunity to make adjustments. Gateway needs to be able to be outside of the box, not in it, in order to continue moving forward and making progress. Help them to do this, don't just shut them down.

Please reconsider and renew their charter. Let Gateway continue to make a positive difference in so many lives.

Sincerely,

Betsy A. Magnuson
Grandmother of Zachary Campbell, grade 6

Kerrie Campbell
225 Sioux Court
Newark, DE 19702

Secretary Mark Murphy
Delaware Department of Education
820 N French Street, 4th Floor
Wilmington, DE 19801

December 10, 2014

Dear Secretary Murphy:

My son, Zachary Campbell, is currently in 6th grade at Gateway Lab Charter School. He has been a student there for the past three years. And within those three years, I have continually seen positive changes in all aspects of his life, not just with school. This school has given Zachary lots of positive experiences, something he was not getting in his old school. See before coming to Gateway, Zachary was always a target of his teachers because he couldn't sit still in his seat and needed to move around. At Gateway, teachers understand this and work with him, not against him. Gateway is very interactive and the classroom is always moving whether it is role playing or acting out scenes in history. This is considered a positive feature, not a negative one. He is learning around an IEP that is actually focused on his way of learning. The teachers at Gateway understand his learning differences and do not try to stuff his learning in to a nice neat box.

With a sense of community, Zachary has come out of his shell and is now part of the guitar club and he also participated on the flag football team. Things I do not believe he would have had the confidence or self-esteem to become a part of in a regular school. At Gateway, his differences are not judged, but embraced.

Zachary has a younger brother, Nicholas, who has ADD and is currently being tested for learning disabilities. He, too, needs a school like Gateway. What happens to him if Gateway is no longer? What happens to, not only the current students, but all of the future students who need Gateway? Please do not let them end up lost in the Delaware school system.

As a parent, I ask that you please renew Gateway's charter. Present students, future students, teachers and faculty at this school deserve the opportunity to continue making a positive difference.

Respectfully,

Kerrie Campbell
Mother of Zachary Campbell, grade 6

December 9, 2014

Mark Murphy
Secretary of Education
Delaware Department of Education
The Townsend Building
401 Federal Street, Suite 2
Dover, DE 19901-3639

Dear Mr. Murphy:

My son has been a student at Gateway Lab School the past two years. I was truly excited when he was accepted into the school, due to there being a waiting list. I have met the school staff, sat in on his IEP meetings, had at times daily contact with the school nurse, receptionist, helped with after school sports as a parent volunteer, and have felt the heartbeat of Gateway. I can tell you there is no other school like it.

I am proud to have my son enrolled in Gateway Lab School and the Delaware public school system. My son is developmentally delayed and has a tic disorder, and despite his challenges, attends Gateway with a smile on his face and has found an environment in which he has flourished. Participating in public speaking on a current event topic once a week, building a balloon race car for science, experiencing the arts and physical education each day, participating on the Spirit Team and after school activities such as the science club are some of the experiences Gateway provides that have enhanced his life.

I have spoken to many other parents who feel the same way and I ask you again to please come visit my son's classroom and feel the heartbeat of the school. It will affect you.

Sincerely,



Sanjay Upadhyaya
302-463-4293
surfinsanj@yahoo.com

Support for Gateway Lab School:

The GATEWAY LAB School has provided my daughter with a rare opportunity to express herself in a comfortable and safe environment. Her experiences in the public school system have been less than desirable. She was bullied. I use this term as defined by the Delaware student code of conduct defines it. When brought to the attention of her teachers and the administrative staff including the principle – they did not want to use this term as it would bring a negative perspective on the student doing the bullying and the school. Nothing was done to prevent or discourage the bullying. Because of this she was unable to learn effectively as she was constantly in a state of emotional distress. This hindered her grades. She was effectively held back one grade because of this. In fact her original school would have promoted her, but when we switched her schools in hopes of a better environment, they held her back. This new school was in the same district and had all her information. How can 2 schools in the same system have differing policies/views on the promotion of students within the same district? This shows how inconsistent the school district is. When moved to a different public school within the System, she found some degree of safety and learning, but due the large class size, lack of teachers and aides, the class often became unruly and was hard to effectively learn.

When we interviewed GATEWAY LAB School we immediately saw the great potential the school offered. The smaller class size and more effective teachers trained and educated in helping students with certain challenges has been of great benefit. My daughter is excelling in her classes, making wonderful friends, enjoys the learning environment and is building a great rapport with her teachers. She is even taking up music- something she has never considered before. For the first time in 6 years of schooling she actually enjoys her school, something every kid should do.

In reading of your assessment of gateway, I am quite shocked of your conclusions. Your methods of evaluation of the students, the DCAS, by your own admission are flawed and do not represent what the students are capable of. So how can your evaluation of poor performance be justified if the mechanic you are using is flawed? To the average parent this doesn't make sense and is just wrong.

Setting aside the flawed evaluation, here you have an established school that IS performing well, that students HAVE improved and yes going from 15% to 65% IS by all means an IMPROVEMENT. It may not make the DCAS report as being acceptable – but it is an improvement and a testament to what these teachers and school are capable of. Given additional time at GATEWAY, this still will improve further and make an acceptable score on DCAS.

Now, by closing this school, you will put back into the SYSTEM, several hundred kids with challenges into already crowded schools without enough teachers trained in ways of educating them. At the one school she came from now has over 37 kids in it with 1 teacher and 1 part time aide and 2 empty classrooms. The parents of these kids have stressed and complained that their kids are not getting what they need and to open the 2 classrooms and hire more teachers – the SYSTEM response- not in the budget sorry- THIS DOES NOT HELP THE KDS. And yet here you are going to put more kids in the classroom. Again doesn't make sense why you would close a school designed for this, showing HUGE improvement in student grades from what they were getting with parent and community support . All you are going to

do is put more stress on an already over taxed SYSTEM that could not handle the increase in students. No to mention that these students, that have improved, come out of their "shells", who are expressing themselves more each day, would quite possibly regress due to the trauma of going from a safe environment to an unfamiliar and to some a HOSTILE one. All the GREAT work that GATEWAY LAB has done would have gone to waste.

It is a mistake to close GATEWAY LAB School.

Parents: Jill and Darrell Northey

Student: Paige Northey

Barbara Carucci

From: <JACARUCCI@COMCAST.NET>
Date: Friday, December 5, 2014 2:50 PM
To: "BARBARA Carucci" <bt1carucci@comcast.net>
Subject: Fw: Gateway Binder

From: JACARUCCI@COMCAST.NET
Sent: Friday, December 5, 2014 1:16 PM
To: nathaniel.r.schwartz@dupont.com
Subject: Gateway Binder

RE: Gateway Lab School

I am sure many of you are aware that the Delaware Department of Education (DOE) has recently denied to renew the charter for Reach and Gateway Lab schools. I can only speak for the Gateway Lab School, since I have a grandson there in 4th grade. My understanding is the school underperformed versus a population of other public schools thus the denial by DOE to renew their charter. I believe the majority of the students at Gateway have some type of learning disability including my grandson. To compare this school with others, I believe is very unfair, and thus leads the DOE to a wrongful conclusion.

There has been significant progress at Gateway and my belief is that within a few years, given the chance, Gateway will be turning out students that parents, teachers and the DOE will be proud of. I don't believe that these students will be engineers and scientist but individuals with enough education to move into adulthood and become productive individuals in many different work places. And some I truly believe will make it on to a higher education.

However, for the students of Gateway, all of the above is predicated on not closing this school and forcing the children back into the school feeder system. There is nothing wrong with school feeder system other than how the children with learning disabilities fare in that student population. I have seen more education progress in my grandson (I do pick him up everyday from school and do the majority of homework with him) in 10 weeks than in his previous 3 years of public schooling. And lastly, we believe it would be difficult for him to learn and compete effectively in the routine school environment. To have Donte return to the public school system in which has already failed him would be a down right injustice, in fact a down right injustice for all these children.

Sincerely
 Joseph & Barbara Carucci

12/10/2014

Barbara Carucci

From: "Joan Beard" <jbeard401@gmail.com>
Date: Wednesday, December 10, 2014 11:22 AM
To: <Mark.murphy@doe.12k.de.us>
Cc: <Nathaniel.r.schwartz@dupont.com>; <Catherine.dolan@gl.k12.de.us>
Subject: Gateway Lab Charter School

Dear Secretary Murphy,

I am writing to you to voice my husband's and my support to re-certify the Gateway Lab School. As a former elementary school teacher, I am truly impressed with the results obtained by these dedicated educators. I am familiar with the progress made by one of their students and it is nothing short of remarkable.

Affordable, committed schools serving students with special needs is a critical component of our state's educational options. To destabilize the foundation that the Gateway Lab School has built for these children would be a terrible injustice.

I thank you for your time and urge you to allow this school to remain open.

Sincerely,

Sam and Joan Beard

No virus found in this message.

Checked by AVG - www.avg.com

Version: 2015.0.5577 / Virus Database: 4235/8710 - Release Date: 12/10/14

12/10/2014

Barbara Carucci

From: "Barbara Carucci" <bt1carucci@comcast.net>
Date: Monday, December 8, 2014 8:13 AM
To: <nathaniel.r.schwartz@dupont.com>
Cc: "Catherine Dolan" <Catherine.Dolan@gls.K12.de.us>
Subject: Fw: Support Gateway Lab School / picture attached

I am a grandmother of a 4th grader, Donte Christopher Hayes, who attends the Gateway Lab School. I have been Donte's caregiver before and after school since he started attending school at the age of 5. Donte has struggled in the public school system since 1st grade.

Over the last 3 years his ability to learn and self-confidence was at his lowest point being enrolled in the public school system and their special education program, especially last year. This school did little to encourage learning for Donte. Three years of continual frustration and disappointment in the public school system, our family was at the end of our rope. Just imagine a child everyday coming home from school in tears, frustrated, low self-esteem and now behavior problems. After last year, I knew as a family we had to help Donte as it was a critical point in his life with his ability to learn at a school where he could be educated. We research two schools for learning disabilities in the State of Delaware; unfortunately they come at a hefty tuition fee and one that is not an option for us. These 2 schools would support the data; there is a need for an affordable school that can teach children with learning disabilities.

Then we had heard about Gateway Lab School, a school which specifically taught children with learning disabilities. We toured the school and talked with the educational teachers and staff. We agreed, as a family, this is what Donte needed. I was excited that Donte would now have the opportunity to be provided with an education and in an atmosphere where he would be encouraged to listen and learn. At Gateway Lab School, Donte would get the education he deserved. However, he was not immediately accepted into Gateway Lab. Once I handed in the application with all the necessary paper work for Gateway Lab School, which included "Gateway Lab School Teacher Evaluation of Students Strengths and Needs." This form needs to be filled out by the previous teacher of Donte's. My first thought was OMG, (Oh my God) but then again I believed the administrators at Gateway would be able to decipher through the negative and arrogant comments written by this teacher. Of course it was no surprise to us the teachers evaluation remarks were exactly what she demonstrated and consistently verbally expressed throughout Donte's 3rd grade year. Stemming from this teacher's harsh words, Donte was not accepted into Gateway Lab. Again, this public school was doing an injustice to Donte and creating an obstacle for him to be accepted in an educational school that would benefit him. Our family determined as ever to fight for Donte, my husband initiated a phone call to Catherine Dolan, head of school and speaking at great lengths, she concluded, she was concerned about Donte. Hesitant, on whether this would be the right fit for Donte. She would be open to talk to another



No virus found in this message.

Checked by AVG - www.avg.com

Version: 2015.0.5577 / Virus Database: 4235/8699 - Release Date: 12/08/14

1/14/14 107.11 - 2/4/107

Barbara Carucci

From: "Roxanne Walker" <roxy1102@comcast.net>
Date: Tuesday, December 9, 2014 9:21 PM
To: <Mark.murphy@doe.k12.de.us>
Subject: RE: Renewal of the Gateway Lab School

To Honorable Mark Murphy,

It is very sad to hear that you are considering closing the Gateway Lab School. My husband was a Special Education teacher in the Christina School District for 25 years prior to his retirement. I understand what it means for a child to have the special care and attention during their formative years. My good friend Barbara Carucci's grandson, Donte Hayes is one of those special children who deserves to have the attention that the Gateway Lab School offers. Please give this decision a considerable amount of thought and don't let the naysayers prevail.

"There is no great disability in society, than the inability to see a person as more" - Robert M. Hensel

Warm regards,

Roxy
 Roxanne Walker
 302-220-9766
roxy1102@comcast.net

No virus found in this message.

Checked by AVG - www.avg.com

Version: 2015.0.5577 / Virus Database: 4235/8707 - Release Date: 12/09/14

12/10/2014



Compose

Delete Move More Collapse

Inbox (119)

Drafts (3)

Sent

Spam (578)

Trash

> Folders (117)

Smart Views

Unread

Starred

People

Social

Shopping

Finance

> Recent

Sponsored

BookBub

Readers are using this new website every day to get hundreds of free and discounted bestselling ebooks.

Gateway Lab School(2)

People

me

Dec 6 at 10:46 AM

To randall.hughes@doe.k12.de.us,
pat.heffernan@doe.k12.de.us,
Jorge.melendez@doe.k12.de.us, teri.gray@doe.k12.de.us,
Gregory.Coverdale@doe.k12.de.us, and 2 more...

Dear Delaware Board of Education,

My son, Jimmy, joined Gateway Lab School this year as a 7th grader. After 7 years attending Holy Angels, Jimmy could not read independently and had no self confidence in his ability to learn. In 4 months, Jimmy is reading confidently on his own and his self esteem has improved tremendously.

Please give Gateway Lab School more time to implement the new curriculum and improve their academic performance.

Sincerely,

Karen Jordan

Reply, Reply All or Forward | More

me

Dec 8 at 4:36 PM

To Nathaniel.R.Schwartz@dupont.com

Mr. Schwartz,

I do not wish to speak. My son Jimmy would love to speak.

Thank you so much for coordinating the binder and informing all of us parents!

Begin forwarded message:

> Show message history

Reply, Reply All or Forward | More[Click to reply all](#)

Send



Jordan, Karen

From: Vince Jordan <vjordan62@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 09, 2014 8:49 AM
To: Jordan, Karen
Subject: Fw: Gateway lab school

Here you go.

On Saturday, December 6, 2014 10:09 AM, Anita Batot <rabatot@icloud.com> wrote:

Mr. Heffernan

I am James Jordan aunt, I want to tell you about James and the major Improvement I have seen in James .

I see Jimmy about once a month, mostly on holidays and special occasions. I always bring a games or a scavenger hunt for the kids to do. Jimmy would never want to participate in the games or the hunt. He always said "I am not smart enough"

This year he was eager for the hunt to start, and participate. He was so happy to play I made him the Captain. He read the clues and was quite good at it.

Please don't close Gateway Lab school.

If this big improvement was just from the first semester at the school

Imagine what the rest of the year will do!

Please don't close it for the sake of James and all the other kids who go there

For you maybe closing the door on the future of the children lives.

Thank you for consideration

Anita Batot

Sent from my iPad

SUPPORT for GATEWAY LAB School

We are speaking on behalf of our son Joshua Watt and the Gateway Lab School. Joshua is a 7th grade student at Gateway. As a student with special needs, Joshua is thriving academically, socially and behaviorally. Joshua loves it there.

We learned of Gateway after hearing about it through one of the therapists at our "normal feeder pattern school". It was suggested that we "look into it."

We researched it and learned of its teaching methods for children with learning differences. As parents, learning about Gateway and their mission to help teach children with learning differences was that.....FINALLY.....someone gets it that our sons learn differently than "normal kids." We applied to the school for both of our sons. Thankfully, both were accepted.

YES OUR SONS ARE NOT NORMAL.

Our older son, Matthew came into Gateway in the opening school year of 2011 entering 6th grade. His IEP has been in-place since he was a student at RPLC. Matt is classified as "developmentally delayed." At Gateway, Matt thrived academically and socially. Matt's class work, quizzes, tests etc. were all very good. He was on the honor roll just about every marking period. He even joined the basketball team! However, Matt tested very poorly initially on his DCAS scores. Yes they improved over the next couple of years, but not to the level of a "normal student." Today, Matt is a freshman in high school. He is succeeding in his school work and his grades reflect it. Matt was one of only a handful of freshmen that made the honor roll for the first marking period all while being on the school's swim team and practicing six nights per week. AMAZING progress that we attribute to Gateway Lab School for building Matt's foundation for high school.

Our youngest son is Joshua.

Joshua also came to GLS in 2011 into the 4th grade. He has *Asperger's Syndrome*. Asperger kids learn differently. Because he learns differently, the "normal feeder pattern" school could not accommodate him to the level that Gateway is capable of doing. In the "feeder pattern schools" his IEP's was not followed completely, and he could not get the attention that he needed to succeed. In a class of +25 students, how could a teacher spend the extra time to help a student who learns differently than the rest of the class?

We found the answer was that teachers could not spend their valuable time on him and what he needed. He became the opposite of "No Child Left Behind" by being the child being left out.

Gateway comes along with their new programs, methods and ways of teaching. A school geared to teaching the required curriculum but presenting it in a different way so that children who learn differently can learn.

Joshua is smart. He understands he has neurological issues and that he is different than "normal students". At Gateway, he is among students who have needs and conditions as he does. He has a strong commitment to what is truthful, honest, fair, and just. He has the morality to know what is right and what is wrong when he sees it; whether he is involved or observes it happening to others. As I said earlier, Joshua is thriving academically, socially and behaviorally thanks to the Gateway Lab School.

Have any of you stepped into our school? If you had, you would feel the positive and caring energy that is present there. You would get the feeling that "I want to be here" and that "YES, I know my child will succeed here."

Have you spent time with the students? How about the parents? Have you asked any of us what we think of Gateway? If you had spent any time with any of the parents or guardians, you would find that we all believe in Gateway. You would learn that Gateway has been a God send for our children.

Yes, they may not take tests well. They may score poorly on standardized tests, but that does mean that they have not learned the lessons. It only means that they scored poorly on the standardized test.....where the standardized test that Gateway is being measured against, DCAS, is in of itself, now obsolete and not being used.

So what happens if you decide to close Gateway?

The majority of the children at Gateway have special needs. Do you realize what you would be doing? You would be freely choosing to allow our children to fail in the "regular schools." They will be picked on and bullied because they ARE DIFFERENT. Is that what you are freely choosing? Do you really believe that is

acceptable rather than educational success at Gateway? How do you justify taking the option to attend Gateway from the parents?

Metaphorically speaking, you are freely choosing to allow the weakest of the flock to be lost! Do you justify that with the rationale that.....as long as the ninety and nine % are corralled and standardized..... that the loss of the weakest 1% is acceptable?

Gateway Lab School is NOT a charter school that cherry picks the "Best of the Best or the cream of the crop" like Wilmington Charter School or Odyssey. It is not Conrad. It is not Cab Calloway. It is not Moyer Academy. It is not Newark Charter. It is not DMA. WE ARE Gateway Lab School where many of the 1%, that you have deemed as an acceptable loss, go to school.

If you elect to close Gateway, you are accepting the premise that it is OK to set these children up for failure. YOU are freely choosing and accepting that. You accept that you will helping these special needs children to be a burden on society because they could not get an education in the "feeder pattern school."

Isn't it easier to accept that **you HELPED** these children to become productive members of society by allowing them to get an education in a school that is designed for children such as ours? That is what Gateway does. It is what they do and it is what they do well.

So when the dust settles and you make your decision, remember that "there by the grace of God" went you and your children. Why would you take the Gateway option away from the children who need it?

Respectfully submitted,

Jeffrey and MaryEllen Watt
511 Chapel Court
Hockessin, DE 19707
302-239-1177

Rachel Anderson
2415 Driftwood Drive
Wilmington, DE 19810
jarbanderson@yahoo.com

December 8, 2014

Mark Murphy
Secretary of Education
Delaware Department of Education
John G. Townsend Building
401 Federal Street, Suite 2
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Secretary Murphy,

As a Board of Director for the Gateway Lab School, I kindly ask that you re-consider the recommendation to *not* renew the charter the school. I am sure you have been made aware that numerous parents and community members have also written letters and e-mails expressing their concern regarding the Board's decision to potentially close the school after only four years of existence.

Those families, children and constituents from the community clearly recognize the value that Gateway has provided to the student population and the community in which the school resides. Gateway continues to serve a population of students that are in great need of different and unique learning opportunities. With an extraordinary percentage of Gateway's student body having individual education plans – over 60%! - the school has been innovative and adaptive to meet this extraordinary need since its inception.

As an educator and leader in Delaware, I am sure you are not surprised to learn in order to be innovative, creative and unique in its design, Gateway must take some chances that traditional schools cannot. With that pioneering attitude and innovative spirit, of course, comes challenges and obstacles. Gateway is not asking for an opportunity to provide excuses for any shortcomings on standardized testing results as a result of those obstacles, but primarily asking for the Board's patience as school leadership establishes a pattern of success which is sure to come from this innovative spirit!

Please grant the school the opportunity to build a strong foundation, to explore these unique learning opportunities that they continue to go out on a limb to implement and ultimately prove to the Board that an arts integration model will produce solid, competitive and responsible high school students and future Delaware citizens.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Rachel Anderson

From: LESLIE MITCHELL <lm1.mail_it13@yahoo.com>

Date: December 9, 2014, 9:58:49 AM EST

To: "governor.markell@state.de.us" <governor.markell@state.de.us>

Subject: Renew Gateway Lab School Charter

The Honorable Governor Markell
820 N. French Street
12th Floor
Wilmington, DE 19801

Dear Governor Markell,

I am writing to rally your support and the State Board of Education to renew the Charter license of Gateway Lab School (GLS) for 5 years. A hearing is scheduled for [December 10, 2014 at 6pm](#) and Secretary Mark Murphy will be making a final decision at the next Board of Education meeting [on December 18th](#).

As an active parent, I am very concerned since my son, diagnosed with Ataxia SCA-7, just started his first year in 5th grade at GLS this past August. He has made remarkable strides in such a short time compared to his experiences in the public school system. For example:

- Public School DECAS Assessments in the past 2 years dropped from meet standards to below: Reading- 758 to 701, Mathematics- 684 - 683 with IEP accommodations. Last year, he scored 386, below range, in social studies.
- After testing in the Spring 2014, he remarked that much of what was on the DECAS Assessment was not taught in class nor in the materials sent home that we reviewed together.
- He became unfocused due to the fast class pace, he withdrew from participating in class and at times when he did ask questions, his teacher responded "figure it out".
- His final report range was proficient to meets proficient.
- After the 2nd trimester, his fourth grade teacher recommended GLS as a better fit for his needs and stated that she recommended another student to transfer there who was accepted and doing well.

This year, after his first trimester at GLS:

- Using a modified curriculum, he ranged from near proficiency to exceeds proficiency in academics.
- He has developed socially with more friendships than all the previous years put together and finally feels part of a school family.
- He actively participated after the first week, and he is able to tell me what he learned in most subjects.
- He is also learning to play the guitar which he loves!
- Most importantly, he is a much happier kid living a more normal life at GLS as any kid should.

It is clear that in only 3 years GLS has made a positive footprint towards their mission in successfully tailoring to meet the needs of a student population that has had difficulty learning in a traditional school setting. I recently read about your remarks regarding the Universal Recycling program and how it first lagged behind and is now benefiting our environment and economy. You mentioned it took "educating the public" and 4 years after adopting a comprehensive plan in 2010 before dramatic results were achieved. We supported your efforts and we pray you will support ours. Please contact the Board of Education and Secretary Mark Murphy on our behalf to give us "**more time**" and have the same faith in GLS and our children by granting us a 5 year charter using the same faith to watch our program achieve these same results. Surely our kids are even a more valuable investment and their future benefits more rewarding to our overall economy and communities.

"Many Thanks" in advance for your continued support.

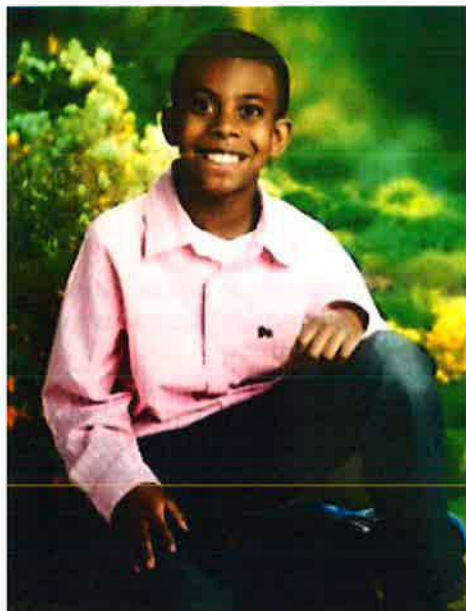
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leslie Mitchell".

Leslie Mitchell

GLS Parent

GLS Student



Request for renewal of charter

Ms. Beth Ms. Beth Summers
1305 Greenleaf Road
Wilmington, DE 19805
(302) 654-6057

December 10, 2014

RE: Renewal charter of Gateway Lab School

Dear Sir/ Madam:

I am writing to you in regards to the Renewal charter of Gateway Lab School, located in Wilmington, DE. This school provides a positive learning environment for many children who do not thrive in the traditional classroom setting. Many of the students at Gateway have shown tremendous growth academically, emotionally, and socially since they have begun attending this amazing school. My son is currently a seventh grade student who began attending only two years ago. I have watched my son transfer during this time academically, socially, and emotionally. His grades have improved along with the state standardize test scores. The school's overall scores are currently below the standard however, there has been improvement. Look at the individual students' scores prior to attending Gateway and compare them to the current scores. You will be surprised at the growth. Each year Gateways overall scores have improved. If this school is not given a chance to improve, these students will have difficult time learning and obtaining the education they deserve. They have not met their maximum potential due to lack of resources available in the traditional school setting. This school provides their students with an environment in which caters. The staff is exceptional and willing take on behavioral problems, mental and mood disorders, attention deficient disorder, and much more.

Please I beg you to help this school continue to make a difference and renew their charter approval.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully,

Ms. Beth Summers

Ms. Beth Summers



SUPPORT FOR GATEWAY LAB SCHOOL



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. 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.

Our son 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, last spring the DOE urged Gateway to apply for an exemption to use an alternative framework 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 is non-sensical that the DOE would make such a recommendation for this appropriate exemption only to 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.

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 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, Secretary of Education, 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 contact Mark Murphy and urge wisdom about this treasure, Gateway Lab School. Take a couple hours from your busy day to visit and interact with its students and teachers.

These children and this school need to be assessed by more than a test score. Please do not discriminate against our children. Please help assure that Gateway Lab School remains open!

Sincerely,
Dave and Bonnie Kitts

Maureen and Dante Zappacosta
814 Jeffrey Pine Dr.
Bear, DE 19701

December 10, 2014

Ref: Gateway Lab School

Dir Sir/Madam:

Our son, Maxim Zappacosta has attended Gateway Lab School for the last three years. In those three years he has blossomed into a well rounded student. His grades have gone up and last year on the state testing he received a 4 on his English. He has many learning disabilities and Gateway has been able to accommodate him as no other school has that he went to in the past. My son has a hard time reading because of his eyes and therefore taking computer tests are hard on him. He has a 504 plan for his eyesight. If he is asked orally what the answer is he can give you the right answer to your question. Many students learn in different ways and that is what Gateway is all about. They approach teaching through the arts and also apply different methods of teaching for each student. One of the main reasons we love and more importantly my son loves Gateway is that he does not stand out for his disabilities. He is accepted by his peers and his teachers. This was not so in the other public schools he went to. He would be put out in the hall, asked to sit on the rug, told to go down to the principal's office, and the list can go on. I was getting so frustrated that he wasn't included in the classrooms while the teachings were going on. My son also has ADHD and the teachers at Gateway have been trained to include and help focus these children. Not once has my son been told to leave the classroom and not been included in the daily teachings of the day. The day I heard about this school I cried. I finally felt hope for my child and that is exactly what Gateway has given him and our family for his education and his confidence. We ask that you give them a chance to implement the new changes they have put into place and give them time to grow.

Sincerely,



Maureen and Dante Zappacosta

I am a third grade teacher at Gateway Lab School and I am writing to ask that you keep our school open. Gateway Lab meets the needs of a special population of students that have previously struggled in school, learn differently, and/or have social issues. Every year at parent teacher conferences I've had parents tell me that this is the first year their child likes school. Other parents have told me this is the first year they did not have to fight to get their child out of bed every morning. Parents also have told me that it is the first time their child has shared information about what they are learning in school. A part of me would like to think it is all due to my teaching ability, but I really believe the credit goes to the tempo and atmosphere of Gateway Lab School. We teach children with art integration and movement. Academic club lessons brings history to life. Children are also in smaller class sizes so they are not lost in the crowd. Some of our children can be quirky, but they meet other students with similar issues and feel like an insider rather than an outsider. When the children feel comfortable with the class size, lesson styles, and social issues, they are in a better place to learn.

This is a run down of my students from *last year*.

Student A had lost his mom due to a car accident just a little over a year before he came into third grade. He was emotional and sometimes clingy. (all understandable) With the smaller class size I was able to give him the extra attention he needed. His reading DCAS score in the fall was a 1 and he went to a 3 in the spring. I saw him in the hall today and he gave me a huge hug. (100 points growth)

Student B has ADHD. She could easily get distracted but with active lessons and a smaller class size she went from a fall DCAS score of 1 to a 2 in the spring, with a 120 points growth.

Student C was a fluent reader. He was the fastest reader in the class, however he had issues with remembering and understanding what he read. His fall DCAS score was a 1 and he moved to a 2 with a 41 point growth.

Student D was on the spectrum and would easily tune out. Again with the smaller class size it was easier to stay on top of his listening habits. He also enjoyed the art integration. His fall DCAS score was a 1 and he moved to a 4 with 100 points growth.

Student E was not thrilled with school and told me so on the first day of school. I told him it was my job to get him to like school. By the end of the school year he liked school, and was even talking about going to college. His DCAS score was a 1 in the fall and went to a 3 in the spring, with a 104 point growth.

Student F had a fall DCS score of a 1 and went to a 3 in the spring with a 75 points growth.

Student G had a fall DCAS score of a 2 and went to a 4 the spring with a 78 point growth.

I don't know where we would be without Gateway. My children were being left behind in their school. My daughter Sierra was getting in trouble a lot, and it wasn't because of behavior. It was because by the end of her lessons on Monday she knew what she was supposed to know. So Tuesday thru Friday she would pull a book out and read or start drawing. She would get in trouble because the other kids would then want to do that as well. The problem was that they had not learned everything that they needed to learn for the week. Sierra was not being challenged at all. I begged and pleaded with the school to help her, to challenge her. Their only option was to put her in "enrichment classes". Enrichment classes were for the advanced students, they met once a week for 30 minutes. How does this change anything? We put her in the enrichment class hoping that they would help even a little while we struggled to figure what else to do. Homeschooling was a definite and very real option for us as it was for many of our friends in the area with the same or similar issues.

Towards the end of Sierra's 2nd grade year I was talking to a close friend (again) about both Sierra and Savanna's issues in public school. She told me about this charter school that had a whole different concept for teaching children. She gave me the info, and my husband and I checked out the school. I'm pretty sure I was in tears by the time I was done reading everything I could find about it. We quickly filled out the application and set up an interview.

Sierra has been at Gateway since the doors opened and Savanna is in her second year. Both of my girls are thriving in Gateway, something I never thought possible before Gateway. I think we were about a month into school in Sierra's first year when I got a phone call from Sierra's teachers. They wanted to start working on 4th through 6th grade work with her because she wasn't being challenged enough. Those were their words, not mine. Someone else saw her potential and knew she needed more.

Savanna is thriving at Gateway as well. She is learning and actually understanding not just memorizing like she was at her other school. She is no longer bullied, no longer comes home from school in tears. Her self esteem has blossomed in Gateway in a way it never would have in her other school.

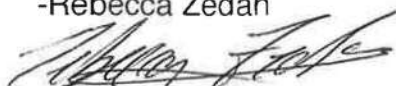
We are so thankful for Gateway. In fact we love Gateway so much that I recruited our neighborhood. We have our own hub stop and now have 5 families that get on and off at our stop. We have families that can't wait for their children to graduate 2nd grade so that they can get them into Gateway. I honestly never thought that the day would come when I wouldn't have to fight with my kids every morning to get them to go to school. Now that they are at Gateway we get in trouble with the kids if we have to pick them up early!

The teachers take the time to talk to the parents, email the parents, and work with the parents to make sure each child is working to the best of their ability and being challenged. Gateway teaches our kids with art-based learning which makes it fun as well as educational for them. They are always striving for excellence with our kids, pushing them to be the best that they can be. You would never know that our school is 63% learning disabled children when you walk through it. The kids are all engaged in learning in every classroom. We are thankful beyond words for Gateway, we would be a homeschooling without them! Please take this into consideration before you turn off the light at the end of the tunnel.

This community cannot afford to lose Gateway Lab Charter School. Neither can these children and their families.

Forever Grateful for Gateway,

-Rebecca Zedan





My daughter's name is Julie. She is a 5th grader at Gateway Lab School. My husband and I learned about Gateway in the summer of 2014 while searching the internet for alternative special education services in Delaware. Julie attended a conventional public school from kindergarten through 3rd grade. In 4th grade, she attended a private school for children with learning disabilities. Julie has had an IEP since kindergarten and struggles with a number of learning challenges including ADHD. There are countless reasons why we strongly support renewal of the Gateway Lab School Charter, here are just a few:

- ❖ The staff at Gateway is adept at teaching children with special needs and employs methods not typically found in the conventional public school setting.

Julie is a kinesthetic learner and learns best by moving and doing. Recently, in her science class, she built a car out of natural items to learn the concept of speed. This project was an excellent way for her to learn it. She picked up the concept quickly because of the way it was taught. The teaching method was aligned with her learning style. She was actively engaged in the learning process. This project enabled Julie to experience a sense of academic success and achievement she doesn't get often and it worked wonders for her self-esteem!

- ❖ Gateway classrooms support diverse learning styles. In her reading class, ipads are used to run programs that allow kids to read the same story regardless of their reading level simultaneously. This type of teaching method is extremely valuable to a child who has *NEVER* been able to keep up with her classroom peers. It makes her feel like she is just like everybody else. She doesn't have to read a 2nd grade level story book when a classmate sits next to her reading grade level material. She feels like she is part of the majority at Gateway, not the kid always struggling to keep up. This teaching method had not been offered in either the conventional public school or the private school settings Julie had been a part of in the past. It has worked wonders to promote her self-confidence. She is excited about reading! She reads without being prompted and works



My son Theodore Kerr is 11 yrs old in 5th grade at Gate way Icab School. He came to gate way in 3rd grade from Dougless alternative School. He was unable to read and at a preschool level in his math skills. His 1st year was a struggle, since he had to adjust to a full day of school and actually being taught in a classroom instead of being given packets of work. At Gate way he has learned what it is to succeed he gained confidence. He does sports, and music, and became a part of something. He now reads at a 3rd grade level and truly enjoys school. Gate way staff worked with me & my son to help him grow and didn't just

I have done the research,
please don't fail my son.

Margaretta Mitchell

625 W 7th St

Wilmington DE 19801

(302) 565-9520

December 10, 2014

Mr. Heffernan, Mr. Melendez, Mr. Hughes II, Dr. Gray, Mr. Coverdale, Mrs. Rutt, and Dr. Whittaker,

I am writing to ask that you look again at closing the Gateway Lab School. My son James (Jimmy) attends the Gateway Lab School in the seventh grade. This is his first year at the school after attending Holy Angels from kindergarten through sixth grade. Jimmy is attention deficit with some hyperactivity. During his time at Holy Angels, Jimmy was able to be pulled out of class and be put into a smaller group for reading and math through fourth grade. Once in fifth grade, Holy Angels didn't have the resources to allow for the smaller group settings. My wife, Karen, and I noticed a little bit during fifth grade and much more during sixth grade that Jimmy was falling behind. Even when we did extra work at home, he still struggled. He began to get down on himself and his self-confidence suffered.

When Karen read about Gateway and what they offered, the smaller class sizes and more one-on-one interaction with the teachers, we felt there was hope that we could get Jimmy back on track.

After only these three plus months, we have seen dramatic changes in Jimmy. He looks forward and is excited to go to school each day. He is reading on his own and comprehending more than he has before. His self-confidence is higher. His organization skills have improved. He is a happy student because he enjoys going to school and can't wait to learn something new each day.

I hope you take into account these positive changes that the Gateway Lab School has had on Jimmy Jordan.

Sincerely,

Vince Jordan



December 10, 2014

Good Evening Mr. Murphy,

As president of the board of Gateway Lab School and its board of directors, we are requesting your consideration and careful review of the school's charter that was recently denied renewal by Delaware's Charter Schools Accountability Committee. As one of the founding board members at Gateway, I have watched the school evolve from a simple idea to a flourishing environment for children to learn. Our first few years were spent ensuring that Gateway was staffed by teachers with a passion for students who had difficulty learning in a traditional classroom setting. Gateway was modeled after The Lab School of Washington, located in Washington D.C., and several of our founding teachers had the opportunity to visit and witness how their art infused curriculum was instrumental in transferring knowledge to students with learning challenges. Too often, these children get lost in a public school system where they are viewed as a problem rather than as students who simply learn differently than their peers.

In the fall of 2012, the head of school and founder of Gateway, Pamela Draper, resigned and a regional search took place to find her replacement. The search committee was dedicated to finding someone who would be able to take the school to the next level. As part of the interview process, Ms. Dolan and the principal, Stacy Solomon, visited The Lab School of Washington in order to meet key administrators and learn more about the school's curriculum. Catherine Dolan, a twenty-year education veteran, was selected as the new head of school in spring 2013, and stepped into this position that summer. Both, Ms. Dolan and Ms. Solomon have done a tremendous job ensuring Gateway's continued growth and development

Following their visit to The Lab School of Washington, Ms. Dolan was inspired to take a closer look at the staff, curriculum, and technology plans at Gateway. In March 2014, Ms. Dolan requested a comprehensive review of Gateway's academic performance by the Delaware Academy for School Leadership (DASL) at the University of Delaware. She immediately implemented the recommendations by DASL and professional development workshops were put in place to ensure that Gateway's teachers were equipped to carry out instruction within the classroom.

All of our teachers have been trained in effectively integrating the arts and technology into their curriculum and have participated in ongoing professional development workshops. The

workshops focus on special education law, as well as teaching techniques such as asking high order questions that prompt deep thinking and analytical skills to increase academic rigor. Ms. Dolan took the steps needed to ensure that a sound plan was in place to improve Gateway's academic curriculum by having a superb team of teachers who are highly qualified to teach and understand students with learning challenges or disabilities. All of Gateway Lab's teachers have certification in special education and are passionate about meeting the needs of each individual child. Gateway has students who came in from mainstream schools unable to read or write. The teachers at Gateway have helped, encouraged, and motivated them to learn how to do both. This is no small task to undertake, yet our teachers rise to the challenge every time.

Parents, teachers, and administrators at Gateway Lab School see academic and social skills improvement in our students, however, more time is needed to capture this growth. In order to fully implement the recommendations and suggestions from DASL, we need to have a sufficient amount of time. A quick-fix is not the answer, but rather a long-term plan is needed for academic success. If Gateway had been able to use the alternative framework for standardized testing, our school would have been compared to other institutions with a similar population of students. This alternative framework has been approved for the fall of 2014, but if Gateway's doors are prematurely closed, then we will not have the opportunity to see these results. The current standardized tests are inadequate tools to measure the progress of students who have learning disabilities. The approval for the alternative framework is evidence that Gateway Lab School is trending in the right direction as it pertains to academic growth, but we were not given the chance to actually put this into place. In order for the alternative framework to go into effect, we need to have time. Scholar Rebecca Gensler, in response to the emphasis placed on standardized tests following No Child Left Behind, said, "Requiring that all students in the same grade levels progress be measured by the same standardized test ignores all the work and consideration of IEPs*."

I will conclude by saying that there is no doubt in my mind that Gateway has the right leadership team in place to encourage learning that prepares our students to enter high school. Gateway Lab School has given many students a second chance in school by increasing their desire to learn. We have the tools, teachers, educational partnerships, administrators, and a solid school board, all of which help make Gateway a model school for Delaware. Our two hundred and twelve students will suffer tremendously if Gateway's charter is not renewed. Please reconsider keeping our doors open. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Joyce Dennis Henderson
Board President
Gateway Lab School

*Gensler, Rebecca. *Effects of No Child Left Behind Act of Special Education Regarding Standardized Testing*

Richard Brown
Primary Address
444 S Felton Street
Dover, DE 19904-3138
Email Address
richardbrown@yahoo.com

Hello Senator Coons

I would like to tell you that I am outraged that a public charter school dismissed its founder from one of the best charter schools in Delaware. This place is Family Foundations Academy Charter school. The public is outraged at the board of directors behavior toward her. All of the board members are members of the same fraternity and have publicly violated the rights of their staff by telling them not to contact the director and not to talk to her in public. This school is up for charter renewal and we the parents are demanding that Dr. Brewington is reinstated into her position. The other director of the school Mr. Sean Moore has documented sexual harassment cases against him, numerous complaints from parents, and he intimidates and threatens staff by telling them they better be loyal to him. The board of directors have done nothing. Additionally the charter office and board of directors have been notified of potential misappropriation of state and local funds yet Mr. Moore who is accused still takes care of the finances of the school. Who is checking him?

I have watched this school grow over the years. Dr. Brewington is always there. They just told her to leave in a very public humiliating meeting where they were trying to expel a kindergarten student. Myself and other members of the community were appalled. We demand Dr. Brewington's return. We demand that the board not be permitted to make decisions regarding her because they are all friends of Sean Moore and are members of a fraternity and have publicly admitted to wanting to get rid of Dr. Brewington. She wants to do things right. They have an attorney who has threatened staff and parents in public and blames everything on her. Talk to people who are not friends of the board. Mr. Moore was the board president for years and was getting paid by the school.

I am aware from other parents that she complained about the board to the charter office and because of that this is why they are doing this. I am aware of Mr. Moore's sexual harassment cases (3 separate ones) and yet he is still in charge of staff at this charter school. The board sees her as a liability because she told the truth. How can they be allowed to do this to her? They are not dumb. They want their dirt kept in the dark as most boards do. Speak to past board members I know several.

Can you help us? Help the parents, students and families who miss her. What can we do? This needs to be stopped. Can we go to the US Department of Education to address this? File a complaint there? What can we do to stop this?



December 9, 2014

Mark Murphy
Secretary of Education
Delaware Department of Education
John G Townsend Building
401 Federal Street
Dover, DE 19901

RE: Gateway Lab School

Dear Secretary Murphy,

The Delaware PTA Exceptional Child Committee (ECC) has significant concerns regarding the use of the Academic Performance Framework as a basis for determining the renewal, or lack thereof, of Gateway Lab's state charter.

Based on the initial presentation of the Academic Performance Framework draft, and the regulations governing the implementation of the Performance Framework, we do not believe the Framework adequately represents the needs of special needs students and other at risk populations. The Exceptional Child Committee has identified the following areas of concern:

1. The lack of equally weighted consideration of the functional curriculum (social emotional, executive function, self-advocacy, general life skills), in the Performance Framework prohibits the adequate measurement of the educational performance of children with disabilities. As a result, the Framework fails to meet IDEA and ADA/Section 504 requirements in demonstrating the equivalent importance of these components.
2. Non- reporting of subgroup sizes where $N \geq 30$, means that the majority of children with disabilities and other at risk populations in our charter schools are not being effectively measured under the Framework.
3. As a result of the inappropriate and inaccurate measurements of the educational performance of children with disabilities, the Framework and the underlying data analysis structure, creates substantial incentives for discrimination against children with disabilities during the admission process. In addition, it does not allow for the appropriate identification of necessary individualized supports.



4. As a result of the inequities in the Academic Performance Framework, charter schools that serve large percentages of children with disabilities and other at risk populations will inevitably end up in a non-renewal status and eventually lose their state charter. This further incentivizes discrimination against students with disabilities and other at risk populations. In addition, closure of these schools will result in returning these displaced students back to the traditional schools that failed to meet their needs in the first place, thus causing irreparable harm to these students.

During initial the initial discussions, these concerns were brought to the attention of the Delaware Department of Education and other board representatives. It was at this time that the Delaware Department of Education committed to addressing these concerns in a timely and consistent manner with stakeholders. This included providing outreach and support to schools that by definition of their mission and expertise, serve high percentages of children with disabilities. The intent was to support these schools in the development of an alternate Academic Performance Framework that would serve as a more effective and accurate measure of performance not only of the school, but as well as the children these schools support. Unfortunately, the Delaware Department of Education has not followed through on any of these commitments with any significant level of fidelity.

Due to the ineffective measurement of the school's performance, the increased propensity for discrimination and the harm to the student population that will result from use of the current Academic Performance Framework on schools that serve at risk populations, the ECC Committee suggests the following recommendations to the Delaware Department of Education:

- 1.** Grant Gateway Charter School a 1 year waiver with an additional 1 year extension contingent on:
 - a.** Continued and documented longitudinal growth of students during their time attending Gateway.
 - b.** Substantial progress in creating an appropriate and more effective alternate Performance Framework with the full support of the DDoE, and in collaboration with parents and other stakeholders for consideration by the board.
- 2.** The development and inclusion of Functional curriculum measures in the framework for children with disabilities. These measures must align with IDEA/ADA 504 equivalency guidance, where appropriate for other at risk children.
- 3.** Development and application of alternate measure for all cells, at all levels for which outcomes are not available due to n size minimum requirements.



4. Development of an equitable and accurate LEA, school, and classroom level comparative performance analysis model that is based on aggregate individual characteristics modeling.
5. The expansion of the Accountability Committee to include representatives from the GACEC, DPTA, and 3 parents at large to ensure input from parents and organizations that not only support children with disabilities, but are well versed in this area as well.

We hope you recognize the critical nature of these recommendations, especially in light of Delaware's transition to full inclusive opportunities in public schools and the department's indication that the framework will be extended to all public schools. The ECC Committee asks that your decision on the above recommendations be based first and foremost on the commitment to support what is in the best interests of the children, and to prevent causing harm to these children by closing Gateway without first exhausting all possible options such as those provided here for your today.

Sincerely,

Liz Toney, Delaware PTA Exception Child Committee Chair

liz.toney@delawarepta.org

Bill Doolittle, Delaware PTA President-Elect and Board Representative to the ECC Committee

bill.doolittle@delawarepta.org

Cc: Delaware State Board of Education

Elaine Buonopane

Primary Address

1214 Flint Hill Road

Wilmington, DE 19808-1914

Email Addresses:

LANEYB3365@AOL.COM

Phone/Home:

(302) 507-2174

Senator,

I am reaching out to you as a parent of a student at Gateway Lab School which recently whose charter not renewed recently by the Charter School Accountability Committee. Our school is chartered for kids who have learning differences (disabilities) and the committee seems to have voted to NOT renew based on DCAS scores. Okay, re-read that - yep, school for kids with learning disabilities having low DCAS scores.....seems like an illogical reason to not renew the charter.

Our public hearing is 12/10 and we are seeking the state to take a LOOK AT OUR SCHOOL. My daughter in her third year there could not read well at all when she entered in third grade, now she is at grade level and scored a 4 on her last reading DCAS. Progress can be made, it will not be quick though. Please consider a visit to our school! Gov. Markell will meet with our head of school Catherine Dolan on 12/10 but we need more help and SOON! Thank you for your time and consideration.

Barbara Carucci
Primary Address
101 Downs Drive
Wilmington, DE 19807-2556
Phone Number
(302) 998-0654

In the last 15 weeks of school, at Gateway Lab, Donte who struggled academically in a traditional classroom has flourish in an environment that combines multi-sensory instruction, integrated arts and learning by the process of experiential learning. Donte tears have turned to smiles. Donte frustration to learn has turned to success in learning. Donte behavior has gone from aggressive to friendly all due to an environment where he can learn. The constant of the teachers and staff at Gateway Lab School and their commitment to educating Donte is above and beyond. Since Donte has been at Gateway Lab School he has become a happier, healthy, confident, intelligent 9 year old student looking forward to a bright future at Gateway Lab. He loves his school. He has become part of a family and he has made friends, learning an instrument, and for the first time and most importantly, Donte is academically successful. I have seen more education progress in my grandson in 15 weeks then in his previous 3 years of public schooling. We are so proud of Donte and the Gateway Lab School for providing Donte this opportunity. Gateway is providing Donte with a strong foundation in learning and continuing to build on this foundation can only bring success for him.

What I know for sure, it will be difficult for Donte to learn and compete effectively in the routine school environment. To have Donte return to the school system he previously attended would be an injustice to him. We have taken 5 giant steps forward; please lets not take 10 giant steps backwards. Not renewing certification for Gateway Lab would be an injustice to all the children at this school. The data that has been collected and presented to this board is incorrect. How can one compare children who have been diagnosed with learning disabilities with the general population of students? This is not a fair or accurate comparison. It is like comparing apples to oranges.

There has been significant progress at Gateway. This school is only at the beginning phases and given the chance the possibilities will be endless. My belief, Gateway will be turning out students that parents and teachers will be proud. Furthermore the DOE will see, years later they had made the correct decision for the recertification of the Gateway Lab School.

Barbara Carucci

Linda Ivins

Primary Address

27 Aronimink Drive
Newark, DE 19711-3801

Phone Number

(302) 455-9311

Dear Senator Coons, below is an email I sent to the DOE concerning the Gateway Lab Charter School. Please support Gateway remaining open.

Thank you

Hearing the news that my grandson Kevin's school might close, actually brought me to tears. Gateway is a safe place, where Kevin learns in an environment where he feels safe and is safe. He loves his school and the teachers because they have taught how to learn. The last day of school in his first year he climbed into my backseat with tears. The child was crying because he didnt think his mom and dad would let him come back next year because we just fun. He didnt even grasp how far he had come in a year because he was happy. Or how relieved his parents and family were that this school was the answer for Kevin, that he was flourishing, he was learning.

The kindergarden and first grade experiences in his local elementary school were not happy ones for him. He loved his teachers but dreaded and feared going to school with classmates that left him out, isolated him and sometimes were even mean and bullied him. I firmly believe that was a most difficult environment in which to learn. Theres so much talk now about mental health and addressing students issues. Gateway doesnt just talk, Gateway addresses the emotional and educational needs of its students. The teachers havent just received so many hours of specialized training, its much more than that, its heart and understanding. Take a walk through the halls, absorb the atmosphere. In all my school experience while raising four children, (public schools, St Edmunds, Archmere, Immaculate Heart of Mary) never, never did I experience a school such as Gateway.

What will happen to Kevin and the rest of the students? Mainstream them? If its an assumption that another public school could education these children to a higher degree, it is a grossly inaccurate assumption. An IEP will not resolve their issues because an IEP can not address the social issues.

Please give our children the educational support they need by giving this school another chance.

Thank You,

Linda Ivins (Grandmother of Kevin MacMicking)

Anthony Santucci

Primary Address

603 New Road
Wilmington, DE 19805-5124

Phone Number

(302) 275-8650

Dear Senator Coons,

I'm asking you to help support to keep the Delaware State Charter Gate-Way Lab School open. The charter was not going to be renewed for 2015.

My grand son who has Dyslexic and some ADA problems attends gate-Way Lab. When my grandson attended the regular feeder school for 1st & 2nd grades he was basically failing all his subjects. The teachers recognize that he needed special help that they didn't have the time, resources, or know how to reach a child like my grandson. We put him in Gate-Way lab starting in the third grade (he is in 5th now) and his report cards now reflect A/B&C on his subjects. My grandson is typical of all the children who attend Gate-Way Lab. If the school closes they will be throwing back these children into the schools they came from and committing them to failure. Please contact Donna Johnson-State Board of Education, Jennifer Nagourney-DOE-Charter Office and Mark Murphy-DOE-Secretary Of Education.

Thank You for you help

Anthony Santucci



**Positive Outcomes
Charter School**

3337 S. DuPont Hwy.
Camden, DE 19934
Phone: (302) 697-8805
Fax: (302) 697-8813

December 10, 2014

Mark Murphy
Secretary of Education
Delaware Department of Education
401 Federal Street, Suite 2
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Secretary Murphy:

I am writing to you today on behalf of the families of children who attend Gateway Lab School (GLS). On November 17, 2014 the Charter School Accountability Committee issued a recommendation to not renew the GLS charter. I am requesting that you not accept this recommendation and that you instead renew their charter.

The charter school movement in Delaware was started to foster the creation of schools to provide unique educational opportunities for students. GLS is fulfilling this mission. The school's mission statement states that "GLS will provide an extraordinary educational opportunity for children who are struggling to achieve academic success in a traditional school environment..."

I can personally attest that the work that Gateway Lab School is doing is incredibly difficult. Our school, Positive Outcomes Charter School (POCS), is also focused on working with students who have not had success in traditional school settings. The students that both of our schools seek to work with arrive to our programs with significant academic, emotional or behavioral challenges and needs. Our students frequently enroll in our programs performing, on average, significantly below grade level. The work required to remediate and support these students is significant. It takes, many times, years to work with our students to achieve success.

It is neither prudent nor equitable to measure the academic success of our (POCS and GLS) students using traditional student means and benchmarks. Our students have different needs and challenges that are not met in traditional school settings. To that end the Delaware Department of Education implemented an Alternative Academic Framework for our school. These metrics enable the DDOE to compare the success of our students to similar school populations and to emphasize growth, which we are confident, is the most important indicator of academic success for our students.

For the 2013-2014 school year POCS was the only school in our state measured by an Alternative Academic Framework. GLS data was run using the Alternative Framework; however, because the school did not ask for the At-Risk Preference until this year, the school was held accountable to the traditional Academic Framework. I ask that you

review the draft GLS Alternative Academic Framework to see the work and progress that they are making. In the future the success of GLS will be measured using the appropriate comparison groups and measures allowing the school to tell the real story that is happening in their school.

Five years ago, POCS was in a similar position as GLS. As of the result of significant financial and instructional support, our school has shown significant gains. Had our school not been provided with these opportunities, I am not sure our school would still be in existence today.

Everything indicates that GLS is cognizant of the work in front of them. They have hired new leadership. They are focusing on curricular supports for teachers and students in order to create great outcomes. GLS commissioned the University of Delaware to complete a Comprehensive Success Review. They are now implementing the recommendations and I encourage them to continue this work and continue to identify areas that can be improved.

I hope that you understand the challenges that GLS faces and both renew their charter and monitor their progress as they work to increase the academic achievement of their students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'EJ Emmett Jr.', written in a cursive style.

Edward J. Emmett Jr.
Director



December 10, 2014

BY EMAIL

Secretary Mark T. Murphy
Delaware Department of Education
The Townsend Building
401 Federal Street, Suite 2
Dover, DE 19901

Re: Gateway Lab School Charter Renewal

Dear Secretary Murphy:

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES
UNION FOUNDATION
of DELAWARE
100 W 10TH ST, SUITE 603
WILMINGTON, DE 19801
T/302-654-5326
F/302-654-3689
WWW.ACLU-DE.ORG

NORMAN M MONHAIT
PRESIDENT

KATHLEEN M MacRAE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

RICHARD H MORSE
LEGAL DIRECTOR

I write to urge the Department of Education to reject the recommendation of the Charter School Accountability Committee regarding Gateway Lab School and to renew the school's charter for five years. The ACLU of Delaware believes that to be the right course of action for multiple reasons.

As you are no doubt aware, there has been a tremendous outpouring of parental support for the school and opposition to its closing. Many students with special education needs arising from learning disabilities, attention disorders, Autism Spectrum Disorder and behavior disorders who were unsuccessful and uncomfortable in traditional public schools transferred to Gateway, and have found success and happiness there. Their parents understandably want that to continue, and fear for their children if the school closes.

We know that notwithstanding the emotional and social benefits Gateway's students have received at the school the test scores are too low. That does not provide sufficient reason to close the school now, in part, because of the many changes Gateway has made under the guidance of the Delaware Academy for School Leadership ("DASL") at the University of Delaware College of Education and Human Development. Those changes are too recent to be reflected in the test scores. As a result, they were disregarded by the CSAC, notwithstanding the provisions of 14 *Del. C.* § 514A requiring their consideration.

Gateway changed its management structure in the 2013-2014 school year. Founder and founding Head of School Pamela Draper, recognizing gaps in her own skill set and recognizing the needs of the growing school, recruited veteran school leaders Catherine Dolan and Stacy Solomon to become Head of School and Assistant Head of School respectively. Ms. Solomon has since become Principal of Instruction. The new leadership recognized that Gateway needed improvement, and asked DASL to perform a Comprehensive Success Review. DASL completed the Review in March, 2014. Thereafter, it prepared recommendations to help Gateway change its educational delivery and operational systems to better align them with best practices and, thereby, increase student achievement. As described in the

Statement of Constance Fisher, Ed. D.¹ DASL recommended specific improvements in the areas of Leadership, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment and Accountability, Professional Development, Teacher and Student Class Assignments and School Environment. (Information about this is detailed in DASL's Comprehensive Success Review Report, Comprehensive Success Review Summary, Comprehensive Success Review Status Report as of October 15, 2014, all of which were submitted to the CSAC with its November 6, 2014 letter responding to a request by the CASC for additional information.)

Since receiving those recommendations, Gateway has been working intensely, under DASL's guidance, to make the necessary changes. Dr. Fisher confirms that Ms. Dolan and Ms. Solomon are committed to acting on the recommendations made by DASL and implementing a comprehensive response to the recommendations. In fact, she notes in the enclosed statement that Ms. Dolan and Ms. Solomon could serve as role models in how to respond to a Comprehensive Success Review.

Dr. Fisher is very optimistic about the likelihood that Gateway will succeed as a school under the new leadership. As she puts it in the enclosed statement:

They are working hard to correct the school's deficiencies and have prioritized well in choosing their responses to DASL's recommendations. They have already implemented changes in the areas of curriculum and instruction for the purpose of better alignment with common core, they have built in on-going professional development opportunities for teachers and paraprofessionals, increased student instructional time, are using diagnostic assessments allowing for more targeted instruction, and expanded the monitoring of instructional expectations so the necessary supports can be provided to staff and course adjustments can be made when needed.

The current leaders have the appropriate sense of urgency and are working at leading the school in the right direction. Because of the manner in which the school's current

¹ Dr. Fisher is an employee of DASL who worked on the Gateway Comprehensive Success Review. After DASL issued the recommendations to Gateway, she was assigned by DASL to be the Development Coach there. In that capacity her primary responsibility is supporting the Gateway administrators in the effective implementation of the Delaware Performance Appraisal System (DPAS II). The purpose of implementing DPASC is to improve instructional practices and the educational environment. Dr. Fisher meets with Gateway's administration weekly for this purpose, routinely performing walkthroughs and discussing what needs to be done. Dr. Fisher provided me with the enclosed statement so I could refer to in this letter and send it to you. I understand that she will be speaking at the December 10, 2014 public hearing as well.

leadership has responded to DASL's recommendations and with a continued commitment to do so I expect Gateway will demonstrate continuous incremental growth that will sustain overtime.

Sufficient time did not pass after the recommendations were received and implementation began for student test scores to reflect the substantial improvements that have been made by the school. This apparently caused the CSAC to disregard all of the forward movement made after the Comprehensive Success Review. According to the conclusion section of the minutes of the final CSAC meeting on the Gateway renewal application:

Mr. Blowman stated that it that [sic] the school's team is working hard and has dedicated people in place who believe the students can learn at same high standards as everyone else. He stated, however, that there is very little growth based on information to date and it is the CSAC's primary responsibility to base its decision-making on the historical record instead of what might happen in the future. Mr. Blowman stated that, on the record before it, the CSAC cannot make any other recommendation than that of non-renewal.

The CASC apparently believed "historical record" meant student test scores. Why it felt compelled to disregard the work and changes since March, 2014, and the current circumstances, is unclear. But it is very clear that the Charter School Law required consideration of the new information. The statute governing charter school renewals and nonrenewals, 14 *Del. C.* § 514A provides, in part:

(d) The renewal process shall, at a minimum, provide an opportunity for the charter school to:

- (1) Present additional evidence, beyond the data contained in the renewal report, supporting its case for charter renewal;
- (2) Describe improvements undertaken or planned for the school; and
- (3) Detail the school's plans for the next charter term.

The statute explicitly entitles Gateway to submit information on improvements undertaken, improvements planned and the school's plans for the next charter term. It is a basic legal principle that the legislature is presumed not to have put meaningless language in a statute. The statutory right to supply the additional information would be meaningless if the approving authority, the Department of Education, could disregard the improvements and plans that are being implemented. The law undoubtedly prevents the renewal decision from being based on past test results without consideration of the improvements made or

planned too late to be reflected in the test results. Yet that is what the CSAC did, even though it knew of them. The CSAC Final Report published November 21, 2014 describes some of the post-test results information that was presented to it:

Ms. Fisher stated that she was impressed with Ms. Dolan and Ms. Solomon because they have embraced the findings and have moved forward. She stated that they are a model of how to make CSR recommendations come alive. According to Ms. Fisher, they have prioritized curriculum and instruction, are moving towards addressing other areas of the CSR report, and will continue to address the recommendations of the CSR Report. She commended the dedication and commitment of the school leadership.

.... Ms. Dolan stated that it is a whole new atmosphere that is focused on instruction and faculty is embracing it. She stated that the school has an improved instructional practices [sic] and that there is an attention to detail that wasn't present before the CSR. Mr. Johnson then asked what diagnostic tools have been used to measure progress. Ms. Dolan stated that the school has only completed baseline studies because CSR changes have been implemented this year. She said that the teachers have been trained on curriculum. Ms. Solomon explained that they are using baseline data because they can't show progress until spring. Ms. Solomon stated that the explanation of the difference between basic and proficient has been provided to teachers. She stated that they have changed the mindset so children believe they can and the bar has been raised this year. She stated that the school is at a beginning phase but, in terms of action, the school has implemented a great deal from the CSR.

That same information, together with the additional information contained in Dr. Fisher's statement and the DASL materials submitted to the CSAC, must not be disregarded when the Department of Education decides on renewal of Gateway's charter. It shows that Gateway's charter should be renewed - because of the work it and DASL have done, the improvements it has already made, and the success the school will likely have for its students if the charter is renewed. It would set a terrible example if the Department of Education decides that improvements a school makes too close in time to the consideration of a renewal application to be reflected in test scores is to be ignored.

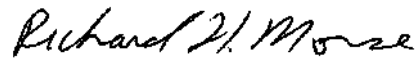
Moreover, there are reasons in addition to the school's past success as a sanctuary for students who have had difficulties in other schools, the improvements it has made under DASL's guidance, and the requirement 14 *Del. C.* § 514A for renewing the charter.

As you know, there are questions about whether the state is permitting charter schools to fail the obligations they have under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The 2013-14 figures on the DOE website show that 13.6% of the students in public schools have disabilities, while only 8% of the students enrolled in charter school students have disabilities. Gateway is one of only two charter schools in Delaware that specialize in educating students with disabilities. It is the only charter school that does that for elementary school students. Closing it would reduce the percentage of children with disabilities served by charter schools even further below the 13.6%. That would be wrong.

The CASC's recommendation that Gateway not be renewed was based on the fact that its Academic Performance Framework scores for the past three years, while improving, did not meet the standard. The charter for Positive Outcomes, the other charter school that focuses on students with disabilities, was renewed last year. Its scores during the three year period considered when it applied for renewal had also failed to meet the standard. Yet it was renewed and treated very well by the state. Relevant facts are described in the December 4, 2014 letter to you from 19 members of the General Assembly, so I will not repeat them here. In plain English, those facts show that closing Gateway in light of the entirely different treatment given Positive Outcomes would be unfair. In legalese, they suggest that the students who wish to attend Gateway may suffer a violation of the Equal Protection Clause if the school is closed.

For all of these reasons, I respectfully request that Gateway Lab School's charter be renewed.

Sincerely yours,



Richard H. Morse

Enclosure

cc: Teri Quinn Gray, President (by email)
Jorge L. Melendez, Vice President (by email)
Gregory B. Coverdale (by email)
G. Patrick Heffernan (by email)
Randall L. Hughes, II (by email)
Barbara B. Rutt (by email)
Dr. Terry M. Whittaker (by email)
Donna R. Johnson, Executive Director (by email)
Constance Fisher, Ed. D. (by email)
Ms. Catherine Dolan (by email)
Ms. Stacy Solomon (by email)
infocso@doe.k12.de.us

Statement of Constance Fisher, Ed.D.

1. I am employed by the Delaware Academy for School Leadership (DASL) in the University of Delaware College of Education and Human Development as a Development Coach. In that capacity my primary responsibility is supporting administrators in the effective implementation of the Delaware Performance Appraisal System (DPAS II). In addition, I have participated in several Comprehensive Success Reviews conducted by DASL.
2. I have a doctorate in Education Leadership, a master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction, and a bachelor's degree in early childhood education, all from the University of Delaware.
3. I am personally familiar from my work at DASL with the Comprehensive Success Review DASL performed at Gateway Lab School ("Gateway") and the work Gateway has done in response to the recommendations DASL made following the Review.
4. DASL performed the Comprehensive Success Review of Gateway in the spring of 2014. Gateway had requested the Review from DASL in order to improve its educational performance, and the Review was done with Gateway's cooperation.
5. In the Comprehensive Success Review, DASL conducted 144 classroom observations throughout the school, interviewed teachers, administration, parents and board members and reviewed available documents. DASL then prepared a report using a 4 point rubric to identify strengths and weaknesses within key criteria/elements related to effective schools.
6. After completing a comprehensive review of the evidence collected, DASL prepared recommendations for Gateway, to guide it in changing its educational delivery and operational systems so that they would be more aligned with best practices and increase student achievement.
7. DASL recommended specific improvements in the areas of Leadership, Curriculum and Instruction, Assessment and Accountability, Professional Development, Teacher and Student Class Assignments and School Environment. The recommendations were delivered to Gateway on March 26, 2014,
8. I was one of approximately ten DASL employees who participated in Gateway's Comprehensive Success Review. Following DASL's issuance of recommendations, in the summer of 2014 I was designated by DASL to be Gateway's Development Coach.
9. As Development Coach, I meet with Gateway's administration weekly for a three hour period. While there, my primary responsibility is to provide support to the administrative staff in effectively implementing Delaware's Performance Appraisal System (DPAS II). In doing so co-observations and walkthroughs are conducted routinely. Discussions around responses and next steps related to the Comprehensive Success Review recommendations occur routinely.

10. Based on my observations to date, I can say without reservation that Catherine Dolan, Gateway's Head of School, and Stacy Solomon, its principal, are committed to acting on the recommendations made by DASL's School Success Review. They have embraced the recommendations and are committed to implementing a comprehensive response to the recommendations.
11. Making significant changes in the operation of a school is not easy, and the changes Gateway is making will not be complete overnight. But, as I have said in other contexts, Ms. Dolan and Ms. Solomon could serve as role models in how to respond to a Comprehensive Success Review.
12. They are working hard to correct the school's deficiencies and have prioritized well in choosing their responses to DASL's recommendations. They have already implemented changes in the areas of curriculum and instruction for the purpose of better alignment with common core, they have built in on-going professional development opportunities for teachers and paraprofessionals, increased student instructional time, are using diagnostic assessments allowing for more targeted instruction, and expanded the monitoring of instructional expectations so the necessary supports can be provided to staff and course adjustments can be made when needed.
13. The current leaders have the appropriate sense of urgency and are working at leading the school in the right direction. Because of the manner in which the school's current leadership has responded to DASL's recommendations and with a continued commitment to do so I expect Gateway will demonstrate continuous incremental growth that will sustain overtime.

Constance J. Fisher
Constance Fisher, Ed.D.

Dated: December 9, 2014

Date; 12/10/14
Address; Gateway Lab School

Dear To Whom May Be In Concern,

Hello. I am Alexis Knox, a proud sixth grade student at Gateway Lab School. The kids at Gateway need different kind of help about learning and respecting each other and accepting that everyone is different. The kids at my old school were often made fun of because they were different. But not here at Gateway. My days here have made me realize that Gateway Gladiators are here for each other. I see people always high fiving or encouraging a kid with problems named Jonathon, a friend of mine that needs extra help and the students always talk to each other, no matter what. At my old school, the students wouldn't do that, and thats what makes me respect Gateway a lot.

And with different children, Gateway teaches differently. They teach things from any other school, but go slow so that people could keep up and get help when they need help. There is always a teacher to help with the students, and the main teacher offers help anytime they can. If you think that Gateway doesn't teach us anything at all, you're wrong. Gateway isn't only teaching us the present, but the future. How we should be honest, loyal and hard working. But in real terms, they are teaching us everything that other schools are teaching us, like I said. And they also have us go on sites to help us even more.

Yes, indeed Gateway has a different way of teaching, and yes, they might not always seem to work, and I must not ignore the flaws the school has, but to be honest, there is very few. This school is still a work in progress, doing things they think will do what is better for the students of this amazing school. They are doing what they can do now, and I hope you consider keeping this school open for those in the future who can't find a school because no school can match there needs of learning. I hope you consider leaving this school open, because all students are accepted with warm welcomes, no matter how many problems they have .

With all hopes and love,
Alexis Knox

From: [Nagourney Jennifer](#)
To: [infocso](#)
Subject: FW: Gateway Charter School
Date: Thursday, December 11, 2014 11:27:23 PM

From: liz.toney@delawarepta.org [mailto:liz.toney@delawarepta.org]
Sent: Thursday, December 11, 2014 8:17 PM
To: Johnson Donna R
Cc: McLaughlin Mary Kate; Bill Doolittle; terri.hodges@delawarepta.org; Yvonne Johnson; Nagourney Jennifer; Kirshon Ilona
Subject: Re: Gateway Charter School

Donna,

Yes, we are aware of the Alternative Framework for Positive Outcomes Charter School; however, the situation with Positive Outcomes is different from Gateway Lab School. Thus comparing the two would have limited value. Based off my research and other conversations, it is clear Gateway was unaware, that they could create their own for consideration and approval.

We look forward to working with you and the Charter School office to create a high quality Framework for Gateway and to make such changes to statutes and regulations as needed. This would align the measures with the educational breadth required within IDEA.

Liz Toney
Delaware PTA
Exceptional Child Committee Chair
(302)333-3887
liz.toney@delawarepta.org
Sent from Windows Mail

From: [Johnson Donna R](#)
Sent: Wednesday, December 10, 2014 8:52 AM
To: liz.toney@delawarepta.org
Cc: [McLaughlin Mary Kate](#), [Bill Doolittle](#), terri.hodges@delawarepta.org, [Yvonne Johnson](#), [Nagourney Jennifer](#), [Kirshon Ilona](#)

Liz,
Thank you for your email. I am concerned by several aspects of the letter which are completely inaccurate and I want to make you aware of several of those aspects. Your letter states that DOE and the SBE have failed to deliver on the development of an alternate academic framework. This is simply untrue.

The Alternate Academic Framework, in accordance with the law is developed and implemented in alignment with the performance agreement for schools with an enrollment preference for "students at-risk of academic failure". Positive Outcomes charter school has been operating under an alternate framework since the development of the framework in 2012 and was evaluated under such framework even when they were up for renewal last year. This has been presented at several SBE meetings and was even discussed at a meeting regarding the framework with representatives from the DE PTA last March.

Further Gateway only applied for and was approved for a modification to their charter last spring, which is effective this school year, to use the at-risk enrollment preference and as a result of that modification will have their performance agreement aligned the alternate framework for the 2014-15 school year. They previously had not included that enrollment preference in their charter. According to DE law that enrollment preference allows the charter to, in partnership with their authorizer, develop a performance agreement using an alternate framework as a measurement tool of performance. The record of their approved modification and the alternate framework under which they will be measured is documented in the modification as well as referenced in their renewal record and available on the DOE Charter School website.

Additionally as can be seen in the record of Gateway's renewal application they included the alternate performance report (listed as Appendix B) showing how their school would have been measured if the alternate framework were implemented now. In reviewing that framework as well as the traditional framework you will see that it is noted there that data are reported when n-counts are greater than 15, yet in accordance with the state accountability rules cells are only included in the calculations for the framework when n-counts are 30 or above. Here is the link to the record of the renewal application for Gateway Lab School where you can find this

information. <http://www.doe.k12.de.us/Page/399#gls>

Should you have questions about this information please feel free to contact me or Jen Nagourney, Director of DOE Charter School Office for clarification.

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>

On Dec 10, 2014, at 8:12 AM, "liz.toney@delawarepta.org" <liz.toney@delawarepta.org>

wrote:

Dear Mark Murphy,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Delaware PTA Exceptional Child Committee. There are concerns about the community impact of the decision to not renew the charter application for Gateway Charter School. The attached letter details those concerns, as well as, recommendations on moving forward in the best interest of those children and families.

Please review and consider supporting those recommendations.

If you have any concerns or questions, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Liz Toney
Delaware PTA
Exceptional Child Committee Chair
(302)333-3887
liz.toney@delawarepta.org

Sent from Windows Mail

<GATEWAYLETTERFINALVERSION.doc>

From: [Teresa Stebner](#)
To: [infocso](#)
Cc: [Ashley Biden](#)
Subject: Fw: I don't know if you remember me, but it's Teresa from Ferris and I have a question for you...
Date: Wednesday, December 10, 2014 9:33:14 PM

Ashley, I hope that you don't mind, but I sent along this email so that your comments could be part of public record. I don't know if you signed any of the petitions that were circulated on our behalf, but I wanted to make sure that your voice was heard too. Sincerely, Teresa

From: Ashley Biden <abiden@dcjustice.org>
Sent: Tuesday, December 2, 2014 12:16 PM
To: Teresa Stebner
Cc: Catherine Dolan
Subject: RE: I don't know if you remember me, but it's Teresa from Ferris and I have a question for you...

Teresa,

I was actually listed on the advisory committee years ago and know Pam Draper. Her husband helped out with the C-Tech Program at Ferris. I received an email from Pam and will be there on the 10th if I can. I really do hope that Gateway receives the funding...these services are much needed in Delaware. I am in DC from Monday-Wednesday of next week but will attend if I arrive in Wilmington in time.

Warmly,

Ashley

Dear Ashley,

The problem is this...My school is in danger of closing due to NOT meeting test expectations. I work at Gateway Lab School in Wilmington. Brief history is this, it was created by a woman who noticed that her son learned differently. She created a school where students learn via the arts and by definition, a lot of special needs students fit into this category. The enrollment went up this year and there were 43 more spec ed students added to the roster. Our school culture encompasses learning, but these students learn differently and they cannot always demonstrate that via a test (even with a plethora of accommodations). Our school has accepted those students that most try to bar from entry because of their educational/emotional concerns. (Charter schools have been criticized for their enrollment procedures stating that they actually seek to keep special needs students out--ours is the opposite--we invite them and welcome them to our school which is leading to our undoing...) This school is in danger of closing and those students who are now thriving in this small environment of 14:1 with para support, an abundance of Spec Ed teachers and a staff that genuinely cares are going to go back into the Public School system that failed them

if we close. The Core Curriculum standards, DCAS and Smarter Balance are not friends of our students and even with the accommodations, they don't test well. These are the kids that are often forgotten or ignored and schools don't want to bother with them because they tend to mess up their statistics of achievement. Portfolio assessments have already been taken from them and replaced with DCAS-Alt1 and now they want to take away the support that they need. We have parents that I have met and students that actually love going to school and are happy, but because they don't produce well, they are in danger of going back to regular school. If you know anyone that could help us (like Mark T. Murphy) or if you know anything that could help, we are meeting with the State Board on 12/10 @ 6p in the Carvel Building. We, as a staff, and also parents and students have been told that our support and alliance is needed. We are all going to be there. I would appreciate anything that you could do. Thank you so much, my best to your family.

Sincerely yours, Teresa Stebner

From: [Nagourney Jennifer](#)
To: [infocso](#)
Subject: FW: RE: Gateway Charter School Charter Renewal
Date: Thursday, December 11, 2014 11:52:44 AM

From: Murphy Mark
Sent: Thursday, December 11, 2014 11:52 AM
To: Nagourney Jennifer
Subject: FW: RE: Gateway Charter School Charter Renewal

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)

This email and any attachments may be confidential or legally privileged. Any dissemination, copying or use of this communication by or to anyone other than the designated and intended recipient(s) is unauthorized. If you are not the intended recipient, please delete or destroy this communication immediately.



Please consider the environment before printing this e-mail

From: Jackson, Kristin
Sent: Thursday, December 11, 2014 7:29 AM
To: Murphy Mark
Subject: RE: Gateway Charter School Charter Renewal

Good Morning Secretary Murphy,

I am a teacher at EastSide Charter school. My middle daughter attends our Pre-K program, however, my oldest daughter, Alexis, started her first year at Gateway this school year. It taken me 5 years to finally find a school that fits her educational and social needs. As a teacher and active parent, I have extremely high standards. Unfortunately, this has caused Alexis to have to move schools several times to find the appropriate placement. After only a short time at Gateway, we are so pleased with her progress. She is making tangible gains and growing in more ways than I could imagine. The staff is so supportive and willing to go above and beyond to meet the individual needs of each student. This is so important to me as a mother of a child with special needs.

I hope that you will consider this email in my support of renewing the charter at Gateway Charter School.

Sincerely,

Kristin Jackson
5th Grade Math/Science Teacher
EastSide Charter School
Email: Kristin.Jackson@escs.k12.de.us
Cell: (302) 983-6993

Soar Beyond Expectations



From: [Nagourney Jennifer](#)
To: [infocso](#)
Subject: FW: RE:Renewal of the Gateway Lab School
Date: Wednesday, December 10, 2014 12:08:02 PM

From: Murphy Mark
Sent: Wednesday, December 10, 2014 12:06 PM
To: Nagourney Jennifer
Subject: FW: RE:Renewal of the Gateway Lab School

Mark T. Murphy
Secretary of Education
Delaware Department of Education
302.735.4002

From: Roxanne Walker [<mailto:roxy1102@comcast.net>]
Sent: Tuesday, December 09, 2014 9:22 PM
To: Murphy Mark
Subject: RE:Renewal of the Gateway Lab School

To Honorable Mark Murphy,

It is very sad to hear that you are considering closing the Gateway Lab School. My husband was a Special Education teacher in the Christina School District for 25 years prior to his retirement. I understand what it means for a child to have the special care and attention during their formative years. My good friend Barbara Carucci's grandson, Donte Hayes is one of those special children who deserves to have the attention that the Gateway Lab School offers. Please give this decision a considerable amount of thought and don't let the naysayers prevail.

*"There is no great disability in society, than the inability to see a person as more" -
Robert M. Hensel*

Warm regards,

Roxy
Roxanne Walker
302-220-9766
roxy1102@comcast.net

From: [Johnson Donna R](#)
To: [infocso](#)
Subject: Fwd: Gateway Lab School
Date: Thursday, December 11, 2014 8:50:17 AM

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
Twitter: @destateboarded

Begin forwarded message:

From: Heffernan Pat <pat.heffernan@doe.k12.de.us>
Date: December 10, 2014 at 4:39:44 PM EST
To: Johnson Donna R <donna.johnson@doe.k12.de.us>
Subject: Fw: Gateway Lab School

Pat Heffernan

From: Leslie Harris <lharris7509@yahoo.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 9, 2014 9:16 PM
To: Heffernan Pat
Subject: Gateway Lab School

I am writing to respectfully request that the Gateway Lab School be allowed to keep its charter and remain open. This school has provided a tremendous improvement for my nephew's learning environment. Jimmy just transferred there a few months ago and has already made great strides. Previous to this school year, Jimmy never wanted to talk about school. I was so happy to get a message that Jimmy loved his new school. Jimmy has started to read on his own and has gained confidence in his ability to learn. This school is filling a big void for the students who have difficulty learning in the standard school setting. The benefits of this school should be a good investment for taxpayers as these children are able to gain confidence and learn skills that they would otherwise be unable to do, which then translates to more productive citizens in the future.

This not only benefits the children, but also their communities. Please reconsider the vote to revoke the charter for this school. Thank you for your attention.

Leslie Harris
7509 N Oxford Pl
Peoria IL 61614

Dante and Maureen Zappacosta
814 Jeffrey Pine Dr.
Bear, DE 19701

December 11, 2014

Ref: Gateway Lab School Support

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter on behalf of my family. My son has been privileged to have been accepted into the charter public school of Gateway Lab. He has been going to the school for the last three years. He has progressed in all subjects at this school. I am very proud of the A's & B's grades he receives. If you are only making a decision on the state test scores alone, he improved in his English last spring. He received the highest grade of a 4 / exceeding standard. He did also receive a below standard for his math though. He has always struggled with math and he works tirelessly every summer to improve. My son has many disabilities and one of them is his eyesight. He wears glasses but that does not fix his problem. We wish it was that easy. His eyes are not aligned and on top of that one of his eyes wanders. So when you and I see one letter or one number he sees many and then they become entwined on top of each other. When his eye wanders he is seeing a page of numbers and letters all over the place and not on the same lines. His eyes miss words or numbers. Think about this and ask yourself if you think you might have a problem with doing math on a computer screen. My eyes feel strained after a while looking at a screen. Can you imagine a child trying desperately to figure out what one number is and especially if it has many of the same numbers involved in an equation? How about a line graph? To him there are lines crossing all over top of each other. It is all one jumbled mess to him. He has never known anything different though. Now let us throw in his anxiety, sensory difficulties and his diagnosed severe ADHD. In this conversation about renewing the charter for Gateway Lab, I would also like you to consider the need to have different testing for children with disabilities. It should be a discussion that goes hand in hand with helping these children to achieve their potential. If you need to compare these children, then please consider comparing like children with disabilities to other children with the same disabilities on their testing scores.

I am advocate for the public schools in Delaware for the right students. My daughter has exceeded in the traditional public school atmosphere. She has been given many opportunities to grow and learn. She has been the top student the last three years in her grade at William Penn High School. My son is very smart too but he does not test well. Let us say he does not do the main stream state testing system well. Ask him questions about what he just learned in Social Studies or Science and he will enthusiastically tell you. He loves telling stories and writing in his journal. When he speaks to you he gives great details about his stories. He likes to challenge himself with puzzles, his Lego's; he is creative with his Minecraft video game (virtual building block game). He loves playing chess and unfortunately for me he beats me most of the time! Does this sound like a student who would be labeled dumb and stupid by not only his peers but more importantly by his teachers at his other schools? My son and his fellow classmates were getting this impression from some of his teacher's. Please don't even say this does not happen in our public schools. It absolutely does and it is extremely unfortunate!! He has been threatened in front of the other students by his teacher that he will make sure he gets more medicine given to him if he doesn't stop talking and fidgeting. Medicine was used as a threat as if it was bad and this by the way was told to a seven year old. He was constantly told to sit out in the hall or to sit in the corner on the rug. He was sent to the principal's office many times. He would be isolated and singled out. He was out of the classroom more than he was in. How is this a good learning environment? I

would dread the phone ringing during the day or the sound of my computer that told me I had an email. I had one teacher that gave me a report of his actions for every 20 minute increment of the day, every day for five days a week. How much time was wasted instead of helping re-direct him? He was bullied more days then not. He was bullied at school and constantly on the bus. He told me in kindergarten that he hated school. It never got better after that until I had an interview with Mrs. Pamela Draper. She is a tireless hero for me and many families. She started this dream to have a public school available for children with special needs because of her own experiences with her own son. Her son was too old to attend the school she had a vision for by the time it opened up. I thank her in my heart every day since the school opened up its doors.

I would ask before you make any decisions please go to the school and sit in the classrooms and make an informed open minded decision on what you see with each child; not just what you see on paper. I think most of the parents that send their students to this school would say that they want their child to grow educationally but also with confidence and well being. They do not get this at any other school in Delaware. The state should embrace this school and celebrate these children's differences. You provide my daughter with honors and AP classes to meet her needs and children like her. Please provide the classroom setting that Gateway has offered and provided to my son so we can meet his needs. The teachers are trained for the vast majority of special need children and are able to work in small classroom sizes that will help them to succeed. I have found the teachers and administrators to be selflessness in their efforts to help these children. These children are celebrated at this school with their many achievements. Their many learning differences are not drawn to everyone's attention. These children don't stand out because they are different as they did in their feeder pattern schools. They stand out at this school for their accomplishments. Gateway has a family atmosphere where everyone accepts each other and they look out for each other. Gateway is truly a special place where my son feels safe and happy about learning. These children have been beaten down in our traditional public school system. They are told that they are trouble, stupid, or not worth the time. Gateway teaches our children that they can do anything they want to do and no one is excluded. This school embodies the word inclusivity. We always teach our children to look out for those around us that are less fortunate than ourselves and to help them in any way we can. I am asking the school board to do the same. You may not have a special needs child and really don't understand what the family and child goes through on a daily basis in their lives. I know decisions are not supposed to be based on emotion but if we can't get emotional for these children and help be their voices I honestly do not understand humanity. In the end, my family does not put our soul decision making of sending our child to Gateway on how he would do on a state written test. A test that is not designed to take in to account his learning disabilities and therefore; does not show his true intellect. Our job as parents, teachers, administrators, and school board members is to provide a safe, nurturing and educational environment. I addressed this letter to – To Whom It May Concern. I would like to tell you that each child at this school should have your concern and I would hope you will make this right decision to keep this school open on what this school stands for, what it means to these children and families, and what it means for these children's futures. Please give this school time to grow and implement the new changes they have put into place.

Sincerely,

Dante and Maureen Zappacosta

From: [Michelle Gardner](#)
To: [infocso](#)
Subject: Gateway Lab School Renewal
Date: Wednesday, December 10, 2014 4:09:24 PM

Dear Mark Murphy, Our son Nicholas has attended Gateway Lab School since they opened. He is now in 7th grade. Gateway was a godsend for Nick in many ways. He struggled tremendously in a traditional classroom environment. While attending Gateway he has shown improvement in all academic areas and verbal communication. Nick has grown in confidence socially, which has enables him to interact comfortably outside of family gatherings. He has stated " I love school " on several occasions and is eager to participate in class. To know that others may not have the same opportunity is disheartening. Gateway needs more time to expand its programs and let other children enjoy the success that Nick has experienced.

Sincerely, Michelle and

Joseph Gardner

From: [Mandy Spriggs](#)
To: [infocso](#)
Subject: Gateway Lab School
Date: Thursday, December 11, 2014 3:18:10 PM

To Whom it May Concern:

I am the new speech pathologist of Gateway Lab School, and am honored to work here. All my career I have searched for a place where the staff and Head of School understand the needs of special education students, and work as a cohesive unit to meet all the needs of their students. This school does just this! It provides the educational and social-emotional supports that are lacking in the school districts. (I know, as I have worked in public schools.)

I implore you to understand the importance of keeping Gateway Lab School open for these students, the families, and the staff who love working here. I have never had such a turn around in children's speech and language skills. A few students who recently began to attend this school have made more progress with their social-emotional and language skills than they ever did in years at public schools. In particular, I have one student who stuttered in his last placement, and has now been discharged from individual group fluency therapy secondary to displaying no dysfluencies. This is fantastic progress, and is truly related to the supports that Gateway staff provide him. His mother also indicated he is now reading for the first time in his academic career.

Please reconsider renewing the Charter for this school, as it has done SO much good for these children. If they have to return to the public school systems, they will fall through the cracks again, and not have the supports to reach their maximum potential as they do here.

Sincerely,
Mandy Spriggs, MA, CCC-SLP

From: jennifer.nagourney@doe.k12.de.us
To: [infocso](#)
Subject: New response for survey "Renewal Public Comment"
Date: Wednesday, December 10, 2014 6:28:09 PM

GENERAL RESPONSE INFORMATION

Response Start Time: 12/10/2014 6:19:19 PM

Response End Time: 12/10/2014 6:27:59 PM

IP Address: 173.59.117.56

Completed Survey: Yes

Respondent: Anonymous

SURVEY RESPONSES

SCORE: 0

1. Full Name

L. Clayton Washington

2. E-Mail Address

claywash3@yahoo.com

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

Gateway Lab School

4. Comment:

Ref: Support for Gateway Lab School.

As a founding Board Member of Gateway Lab School and an educator for the past 18 years, and as a parent, I strongly urge the State Board of Education to vote yes to continue to keep Gateway Lab School open, based on the school's mission to support and teach students with disabilities. Also based on the current overwhelming support from the parents, students, staff, and the community.

I also believe Gateway should be given opt-out rights from future standardized achievement testing, based on the percentage of students classified with learning disabilities and 504 accommodations.

Another solution is to test only the 8th graders who are moving on to high school. The 8th grade assessment could be used as part of the students' transitional IEPs, for high school course selections, and for chosen career pathways.

Thank you for all your hard work and support for the students, parents, and staff at Gateway Lab School.

Sincerely,

L. Clayton Washington

From: jennifer.nagourney@doe.k12.de.us
To: [infocso](#)
Subject: New response for survey "Renewal Public Comment"
Date: Wednesday, December 10, 2014 11:09:27 AM

GENERAL RESPONSE INFORMATION

Response Start Time: 12/10/2014 10:44:32 AM

Response End Time: 12/10/2014 11:09:16 AM

IP Address: 198.147.202.113

Completed Survey: Yes

Respondent: Anonymous

SURVEY RESPONSES

SCORE: 0

1. Full Name
Suzanne Deputy

2. E-Mail Address
sd41majestique@gmail.com

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

4. Comment:
Support for Gateway Lab School. My name is Suzanne Deputy and my son, Matthew Deputy, has attended Gateway Lab School since it first opened. My son has ADHD and was struggling in the larger feeder school system, he would come home crying every day, saying things like " I feel stupid and unable to learn, the teacher has to constantly re-direct me in front of the other kids and has to put my desk separate from the other kids" don't get me wrong, the Appo. Schools tried and did their best but were unable to devote the time and extra attention needed to teach my son due to the large amount of kids in each classroom. Gateway Lab School has been a "Godsend" to us, they teach kids in different ways and cater to children with learning disabilities such as ADHD and dyslexia. Matthew has excelled in this environment and has gone from feeling he could not learn and hated school, to on the honor roll last school year and a leader in his classroom this year. GLS has given my son the tools he has needed to learn, to excel and to now wanting to go to college when he graduates High School. I am so grateful to GLS for all that they have done for my son and all the children who go there. I only wish there were more schools like this out there. Please I implore you to give GLS the chance to make the Academic changes needed and to keep the school open for the sake of all the children who have been left behind in our larger/feeder school system. Sincerely, Suzanne Deputy

From: jennifer.nagourney@doe.k12.de.us
To: [infocso](#)
Subject: New response for survey "Renewal Public Comment"
Date: Wednesday, December 10, 2014 2:13:54 PM

GENERAL RESPONSE INFORMATION

Response Start Time: 12/10/2014 1:50:48 PM

Response End Time: 12/10/2014 2:13:39 PM

IP Address: 167.21.141.14

Completed Survey: Yes

Respondent: Anonymous

SURVEY RESPONSES

SCORE: 0

1. Full Name
Darryl S. Brown

2. E-Mail Address
darryl.brown@state.de.us

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

4. Comment:
My grandson Keith Fowler and granddaughter Grace Fawcett are students at the Gateway Lab School. I too have witnessed an extraordinary change in their attitudes toward school and their overall excitement in going to school. The Gateway Lab School has made an incredible impact on their lives as students and has given them the confidence to achieve. If you take this opportunity away from them, you will have not only damaged their spirit, but you will have also taken away from them a chance to become productive and successful students. As you know, students gain confidence and are better able to achieve when they feel equal to their peers. If you take these minnows and throw them back into the lake with the big fish, they will surely be devoured. Please do not destroy their future; give them the opportunity they deserve as kids to persevere in an atmosphere that is conducive of their needs as students who require a little more attention. Thank you.

From: jennifer.nagourney@doe.k12.de.us
To: [infocso](#)
Subject: New response for survey "Renewal Public Comment"
Date: Wednesday, December 10, 2014 4:19:20 PM

GENERAL RESPONSE INFORMATION

Response Start Time: 12/10/2014 4:13:36 PM

Response End Time: 12/10/2014 4:19:07 PM

IP Address: 216.163.255.100

Completed Survey: Yes

Respondent: Anonymous

SURVEY RESPONSES

SCORE: 0

1. Full Name
rachel Williams

2. E-Mail Address
rwillisms@yahoo.com

3. Which charter school renewal application do you wish to comment upon?
Reach Academy for Girls

4. Comment:
As much as reach is providing a learning environment, the leadership is terrible. Instead of closing the school, why not consider a take over by new management. My daughter has been a student at reach for five years and this will be my last unless something drastic happens. It is a waste of time for students here. The principal is not available for parent support and she beats around the bushes all the time when we try to ask her something.

A new principal may be a good option to redirect the schools performance and ratings. If not, I support the closure of the school it's not worth being around with this tremendous poor performance

From: jennifer.nagourney@doe.k12.de.us
To: [infocso](#)
Subject: New response for survey "Renewal Public Comment"
Date: Thursday, December 11, 2014 12:40:09 PM

GENERAL RESPONSE INFORMATION

Response Start Time: 12/11/2014 12:36:45 PM

Response End Time: 12/11/2014 12:39:51 PM

IP Address: 173.75.231.199

Completed Survey: Yes

Respondent: Anonymous

SURVEY RESPONSES

SCORE: 0

1. Full Name
Kathy Maas

2. E-Mail Address
kassaam@gmail.com

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

4. Comment:

My kids go to Charter School of Wilm. and HB duPont, and I'm not affiliated with Gateway. Yet even I - just a Delawarean - can recognize the value of this school. Its dual role provides students who are ill-equipped for the public school classroom the opportunity to thrive...and allows the public school classrooms (which are ill-equipped to educate these kids) the same thing: A chance to thrive.

It takes time (more than CSAC is allowing) to turn around a child whose emotional, behavioral or cognitive challenges have weighed them down in their prior schooling. Academics are important - but be fair: Gateway welcomes students who already had lower test scores and performance. Has anyone pulled individual files and compared current vs. previous scores?

One of my kids has challenges, and I'm sure Gateway parents can relate, in that I'm really concerned with him getting on a better path in life. I want him to grow up the best he can be. A good citizen. A responsible decision-maker. Frankly, once he reaches adulthood, any lingering "issues" become more than just my family's.

Intervention is so important; we need to reach these kids in their school years. Do we really want to incur the challenges of an adult population whose schooling had failed them?

Instead of trying to close this school, we should be honoring the educators who work with these kids and all their IEPs daily! Allow them to this specialized and demanding job. Otherwise, you'll be sticking children back into a system THAT DIDN'T WORK THE FIRST TIME.

These students will probably get further behind in their studies, and perhaps perform to the lowest standard of their label. Some will be alienated by classmates. The classes themselves will suffer.

It's not about budgets...or ranking high in some report. If you care about our state, our future, OUR KIDS...leave this school be!

Support for Gateway Lab School

December 10, 2014

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is LaToya Roane. My child Tyler Roane is a 5th grade student at Gateway Lab School. I am writing this letter in support of Gateway Lab Schools Charter renewal. My son Tyler has ADHD, PTSD and anxiety disorder. I adopted him at the age of 5 years from the state of Delaware's foster care system. He has suffered since conception in the womb. He has dealt with more in his 10 years of life than most adults have experienced. Due to Tyler's past he was behind socially, behaviorally, emotionally and overall academically by 3 years. Currently he is only behind in the area of math.

Before Tyler went to Gateway Lab School, he attended several schools. He attended Kindergarten at Guardian Angels (Ministry of Caring), and then he attended St. Peter's Cathedral School for 1st grade and after that Family Foundations Academy in 2nd grade. He was just pushed along each year. Each school had the same COMPLAINTS about my child. He won't sit still, he is constantly out of his seat, he is crying and won't stop (for hours), he won't talk to anyone, he is holding his breath until he passes out, he won't pick up his pencil, he isn't capable, and no one can handle him in their class. I can't tell you how many times I have heard "we just don't have the resources or the time to deal with his issues". Then a miracle happened, in a foster care support group someone mentioned Gateway Lab School. Desperate, I picked up the phone and called. There were 2 spots open. I rushed there the next day with my son to apply; they spoke to Tyler and told me what they could offer. They said that we would work together to help Tyler. That is exactly what happened. From that day, 2 school years and 3 months ago we have worked together, as a family to ensure my son's success.

Tyler is now doing school work. He is participating more. He is not crying for hours. He actually expresses how he is feeling. He is still growing more confident with each passing day. He is no longer having two hour meltdowns every evening. He is progressing. He is learning. He is making friends. He loves going to school. He feels safe at Gateway. No other school in the state of Delaware provides the level of care my son needs in order to succeed. Please give Gateway Lab School more time. My son's future depends on this school.

Thank you,

LaToya A. Roane

302-597-8560

From: jsmith022627@aol.com
To: [infocso](#)
Subject: Support for keeping Gateway Lab School
Date: Thursday, December 11, 2014 1:01:09 PM

Dear Committee ~

I support Gateway being able to keep its charter. I write as an educator and as a parent of a child whose needs are not being met in the public high school he attends in Delaware. I teach in an independent school setting but am quite aware of all the services Gateway offers as my son formerly attended a similar independent school; he, fortunately, evolved enough in his time there that he no longer needed a specialized setting. I was relieved on behalf of those families who couldn't even begin to afford the private school setting when Gateway opened.

These students are complex learners with complex issues. Unfortunately, as politicians and lay people, it is very difficult to understand the complexities and special services required; setting test results as the standard for success is misguided. But I sympathize with your perspective; if I weren't in education myself, I'd simply say what you're saying, "This is a failing school; close it." The issues are much more complex than that, however.

Please understand that many students in that school will *never* meet state testing standards. Students at that school are there because their special learning challenges are being met, probably for the first time in their educational lives; the goal is not to meet state testing standards. The goal of the school is to meet students' complex and complicated needs that will not be met in any other setting. Those teachers are specially trained in how to implement unique strategies about which no other educators would know. In addition, there are specialized therapies involved that mainstream schools absolutely will NOT provide (i.e., occupational therapists, language therapists, speech therapists).

My 18 year old son requires language therapy at our expense. Such a service would never be provided by the mainstream school system because his lack of ability doesn't fall into the 12th percentile of performance, the percentile range required to receive services. In fact, his teachers don't even recognize the need because they are not trained to recognize the issues. When I raised the issue of "expressive language" at a recent parent teacher conference, the teachers said he doesn't use a lot of expression when he talks but he knows the answers. Disturbingly, that is not even what I was asking, but mainstream educators don't understand that term or that diagnosis.

By closing Gateway, you are proposing that students with similar - and much greater - needs be thrust into a mainstream setting in which no one understands their needs, how to spot those needs, or how to teach to those needs. Gateway *does* know how to reach these students. The focus must be on the *students'* long term needs; not the *system's* short term needs.

Closing Central School, whose students have complex emotional and behavioral diagnosis, was an analogous error. Those students will be thrust into the mainstream setting next year where teachers will be ill-prepared to handle their complex - and disruptive - issues. Keeping Gateway open is a chance to do the right thing; please don't miss this opportunity. Parenthetically, it is paradoxical that test scores are the barometer of success for which Gateway (and presumably Central) is being judged when those same "failing" students will now be placed into the mainstream setting whose test scores will plummet due to the influx of students who can't meet the standard. Then what? Will all the mainstream schools close?

I urge you to evaluate Gateway in a vacuum and not in comparison to mainstream schools. I shudder to think of the harm that will come to the families who will need to find alternate educational placements for their children should Gateway no longer be an option for them. They will be lost and demoralized. Let your conscience be your guide.

Most sincerely ~