

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

Delaware Department of Education (department)

Secretary Mark Murphy,

Mark,

The Exceptional Child Committee of the Delaware PTA (ECC committee) would like to express our concerns in regards to the non renewal potential of the State charter for the Gateway Lab school (Gateway), and more broadly in the performance framework which guides these decisions.

From the initial presentation of the draft charter performance framework (framework) and though the adoption of the implementing regulation, stakeholders from the disability communities have expressed strong concerns that the framework was not created with our special needs and other at risk populations appropriately considered. Specifically, the primary areas of concern were

1. That the framework failed to appropriately and fully measure the educational perform of children with disabilities, especially in regards to the failing to address the equal importance of the functional curriculum (Social emotional, executive function, self advocacy, general life skills etc.) and these components equivalent importance as required under IDEA and ADA/Section 504.
2. That the Cell n-size prevents the majority of children with disabilities in our charter schools, and other at risk subgroups from being effectively measured under the framework.
3. That the due to the failure of the framework to appropriately measure the educational performance of children with disabilities that the framework and the underlying data analysis structure creates substantial incentives for discrimination against children with disabilities in admissions and appropriate individualized supports.
4. That for charter schools which choose to support atypically large percentages of children with disabilities and other at risk children though their mission, expertise, and by attracting students who have been failed by the traditional public schools, would, though the inequity of standard framework inevitably end up in a non renewal status.

During the discussion of these concerns with the department and board representatives, intent and commitment was given to address these concerns in a timely and ongoing basis including specifically informing and supporting the schools in #4 to create their own alternate performance framework for approval by the State Board of Education (board) for , which more effectively and accurately measures the performance of the school and the children the school supports. Unfortunately neither of these commitments have been followed through on by the department with any significant level of fidelity.

Based on the current framework's failure to equitably and effectively measure many components of performance of schools serving children with disabilities, the discrimination potential that the framework creates and the harm to children that the currents framework implementation will cause, the ECC committee is offering the following recommendations to you and the department and extend to such changes in legislation and regulation as may be required. These recommendation are additionally

critical based on the move to full inclusive opportunities the department indication that the framework will be extended to all public schools

1. That Gateway Charter school be granted a 1 year waiver with a additional 1 year extension with the 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 department and in collaboration with parents and other stakeholders for consideration by the board.
2. That functional curriculum measures be developed and included in the framework for children with disabilities and that they be applied consistent with IDEA/ADA 504 equivalency guidance, and where appropriate for or other at risk children.
3. That alternate measures be developed and applied for all cells at all levels for which outcomes are not available due to n size cut of limitations.
4. That an equitable and accurate LEA, School and classroom level comparative performance analysis model be developed based on an aggregate individual characteristics modeling.
5. That the accountability committee be expanded to include a representatives from the GACEC, DPTA and 3 parents at large.

The committee asks that your decision on the above recommendations be based first and foremost on not harming children as will occur if Gateway is closed, and more broadly on what is in the best interest of our children.

Delaware PTA Exceptional children committee

Liz Toney, Chair

Bill Doolittle, Delaware PTA board representative to the ECC committee

CC Delaware State Board of Education

# Gateway Lab School

Beverly Stewart <beverly@backtobasicslearning.com>

Fri 12/5/2014 9:04 AM

To: infocso <infocso@doe.k12.de.us>;

*To Whom it Concerns,*

*I wanted to weigh in by email since I will be attending a function the evening of December 10<sup>th</sup> and can't make the scheduled hearing.*

*We have worked with GLS both under the direction of founder Pam Draper and in the past two years with Catherine Dolan. I can tell you there is a dramatic difference in the way the school is run with the experience of the "new" leader. We see a much brighter future for GLS with Catherine at the helm. I ask that you give them one more year to prove this. In fact, they have recently won awards.*

*Please contact me if you would like to discuss our experience at Gateway Lab School. We are certainly supporting them to stay open.*

*Regards,*

*Beverly*

**Beverly Stewart, M.Ed., Hall of Fame of Delaware Women**

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December 9, 2014

To Whom It May Concern,

I am the pediatrician who has been caring for \_\_\_\_\_ since birth. She had a history of struggling in school and social situations during her early school career. By March of 2007 she was diagnosed with ADHD combined subtype and began on medication. In spite of that, her grades were fair and she still faced tremendous challenges academically and socially. In sixth grade she entered the Gateway Lab School. Her experience there seemed to allow her to blossom. Her grades improved dramatically, and in fact, she excelled. Socially she came into her own and made friends and participated in various activities. She is one of several patients I care for that have attended the Gateway Lab School and I've seen some tremendous benefits accrued from their time there.

Sincerely,

Neal B. Cohn, MD

## Gateway Lab School

E McReynolds <mcreynolds\_associates@yahoo.com>

Wed 12/3/2014 1:01 PM

To: Catherine Dolan <Catherine.Dolan@gl.s.k12.de.us>;

As a practicing pediatrician for 40 years, I have cared for many children with Attention Deficit Disorder and Learning Disabilities. Medication and balanced health care only do so much for these patients. They require educational attention that is only available to many through Gateway Lab School. Many of my patients, e.g. Michael Kempinski and Quadir Davis, really need this service. I commend this work and encourage the State to continue this essential service.

Edward W. McReynolds, M.D., F.A.A.P.

December 9, 2014

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a clinical psychologist specializing in child and family therapy and the coauthor of Brain Based Parenting. I currently have two child clients in my practice who are attending Gateway School. Both of these children have learning and social problems and were struggling to succeed in their previous school settings. One of these children had been home taught for years because of his difficulties and was very fearful of attending school. The other child has significant problems with attention and impulse control and was frequently being removed from class in his prior placements.

Both of these children have benefited greatly from their experiences at Gateway School so far this year and their parents were extremely upset when they learned that the school may be closed. Both children get up in the mornings now and readily go to school and come home in a positive frame of mind. Furthermore, they communicate with their parents more openly and, at times, even eagerly, about their school experiences.

While I don't know the details of how these two children are doing on tests of academic achievement, I do know the importance of children feeling positive about going to school and about being in the classroom. The children I am working with had mostly negative feelings about their prior school experiences and Gateway has turned things around for them, making school a positive part of their lives. Their parents have expressed strong feelings of gratitude towards the staff of Gateway for helping their children enjoy school and start to have success in their learning endeavors.

I strongly support the Gateway program based on my clinical experience with these youngsters and their parents and urge the board to reconsider the decision to close the school.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Baylin, PhD

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 F. Fisher  
Constance Fisher, Ed. D.

Dated: December 9, 2014

December 2014

I don't even know how to start this letter, I found it very outrageous that we as School, Parents and community has to be put in this predicament of fighting, defending and imploring for more time to prove that Gateway Lab School really works for all of our unique, distinctive and uncommon children!

I am a parent of a precious gift from God, named Laureana Faith, who probe from the beginning that she was going to be unique, distinctive, uncommon and that she was going to set her own time, her own pace. She was born at 23 weeks old, she weighed 1 lb. 0.06 oz., the doctors and specialist only gave us a 10% of survival and if survived, she was not going to be normal. They gave us a imaginable and horrible long list of possibilities and probabilities and in more than one occasion they reminded us our right to let her go and stop fighting for her life...

It was a long, excruciating process, she stayed 1 months in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at Christiana Hospital's then transferred at the NICU on A. I. DuPont Children's Hospital's, after that 2 more months in a different unit, to finally came home, but only for a few weeks and then back to A.I. DuPont Hospital, and it was back and forth for a while, she had had a lot of medical complications and several surgeries, and thank God she is now a success story, even thou there still some medical challenges it is nothing compare of what she has gone thru and the whole family at her side...As I told the doctors back then, the Lord give us this baby, and He can take it back when He pleases, in the meantime do everything that you have to do to keep our baby alive; the same way I feel today, I will continue do everything that I can do, to keep my baby in this school, after seen the encouraging transformation of my daughter as a 3<sup>rd</sup> grader at Gateway Lab School, is remarkable that is such short time only 4 month, this school has been an answer to our prayers, starting with the essential and vital fact, that my daughter wants to go to school, that itself is awesome, that is the tangible Gateway, the desire to learn! For someone that has not experience distinctive kids is hard and almost impossible to comprehend, that my child wants to be in her school, she and her school mates are not "trouble" kids, they have their own pace and their unique way to learn, and sadly after the majority of them had and are fighting so many medical challenges, we have been also fighting the standard or traditional education, the "normal" schools –no matter the school districts, has fail our kids, for many reasons from the quantity of students to the system itself on how and what and when to teach and how to really test our kids on their level. For the 99.9% of the standard or traditional schools our kids are not been served, are labeled trouble kids, the special Ed kids, most teachers don't have the time, the energy and by own experience, neither the desire to deal with kids that are labeled different. My daughter received 4 different therapies since she was born, first at the hospital, then at home until her 3<sup>rd</sup> year of being born, after that she had to enter the school system to be able to continue with all the therapies that she need it, so I can tell you as a fact on my own experience that my daughter education has in fact improved tremendously since she is Gateway Lab, this is her 5<sup>th</sup> school on her 9 years of life, she was at Leach for 2 years, which is was excellent but because it was a Choice School, she was not allow to continue and was sent to our school district, and school feeder, the first day of school, they told us that our daughter was transferred to another school that was better for her, that it was equip to handle her disabilities, yes they did said that and on the first day of school, so we have to run to a complete different school that day, next year back to

the feeder school, then two years in a charter school, and I have been waiting for two years to put my daughter here and it is devastating that finally when she got here now is this unfair battle that doesn't make any sense at all...If you made your judgment based of standardized tests, it is unfair for our kids, please evaluate our kids fairly, it does not make any sense that the educational system already categorized our kids with Individual Education Plan (IEP) then that is exactly what it means our kids are Individuals were standard Educational Plan does not apply, they must be and individual education plan to fairly test our kids, give Gateway Lab more time to keep individual-ing educating our children. How can our kids scores been compare with the traditional school were the majority of students has higher scores and the few IEP' student scores are a minority, in our school is the opposite the majority has IEP.

My daughter's grades this school year at Gateway Lab shows a big improvements compare with her Report Cards at the traditional schools, it tells how she is learning but also reveals how much she was not taught with diligence the math concepts, neither the writing skill just to mention two subjects. Her level of confidence has also improved and there is no anxiety now, on the top of her unique way to learn; before she was so overwhelm to go to school she didn't wanted to go to school at all, even to go to the cafeteria was overboard of anxiety, now none of things exist, before she was yelled at, even by teachers in all of the traditional school she has attended, she was also bullied and called retarded, stupid, slow among other hurtful things, even her ride on the bus was awful for her, none of those things are part of her life now, and there is no better evidence that the atmosphere and the techniques and skills that all the staff at Gateway Lab School are the right ones, that they are succeeding and that all the people involved in this school is making a huge different in each of the children that are part of it, give us more time to continue proving that Gateway Lab and its innovated and unique education style is working, we as parents are right here pleading to you, asking to give our kids more time to continue learning, don't forget that our kids are unique and they learn at their individual pace, give Gateway Lab more time to continue reaching out to our kids so they can continue uncovered our kids uniqueness and potential, if you can see the light up eyes and the excitement of the kids who really love their school were arts and music and as importal and vital as the other subject, how wonderful is to see how all work for the good in each the Gateway Lab Gladiators, how appropriate, Gladiator fighting to keep this special school alive!

Please consider all other alternatives, not just cancelled and closed our school.

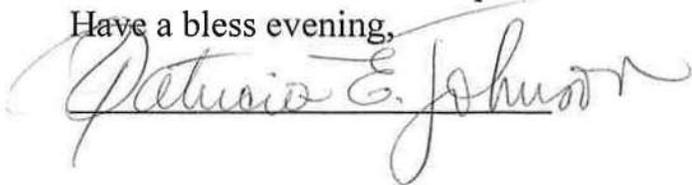
Please give Gateway Lab more time.

Please do the right thing.

Please renew Gateway Lab School.

I have faith that Good will prevail.

Have a bless evening,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Patricia E. Johnson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed text. The name "Patricia E. Johnson" is also printed in a smaller font directly beneath the signature.

Dear Secretary Murphy and Members of the Board of Education,

As a parent of a student currently attending Gateway Lab School I am writing to urge you to consider renewing its charter. The progress in my daughter's grades and state test scores is proof that Gateway's alternate teaching methods are helping my daughter and preparing her for a successful academic future.

When my daughter attended the district feeder school she struggled severely with testing, class work and ultimately socially due to the continuing decline of her grades and a lack of understanding of the material being taught. In a classroom with a student to teacher ratio of 27/1, she did not receive the attention or direction that she required to succeed. In her classroom at Gateway the ratio is 13/2 which allows her to be less distracted by other students and to receive the assistance she needs daily in order to continue progressing in school. While attending the district feeder school, she marked "below proficiency" in all core subjects and was retained in second grade because she was not receiving the attention needed to understand the class work. As a result of having to repeat second grade, she suffered socially and her confidence continued to decline. At Gateway most of her classmates and friends have suffered with the same struggles so she feels less isolated. Knowing that she is just like everyone else at "her school" her confidence has grown. As a result of her increased confidence, her grades have progressed from "below proficiency" to "meets and exceeds" in all core subjects. She has attained Honor Roll status since she started at Gateway in 3rd grade.

In addition to individual subject grades, her state test scores have also continued to improve yearly. Her instructional reading score has increased 159 points from the beginning of 3rd grade to the end of 5th grade. The accountability score in reading has increased 173 points from the beginning of 3rd grade to the end of 5th grade. At this rate she should meet the state testing standards in reading for both categories by 8th grade. Math instructional score has increased 133 points from 3rd to 5th grade and the accountability score increased 138 points from 3rd grade to 5th grade. At this rate she should meet state testing standards this year. Her test scores at the end of last year were below state standards but were above district standards. If Gateway is being judged on testing scores alone, my daughter's results are a perfect example of the amazing work being done at the school. Additional time is needed to allow my daughter to meet the state standards.

We know that all children learn differently and the dedicated faculty at Gateway has taken that knowledge and transformed it into action. They understand that children with hyperactivity disorders and attention deficit disorders need an outlet so that their disorders do not impede learning. At Gateway my daughter participates in physical education daily and in her words, that activity "gets the energies out" so she can focus while in her core classes. Art and music classes are attended on alternating days which provides the creative outlet needed by my daughter. These are all things that she would be denied at a traditional feeder school. As a result, her ability to focus and be successful in her education would be negatively impacted. I urge you to renew Gateway Lab School's charter. Please give them additional time to prove that the unique environment they provide for our kids is truly helping them to succeed in school and in life.

Thank you,

Denise M. Johnson

Dear Secretary Murphy and Board of Education Members,

As a parent of a child who attends Gateway Lab School, I urge you to renew its charter.

My child attended district feeder schools until third grade. I watched her begin her educational journey with an innocent enthusiasm, a genuine curiosity, and zest for learning. As her school experience unfolded, however, I witnessed steadily decreasing test scores and sagging confidence. Despite our many efforts to assist her through the district feeder schools we were unable to find a learning style that suited her. When she was retained and had to repeat second grade, we agreed with the staff that it might prove beneficial and allow her additional time to mature. When this course of action did not help her catch up with her peers we were dismayed. Over a three year period we had watched our happy, effervescent kindergarten student turn into a frustrated and angry second grader. We truly knew it was time for a new course of action when she would get physically ill each Sunday night in anticipation of Monday morning and a new week of school.

Despite some initial skepticism, we decided to visit Gateway Lab School. After meeting with some of the staff and understanding their mission, we decided to give it a try. The immediate improvement in our child's attitude about attending was evident. Our happy child had returned! As a result of Gateway's alternate teaching methods and its caring staff, my child's ability to learn has been fostered. She has consistently achieved Honor Roll status and we have watched her self confidence bloom. The new found confidence has allowed her to participate in many different activities which have further augmented her intellectual and emotional development.

I respectfully submit that closing Gateway Lab School at this juncture would cut short its mission and stifle my daughter's potential. Please allow them additional time to fully realize their vision for my child's future.

Sincerely,  
Terry Short

Dear Secretary Murphy and Members of the Delaware Department of Education,

I would like to address the proposed closing of The Gateway Lab School. After reading the reports and speaking to parents and children, I would like to strongly urge you not to dismiss this Charter School as a means of educating our children. The Gateway Lab has helped so many students by giving them the necessary foundation to complete their educational goals over a long term period. I realize your reports only test current students, many who may have just enrolled mid-year, using standardized testing. Standard is a far cry from what these kids know. I totally understand the testing shows below averages in Math and English, but what would those test scores be like if you only tested these kids in a public school setting? To me it is a very scary question. We all know in a public school setting their test scores would be dramatically lower. These scores are masked by the outstanding students in any one school. So if you place these children back in public school your test scores level out. I would really hate to see these kids get swept under the public school system in this matter. The Gateway School builds confidence in so many. It gives them a sense of belonging to a group just like themselves. How many of these kids, if brought back to the public school system, will actually make it to graduation? There is another scary question. And what will these kids do for the rest of their lives? These are good kids who deserve a chance to be successful in their lives.

Thank you for taking a moment to read my plea,

Sue Bower

11-20-14

Dear Board of Education,

My name is Alyssa Johnson and I am a student at Gateway Lab School. I'm writing this because you guys are thinking about closing my school. Five years ago I went to another public school and I needed to get my grades up, I couldn't focus as well as the others. I was nervous leaving my old school and starting at Gateway. I wanted to stay at my old school but I couldn't, It wasn't so bad after all. I just wanted to say not everyone is a straight A student. Our test scores are not as high as other schools. Our school is for kids that need help. Kids that need more attention and need more help on academics, that other kids don't need. When I started at Gateway my test scores where all ones but now in my 4th year at Gateway my scores are now threes. I'm very proud of how well I'm doing. Our teachers work very hard to help us and I couldn't ask for better teachers and counselors and all the other people that help us.

Sincerely,

*Alyssa Johnson*

Alyssa Johnson

Brigitte and Todd Pote  
585 Hemingway Dr.  
Hockessin, DE 19707  
December 9, 2014

Dear Renewal Committee:

I am writing to ask you to please renew the charter for the Gateway Lab School. It is such a unique place. Our son Brody is currently in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade at Gateway. It is his first year here. He has had an IEP since starting school. Brody has speech issues, memory issues, organizational issues, a learning disability, and is ADHD. He spent KN-4<sup>th</sup> grade at Richardson Park Learning Center. Brody was then mainstreamed for 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> to Brandywine Springs, which is an excellent school and where my daughter, who is in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, is thriving.

Even with all the support afforded to my son in the traditional mainstream setting, it was not enough. He was unable to meet his IEP goals, let alone the goals set by the state on mandated testing. This was very frustrating for him, knowing he was doing his best and still failing. Every day were the same complaints..."Mom, I just don't get it" or "They go too fast".

At his last teacher conference my husband and I were asked if we had heard of the Gateway Lab School. I pass it every day as I am a teacher at Richardson Park Elementary. It was suggested it may be a great fit for our Brody.

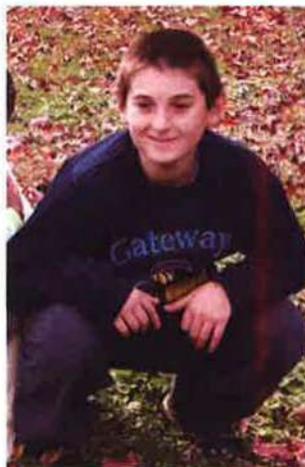
I couldn't agree more! Brody really enjoys school. His class size will always be 14 or less. There is an assistant teacher in the room that works with him when he needs it. His participation has improved, as well as his grades. It is the non-traditional setting that is working for him.

Please do not take this wonderful opportunity away from him. He has been upset since the news of the possible closure. His words..."They are like me, mom. I fit in here!" and "I'm starting to get it now. It makes more sense the way my teachers here do it."

Mrs. Dolan is implementing changes that take time to show results. Please give her that time. Give our children that time! I've been teaching at Richardson Park in Red Clay for 24 years. I would not have chosen to send my son to a "failing" school. Gateway Lab does wonderful things to help our special needs children learn and grow. It is their best chance of showing any growth and/or meeting the standard on the state tests. To me, that is NOT a failing school! Give Mrs. Dolan the chance to prove it. Give the parents the chance. Give the students the chance!

Sincerely,

*Brigitte and Todd Pote*



Give Brody the chance!

## Gateway Lab School is very much needed:

Daniel Whyte <whytedr@icloud.com>

Wed 12/10/2014 3:51 PM

To: Catherine Dolan <Catherine.Dolan@gls.k12.de.us>;

Gateway Lab School is very much needed:

A question that I have is will students with disabilities be well represented in the public schools as they seek to participate in after school athletics and clubs?

It has been studied and said by Arne Duncan U.S. Secretary of Education "students with disabilities are all too often denied the chance to participate and with it the respect that comes with inclusion."

We at Gateway offer extracurricular athletic activities, because we believe that it "promotes socialization, the development of leadership skills, focus, and of course physical fitness." U.S. Education Department. I am concerned , that our children will not be given the same opportunities to participate in school athletics, that many coaches will not be trained, that many will not know how to work with student athletes disabilities.

Daniel R. Whyte Jr.

Athletic Director

Sent from my iPad

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



Darcy and Michael Donahue, North Wilmington: Carrcroft

8 year old son Orion in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade at Gateway Lab School (First year)

When Orion left his last school in June of 2014, his self-esteem was shot and he was afraid of learning. Orion had become so afraid of “putting himself out there” and being ridiculed, that he never talked about school, ever. We found it so strange that we would ask him about his day and his face would darken, his expression would fall and he would change the subject. Orion has ADHD and would often ask his teachers lots of questions and at times be a distraction for other students. Unfortunately, the climate of the classroom had become so toxic for him because the other 26 students would not stop talking or allow Orion to ask for clarification on things. He was made fun of for the way he learned. He was labeled “the bad kid”.

Gateway Lab School had an immediate effect on our son. A couple of weeks into the new school year Orion and I were upstairs in his room talking. I asked him if he liked his new school and if there was any difference from his [former] school. He responded that he loved going to Gateway every day and the difference for him was that the students in his class respected him enough to allow him to learn. Orion’s statement took me aback as it was very insightful. From day one Orion came home from school chattering away about different projects he loved and math problems he solved. Orion talks about the culture of the classroom all the time-his friends, the learning environment and the teacher. He talks about how important his contributions are to the classroom learning environment. Orion has been taught by the teachers and staff of Gateway that he is an important contribution to the world and the classroom. He has also been taught to respect everyone in the learning environment even if they have learning differences. Also, Orion’s test scores have improved significantly especially in Math.

From: Jake Getty <j\_getty5@yahoo.com>  
Sent: Tuesday, December 09, 2014 5:10 PM  
To: Catherine Dolan  
Subject: Support Letter for Renewal

Good Evening Mrs. Dolan,

I am writing to you today to express my appreciation and support for the Gateway Lab School. My daughter has special needs both cognitively and at times, socially. I am sincerely grateful for the nurturing and professional school climate that is in place at your school. Abigail feels supported and challenged each day. It is obvious that high expectations and standards for teaching and learning are in place. I believe that the Gateway Lab School is a unique environment for all students to be a part of and it is truly a diamond in the ruff, in our current educational system.

As a concerned and loving parent of a precious child with learning challenges and as an educator with over twenty five years experience working with at-risk students, I request that you submit my response to the Delaware Department of Education and at the hearing this Wednesday, December 10, 2014. I am confident that the Gateway Lab School will continue to improve and make the necessary adjustments to increase student achievement at the highest level of performance. It will showcase for all of Delaware to see, how students learn through various modalities and in diverse ways.

Sincerely,

Jacob J. Getty Jr. Ed.D.  
Proud Parent and Educator

Sent from my iPhone

December 8, 2014

RE: Gateway Lab School possible closing

Kalia Wilson-Dorsey, Grade 5

My daughter Kalia Wilson-Dorsey has attended Gateway Lab School for the past three years. From the age of three years old, I have had Kalia in early childhood education programs and classes due to her learning differences. When Kalia was school age, I enrolled her in public school which separated her into RTI classes which did not address her learning struggles. I then enrolled her in Christian School which ignored her learning differences. Before Gateway Lab School, Kalia was not meeting proficiency in reading and math. After meeting with the team of professionals at Gateway Lab School and putting an IEP in place for Kalia, she has improved in both reading and math. Gateway Lab School two teacher class rooms and small class room size contributes to Kalia's improvement. Kalia's self esteem has improved. She is reading aloud more at home and is not reduced to tears when it's time to do math homework. Kalia feels the genuine support from the staff and teachers at Gateway Lab School.

I am at a lost as to where I would enroll Kalia if Gateway Lab School closes. Please consider other alternatives such as giving Gateway Lab School more time to meet state requirements. Can Gateway Lab School be reviewed as a stand alone school and not compared to other schools in the state? I feel, Kalia will continue to improve and become proficient in both reading and math if she remains at Gateway Lab School.

Sincerely,

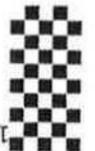
Gail Wilson-Dorsey

My name is Claudia Kuzminsky  
I am writing this letter in  
behalf of the Gate Way Lab  
School.

My Daughter attended Gate  
Way and excelled there. It  
wasn't easy. The teachers there  
helped her so much. They stayed  
after school on their own time,  
Took her into class rooms by  
herself to help her. They weren't  
teachers, they were her friends.  
They treated her with respect,  
and helped her learn. There's not  
many teachers that would do the  
things they did with Melinda.  
They are the best there.

It wasn't just my Daughter.  
Other parents we talked to, and  
their children went through the same  
thing.

Some children learn faster  
than others, but the teachers didn't  
let the others fall behind.



To whom it may concern:

I am the guardian of one student that attend gate way lab school. I hope and pray that this school will remain open next year! Reason being this school has change my grandchild to a better happy child. who can't wait to get to school every day. This school gives such a strong support and guidance to the family and children. The teaching style is very effective with the love and care of concern of the child health.

I will recommend this school to any parent that struggle with ~~learning~~ learning issue with their child. I am proud that I chose this school for my grandchild. I can't not feel so bless and lucky to have such great support from great teachers and staff. please let them stay open.

God bless you!  
Sincerely,  
Yan's  
Sharon's Kiss

December 8, 2014

Support for Gateway Lab School

To: Mark Murphy, State of Delaware Secretary of Education

Re: Charter School Accountability Committee' decision not to renew the charter for Gateway Lab School

Dear Secretary Murphy,

In July of 2014 my husband and I became legal guardians for our granddaughter, Kayla Gardner. Kayla's mother enrolled her at the Gateway Lab School for the fall of 2011. Kayla has attended Gateway Lab School for fourth, fifth and sixth grades and is currently in her second trimester of seventh grade. The decision to enroll Kayla at Gateway Lab School was made in light of her documented learning disability in mathematics and her diagnosed Attention Deficit Disorder-Combined Type and Anxiety after her poor social and academic progress in the private school in which she was previously enrolled.

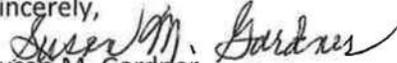
Given that we did not have legal guardianship and custody of Kayla until this summer, I am not able to provide you with her measurable academic growth over the last almost three and one half years as I write this letter. I am confident that I can meet with Gateway Lab School leadership to receive a copy of Kayla's previous report cards and her state testing scores. I am, however, able to attest to the fact that she has made great strides in her social and emotional growth during the time she has been enrolled at Gateway Lab School. I am also able to attest to the care, concern and professionalism of the faculty and staff that assisted us by providing us with information to assist Kayla when it became evident that she was negatively impacted by serious attendance issues. I am also pleased that the faculty of Gateway Lab School has used the MAP testing to provide an evidence based analysis of Kayla's skills. She has been receiving assigned work through Achieve 3000 that is specifically determined differentiated instruction targeted to help her improve academic mastery.

During the past four months, as legal guardians, my husband and I have had the opportunity to interact with Gateway Lab School students and their families. I am edified by the depth of commitment and determination shown by the parents of Kayla's classmates. These parents are working with the faculty and staff of Gateway Lab School to provide the best possible education for their children knowing that their sons and daughters learning challenges cannot be addressed in a traditional public school setting.

The administration of the Gateway Lab School has taken great strides forward to structure and evidence based curriculum of instruction to meet the learning needs of a school community where approximately 60% of the enrolled students are documented as having learning disabilities. I am eager to see the ratings of performance for Gateway Lab School when the Alternative Framework for Assessment is used in 2015.

I am requesting that you grant Gateway Lab School a renewal of their charter. All indications are that Ms. Dolan and Ms. Solomon are guiding the school's faculty and staff to strengthen instruction and provide for measurable growth in student achievement.

Sincerely,

  
Susan M. Gardner

Grandmother/Legal Guardian of Kayla Gardner

Mr. Sokola,

My name is Erik Dammeyer and I live in Newark. I am writing you to express my concern and frustration with the Board of Education's plan to shut down Gateway Lab School at the end of the current school year. My daughter Grace has ADHD and a learning disability that was diagnosed when she was in kindergarten. At that time she was enrolled at Maclary Elementary school in Newark. We were very pleased with Maclary up until second grade. It was then we realized that Grace needed to be in a class with less students and a place where she could have extra attention.

My wife heard of Gateway Lab from doing some research as we were trying to find a better school for our daughter. The original school was founded in Washington D.C. and specializes in educating children with ADD, ADHD and mild to severe learning disabilities. We heard that there would be a school opening in Delaware that would be very much like the school in Washington. We attended a few meetings and met with the woman who was spear heading this and knew right away that Grace would really benefit from a school with this program.

Grace started at Gateway the first year it was open in 2011 in the third grade. We immediately knew that this school would benefit her in many ways. The class sizes were small so she could get the extra attention she deserved and she was happy that she was with other children who were like her. She no longer had issues keeping up or being outcast by other students and teachers. Her grades improved right away as did her reading and math skills. She not only has ADHD but she also has socialization issues and a learning disability. All of which have been addressed by the staff at Gateway and she is making strides every year.

She is now in sixth grade and we were really counting on her being at Gateway through 8th grade so we could help her prepare for the leap to a regular high school. She is not ready to go back to a school that can not and will not give her the special attention she needs. She will be lost in the classroom and I am sure she will struggle academically and socially. Our fear is that she will get left behind and bullied.

The very idea that the state wants to shut down this school because of poor test scores is insulting. This school is dedicated to serving children who are struggling to achieve academic success in a normal school environment. How can it be held to the same standards as the traditional school when most of the kids at Gateway Lab are there because of learning disabilities?

I can tell you that I would normally not write a politician because with all do respect I don't believe they listen or care once they are elected. I am hoping that you and the other representatives we are contacting prove me wrong. We have no idea what we will do if they do shut down Gateway Lab. I can not and will not send her to a public school that will just push her through the system. Any help you can give us would be greatly appreciated. Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,  
Erik Dammeyer  
302-893-4700

Gateway Lab Charter School of the Arts

Attention: State of The Circuit Court System Judicial Processing of the closing of Wilmington Schools.

December 10, 2014

Re: Cayla Bray, Gateway Lab Student

I am writing this letter in reference to my daughter, Cayla Bray. She has been attending Gateway Lab for the last four years. The reason why my daughter attended this school was to assist her individual needs towards learning comprehension while on the Independent Educational Program (IEP). I preferred this process due to the fact, as a parent I had the opportunity to sit with teachers who work with my daughter in a small classroom setting. Although her classes rotate, the size remains manageable to about fifteen students per teacher where personal education goals can be established.

My daughter was assigned to fourth grade due to the fact District School Principals have a roll with teachers to promote students that attend their schools. I had difficulty with the principal concerning my daughter not reaching her learning goals. However a team of teachers met with me and my daughter was assigned to the next grade and transfer to another school which was new to the district. At this school, her classes had two teachers and thirty-five students. I found this to be struggling. Pamela Draper founded Gateway that specialized in IEP learning with Educational Diagnosticians because she too experienced a lack of concern for our children who needed assistance with educational tools. Gateway offers this need but on a small scale which in my opinion is very controllable and functional.

I have seen the progress my daughter has accomplished statically with test scores. She started off in the low two hundreds upon arrival and scores range within the seven hundreds. She has gain great confidence and has no problem displaying leadership skills amongst her peers. If there is a problem, parents are informed immediately. Principal, faculty parents and students have good relationships. They also provide guidance and behavioral counseling. I do receive telephone calls from the Dean. The children feel safe and very eager to accept the challenges that come with developing new comprehension skills. What makes this school specials are the arts of music, sports, dance and hiking. The Gateway Lab Charter School emphasizes on strategizing. This is a very important skill that will be used throughout life circumstances. Please keep Gateway Lab School of the Arts open. The lab time allows the children to work in small groups to complete assignments and work on class projects. This school makes an excellent model for Special Educational learning. Please do not close the school doors but provide additional funds to bring in specialist to teach on how to strategize the increase on state testing scores.

Sincerely Yours;

Mr. and Mrs. Bray

Dear Mark Murphy and Committee Members,

My name is Teresa Stebner and I am writing you as a concerned citizen and also the Educational Diagnostician at Gateway Lab School. My experience is this: I have over 14 years experience working with Special needs students. I have worked in both Pennsylvania and Delaware in Wraparound Services (TSS and BSC) with many different diagnoses--all ages from 3-adult, a therapist in the community both individually and with families, and as a teacher prior to my current experience. I have two Master's Degrees in Counseling--one in Secondary School Counseling and also one in Mental Health Counseling. I got the 2nd Degree to supplement/support my School Counseling degree and experience. I am working as an Educational Diagnostician because of my wealth of Special Education experience as well as for the simple fact that the job market is difficult and counseling jobs are hard to come by. That being said, I can say that my experience at Gateway (albeit short at this time, has been a great experience so far) and I hope to add to it. I was, however, hired and then started working and within a week was told that our school might be closing. That was nothing short of a shock to me as the need for this school is great. (And I am not simply saying that because I work here).

I give you that brief summary so that you know that I am speaking from experience. My experience is varied and encompasses the Special Education arena from the standpoint of an educator and a therapist. I have been in many public schools and now work for a charter. I have worked with many different developmental levels and know some things for certain and one of them is that standardized testing is not a fair basis of comparison for children with special needs. The level of growth that they experience is difficult to measure by a test's standards and it is almost akin to comparing apples and oranges with children that are considered "normal" by either educational or emotional standards. These students have a different path to their development and demonstrate it best by their work and abilities. The portfolio that was originally an implementation standard would be a fantastic way to show the growth as the individual work is what they should be judged by (especially if you are comparing their growth to their own growth from years past). Children with special needs have a different trajectory of growth than others and an annual measure is difficult to show any level of mastery when simply put into numbers.

Speaking from a data standpoint and from other concerned citizens that are opposed or find fault with standardized testing, it is not difficult to find measures that are being disputed during your own administration all over the country. NEA puts their support behind then bills that are being levelled into the house current and past for the problems with standardized testing. HB 2836 is being introduced by Texas to decrease the amount of testing from annual measures and is similar to the concerns raised by HR 4172 which proposes grade span testing. HR 5 aka the "Student Success Act" is being hailed by NEA as enforcing equal opportunities when the poor and disadvantaged students are oftentimes being underrepresented in legislation. It also takes into consideration of the increase of achievement being used to close gaps, but your own fellow lawmakers find fault with the weight being given to standardized tests stating that "multiple measures should be used instead of one size fits all standardized assessments" as reported by <http://educationvotes.nea.org/2013/07/19/house-of-representatives-narrowly-passes-flawed-esea-reauthorization/>.

So that is my objective information, here is my personal standpoint. I have a very personal stake in this battle as my position is in jeopardy. Moreover, I have been party to Individualized Education Programs for the better part of 14 years and have to say that my experience has been very positive since I have been part of Gateway's community for the past month. I have been writing and amending a lot of IEP's and can tell you from not only writing them for another state (PA) and implementing them also for that

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



and Gentlemen of the General Assembly,

My lab school has created the best environment for my son Tzadik, to thrive academically and socially. The staff has continued to commit to providing the services and support available to him. Having a small classroom size. Allows him to get the individual attention that he needs. With the support of speech, and occupational therapy he is also making great strides with socialization and his sense of community. Tzadik is accepted here for the way that he learns, which is the emphasis of the IEP that the staff, his mother and I partnered to construct for him. It's working. His individual goals for reading, and math are either being met or are at least showing continual growth.

I was told to accentuate the positive, and to reserve my comments to the greatness of Gateway to help persuade you to give the school the time and fair playing field that it needs to show you how much better that we can do.

I have to question your guidelines for measuring our school. It is my understanding that the DDOE guidelines are measuring our children, ones with IEPs, 504s, categorized by you as at risk, the same as unaffected children. How is this fair or even an accurate way to measure their standards or growth. Our children can learn. They are learning. Please acknowledge that they just learn differently.

My son came from a Colonial district school. He was bullied mercilessly everyday to the point that halfway through the first semester, I had to go to the school every day for six weeks to observe why. Up to 31 children in the class. No aids in the classroom. Not one teacher specifically trained or credentialed to deal with ASD. They didn't even admit until late in the game that they were not even dealing with his IEP. None of the services that he required were provided. From the principal, to the superintendent, we were stonewalled and treated like an enemy. We had to press and insist for everything, and ultimately received nothing more than lip service. If it were not for the proactivity of Tzadik's Mother and I with his studies, the 2012-2013 school year would have been a loss.

From my own investigation, not one of Tzadik's neighborhood schools provide the services that Tzadik needs and is receiving here at Gateway. Not George Meade, not Gunning Bedford, not Calvin McCulloch. Placing him back in general population at any of these schools would not be in his best interest.

Please don't simply politicize this issue and have our school become the collateral damage of skewed figures and measurements. Please don't send us back to hell. Give us a fair chance, give us the time that was afforded to others. Let us go out on our shield.

Thank you for your time.

EI' Ahmad Barak( devoted parent of Tzadik Barak and Gateway Gladiator)

Letter of Support for Gateway Lab School:

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

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

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

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

Mission Statement:

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

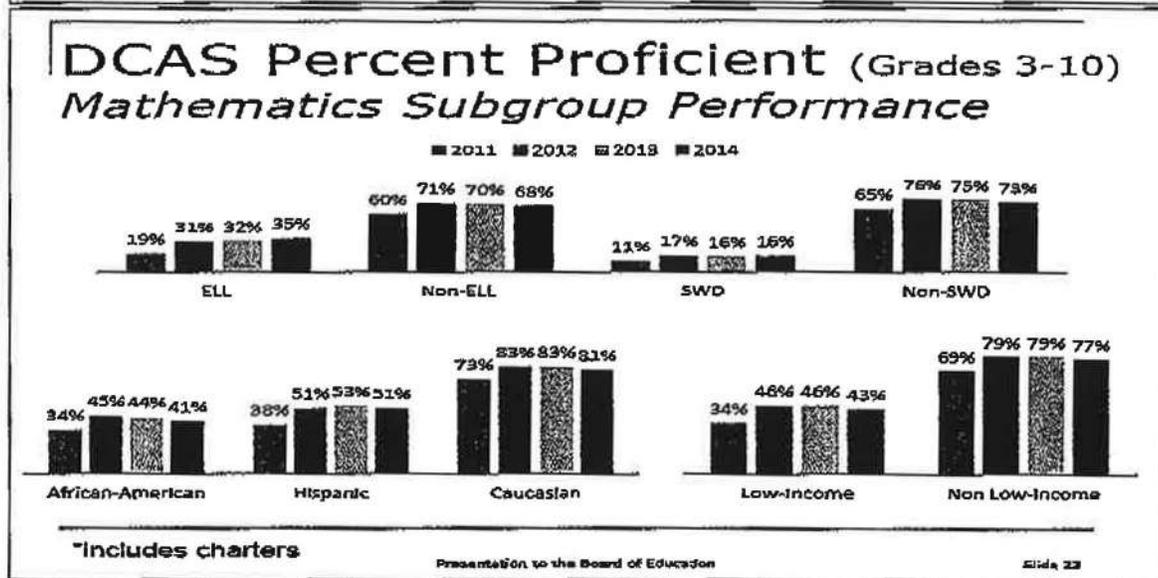
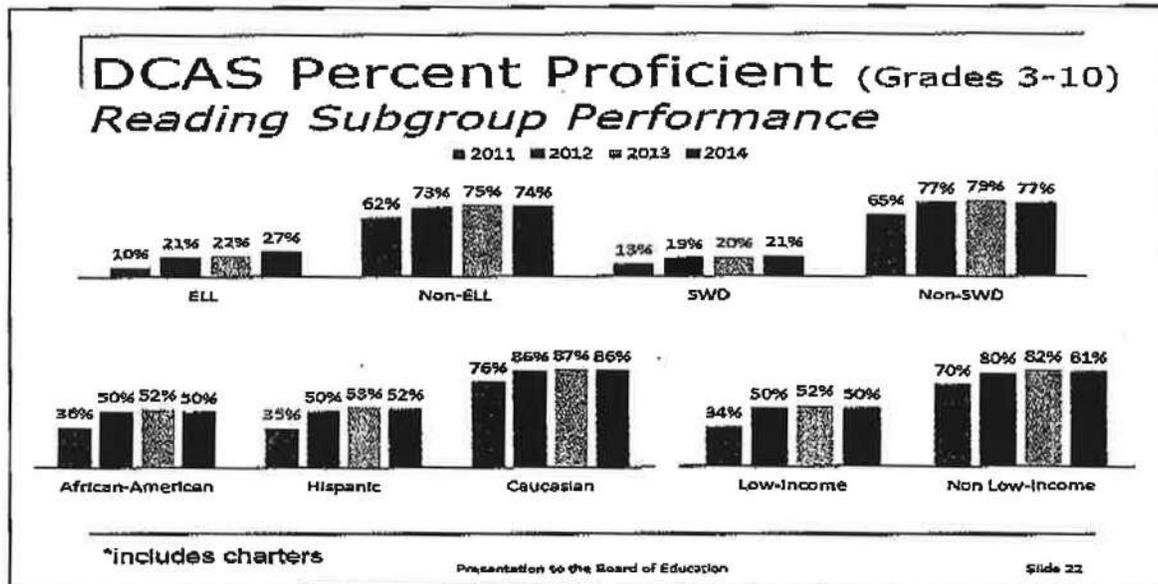
In an email sent to State Representative Williams on Monday, November 24<sup>th</sup>, Ms. Nagourney, in response to Ms. Johnson's email to State Representative Williams on November 23<sup>rd</sup>, the following points were made:

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

Again, referencing the CSAS Initial Meeting held on October 14<sup>th</sup> with the Initial report published on October 22<sup>nd</sup>, page 6 of 9, Ms. Johnson asked about the percentage of intense and complex students at the school. Ms. Field Rogers stated:

"there were 212 total units, of which 7 were complex, 41 intense, and 71 basic." Including the additional 18-19 students with 504 Plans, a majority of the school is made up of SWDs.

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

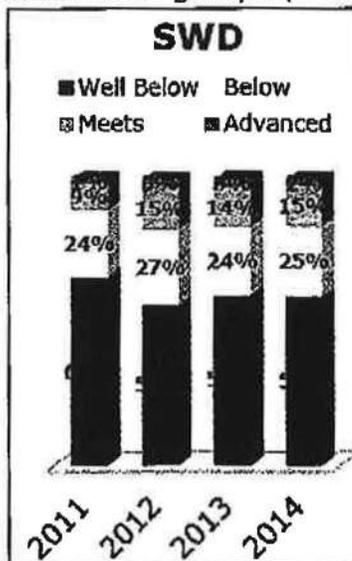
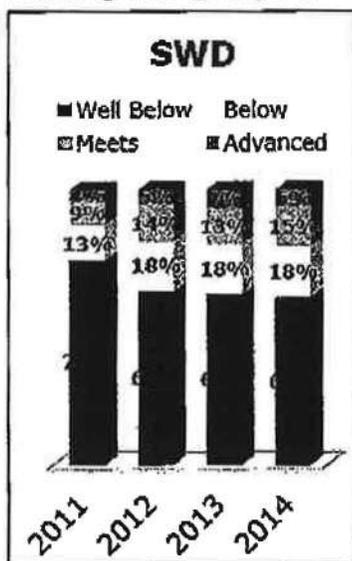


Further breaking it down for SWD children:

## DCAS Performance Levels DCAS Performance Levels

Reading Sub-groups (Grades 3-10)

Mathematics Sub-groups (Grades 3-10)



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

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

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

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

Sincerely,

**Nate Schwartz**

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

December 10, 2014

To Whom It May Concern:

We just wanted to explain how our son has been impacted by this wonderful school. Since beginning at Gateway, our son has shown definite improvement in his reading and writing skills. Although district wide test scores did not reflect well, his personal testing showed definite improvement and isn't this why these children are in this school; because they don't fit the mold for other schools.

Our son is doing so much better socially and we see him coming out of his shell. This has been a big jump for him as he is painfully shy and now we are happy to report that he has kids that he can actually call friends.

We hope that all the information you gather from parents will be put in to play and the district can find it in their realm to keep our school going as there is a great need for this type of school. The children attending this school benefit greatly from the one on one help.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth and Blake Hubschmidt

My brother-in-law, Zachary Ward, started attending Gateway Lab School this past September, and in the three short months that he's been there we've noticed dramatic improvement in both his learning and social skills. The effects were immediate. You see, it all started in 2011 while Zack was attending Richardson Park elementary. He was failing 3rd grade at that time as well as showing signs of the bipolar disorder he was later diagnosed with. My mother-in-law, Valerie, decided homeschool was the best option. She embarked on a two year journey to educate her son. In doing so, she noticed Zack's learning disabilities. He was unable to concentrate. It was a fight to get him to sit down and try to pay attention, let alone to complete an assignment. He felt that he was stupid and unable to learn anything. It broke my heart to hear him say these things. Valerie discovered several educational websites that were helpful and Zack showed some improvement, but it wasn't enough.

Since starting at Gateway Lab, Zack has begun to enjoy learning. He looks forward to attending school and doesn't want to miss a day. How many children feel that way? He comes home from school and does his homework without being asked, and without much help. He's really comprehending what he learns. He was so excited last week when he received his report card. He earned mostly A's and B's. We couldn't be more proud of him, and can see his confidence growing. He's becoming more interactive with others as well, not as shy as he used to be, and is making eye contact with others now. Being at Gateway Lab has also encouraged his creative side. One of his first school projects was to build a vehicle of sorts, and he's been creating things ever since.

We've been to the Gateway school. It's a very cozy, quiet school, a place I would have enjoyed attending. The teachers and staff are friendly and dedicate to their students. The children who attend are very fortunate that such a place exists, and hopefully will continue to exist. Should Gateway Lab be shut down, the children will be forced to

attend a school that does not have the specialized training to be able to educate all of these children according to their needs. We strongly feel that closing Gateway Lab school would be detrimental to the childrens' future and thus encourage you to reconsider closing the school. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

  
Daniel Tequianes

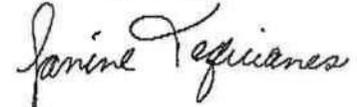
My brother, Zachary Ward, started attending Gateway Lab School this past September, and in the three short months that he's been there I've noticed dramatic improvement in both his learning and social skills. The effects were immediate. You see, it all started in 2011 while Zack was attending Richardson Park elementary. He was failing 3rd grade at that time as well as showing signs of the bipolar disorder he was later diagnosed with. We decided homeschool was the best option. My mom embarked on a two year journey to educate her son. In doing so, my mom noticed Zack's learning disabilities. He was unable to concentrate. It was a fight to get him to sit down and try to pay attention, let alone to complete an assignment. He felt that he was stupid and unable to learn anything. It broke my heart to hear him say these things. My mom discovered several educational websites that were helpful and Zack showed some improvement, but it wasn't enough.

Since starting at Gateway Lab, Zack has begun to enjoy learning. He looks forward to attending school and doesn't want to miss a day. How many children feel that way? He comes home from school and does his homework without being asked, and without much help. He's really comprehending what he learns. He was so excited last week when he received his report card. He earned mostly A's and B's. I couldn't be more proud. I can see his confidence growing. He's becoming more interactive with others as well, not as shy as he used to be, and is making eye contact with others now. Being at Gateway Lab has also encouraged his creative side. One of his first school projects was to build a vehicle of sorts, and he's been creating things ever since.

I've been to Gateway Lab school. It's a very cozy, quiet school, a place I would have enjoyed attending. The teachers and staff are friendly and dedicate to their students. The children who attend are very fortunate that such a place exists, and hopefully will continue to exist. Should Gateway Lab be shut down, the children will be forced to

attend a school that does not have the specialized training to be able to educate all of these children according to their needs. I strongly feel that closing Gateway Lab school would be detrimental to the childrens' future and I, thus, encourage you to reconsider closing the school. Thank you for your time.

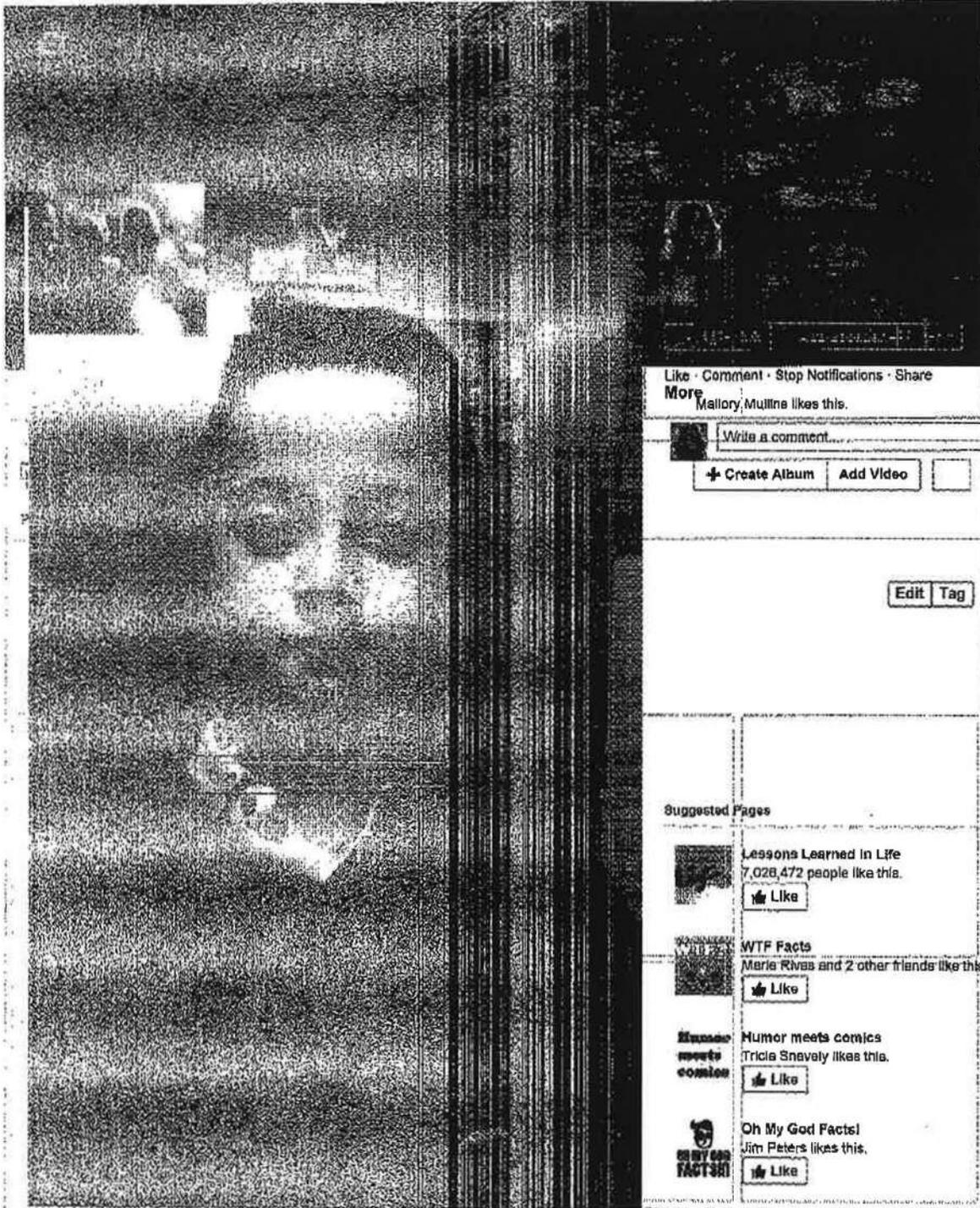
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Janine Tequianes". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Janine Tequianes



(3) Janine Tequianes



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Jim Peters likes this.  
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Jackie Burbank  
391 Stafford Ave  
Newark, DE 19711

To whom it may concern,

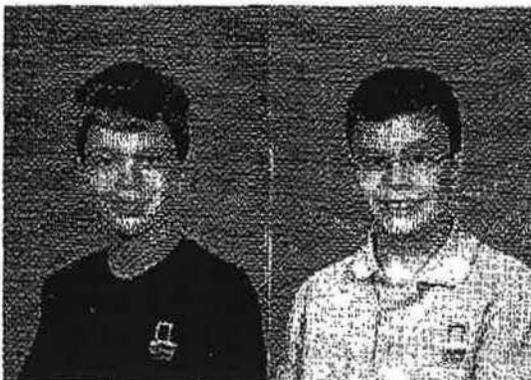
My name is Jackie Burbank, and I am a Gateway parent with two children in the school, both of whom have IEP's. One of them suffers from Non Verbal Learning Disorder and ADHD. After our nightmarish ordeal suffering through the third grade at our district school last year, we were lucky enough to get both of our sons into Gateway to start the fourth grade.

Our Non-Verbal/ADHD son had a terrible school experience last year! Not because it's a bad school, but because they just didn't have the resources or expertise to provide the learning environment he needed. My son acts out because he can't focus and doesn't understand how to behave in a mainstream classroom environment. They treated his disability like it was a disciplinary issue. He was punished severely, including having his desk and chair taken away and being forced to sit on the floor in class. He was suspended numerous times. Almost every week we would get a call from the school asking us to come take him home because they didn't know how to deal with him. My husband and I lived in fear of those phone calls!

Our son's psychologist recommended Gateway Lab School to us, and things have been wonderful so far this school year! The staff at Gateway knows how to handle kids like my son, and how to get them engaged and interested in learning. Our son has become a model student compared to last year. He is completing his class assignments, participating in extracurricular activities (Drum Club and Basketball), and he has not been suspended or sent home. And, both of my sons just got six A's and two B's on their report cards!

Standardized test scores are simply NOT an accurate way to evaluate the progress of a school where more than 70% of the students have some sort of learning difficulty. Do you really think their individual scores will improve if placed back into their district schools? Of course not. Closing this school would amount to nothing more than discrimination against learning-disabled children!

Thank you.  
Jackie Burbank





**Positive Outcomes  
Charter School**

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

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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 using State and Federal Benchmarks.

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 also emphasizes growth, which we are confident, is the most important indicator of success.

For the 2013-2014 school year POCS was the only school in our state that was being measured utilizing an Alternative Academic Framework. GLS data was run on the Alternative Framework; however, the school was still being held accountable to the



## **Positive Outcomes Charter School**

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traditional Academic Framework. A review of the draft GLS Alternative Academic Framework demonstrates the work and progress that they are making. In the future the success of GLS should be measured using appropriate comparison groups and measures.

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 for their students. GLS has also just completed a Comprehensive Success Review and I would 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,

Edward J. Emmett Jr.  
Director

**From:** [infocso](#)  
**To:** [infocso](#)  
**Subject:** FW: New response for survey "Renewal Public Comment"  
**Date:** Friday, December 12, 2014 3:45:10 PM

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## GENERAL RESPONSE INFORMATION

Response Start Time: 12/12/2014 1:21:04 PM

Response End Time: 12/12/2014 1:49:16 PM

IP Address: 100.34.137.132

Completed Survey: Yes

Respondent: Anonymous

## SURVEY RESPONSES

SCORE: 0

1. Full Name

Dawn Coover

2. E-Mail Address

[coov1031@aol.com](mailto:coov1031@aol.com)

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

Gateway Lab School

4. Comment:

I had two children attend GLS for three years. Such a magical place! My son started barely knowing how to write. The teacher scribed for him, no one teased him. Everyone including the students support each other. My son learned confidence- He believes in himself. GLS taught him that. My son is now in high school. He writes now. I do not believe he would of come this far without GLS. I am so grateful for the support And staff there. This is just one small example of the magic that happens on a daily basis at GLS.

**From:** [Chuck Burbank](#)  
**To:** [infocso](#)  
**Subject:** Gateway Lab School / 2016 Olympic Games  
**Date:** Friday, December 12, 2014 3:37:18 PM

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In less that two years, many of us will be watching the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro on TV. It's exciting and inspiring to watch the finest, best trained, most gifted athletes from around the world competing to see who is the best of the best. But there is a reason why we don't put wheelchair-bound athletes up against them and then revoke their charters when they can't compete!

Not only do we not expect the same performance from special-needs athletes as we do from "normal" athletes, we also don't train them in the same facilities or measure their progress by the same standards. To do so would be discrimination.

The reason we treat special-needs athletes differently than normal athletes is that they ARE different. And so are the children at Gateway Lab School. The majority of our students have one or more learning disabilities, and they came to Gateway because their needs were not being met at their District schools.

Forcing these children back into their previous schools will not help them. Like my two sons, these children were disenfranchised, bullied, silenced, and tossed aside due to their District schools' lack of resources and expertise for helping learning-disabled students succeed. Gateway's environment was designed for these children and, given time, it works! This is evident by the huge number of parents, teachers, legislators, and others who came to support Gateway at the public hearing earlier this week.

The only right course of action in this matter is to renew Gateway Lab School's charter and to measure their future progress by the alternative framework which they have been granted.

Thank you.  
Charles Burbank

**From:** [Chuck and Jackie Burbank](#)  
**To:** [infocso](#)  
**Subject:** Gateway Lab School Charter Renewal  
**Date:** Friday, December 12, 2014 2:43:07 PM

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To all concerned:

Since attending and speaking at the Public Hearing this past Wednesday and hearing the overwhelming volume of support for our school from various legislators, doctors, teachers, and parents, it should be plainly obvious to everyone that Gateway's charter **MUST** be renewed!

This charter should be renewed for 5 years to provide an adequate time for Gateway to show the slow but steady progress this school makes with it's population of mostly learning-disabled students. Not just academic progress, but social, behavioral, and emotional progress as well. The alternative framework that the school has been granted will paint an accurate picture of the success that Gateway is capable of with children who have learning difficulties. Remember, the parents of these children found their way to Gateway because their previous schools were not meeting their needs.

Renewing Gateway's charter and supporting this school would be a step in the right direction for Delaware, a State that currently ranks quite poorly in special education offerings, and would put Delaware on a path to becoming a competitor in special-needs education.

Thank you.  
Charles and Jackie Burbank

**From:** [jennifer.nagourney@doe.k12.de.us](mailto:jennifer.nagourney@doe.k12.de.us)  
**To:** [infocso](#)  
**Subject:** New response for survey "Renewal Public Comment"  
**Date:** Friday, December 12, 2014 3:16:37 PM

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## GENERAL RESPONSE INFORMATION

Response Start Time: 12/12/2014 3:01:15 PM

Response End Time: 12/12/2014 3:16:22 PM

IP Address: 73.13.246.162

Completed Survey: Yes

Respondent: Anonymous

## SURVEY RESPONSES

SCORE: 0

1. Full Name  
Rebecca Zedan

2. E-Mail Address  
BeckieNNate@me.com

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

4. Comment:

My girls do not have any disabilities, but they attend Gateway. We CHOSE to send our girls to Gateway because they were being left behind in their public school. Sierra has been at Gateway since it opened, and Savanna is in her 2nd school year there. Gateway challenged Sierra when her public school would not. Sierra is very smart, and was getting bored in her public school after 2 years of back and forth with school I finally got them to put her in and "Enrichment" class. Come to find out that the enrichment class only met once a week for 30 minutes! We enrolled her in Gateway as soon as we could. She was in Gateway for about a month when I got a phone call from her teacher. She started to tell me how Sierra wasn't being challenged enough, that with our permission she would like to push her ahead to 4 to 6th grade work. This was exactly what Sierra needed. I hadn't even told the teachers the reason why I had put Sierra in Gateway. I wanted to see if the school really was doing what they had said they were going to do. In that first month they had realized that Sierra was not being challenged enough and was not getting the education she needed. They then started challenging her. She and her sister, Savanna are both thriving in Gateway's art-filled environment. Please do not take my girls school away from them. They cannot go back to the school they were in before, especially since in the past 3 years there has been no change there. We need Gateway, our children need Gateway. Please reconsider and give my girls and all of the Gateway students and families a chance to prove to you that who we are.

**From:** [jennifer.nagourney@doe.k12.de.us](mailto:jennifer.nagourney@doe.k12.de.us)  
**To:** [infocso](#)  
**Subject:** New response for survey "Renewal Public Comment"  
**Date:** Friday, December 12, 2014 11:08:56 AM

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## GENERAL RESPONSE INFORMATION

Response Start Time: 12/12/2014 11:05:10 AM

Response End Time: 12/12/2014 11:08:44 AM

IP Address: 198.246.145.98

Completed Survey: Yes

Respondent: Anonymous

## SURVEY RESPONSES

SCORE: 0

1. Full Name  
Jen LaRocca

2. E-Mail Address  
[guineveremattes@yahoo.com](mailto:guineveremattes@yahoo.com)

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

4. Comment:  
Please support the Gateway Lab School and renew their Charter.

**From:** [jennifer.nagourney@doe.k12.de.us](mailto:jennifer.nagourney@doe.k12.de.us)  
**To:** [infocso](#)  
**Subject:** New response for survey "Renewal Public Comment"  
**Date:** Friday, December 12, 2014 10:10:09 AM

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## GENERAL RESPONSE INFORMATION

Response Start Time: 12/12/2014 10:02:13 AM

Response End Time: 12/12/2014 10:10:02 AM

IP Address: 198.246.145.98

Completed Survey: Yes

Respondent: Anonymous

## SURVEY RESPONSES

SCORE: 0

1. Full Name  
Karen Buckley

2. E-Mail Address  
[karenbuckley@mpainc.com](mailto:karenbuckley@mpainc.com)

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

4. Comment:

Dear Secretary Mark Murphy,  
Unfortunately you missed a heartfelt meeting at the Carvel Building this week in support of the Gateway Lab School. Parents, friends, faculty, students and many others expressed the gift that GLS is to their family. It truly meets its mission to provide an opportunity to children that struggle to achieve academic success in a traditional environment.

Please take a moment to reflect on the importance of keeping this school open and the number of children that will be affected if it were to close.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Karen Buckley  
COO/CFO

**From:** [Karen Buckley](#)  
**To:** [infocso](#)  
**Subject:** Support for Gateway Lab School  
**Date:** Friday, December 12, 2014 10:02:36 AM

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Dear Secretary Mark Murphy

I am writing on behalf of my nephew who currently attends the Gateway Lab School. As a parent the most important part of your life is taking care of your children and giving them the best education and tools to become a happy and productive citizen. For so many years I watched my nephew struggle in school to the detriment that it was affecting his health, self-esteem and relationship with adults and peers.

The past few years has made a remarkable change in my nephew's health, self-esteem and future outlook thanks to the commitment and focus of the teachers and staff at GLS.

The Gateway Lab School is "a gift from heaven" as my sister-in-law describes it and truly meets its mission to provide an opportunity to children who are struggling to achieve academic success in a traditional environment.

I am sorry that you were not at the meeting at the Carvel Building this week as you would have been astonished at the number of lives that have been changed through the Gateway Lab School.

Please take a moment to reflect on the importance of keeping this school open and the number of children that will be affected if it were to close.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Karen Buckley  
COO/CFO

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