

November 12, 2019

To Whom it May Concern:

It is my understanding that Gateway Lab School is up for its Charter Renewal. My son James Horgan is a current 8th grader at the school, and he has been at the school since 3rd grade. As a parent, former Board Member, and current high school teacher, I support the charter renewal for many reasons.

First of all, Gateway has helped my son in many areas—academically, artistically, and socially. When James started at Gateway, he was behind in reading, math, and in social skills. The Wilson Reading Program helped James's fluency tremendously. In addition, the services available from Occupational Therapy and Speech Therapy have helped with his fine motor skills and social skills. The small class sizes have helped him learn to advocate for himself. All of the teachers have been knowledgeable and caring. His current Individual Education Plan (IEP) is very detailed and personalized. The teachers and specialists work as a team to make sure that all of the students' needs are met.

Besides academic success, the arts integration at Gateway has been tremendous. James has been a member of the Drumming Club and it has helped him manage his ADHD and improve his social skills. The annual Arts Festivals give the students and teachers to opportunity to display the projects and perform for the parents. The students will benefit from this confidence booster in preparation for high school.

As a high school teacher at a local high school, I have taught many Gateway graduates. Most of the students have been successful; our valedictorian last year was a Gateway graduate. Hard work and self-advocacy are common traits that I find exemplified in the Gateway graduates.

Finally, the administrators and teachers work as team to offer a unique program that is beneficial to so many kids in our county. As a former member of the Gateway Board of Directors, I am and have been so impressed with their dedication to offering the students at Gateway a quality arts-integrated education.

Please renew Gateway's Charter for the next five years. Attending Gateway has been an amazing gift for my son. Please allow future students to have the same opportunity.

Sincerely,

Ms. Tina Horgan
English Teacher
Delcastle Technical High School

To: Gateway Lab School Board

Re: Charter Renewal

Please be advised, I am sending this letter of recommendation for Gateway Lab School's charter renewal this year.

My son, Jayson, is currently a 7th grade student at Gateway and I could not be happier or prouder to have him anywhere else. This school has changed our lives.

From the beginning, Jayson has always struggled in most traditional school settings. He was born with a speech delay which made it difficult for him to communicate with his peers and teachers effectively as early as pre-K. In his ELC (early learning center), there were about 20 kids in the class, and he struggled socially and emotionally, which adversely affected his ability to grasp the other basic skills most children learn at this stage. Both his speech therapist and behavior specialist suspected he may have been autistic and would need additional services to thrive in classroom settings. Even as he learned to speak better, I still was worried because they marked him as high risk for illiteracy and his struggles to interact positively with other children was a major concern as well.

When doctors confirmed that he was not autistic, I was relieved but still unsure of what type of learning environment would be best for him. I enrolled him in a private school Kindergarten which only had 4 other students in the class. Jayson made great leaps and began learning in all subjects much better and even his speech improved greatly. It was like I had another kid and it was remarkable how much progress he made that year.

Then Jayson started at public elementary school from 1st grade thru 4th. It was a classroom setting with 20 or more children each grade. He eventually tested out for speech therapy in 2nd grade, but constantly struggled in math, ELA and to interact well with classmates. His behavior at school and home was erratic to say the least. The school would not provide additional paraprofessionals to assist in the classroom with his struggles, even though he had an IEP. It became clear to me at that point, Jayson needed a smaller class size for him to learn effectively. His math scores were always below grade level, a 2, on scale of 4-1. I was repeatedly told that he was not performing bad enough in math and ELA to get RTI or additional help. The system was happy to keep passing him along as long as his scores were just below grade level. As a parent, I felt this unacceptable. I was determined to try to find the proper classroom setting so he could learn to his full capability.

By the summer after 4th grade I had enough of the same excuses with no progress or additional resources being allocated for his learning. He was also tested that summer by Nemours with ADHD and General Anxiety Disorder. I knew that changes were in order. He had started 5th grade at his home elementary school, yet no provisions were made for his IEP to be updated with his recent diagnosis or even a meeting being scheduled to try to figure out a new learning plan for Jayson's school year. My frustration was at a level that I never had before. How do I make things work for my son without the accommodations needed in school for him?? That same week, I just happened to see a sign at a strip mall for Open Enrollment at Gateway Lab School for his grade level. I looked up the website, and I liked the description of the school's mission and decided to call. By the next day, I had an appointment at the school, and by the end of the week, Jayson was enrolled as a 5th grader at Gateway.

The normal challenges for when a student transfers to a new school were there of course. However, I could not believe the services that were available to us now. Jayson quickly received his own

individualized learning plan, a new 504 Plan, assistance from paraprofessionals both inside and outside the classroom!! I was thrilled!!! It was like a dream come true. Once Jayson got over the change to a new school environment, things just went into motion. The smaller class size truly helps him. I can say as a parent, smaller size learning groups really makes a difference with children who has learning differences. It is much easier for him to focus now in class, and he is growing socially as well. Now I am told by his teachers (as of 6th grade), that my son has a MATH mind and that he is a student who completes his work in a fashion that other students will try to emulate!!! That is a far cry from where we started. Therefore, I do not care to think where he would be today, if I had not changed the setting so abruptly for him.

Not only do I think that Gateway Lab's charter should be renewed but if possible, give Gateway additional funding to expand their program to 1st through 12th grade. Gateway's model on how to handle children with learning disabilities and challenges cannot be matched and should not be discounted. Many children right now are enrolled in public schools throughout the systems and districts and have learning problems that are not being identified, addressed and accommodated so that the child can thrive. That is not only heartbreaking but disturbing that we live in a country where needs of children like my son are not being addressed. Not all children can learn the same; it is imperative that learning differences be acknowledged and fostered to help children succeed in school. As parents and a society, we need to use all resources and means at our disposal to make a brighter future for our children.

I would also ask that better bus transportation is provided for the charters schools as that is a nightmare but I would settle for just making sure Gateway receives its charter renewal and they are allowed to continue to help fulfill their mission...one child at a time. More children need to have the healthy outcomes that my son as had. I am such a grateful parent.

Sincerely,

Yolanda Taylor – Gateway Gladiator Mom

Lawrence Sheila

From: Keri Maisano <antkar36@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, November 12, 2019 1:03 PM
To: infocso
Cc: a.doyle.lowe@gmail.com; Pat Troy-Brooks
Subject: Gateway Lab School Renewal

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my support for the renewal of the Gateway Lab School Charter. The Gateway Lab School philosophy is based on the belief that children, who have struggled to achieve academic success in the traditional school environment and learn differently, have the capacity to achieve academic success and to realize individual learning potential. Gateway's innovative arts-based learning helps children with the development of motor skills, language skills, social skills, decision-making, risk-taking, and inventiveness.

I support the charter renewal for the following reasons: My son would not be where he is today academically or socially without Gateway. He struggled in elementary school with an IEP but accomplished enough to "be assigned" to the next grade. In 6th grade we decided to go to a catholic school in hopes that the smaller classroom sizes would help him focus and understand the material better, however it was a huge mistake. He struggled everyday with the homework load, tests, etc. We finally found Gateway and decided to repeat 6th grade with all the extra support Gateway had to offer and that was the best decision we ever made. Anthony is able to learn in a small setting with the support he needs to retain the information that is being taught. His confidence has sky rocketed, tests scores improved dramatically, and socially he came out of his shell. He has joined clubs and sports, enjoys going to school, and homework is never a battle anymore. Gateway has truly made a positive impact and I hope the renewal is granted so other families and students have the chance to experience what we have.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Keri Maisano

Student: Anthony Maisano 7th grade

Sent from my iPhone

From: [Michele Foster](#)
To: [infocso](#)
Cc: a.doyle.lowe@gmail.com; [Pat Troy-Brooks](#); [Scott Foster](#)
Subject: Charter renewal letter
Date: Tuesday, November 12, 2019 11:20:50 PM

To Whom It May Concern,

Today, our 13 year old daughter is reading at peer level, instead of crying when she tried to read a page in a book; solving math problems on her own, instead of walking out of class in frustration; considered a class leader instead of a “troubled” student just 8 months ago.

Our daughter has grown by leap and bounds in the past four years because of the support, encouragement and specialized education offered at Gateway Lab Charter School. Today, she no longer needs an IEP because of the individualized attention she has received by teachers and staff at GLS.

Before Gateway Lab Charter School, our daughter attended Ursuline Academy and All Saints Catholic School. Although her learning challenges surfaced while she attended these exceptional grade schools, her needs were not be met; these private schools just did not have the “resources” to help our elementary student with her reading and math delays.

Fortunately, in 2015, we got a recommendation from Dr. Harris Finkelstein, a respected psychologist. He said that Gateway Lab Charter School would be the best place for our daughter. Thus, she was enrolled that year to the charter school as a third grader. Because of this remarkable school, our now 7th grader is thriving as a result of special education support offered at GLS. Her confidence has grown because Gateway’s teachers and staff believed in her. The future is full of possibilities for our daughter!

This is our story to express our support for the renewal of the Gateway Lab School Charter.

Thank you for your consideration.

Michele M. Foster
Scott C. Foster

From: [Susan](#)
To: [infocso; a.doyle.lowe@gmail.com](mailto:a.doyle.lowe@gmail.com); [Pat Troy-Brooks](#)
Subject: Letter of support
Date: Wednesday, November 13, 2019 3:09:21 PM

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my strong support for the renewal of the Gateway Lab School Charter. The Gateway Lab School philosophy is based on the belief that children, who have struggled to achieve academic success in the traditional school environment and learn differently, have the capacity to achieve academic success and to realize individual learning potential. Gateway's innovative arts-based learning helps children with the development of motor skills, language skills, social skills, decision-making, risk-taking, and inventiveness.

I support the charter renewal for the following reasons:

Watching my child grow up to be the best person that she/he is a blessing and source of pride. Gateway supports a non-traditional way to learning but is able to enhance and drill down the necessary skills to foster learning by being creative, using arts (musical, visual arts, movement, etc), and being supportive. I remember as a child having to make a song out of most things just to remember it. In her past school, it was a struggle to see her uninterested, unmotivated, and not eager to learn. She continued to get the comment by the teacher that 'Child does not appear motivated.' or 'Needs to work more independently.' That was heartbreaking to her and I. We knew she was trying and she just wasn't feeling confident, felt rushed and pressured. Since my youngest daughter has transferred to Gateway, we have seen her returning an interest in learning. In the few short months of attending Gateway, she is once again excited about being challenged, integrating dance, musical instruments, and art projects to learn. She was very happy to start and continues to be excited about attending school. The effort and preparation that she displays independently helps me feel comforted that she can continue on to be an independent learner. The compassion that the staff and Ms. Wooten have shown, demonstrating a family environment feel has allowed her to feel comforted to learn and not be hesitant.

Another older daughter in the home, has also shown great benefits and improvement from attending Gateway. After attending the Middle School in our home district, coming into it as an excited learner with good grades drastically changed to failing grades, being bullied, changing her

behavior to be aggressive towards others in just a few weeks became our harsh reality. Watching a drastic mood change, no motivation to dream or pursue her interest of drawing, or being creative, but instead being placed on multiple discipline at school and home for fighting in school, and disrespecting adults. We had to find a safe place for her learning to be the priority by any means possible. Attending open house after another and finally finding Gateway, we were amazed by the eager learners that were so proud to show off their school, pointing out the 'cool' stuff about their school, classroom's etc. We knew that was the place to meet the child where they are and grow from that. In such a delicate time of pre-teen dynamics, we have seen in just two month's time, the return of our pre-teen that has now emerged. She willingly brings up things happening at school, wanting to attend field trips, wanting to help out with open house showing us the 'cool' stuff in her classroom, actively sketching in her sketchbook with dreams of attending an arts school, and running for class president. This turnaround is so heartwarming to us and relieves some fears of how her outcome could have went rather than seeing where it is going. As a parent, our goal has been to raise good citizens, active participants in the community and that seems to be fostered and enhances the learning experience.

I hope that you will find that these mere words are minimal compared to the huge IMPACT it will continue to have on our child's life. One that is being impacted and fostered by the great supports offered at Gateway. Thank you for your time and consideration.

*Sincerely,
S. White*

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my wishes for you....love, peace, happiness, & good health.