

Initial Public Hearing

In The Matter Of:
Department of Education
Gateway Lab School

Public Hearing
November 13, 2019

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THE STATE OF DELAWARE
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
and
BOARD OF EDUCATION

In re:)
)
GATEWAY LAB SCHOOL)

TRANSCRIPT OF PUBLIC HEARING

New Castle Public Library
424 Delaware Street
New Castle, Delaware
November 13, 2019
5:36 p.m.

HEARD BEFORE: LEROY TRAVERS
WALI RUSHDAN

APPEARANCES:

DARRYL PARSON, Deputy Attorney General
for the Department of Education

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1 MR. TRAVERS: Good evening,
2 everyone. I declare this public hearing to
3 be open. My name is Leroy Travers. I'm
4 the education associate with the Charter
5 School Office, and I've been appointed by
6 the Secretary of Education to conduct this
7 public hearing.

8 Gateway Lab School has filed an
9 application to renew its charter for a term
10 of five years. As is required by law, the
11 matter was referred to the Charter School
12 Accountability Committee for investigation
13 and report. This joint public hearing is
14 being held by the Department of Education,
15 and the State Board of Education.

16 At this time I ask the others
17 joining me to introduce themselves.

18 MR. RUSHDAN: Wali Rushdan,
19 State Board of Education.

20 MR. PARSON: Darryl Parson,
21 Department of Justice.

22 MR. TRAVERS: I would like the
23 record to reflect that the notice of the
24 time, date, and place of today's public



1 hearing was published in The News Journal
2 the Delaware State News on October 10,
3 2019.

4 In addition, notice was posted
5 at the Charter School Accountability
6 Committee's official place of business, on
7 the Department of Education's official
8 website, and on the state public meeting
9 calendar on the State's official website.

10 Further, Gateway Lab School was
11 personally notified of the time, date, and
12 place of today's public hearing on June 19,
13 2019 and notified of the change in location
14 on September 5, 2019.

15 A court reporter is present so
16 that a record of this hearing can be made.
17 It will be necessary for each speaker to
18 clearly identify his or herself before
19 beginning to speak so that the court
20 reporter will be able to note who you are.

21 The record of this hearing will
22 be provided to the Secretary of Education
23 and the members of the State Board of
24 Education together with any written or



1 electronic comments received during the
2 course of the renewal process.

3 To date comments received on
4 this renewal application are posted on the
5 Charter School Office's website.

6 We will proceed in the
7 following manner: First, we will hear from
8 any representatives of the charter school
9 who wish to comment on the renewal
10 application. Then we will take comments
11 from anyone else who desires to speak.

12 There are sign-up sheets at the
13 back of the room. If you desire to speak
14 and have not signed up, please do so now,
15 ensuring to check the box that states you
16 would like to speak. Those who have not
17 signed up will not be permitted to speak
18 and instead will be asked to submit written
19 comment.

20 We will now pause for a moment
21 to ensure that anyone who wishes to sign up
22 can do so.

23 (A discussion was held off the
24 record.)



1 MR. TRAVERS: I reserve the
2 right to limit comment if it is purely
3 repetitive or cumulative. This hearing's
4 purpose is strictly to collect public
5 comment. Questions of the Department of
6 Education and the State Board of Education
7 are not permitted and will not be
8 acknowledged.

9 At this point we will accept
10 comments from any representatives of the
11 school.

12 MS. DOLAN: Hello. My name is
13 Catherine Dolan, and I'm the head of school
14 at the Gateway Lab School.

15 The Gateway Lab School is a
16 unique place filled with unique faculty and
17 definitely with unique but wonderful
18 students.

19 I was listening to NPR one day,
20 and they said there's a great conversation
21 starter. You ask the question if you could
22 have a superpower, would you choose to be
23 invisible or to fly? They said everybody
24 will almost immediately know the answer to



1 the question. I'll give you just a second.
2 Invisible or the ability to fly?

3 You all know, don't you? Well,
4 here's the thing: When students come to
5 the Gateway Lab School, they know too, and
6 they have chosen to be invisible.

7 They have chosen to be
8 invisible because they've learned by the
9 time they're in third grade that it's safer
10 to be invisible, to be quiet, to be unseen,
11 to be hidden because otherwise you can be
12 hurt, not necessarily physically hurt, but
13 your heart can get hurt by words, and it's
14 far more powerful if your heart gets hurt
15 because it can take a lifetime to heal.
16 And I see heads nodding on that too. Don't
17 we all know that.

18 In going through this process I
19 have been reading letters that parents are
20 writing, and I said let me look at the
21 patterns that are developing in these
22 letters. And there are patterns, and
23 patterns are powerful because patterns are
24 data.



1 The patterns that are emerging
2 are the words struggle. Nobody comes to
3 Gateway if you haven't struggled first.
4 Struggle is a common denominator. And then
5 we go to confidence, joining clubs, coming
6 out of his shell academically and socially,
7 positive impact, reading at grade level,
8 not crying, not walking out of classes
9 because of frustration, a leader instead of
10 a troubled student, grown by leaps and
11 bounds, thriving, the future is full of
12 possibilities, this school has changed our
13 lives. These are quotes from parents,
14 quotes from students.

15 But more powerful, I have
16 learned self-advocacy. I have learned who
17 I am and where I'm going in this world.
18 That's a powerful life skill. Without it,
19 you're going nowhere. Without it, you will
20 search for the rest of your life to know
21 who you are, and you will struggle.

22 It's that circle that goes back
23 to the beginning. Unless you break the
24 cycle, it will continue and repeat itself.



1 We're breaking the cycle at Gateway Lab
2 School so it's not repeating itself over
3 and over.

4 This will be my fourth year at
5 Gateway. I was there for two. My husband
6 was terminally ill, and I left. After he
7 died I took time to heal. I taught art for
8 six months.

9 That did it because after
10 20-some years of telling teachers here's
11 how you do lesson plans, here's how you
12 manage a classroom, here's how you, here's
13 how you, here's how you, I had to do it K
14 to 8. What a refresher course. But I came
15 back healed, renewed, and refreshed, and
16 have been back for a year.

17 And I have witnessed powerful
18 change in that year. Our music program was
19 gone, but it's back now. I felt like
20 Ronald Reagan. I walked into the music
21 room. They had built a wall in the middle
22 of it, and I said, "Tear down that wall."
23 And we have a music program.

24 We started with a little



1 kernel -- our music teacher is right
2 here -- a little kernel of chorus. It's
3 doubled this year. A little kernel of a
4 drumming club. It has more than doubled.
5 We're starting band this year. We're
6 starting dance.

7 We're in collaboration with the
8 University of Delaware for arts
9 integration. Dr. Overby comes every
10 Tuesday herself to deliver instruction.
11 And guess what, all the faculty has to do
12 it.

13 We are stretching like cheese,
14 and we are -- and we're laughing at the end
15 and talking to one another and open to
16 learn just like the students because we're
17 an arts integrated school.

18 So I want others' voices to be
19 heard, but I want you to know that the
20 keyword is transformation. Transformation
21 is so powerful in a child's life. How they
22 view themselves, how they view their
23 position in the world is so powerful.

24 Mark Twain said whether you



1 believe you can or you believe you can't,
2 either way you're right. And students come
3 to us invisible, but they leave us ready to
4 fly. Invisible or the ability to fly.
5 When they leave us, they're choosing a
6 different superpower. They're ready to
7 soar. Thank you.

8 MR. WHITE: Good evening,
9 everybody. My name is Marlin White. I'm
10 principal at Gateway Lab Charter School. I
11 thought about different things to say this
12 evening. I started writing, and then I
13 just had to stop because I thought about
14 just taking everybody through the day at
15 Gateway.

16 And when you go through the day
17 at Gateway, it looks different. It looks
18 different because, first thing, our school
19 is not like any other school. When kids
20 first come to Gateway, when you first get
21 on the property, you're being greeted. I
22 make sure you're greeted by me, you're
23 greeted by multiple people.

24 You're not just "Good morning."



1 We're calling you by name. I want everyone
2 to know every child that's in the building.
3 I can tell you I know every -- I know each,
4 175 of the students that we have, I know
5 their first and last name.

6 I've corresponded with their
7 parents in person, on the phone, through
8 email. We've interacted. Those are things
9 that I push for my staff to do. We do that
10 on a daily basis.

11 They come through the building.
12 As they enter the building they're going to
13 the cafeteria. They're interacting with
14 the staff that we have in our cafeteria.
15 They're coming back to homeroom. They're
16 interacting with the teacher and the para.
17 In our building every classroom has a
18 teacher and a paraprofessional, at least
19 one paraprofessional.

20 We adjust things according to
21 our students' needs, and we address those
22 needs. We all acknowledge that there's not
23 a manual for any child, so as a family at
24 Gateway, we make it a point to adjust the



1 things that we do according to the students
2 that we have to adjust things.

3 And as we go through our day we
4 have different things that happen. We
5 start our morning off with response to --
6 excuse me. Let me start again. We start
7 our morning off after they eat breakfast
8 with responsive classroom.

9 Our students are learning how
10 to work as a community. They're
11 interacting with each other. They're
12 understanding tolerance. They're
13 understanding differences of each other.

14 And they're learning how to
15 communicate. We have a society that does
16 not know how to communicate because of
17 technology. Our students have to
18 communicate. They have to learn how to
19 interact with each other, and it starts off
20 our day.

21 Then from there we go to RTI.
22 Every child in our building gets RTI. It's
23 not just the students that have the high
24 need. No. Every student has it where



1 they're in small groups with our
2 paraprofessionals as well as our teachers.

3 Our teachers with the highest
4 skill, our master teachers, are with the
5 students with the highest need. That's to
6 try to reduce the hole that they have in
7 their education.

8 Throughout the day they, our
9 elementary kids, their start their ELA with
10 our new curriculum, Wonders. Our older
11 students start rotating amongst classes,
12 and our day keeps going.

13 Around 11:10 we start lunch for
14 our middle school kids. And I bring this
15 up because this is important. After lunch
16 our middle school kids go to recess. It's
17 a very big thing for our kids because in
18 most middle schools that's not happening.

19 Our kids need to have the
20 opportunity to communicate and to have
21 those social relationships together. They
22 need that. And our students coming from
23 far north as Claymont, as far south as
24 Smyrna, they need that time to play,



1 interact, socialize, get that physical
2 activity, get it out their system.

3 After recess is over they come
4 back in. Then once they come back in they
5 start rotating classes. They have the
6 opportunity to be in music, to be in gym,
7 to be in art. Those are all big things.

8 Throughout our day our students
9 are interacting with me. I'm open. I'm
10 constantly in and out of rooms. Our
11 students are constantly doing things that
12 are effective for them.

13 Everything looks different for
14 our kids because, like I said before, and I
15 go back to this, there's no manual for each
16 child. And because we know there's no
17 manual for the kids, we know that we have
18 to switch up things on a constant basis.

19 So I welcome anybody to come to
20 Gateway and see what we have available
21 because you're going to see something
22 that's different, that's not being done in
23 every school. Thank you.

24 MR. TRAVERS: Are there other



1 representatives of Gateway Lab that would
2 like to speak?

3 MR. EVERETT: Good evening,
4 everybody. My name is Aubrey Everett. I'm
5 the music teacher that Ms. Dolan talked
6 about here at Gateway. I want to just talk
7 about growth, and I want to talk about
8 arts.

9 I think everybody has a
10 wonderful experience with art at some point
11 in their lives, and that's the thing that
12 connects us all, whether you paint, whether
13 you draw, whether you dance. It's a form
14 of expression. And at Gateway the arts are
15 the gateway to learning, and that's one
16 thing I love about this place.

17 I've been teaching since about
18 2004. And one thing I've been working,
19 I've worked with students with heavy
20 emotional, cognitive abilities from on and
21 off. But one thing about this place, one
22 thing what makes this place special is that
23 they understand our students, our student
24 needs, our student values.



1 When I started working and we
2 started with a small chorus, we could see
3 how when they got here, I had students that
4 didn't like to talk a lot but were
5 auditioning for chorus. So that was my, I
6 don't really hear you talking in class, but
7 you're ready to audition for the chorus,
8 and they had their song ready.

9 And when they get to see other
10 people express themselves, because it's
11 about connection. It's about making those
12 skills for jobs because we have to
13 communicate with each other.

14 We have to have a form of
15 teamwork. This is what we learned in
16 chorus. We have to learn how the
17 communicate. This is what we learned in
18 drum club. We have to learn different
19 things about math and science. We learned
20 that in music class. And that's what we
21 understand here. We can connect it in
22 other ways, cross-curricular.

23 So I will give you a quick
24 example of something we learned in music



1 this year. I got a couple of my students
2 in here. So I'm not going to put you on
3 the spot.

4 But one thing we learned, first
5 thing I usually teach is all sound comes
6 from vibration, and vibration means
7 something moves rapidly back and forth, and
8 that comes sound waves moving molecules in
9 the air. That's how we make sound. And
10 then we get instruments out, and then we
11 see where those vibrations come from.

12 So now we can talk to the
13 science teacher about, hey, we learned
14 about vibration. And then they can go and
15 say we learned that in science. You just
16 learned that in music. And that's what
17 they usually tell us. The science teacher
18 usually says, hey, they said you're
19 stepping on my toes. We're going back and
20 forth.

21 But then they have a better
22 understanding of what's going on because
23 that's their world. It's a connection.
24 It's a relation. And I think that's what



1 we can do -- That's what we do here at
2 Gateway.

3 And the other big thing is just
4 connecting and expressing themselves. Like
5 I said, there's so many kids that can't
6 express themselves, express their hurt,
7 express their pain in a constructive way.
8 And through the arts they can do that.

9 Through Ms. Stacy's art class
10 they can draw something that happened or
11 through music class. I have students that
12 come to me and show me songs they wrote,
13 you know, and that's amazing to see that
14 kind of growth. And we can take that.
15 Here's a rap I wrote. Well, let's take it
16 to your English teacher. Let's clean it up
17 so it makes a little bit better sense. But
18 then it's an expression.

19 So that's what I wanted to just
20 say, just how we use the arts and how
21 that's making a way where sometimes when
22 before they came there was no way. Thank
23 you.

24 MS. RATHMELL: Hi. My name is



1 Doreen Rathmell, R-a-t-h-m-e-l-l. I've
2 been at Gateway Lab School since the doors
3 opened, and I feel so fortunate to have
4 been at this school all these years. It's
5 a phenomenal school. And Catherine's words
6 are so true about a lot of our students
7 come in trying to be invisible. We do have
8 unique learners.

9 I will never forget my very
10 first year at the school. I had a student,
11 a third grader, and I put the reading book
12 in front of him, and he pushed it across
13 the little kidney table and said, "I can't
14 read." For two weeks he pushed it across.
15 "I can't read."

16 Finally, with patience and
17 caring and guidance, I got him to open the
18 book, and we worked on reading. By
19 Christmastime he was hugging his book
20 saying, "Can I bring this home and show my
21 mom that I can read?"

22 Lives are changed at this
23 school. We do reach these unique learners
24 that slip through the cracks in your more



1 traditional schools. We reach these
2 learners and change their chair lives.
3 Academically they grow, and socially they
4 bloom with making friendships. Thank you.

5 MS. WHITE: My name is Allison
6 White as in the color. I'm also a teacher
7 that walked in the doors right behind Pam
8 when we first opened. I had retired a week
9 earlier from 30 years in education in New
10 Jersey. And I met Pam, and that was nine
11 years ago, and I'm still there.

12 There's a reason for that.
13 This job spoke to me. They are my kids.
14 This is my school. I've been in education
15 a long time. And met my third graders.
16 And third grade is kind of an awkward place
17 to start a school, some people think, but I
18 met my third graders, and they came in
19 first day of school and their heads were
20 down.

21 And I'm, like, "Hey, what's
22 going on? Tell me about your experience."

23 "Hate school. I'm bad." And
24 they got into a raging discussion about how



1 many times they had seen the principal and
2 been suspended. And I sat there and went,
3 "Oh, my gracious. What am I doing?"

4 They were told I can't so many
5 times that they believed it, and they
6 believed they were bad, and on top of that
7 they believed they couldn't learn. But
8 being who I am, I refused to give in, and I
9 did not yield my high expectations.

10 And don't you know, by
11 Christmas I had a lot more gray hair. I
12 was really tired when I went home. But
13 doggone if my kids weren't learning. And
14 didn't they believe that, A, they weren't
15 bad, B, they were loved, and, C, they could
16 learn.

17 Gateway kids don't come to
18 Gateway unless they need something special.
19 I'm proud to say we are what's special for
20 our Gateway kids. We love them. We don't
21 change our expectations. They can learn.

22 I've had kindergarten readers
23 who have jumped two years reading level in
24 one year. I had kids that weren't on grade



1 level who left me on grade level. I don't
2 change what I expect them to do, but I
3 change who they believe they are and what
4 they're capable of, and I'm damn proud of
5 it.

6 Our school has a place in this
7 state. Our school has a place in children
8 that need a special place to learn, and
9 they deserve to have us open.

10 MS. DAMIRI: Good evening. I'm
11 Patti Damiri, D-a-m-i-r-i, and I'm a
12 teacher at Gateway Lab School as well. And
13 I came to Gateway after 20-plus years in a
14 career, a very successful career in
15 architecture and design.

16 And so when I met Catherine and
17 her team I was looking for a school that
18 really touched me and would cause me to
19 leave a very successful career and come
20 into teaching. I had gone back to school,
21 got my master's degree, spent a lot of time
22 working hard and really believed that I
23 wanted to spend the rest of my life
24 teaching.



1 And after I met the
2 administrative team and Catherine, I
3 thought this is really just exactly what
4 I'm looking for. These are children that
5 learn differently. They need to express
6 themselves through different arts. I felt
7 I had the creativity to do that and bring
8 that out, and I feel that our staff is
9 particularly skilled at that.

10 Not all children learn the
11 same. They're all different. We know
12 that. All of us are unique. And so to be
13 able to work with Catherine and her team
14 and to reach these children really touched
15 my heart.

16 After Catherine had the
17 unfortunate event of having to leave, I
18 went back to -- I live in Pennsylvania, and
19 I went to a very large successful school in
20 Pennsylvania, and I taught there for the
21 last two years, and something was missing.

22 And I thought I don't know if I
23 can continue teaching because this is not
24 Gateway. This is not the school, this is



1 not the passion, this is not the
2 expectation that I left at Gateway. And I
3 will tell you, it was a tough decision to
4 think about really making yet another
5 change in my career.

6 However, I believe so strongly
7 in Gateway and in the leadership and
8 knowing Catherine was back and her team and
9 the other teachers at Gateway that are so
10 amazingly dedicated and talented
11 individuals, that it was a no-brainer for
12 me, and I am so thrilled to be back here.

13 And I see the growth. I see,
14 you know, we have academic rigor beyond
15 words. I mean, it's not just all fun and
16 games. But we reach these children through
17 other ways that I truly believe in my heart
18 that no other school can do. And it is a
19 great honor to be back and to be working
20 there, and I really, I'm so excited about
21 the future of Gateway. Thank you.

22 MR. TRAVERS: Are there other
23 representatives of Gateway Charter School
24 that would like to speak at this time?



1 MS. MAGROGAN: Hi. My name is
2 Lynn Magrogan, and I'm a parent educator.
3 So this is my sixth year at Gateway, so
4 I've seen a lot. And I wasn't going to
5 speak, but when Catherine spoke about
6 transformation, I wanted to share a story
7 that happened yesterday, share it quickly.

8 There's a student that I've --
9 I work in the learning support group right
10 now. And there's a student that I've been
11 working with since I started, and this
12 student struggles. She has -- She's one of
13 the students who came to school invisible,
14 and she has more against her than she has
15 for her. But I've seen tremendous growth
16 with her.

17 And yesterday she was -- We
18 were working on a math project, and she had
19 to go into a classroom and collect data
20 from the students in the classroom. And
21 she was all set to do it, and we went up
22 and we went in. And Mr. White saw this.
23 She went and stood outside the room and
24 just covered her face and "I can't. I



1 can't." She said, "You do it."

2 "I'm not going to do it." And
3 I just, I said, "You can. We can do this.
4 We've been learning this. You know what to
5 do."

6 And she went in, and amazingly
7 her voice got loud, and she collected the
8 data. And she asked -- We were taking a,
9 just a series of questions, who rides Bus
10 No. 1, who rides Bus No. 2. And she had
11 her clipboard, and she got the information
12 and wrote it down.

13 And at the end without
14 prompting she said, "Thank you for your
15 time, and have a nice day." And to me that
16 is the ultimate in transformation.

17 And when we got out of the room
18 she jumped up, and she said, "I can't
19 believe I did it." And she was so excited,
20 and she ran up and down the hall and she
21 was high-fiving us all, to the point where
22 we were, like, okay, we get it.

23 But to me that's
24 transformation, and she'll never forget



1 that and I'll never forget that. So that's
2 what this school does.

3 MR. TRAVERS: Other
4 representatives of Gateway?

5 At this point we will accept
6 comments from members of the public that
7 would like to speak regarding Gateway Lab
8 School.

9 MR. MCGARRY: John McGarry.
10 And I have a son there, 11 years old. He's
11 in his fourth year. Everything Ms. Dolan
12 said, invisible, insecure, and afraid of
13 his shadow. But in the past three years
14 there things have fast-tracked so quickly.

15 The administration has moved
16 everything along. They teach them respect
17 when they come in, how to treat all the
18 other kids, how to try and get along, which
19 was really important. Academics have
20 picked up. And we're totally thrilled with
21 Andrew there.

22 And there is a need in the
23 community. You know, he was failing
24 miserably in Maryland. And when we came



1 here in grade 3, I had no idea what to do
2 with him because it was a losing game. But
3 I must say he really blossomed there, just
4 like the rest. It's working.

5 And they came with a plan, the
6 administration, and they actually enforce
7 it, and everybody's got to go along. You
8 know, and the kids understand that. And
9 the kids are treated with respect, and I
10 think that's what helps a lot.

11 And they've also engaged the
12 parents because no matter how hard they
13 try, if nothing's going on at home, it's
14 not going to work. And they've got the
15 parents involved. So I say keep it going.

16 MR. RANDOLPH: Hi. My name is
17 Adonis Randolph. My wife and I are proud
18 parents of a Gateway Lab School student,
19 and we're here to express our support for
20 the renewal of the Gateway Lab School
21 charter.

22 My wife and I brought my
23 daughter to Gateway in 2017 after she was
24 experiencing some challenges and struggles,



1 as Ms. Dolan said, at another school.

2 Reading has always been a
3 strong suit for my daughter, but she always
4 struggled with mathematics. But since she
5 came to Gateway, not only has her reading
6 improved, but she's experienced and shown
7 tremendous growth in her math.

8 The Gateway school philosophy
9 and belief rang true with my daughter. The
10 philosophy was that children who struggled
11 can achieve academic success -- or who
12 couldn't achieve academic success in the
13 traditional school environment and those
14 who learn differently, as my daughter does,
15 they do have the capacity to achieve
16 academic success and to realize individual
17 learning potential. And this showed true
18 with my daughter.

19 This along with, as Mr. Everett
20 alluded to, their art-based learning, this
21 helps and continues to help my daughter
22 because she loves to dance, and she loves
23 to sing. And when you incorporate that
24 into her learning, it helped her



1 tremendously. So this helped her develop
2 her motor skills, her language skills, her
3 social skills, helped her with her
4 creativity and her inventiveness.

5 The educators and the
6 paraprofessionals at Gateway have greatly
7 impacted my daughter's educational success.
8 So it's for these reasons that I ask you to
9 renew Gateway Lab School's charter. And if
10 you do, the educators and the paras can
11 continue to impact and invest in my
12 daughter and other students as well. So
13 thank you.

14 MS. RANDOLPH: To piggyback off
15 my husband, my name is Tina Randolph, and
16 this is my husband, Adonis Randolph. I had
17 wrote something, and I said let me just
18 speak from the heart and my experience.

19 I was trying to get my daughter
20 into a school where they understood what
21 was going on with her because in the past
22 previous schools we were having issues with
23 her. They thought she was bad or she was a
24 problem. And her thing was I couldn't get



1 it, so she wouldn't do the work. She just
2 wouldn't touch it.

3 She was not being rebellious of
4 doing the work, she couldn't get it. And
5 they couldn't help her to find how to get
6 it. So sometimes they took her recess away
7 from her, her lunch. And I became very
8 upset about that, like how do you take a
9 lunch from a student, half of a lunch or a
10 recess? They need that.

11 And so I searched two schools
12 out. And we had, like, two weeks of school
13 about to start. I didn't find my daughter
14 a school yet. I said, Lord, I've got to
15 find a school for my daughter to get into.
16 You've got to help me find out how I'm
17 going to do it.

18 My husband said, "Did you find
19 a school yet?" I said no. He said, "Well,
20 she can go to school across the street."

21 I said, "No. I called over
22 there and I asked how many students are in
23 a classroom. They said at least 25 to 30
24 with one teacher." I said, "That's not



1 going to work. We're asking for failure
2 for my child. We cannot have this. This
3 is not going to work."

4 So my husband kept saying, "Did
5 you find a school?"

6 I said no.

7 So the last school that I
8 attempted to was Gateway Lab School, and I
9 talked to the school secretary, Monica Lee.
10 And I said, "I'm trying to apply. Can you
11 help me?" She so kindly helped me apply,
12 walked me through it on the phone, the
13 whole way, and set me up with I met Pam
14 Draper, who's the business manager.

15 She so kindly did the interview
16 with me and my daughter, and I explained to
17 her my situation, what was going on, my
18 needs and what I expected, and what I
19 needed for my child for her to succeed.
20 And she gave us a tour and gave us the
21 special -- what they specialize at the
22 school.

23 And once we had got to talking,
24 she said okay. So we went from there, and



1 my daughter got accepted into the school.
2 And I heard her story. She told me her
3 background, her foundation, of how the
4 school got started and what was her reason
5 for the school, of the existence.

6 And her sharing her story how
7 it was started because she was sharing
8 about her kids and what their disabilities
9 or things she went through with them, that
10 gave her the umph.

11 At that point for me, I was at
12 the point where I was ready to start my own
13 school. I was ready. That's where I was
14 at. I told my husband, I said, look, I'm
15 at the point I'm going to homeschool my own
16 child. I'll find other parents and see how
17 we're going to work this out.

18 Someway, somehow we have to do
19 something. I have to find something.
20 Somebody's got to help me. There's
21 somebody out there that has the resources.
22 We've got to find a way.

23 So I found Gateway Lab School
24 online, went there. And as different



1 things came up, the principal, excuse me,
2 Mr. White, I had contacted him. Different
3 things were going on with my daughter. I
4 was, like, I want to see what's going on.
5 He would show me cameras.

6 Like, everything -- I was
7 really trying to find out what school is
8 going to help my daughter, and I want to
9 know every answered question what's going
10 on with her, and they was providing all the
11 answers. They let me come to the school.
12 They said we have an open door policy.

13 Mrs. White was there with me.
14 She was my third grade teacher for my
15 daughter. And every question I had,
16 whatever was going on with her, we never,
17 hit or miss, me and Mrs. White always
18 communicated through email, phone, however,
19 I came into the school, after school,
20 whatever. I was there.

21 And I'm sure they were, like,
22 oh, here comes that lady. But yes, I was
23 present to where I was coming up there on a
24 daily basis because I was concerned about



1 my child. And I'm, like, sometimes I see
2 where the parents, they say, well, they're
3 not even involved, they're not coming. No.
4 We were involved. We're coming up there.
5 You're going to see me, open, closed. Now
6 roles have changed where my husband, he'll
7 be up at the school.

8 But other than that, I
9 appreciate Gateway Lab School for being
10 there and being what it is that my daughter
11 needed because, like I said, I was ready to
12 start my own. I didn't know how. But I
13 saw where Pam Draper, where she started,
14 and she had a need, and I felt like we can
15 relate. And excuse me if I get kind of --

16 A VOICE: We love you.

17 MS. RANDOLPH: We are active.
18 We want to be a part of our child's life.
19 It's hard out here when you're an active
20 parent and you feel like teachers or staff
21 don't understand. I like Gateway Lab
22 School. They do understand us.

23 They understand what it is
24 that's going on with my daughter, find out



1 what she was diagnosed with. Other
2 schools, they were looking at it she's just
3 bad. And they tested her out but never
4 found out what was the issue. So we found
5 out what the issue was. And we didn't want
6 to do medication.

7 So we went that route and found
8 out different things to help her to be a
9 better person. And we're just being the
10 best parents we can be to help her to be
11 what she's supposed to be because we're
12 responsible as a community for the children
13 that we bring into this world, that they'll
14 be successful.

15 So I don't want anything held
16 on us where they wasn't involved. We are
17 involved. We're there to the best of our
18 ability. If I could quit my job I would
19 and come up there and volunteer, but I
20 can't do that. I have common sense. We
21 have bills to pay and have a roof over our
22 head. But that's where my heart is at.

23 If I could, I would be at the
24 school as much as I could if I had the



1 money to make sure, whatever, the needs are
2 being met. So I'm going to do my part and
3 do the best. We're going to do the best we
4 can what we have here going on.

5 But I ask please renew Gateway
6 Lab School charter school renewal. Please
7 renew us because they have a lot going on,
8 and they need so much as far as just for
9 the community to know about this school. I
10 feel like they have more that needs to come
11 to them that's waiting, doors open, for
12 Gateway Lab school.

13 So please, please, please renew
14 Gateway Lab School. I appreciate it so
15 much. Thank you.

16 MS. CHIOMA: My name is Evelyn
17 Chioma. I'm a parent of my son, Cassidy,
18 who attends Gateway Lab School. Cassidy
19 started last year sixth grade. I feel like
20 Gateway Lab is a godsend to us. I don't
21 want to cry like she did. It's that
22 emotional.

23 So my son before he came to
24 Gateway, he was in elementary school. So



1 fifth grade year, I think last marking
2 period or semester, so first day of school,
3 so I came, I brought my son to school.
4 Actually, he took the bus, but I followed
5 because I wanted to know how he was doing
6 with, you know, transitioning into the new,
7 the classrooms.

8 So but anyway, so when I went
9 to the classroom he was already there.
10 There were two other students. So there's
11 three of them there. And then they were
12 just sitting there quietly. And one of the
13 kids had his head down on the desk.

14 And then I looked at other
15 classrooms. It's the first day of school.
16 Everybody's happy to meet their friends,
17 just saying hi, greeting, was kind of
18 bubbly and exciting. And I went to my
19 son's classroom. There wasn't anything. I
20 felt so bad because he's in a classroom
21 because he's special ed.

22 And that's not what I want for
23 my son. I know the thing is because he
24 needed smaller classroom size so that you



1 can get his attention because his main
2 thing is difficulty focusing.

3 So I was, like, I know the
4 academic part is important, but also the
5 socializing piece and being able to mingle
6 and get the feel for the school is also
7 very, very important, and I didn't like
8 that at all. And I fought to get my son
9 out of that kind of setting because just
10 academics is not the only important thing.
11 But it didn't work out.

12 But anyway, so elementary
13 school is done. Prior to that I was
14 looking for a middle school that would suit
15 my son, so I looked at a few middle schools
16 that were around. And I know my son would
17 not succeed in those kinds of schools
18 because he really does need a special, you
19 know, somebody who really understands him
20 and being able to focus and pay attention
21 to him.

22 Middle school is a little bit
23 bigger kids and they don't give them that
24 kind of attention, you know, in elementary



1 school. Even though my son was in the
2 classroom secluded, but then there is some
3 kind of attention they give to the younger
4 kids. So I knew he wasn't going the get
5 that in middle school, so I started looking
6 for schools.

7 And then I came upon different
8 schools and then Gateway. So when I read
9 about the school, I was, like, oh, my God,
10 this is exactly what we need.

11 First, I didn't want my son to
12 get identified as special ed. This school,
13 all the kids that go there have certain
14 things going on, so you're not identifying
15 any child or separating them based on what
16 they present with.

17 So my son I thought would be
18 able to mingle in this school without
19 having anybody say he's special ed. He was
20 also bullied for reasons like that when he
21 was in elementary school. So I was happy
22 about that. So I went to the school, and I
23 looked at it. So there's also smaller
24 classrooms, which is good, but it's not two



1 or three students like it was.

2 And then another thing, besides
3 just liking the school and loving it and
4 not even believing that such school exists,
5 I also liked the fact that my son was able
6 to join the band club. He joined the
7 basketball team and a few smaller clubs.

8 And I felt like my son wouldn't
9 have had any chance in a regular middle
10 school to join such, you know, clubs.
11 Let's say if he attempted to join the
12 chorus, he wouldn't have a chance because
13 the other kids would fill up the spots.
14 And I felt like even in basketball, he
15 wouldn't have a chance to play.

16 But in this school abilities
17 are similar. My son had a chance to
18 experience such things that he wouldn't
19 have been able to participate in in a
20 regular school. So that alone gave me a
21 lot of joy. Besides the academic part, I
22 was happy that my son could take part in
23 all these kinds of things.

24 And the teachers know him well,



1 so they were able to, because the kids that
2 attend there have something that brought
3 them there, those teachers were able to
4 learn who is Cassidy, what he's able to do,
5 and then kind of like try to connect him in
6 that kind of matter.

7 Any teacher that I talked to
8 that my son has a class, they know him.
9 They're able to tell me what he's able to
10 do, what he's not able to do.

11 And Cassidy felt so relaxed in
12 that school that one time I came for the
13 teacher conference, the teachers were
14 telling me how funny Cassidy is and how
15 relaxed he is and how he's able to laugh
16 and do all this. And I was, like, no,
17 that's not Cassidy, that's not my son.

18 I'm serious because my son
19 would always be quiet and secluded. He's
20 not able to express himself, or just his
21 real self didn't come out because he know
22 he has been identified as this kind of
23 child and secluded in a classroom. So he
24 didn't flourish.



1 But at Gateway he flourished.
2 He became himself. And that also helped
3 him to be able to learn. A lot of the
4 teachers would say that Cassidy is good at
5 math, he's good at this. I was, like, wow.
6 So at Gateway I feel like Gateway is the
7 whole package of what my son needed.

8 And I couldn't even understand
9 or fathom why such school, anybody would
10 ever think of closing. The students there
11 needs -- I feel like for my son, need more
12 than academics. He's also doing the
13 academic part, which boggles to me, but
14 every other thing that he's gaining from
15 being in Gateway is so nice.

16 And we could not even have
17 asked for any better school for my son, and
18 I wouldn't even think of any other
19 classroom that he would go to. Even my
20 other kids go to Newark Charter, but I
21 don't even see my son being able to succeed
22 there.

23 I feel like where he is right
24 now is the perfect place for him, and I



1 feel like there's a lot of other students
2 around like him that will flourish better
3 in a setting like that. And I could not
4 understand why this kind of school would
5 not be renewed because what they've given
6 is much more than academics. That's all.

7 MS. ANDERSON: My name is Susan
8 Anderson, ends in -s-o-n. I just want to
9 agree with all the other parents who've
10 spoken. I'm a grandparent, a proud
11 grandparent of a Gateway Lab student.

12 And in the three years that
13 he's been there I've seen a tremendous
14 improvement in his behavior and his just
15 love of going to school, that he doesn't
16 say I'm not going to go to school. He
17 wants to go to school now. And just the
18 changes are phenomenal.

19 And it's not, as Mr. White
20 said, not just 175 students that need that
21 school. It's all the parents, all the
22 siblings, all the aunts and uncles, because
23 having a child who has issues affects every
24 other person in the family. And this



1 school is helping every one of them.

2 And I just really think that it
3 would be more than a shame if it didn't get
4 the renewal it needs. So please renew it.
5 Thank you.

6 MR. WHITE: Good evening. My
7 name is Larry White. No relations to any
8 of the Whites. I'm a proud parent of three
9 children that came to Gateway Labs this
10 year. This is our first year. Anybody who
11 has multiple kids in your environment, you
12 know they all have three distinctive
13 personalities and three distinctive needs.

14 My oldest son is 13 years old.
15 For his whole, ever since he was 3 years
16 old we struggled to find out what was his
17 diagnosis. He was on the autism spectrum,
18 and the diagnosis has changed.

19 And it was really a
20 transformative moment as we as a parent,
21 that I was like, you know what, I'm going
22 to have to make sure he gets everything he
23 needs for the rest of his -- for his whole
24 academic years. So that challenge always



1 went on throughout my life.

2 And I always felt like my two
3 younger children, my daughters, were pretty
4 much okay. We moved to Delaware two years
5 ago. We tried the public school systems.
6 The elementary schools were great. They
7 were able to provide what we needed when we
8 moved from Maryland. It was a much
9 different atmosphere, and we felt really
10 well taken care of with my son.

11 Then the middle school years
12 happened. We went into middle school, and
13 this is where I think -- I say that, give
14 you that background because Gateway in my
15 opinion makes sure no kid falls through the
16 cracks. They immediately took care of my
17 son's needs, which I spoke to, talked about
18 him being on the autism spectrum. I'm
19 pretty sure you heard a lot of stories
20 about that.

21 But my daughter who's 11 years
22 old, she's in the seventh grade now, she
23 always succeeded academically everywhere
24 she went except when she went to middle



1 school. This was a younger sister to an
2 older brother who had special needs all his
3 life, very compassionate.

4 But when she went to middle
5 school she was bullied, and all of these
6 different type of activities that took
7 place, and I just saw my daughter
8 hardening. She was a daddy's girl. Just
9 saw her hardening. She was being
10 disrespectful to adults, which would never
11 happen, and she got in fights in school as
12 a result of the bullying.

13 I was, like, you know what, we
14 have to change this environment right away,
15 you know. And we went to the school
16 choice, learning about that in Delaware.

17 And when we went to Gateway
18 Lab -- and I'm so happy to see because this
19 young lady right here was one of the people
20 who greeted us when we came to school
21 choice night. And instead of the teachers
22 walking us around, the students walked us
23 around, and they were just so excited and
24 happy about the environment.



1 I was, like, you know what,
2 this is the environment for all three of my
3 children, you know, not just my oldest one.
4 This is the environment for them. So we
5 were making sure we get in there as early
6 as possible, trying to get on Ms. Draper's
7 schedule as early as possible. But we got
8 in there, and we felt very blessed to get
9 all of them in the school.

10 For my daughter Layla, who's
11 that 11-year-old, you would be surprised
12 that that hardened child, within the first
13 couple months, now she's back into art.
14 She's excited about her academic
15 opportunities. Now -- thank you for that.
16 She's excited about Cab Calloway. She's
17 talking about school again.

18 This was a girl who excelled
19 all the way up until fifth grade. And she
20 had the sixth grade year. It was just, I
21 didn't recognize who she was. But now
22 she's back. She's running for class
23 president. She's involved. You know,
24 she's still a tween girl, but I'm starting



1 to see my daughter again.

2 My younger daughter, she's
3 always an average, like, C student, but she
4 always, with parent-teacher conferences the
5 conversations always took place about she
6 doesn't seem motivated, she doesn't -- she
7 needs to work more independently, those
8 type of things, not anything extraordinary,
9 but it was kind of heartbreaking because I
10 knew she was giving her best effort. When
11 she came to Gateway it completely turned
12 around.

13 And you shouldn't be surprised
14 that all of these parents here are having
15 similar stories and are very emotional
16 because it's scary out there in that
17 regular environment when your kid don't fit
18 that 80 percent that most public schools
19 educate. It is really scary, and it's
20 really frustrating.

21 And when the parents come
22 together here, it's like they're coming out
23 of the wilderness. They're like, okay,
24 this is where we belong. This is where we



1 feel. So that's why all of that emotion,
2 that dedication of sitting in that traffic
3 trying to get here in time just to talk.

4 It really is a place where we
5 care about our children, we want them to
6 not fall between those cracks. And
7 Ms. Draper and Mr. White, they really do
8 care about our kids. So I strongly
9 encourage you to -- and strongly stand
10 behind the charter renewal for Gateway.

11 I appreciate you guys taking
12 your time coming out here listening to all
13 of us taking our times to talk and not
14 rushing us through our stories because this
15 is very personal to us, and we really need
16 this school.

17 MS. LOWE: Okay. I'm going to
18 try really hard not to be emotional. This
19 has been a very emotional journey for my
20 family, finding our way to Gateway Lab
21 School.

22 My son has attended Gateway for
23 three years, and in those three years I've
24 seen him grow so much. And some of those



1 things are measurable things like test
2 scores, better attendance, fewer incidents
3 in classroom.

4 But the ones that really touch
5 your heart are the ones that can't be
6 measured, and that's increased confidence,
7 more empathy for his peers. And this year
8 he really surprised me and he auditioned
9 for chorus, so, hey, shout out to
10 Mr. Everett again.

11 In previous schools that he's
12 attended I always felt like he was like
13 that square peg trying to fit himself into
14 a round hole. And at Gateway I feel like
15 they help him make his own space. He
16 doesn't have to fit into a mold that
17 doesn't work for him.

18 And I feel like the team at
19 Gateway has always listened to me and my
20 husband because my son has had an IEP since
21 kindergarten, and at other schools I kind
22 of felt like we were treated as, you know,
23 we weren't the expert, but we're the
24 experts on our child.



1 And we're part of the team at
2 Gateway, and that's very important when you
3 have a child who has these needs and needs
4 these special -- the special attention and
5 needs the smaller classroom and all that.

6 And I just want other parents
7 to have the opportunity to feel empowered
8 in their child's education, to feel like
9 they can be part of a team and that they
10 can see these kinds of improvements.

11 So I want to see Gateway
12 succeed. I want to see this charter be
13 renewed so that other children can do that,
14 so that my child can have his remaining
15 years at Gateway. And I hope that all
16 these stories and all this means -- you
17 know, that these stories mean something to
18 you guys and that you support Gateway as
19 well. So thank you.

20 THE REPORTER: Can I have your
21 name?

22 MS. LOWE: Amber Lowe, L-o-w-e.

23 MR. TRAVERS: Any other members
24 that would like to speak regarding Gateway



1 Lab School?

2 I want to thank you all for
3 participating today. The secretary will
4 consider your comments in deciding at the
5 conclusion of the renewal process what
6 decision to submit to the State Board for
7 assent if needed. The hearing for Gateway
8 Lab School is now closed.

9 (Hearing concluded at 6:28
10 p.m.)

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1 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

2
3 I, SUSAN ARNOLD YODER, Registered
4 Professional Reporter and Notary Public, do
5 hereby certify that the foregoing record,
6 pages 1 through 53 inclusive, is a true and
7 accurate transcript of my stenographic notes
8 taken on November 13, 2019, in the
9 above-captioned matter.

10 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set
11 my hand and seal this 19th day of November,
12 2019, at Wilmington.

13
14
15
16 *Susan A. Yoder*
17

SUSAN ARNOLD YODER, RPR

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<p>year (16) 8:4,16,18 9:3,5 17:1 19:10 21:24 25:3 27:11 37:19 38:1 45:10,10 48:20 51:7</p> <p>years (20) 2:10 8:10 19:4 20:9, 11 21:23 22:13 23:21 27:10,13 44:12 45:14, 15,24 46:4,11,21 50:23,23 52:15</p> <p>yesterday (2) 25:7,17</p> <p>yield (1) 21:9</p> <p>young (1)</p>	<p>2 (1) 26:10</p> <p>2004 (1) 15:18</p> <p>2017 (1) 28:23</p> <p>2019 (3) 3:3,13,14</p> <p>20-plus (1) 22:13</p> <p>20-some (1) 8:10</p> <p>25 (1) 31:23</p>		

Initial Public Hearing :: Public Comment 11/6/19

11/5/19

Dear CSAC committee,

Thank you for your service on this committee. Your duty is one of great importance to the children of Delaware charter schools. This letter is written with your duty in mind and with the hope that you will see the details, not as a complaint but rather an account of the actions of the board currently in place. Below I have listed items this committee should review prior to renewal of the Gateway Lab School Charter agreement.

Please let me be clear in saying, I feel this school is important to the students it serves and the students it serves need a school that can support their diverse needs. Having said that I have developed a list of concerns you should know about and consider prior to renewal of this charter application. These students, especially these students, should not have to endure the playing out of the board and administrative posturing at the expense of quality education for the students it serves.

Who am I? I am the former Executive Director and longest-tenured administrator of the school's history. I submitted my resignation with desolate sadness because the Board became so overwhelming in its efforts to deconstruct everything that was rebuilt after the first renewal and because of the nasty and humiliating actions towards me in public meetings and in my daily work at the school. On 2/20/19, I submitted my letter of resignation with the option to not resign if the problems were addressed (BOD Minutes 2/20/19). I did this with the hopes of getting the board to address their unprofessional actions of the prior months. As I expected, the board took no action to my concerns of several schools and state policy violations or to even gain perspective to why their school leader was resigning. Instead they rather quickly, the night the letter was submitted, by board vote, accepted my resignation and choose to move on without dealing with the issues. As indicated by the charter school office leader at the time, I gave them the easy way out by resigning.

Below are my major concerns with the current board continuing as the governing body of this charter school. The information in this letter detailing my concerns is either information I can recount or are public records.

List of Concerns

School Mission: While I understand the mission is heartwarming you must look beyond the compassionate pleas and empty promises about how they are going to improve and develop this beautiful dream of a school like the Lab School of Washington. You must realize this mission from The Lab School of Washington DC is the mission of a private school. The problem with running a private school model in the public-school realm was evident in the first renewal for Gateway and is still very clear now. Gateway has a much greater need with complex and intense classifications rising. The school just can't meet the basic needs of all students. They are in crisis mode every year with what to do. The reason for that is the lack of planning on the board's behalf.

To make a comparison between the two schools that share a similar mission. The Lab School of Washington DC is a private school that does not have to do the following and Gateway absolutely must do all the following:

11/5/19

- Meet a state standard (i.e. Performance Framework)
- Does not have to comply with IDEA (i.e. does not accept federal funding)
- Does not have to take every student for enrollment (i.e. Can turn kids away with classifications other ADHD)
- Has endless funding through tuition and well suited and high functioning fundraising. (i.e. David Letterman was the MC of their fundraiser)

Gateway, states in its mission and renewal application that they are following this model and are getting back to their original mission. The board lacks in vision to evolve what was thought to be possible to what is actually possible in the public school realm.

The current board presents in its minutes and renewal application a vision of going back to the old system that was under review in the first renewal process. The students of Gateway need and deserve a plan that works and not a repeat of mistakes from the past.

In addition to reliving past mistakes, they also continue to fail to plan ahead. I have listed below, statistics obtained from the Gateway Lab School website that speak for themselves. To run any school you must plan ahead. Below, you will see very clear evidence that this board is failing in this area and for that reason, this board should not continue to fail these students.

Board Meeting and Committee Attendance

Gateway bylaws indicate that a **minimum of 75%** attendance is required to remain on the board. Below is the attendance of the board for the past 16 meetings over 17 months (Feb 2019 meeting not posted on web site even after request through an FOIA request on 10/3/19) the percentage of each person and the overall percentage of these board members attended.

- Salter, **Community Director, and GLS insurance agent** – attended 10 / 16 meetings – **63%**
- Horagan – attended 13 / 16 meetings – 81%
- Hack, **Treasurer** – attended 13 / 16 meetings – 81%
- Rathmell – attended 13 / 16 meetings – 81%
- Austin – attended 13 / 16 meetings – 81%
- Heredia – attended 9 / 11 meetings – 82%

*Overall these board members attend **78%** of the meetings held*

Operational & Sustainability Committee – See committee description from the website below

- 19/20 school year 4 of 5 meetings held or 80% of meetings held
- 18/19 school year 7 of 11 meetings held or 64% of meetings held
- 17/18 minutes not available on the website.
- 16/17 school year 7 of 12 meetings held or 58% of meetings held
- 15/16 school year no minutes available
- 14 /15 school year 1 of 6 meetings held or 17% of meetings held

*Overall, with the available data, these meetings are held **55%** of the time.*

Community Outreach Committee – See committee description from website see below

With the school's current enrollment (19-20 SY) barely holding on at 177 or 81% of the 216 approved enrollment and ending last year (18-19SY) at 164 (July 2019 BOD Minutes) meaning 8 students left the school during the school. This resulted in the school enrollment is 76% of its approved enrollment, one would think this committee would meet often and with a certain level of urgency given its purpose.

Since January 4th, 2016 the committee has scheduled 17 meeting dates and met **ZERO** times. How can that happen? There is no excuse for this kind of neglect. The students of GLS depend on this board which in turn, according to the boards' description of the committee, depends on this committee to keep their school going with enrollment and community outreach. Excuses for why and relying on "Hope" as stated several times in the August 2019 board minutes by the founding board member, is just not enough. Schools are not built on Hope, they are built on hard work and commitment to the students and the community they live in. They are built on people rolling up their sleeves and making it work. Not meeting even once out of 17 scheduled meetings is just gross negligence.

*Overall, with the available data, these meetings are held **0%** of the time since Jan 4th, 2016.*

Finance Committee – No description available but I think we can assume the purpose from the name.

19/20 school year 4 meeting held of 6 meetings scheduled or 67% of the scheduled meeting held

18/19 school 4 meetings held of 6 meetings scheduled or 67% of the scheduled meetings held

Previous years are not posted on the website.

*Overall, with the available data, these meetings are held **67%** of the time.*

Report card on time spent on governing the school

Board Meetings	78%
Operational Sustainability	55%
Community Outreach	0%
Finance	67
Average time spent on board governance	50%

Staff Retention: As indicated on the Sept. 17th, 2019 board minutes, the enrollment for the school is struggling to stay at minimal compliance and they are in year 10 of the charter. The enrollment problem is a direct result of the inability of the school to effectively keep staff.

- SY 18-19 to SY 19-20 there is a 43% turnover. When you look at previous school years you will see upwards to 50% or more in turnover. This was highlighted in the CSR done by DASL following the first renewal process.

In the renewal application, you will hear as a reason for the turnover being the salary scale difference between districts and charters. While this is a reasonable and very true response, I want you to take a minute and focus on what you won't see in the renewal application. All this information is from the Board Minutes over the past 16 months. Just this past year, (March 2019 BOD minutes) you will notice 3 teachers resigned at the same time. Also, in the same BOD meeting, in executive session the board settled an employee matter. We can make assumptions about why but the fact that three resigned at the same time is a concern. Another clear sign of why GLS struggles to keep staff is in the Sept 2019 BOD minutes, the founding board member announces an investment in technology of cameras in the classroom. This is a clear sign of distress, not to mention, a prison-like mentality towards dealing with behavior or a really bad way to monitor their teachers. Another example would be the public comment during Dec. 2018 BOD meeting minutes by a GLS teacher stating Parents are complaining about student readiness, students need to own their actions, and be held accountable. Lastly, April 2019 BOD meeting minutes show that only 40% of staff returned their letters of intent. One might conclude that teachers are very frustrated with the system they work in and with DPAS formatives not being completed until late April (April BOD minutes) the teachers feel like they are unsupported. When teachers do not return it has a major effect on students, it affects the building culture in a negative way, and you lose your ability claim to be an expert in the field of special education because you have no consistency in your staffing model to build that credibility or long term successes.

In addition, the school has struggled to maintain leadership. I can only give my personal experience of dealing with the board during my tenure in the then Executive Director position, as being intolerable, humiliating and demeaning to say the least. I can say that in my conversations with past administrators the same sentiments emerged in those conversations as well.

Strategic Plan: The original strategic plan ended in 17-18 SY. There has not been a plan since that time until September 2019.

Please be cautious of the Big Words and the timing of those words. Example: 7/16/19 BOD meeting the HOS indicated a “Visionary Piece” to the Technology plan. The only thing following that announcement was the issuing of 4-year-old chrome books. Sending home 4-year-old chrome books is hardly visionary, it should be the norm. Another less than a visionary approach to the school model is the addition of video cameras in the classroom. This really just serves the purpose of protecting themselves from a lawsuit. We will wait to see what the technology plan is when it is actually shared with the school and community but let’s just hope the plan comes out soon enough for the CSAC committee to evaluate before renewal.

Special Education Legal Action against the school – to what extent you are permitted to look at this please do. You will notice a great deal of money going out the door. Little issues lead to big numbers of in-laws suits. Little issues happen when things are not being monitored.

Renewal Application:

The phrases you will consistently see in the renewal application are:

- “Unforeseen Circumstances”,
- “Drifting away from the mission”
- “Re-alignment of Mission & Vision”
- “Beginning to respond positively” with regards to enrollment.

The unforeseen_circumstances were not unforeseen, they were created by the board and they had a chance to deal with the circumstances but choose to brush them under the rug by accepting my resignation as stated earlier.

The mission has been changed by the board several times since the school opened. Is the thought, every time there is a struggle, change the mission?

The Re-alignment they are referring to means moving away from the 5 Stars shown in the academic growth section of the Alternative Academic Framework. Maybe they should work towards the successes and not back towards the failures.

The current enrollment is at 177 after dropping two students in September 2019. Maybe they should have worked with the parents of those two more to preserve their enrollment. (9/17/19 BOD Minutes, pg. 4) In the minutes it sounds like the school gave up on the family.

11/5/19

Why am I writing this letter to you? I loved this school and worked tirelessly to make it work and we were moving in the right direction.

- We had comprehensive fundraising and grant funding plan that has since been thrown out by the board and subsequently they have not received a grant since then and are currently “exploring idea’s” (BOD MIN Dec, Jan 17)
- We had an expansion plan that had the potential to achieve the GLS goal of serving the greater community and opening a space better suited to the student’s needs. They are starting over on this as well.
- The culture was blossoming and did not need cameras in the classroom (BOD Minute 9/17/19) which presents a prison mentality, to say the least.
- We did a comprehensive review of the budget found dozens of the mismanaged items like Unit count, Cafeteria expenses, overpaid positions (Full-time building engineer, the landlord did this job as well, double paying in rent and FTE), line by line for every dollar spent. The treasurer at the time blow all this up into misleading facts about the school was going broke (You would have to review the board minutes (BOD, MTG Minutes, Dec. 2017) and audio to get the full grasp of this)

We were making it work, developing a solid plan with more than words and evolving the mission so that the idea of the school could live and breathe in a public school environment. The current board is forgoing all of that work and starting over which will lead to them repeating a history of failure. If you approve this charter it will be your responsibility as the CSAC committee to develop a comprehensive monitoring plan for this board to ensure the big words and statements about all they are going to do actually happen and it does not just become lip service to please your ears during the renewal process.

Sincerely,

Timothy W. Griffiths

Committee descriptions

Operational & Sustainability Committee description

Board structure, development/recruitment, training and ensuring sustainability, Community Outreach – relationship with DOE, DE Politicians, other key influencers, Policy development and review, Strategic Planning (comprehensive), Establish sound policies and procedures for complying with regulatory standards and meeting fiduciary responsibilities, Establishing policies and procedures and assuming oversight of adherence with record-keeping, public reporting, publicity and press releases, Liaison with GLS counsel, Oversight of contracting process and review of contracts with vendors and outsourced service providers, Oversight responsibility for adherence with GLS By-Laws and other documents related to the operations of GLS, particularly Conflicts of Interest, Recommendations with regard to and oversight of vendors and outsourced solutions providers, Educate Board of Directors and other members of the GLS community with regard to best practices in Charter School and Special Education leadership and governance, Educate Board of Directors and other members of the GLS community with regard to regulatory, legal and policy changes to Delaware Charter School and Special Education legislation and administration. This all sounds pretty important stuff. Canceling meetings seems to be the trend with this committee.

Community Outreach Committee description

Establish sound policies and procedures for Board activities relating to fostering strong relationships with the greater GLS community and communication, Oversight responsibility for GLS and GFF policies and procedures relating to communication and fostering relationships with the greater GLS community with particular attention as to whether they are in alignment with GLS' mission and values and foster GLS' reputation and sustainability, Liaison between Board and Gateway Friends and Family (GFF), Ensure effective measurement and reporting of Student and Parent satisfaction with GLS, Strategic planning with regard to community outreach and communication, Educate Board of Directors regarding to best practices in communication and relationship building

Initial Public Hearing :: Public Comment 11/14/19

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*

--

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

Initial Public Hearing :: Public Comment 11/21/19



November 18, 2019

Charter School Accountability Committee
Delaware Department of Education
01 Federal Street, Suite 2
Dover, DE 19901-3639

Dear CSAC Committee,

Thank you for your service to Delaware parents in oversight of the charter schools and ensuring the welfare and education of school age children who attend charter schools.

As an unbiased outside observer who just worked with the Gateway Lab School (GLS) Board in a strategic planning process, I would like to offer my insights and data about what I discovered during this process.

The Board conducted year over year surveys of teachers and parents to gather a clear sense of areas of strength and potential areas of concern. The Teacher surveys reflect that the school culture and atmosphere has improved significantly between the 2017-18 and 2018-19. This appears to be in large part due to the impact of the school leadership by Head of School Catherine Dolan and Principal Marlin White. The GLS Board was also recognized by approximately 75% of the teachers as being active and having the right level of involvement. Consider what is revealed in the data about improvement in some of the key categories measured.

- Teacher satisfaction with career choice at GLS – 15% increase overall toward the positive with 95% overall having some degree of satisfaction (19% increase in “Very Satisfied” category).
- Interactions between staff (school culture) – 18% increase in “Very Satisfied” with 100% expressing satisfaction.
- Effectiveness of school leadership (ED, Principal, Special ED Director) – 30% increase in “Very Effective” category.
- Optimism of teachers about returning to GLS – 27% increase in “Absolutely Optimistic” category.
- 78% of all categories show improvement from 2017-18 to 2018-19.

While there was a significant drop in parent participation in the parent’s survey from year to year, 90% of respondents were satisfied with the services their child is receiving. The survey showed a need to improve communication with the parents and was impetus for communication objectives in the

strategic plan. This survey also reinforced the board's decision to strengthen processes to ensure fidelity to curriculum, fidelity to instructional techniques and fidelity to responsive classroom principles.

Regarding plans for future improvement and impact, the current strategic plan which was submitted to the board for approval included key measurable outcomes with appropriate targets by year to meet or exceed the DOE Academic Framework. The strategic plan includes identification of the data source and the processes for monitoring progress toward each year's goal and identifies the responsible parties for accountability.

I hope that you find this information helpful as you proceed through the charter renewal process for Gateway Lab School.

Sincerely,

Paul Stock

Digitally signed by Paul Stock
DN: cn=Paul Stock, o=Delaware Alliance
for Nonprofit Advancement, ou,
email=pstock@delawarenonprofit.org,
c=US
Date: 2019.11.18 08:13:11 -05'00'

Paul Stock
Executive Vice President
Excellence Academy

September 19, 2019

2306 Rockwell Rd.

Wilmington, DE 19810

Greetings Ms. Draper,

From a conversation I had with Ms. Rose Wooten, a former colleague, I desired to examine the educational process given to students at Gateway. I found her report of participation in the care and teaching of students intriguing. I wanted to learn more.

I appreciated being escorted through Gateway Lab School. I was impressed with your dedication to educate young people who too often are underserved, the students which are overwhelmed in the regular classroom with too many students. Often these regular classrooms have a teacher assistant as you have but the child is distracted with too many voices. Gateway Lab School has purposed itself to teaching students with learning disabilities and the student who needs extra attention which I believe are all students. The number of human resources that Gateway Lab School have on site in support for their students, leaves me in awe, as it is a small school without the support of tax dollars.

To you, Ms. Dolan and the staff thank you for a day of inspiration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gwendolyn Y. James". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Gwendolyn Y. James

IMAC Educational Chair

Network Director Delaware's Educators for Christ

Sponsored by Christian Educators Association International



MACINTYRE ASSOCIATES
Nonprofit Development Consultants

November 14, 2019

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Angela M. Scully
Peggy Strine
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Strategic Partners

**Louis J. Beccaria, Ph.D.
Donna Melton**

To whom it may concern:

In 2014 we received a call asking if we worked with clients on Board and leadership development. The call was from Gateway Lab School, at the time a group seeking a new approach to student learning within the charter school framework.

We met with school leadership and conducted board and staff leadership workshops and met with them over the next several months. We were impressed with several things:

- The student was the primary focus.
- Parents were involved
- The arts were a path to learning
- Everyone knew everyone
- The leadership was intentional about their responsibility
- The faculty had an amazing capacity for teaching in this special environment.

Over time leadership changed and while we were saddened to see the decline, we are gladdened to see the original intensity of leadership return as well as the focus on the school's mission and vision. We will be working again with Gateway Lab School on leadership and organizational development. After an overview session the first topic to be examined will be succession planning.

The school provides a special learning environment to a special child. We have every confidence in their current and future success.

Sincerely,

Bonny Anderson, MSS
Managing Director

Initial Public Hearing :: Public Comment 11/25/19



November 18, 2019

Charter School Accountability Committee
Delaware Department of Education
01 Federal Street, Suite 2
Dover, DE 19901-3639

Dear CSAC Committee,

As President of Gateway Lab Charter School, I am writing this letter to request your consideration in renewing the charter of our school that serves a unique population of students who struggle to learn in a traditional classroom setting. Gateway is the only public charter school in the state of Delaware that specifically addresses the needs of elementary students who learn differently. Unlike other public schools, Gateway serves over 50 percent of their students who have an individualized education plan (IEP) or a 504 Plan.

To serve our students better, Gateway has undergone a major transformation in our Board and senior staff leadership to ensure that the mission and vision of the school established by its founder, Pam Draper and founding members was carried out with fidelity.

I returned to the Board in October 2018, as a community director, in order to provide a historical framework. Since serving as president of this newly appointed board, who understand and embrace the mission of the school, I have witnessed a significant change in four areas:

- climate and culture improved significantly for students and staff
- students are more engaged in classroom and experiential learning opportunities outside the class
- collaboration among teachers on how to integrate the arts across all subject matters is happening
- a more engaged board of directors regarding giving of their talent, time, and ideas. One hundred percent of the board of directors give a meaningful financial contribution to the school.

Not only have I witnessed these changes but parents, teachers, and administrators who attended the public hearing at the Public Hearing in New Castle last week to attest the positive impact that Gateway has had on their child(ren). The stories shared by parents were authentic and heart-felt regarding the difference the school has made on their entire family.

Moreover, I applaud the board for approving a school model which led to selecting a Head of School with an education background. Ms. Dolan, Head of School, knew exactly how to turn around the school when the school lost two senior-level administrators. She assessed the strengths and weaknesses of the current staff and provided leadership opportunities for internal staff members which boosted morale significantly. As a result of putting the right skill set into the right positions, and hiring faculty who embraced the vision, the school has operated much more smoothly. To address academic achievement, the school has purchased new curricula for ELA and Math. Data provided to the CSAC committee reflects an increase in Map testing scores and a slight growth with smarter balance proficiency and growth from 2018 to 2019. Now that the infrastructure of the school is in place, the school's focus is on academic rigor.

I am delighted to say, that behavioral issues have been better managed and students are spending more time in the classroom opposed to out of the classroom. Gateway is poised to focus on two strategic goals this year to include the following:

- To meet or exceed all of standards set forth in the Alternative Academic Framework established by the State Board Education by the end of 2021
- Become a "Best Place" school that attracts and retains high quality teachers and maximizes students' potential

To conclude, the Board of Directors with the help of Paul Stock, Executive Vice President from the Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement (DANA) has prepared a three-year strategic plan and has put in place measurements to ensure that the plan is executed properly. Additionally, the board is working to establish a succession plan for the board of directors and administration to ensure future leaders with the correct skill sets can take Gateway Lab School to the next level.

Sincerely,

Joyce Dennis Henderson
Board President & Community Director
Joyce.henderson@gl.s.k12.de.us
302-766-0050

November 21, 2019

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 husband and I have full guardianship of our grandson. He is a child with ADHD and has been diagnosed with a learning disability. He previously attended another mainstream school where he was struggling academically and was exhibiting behavior problems as a result of his frustration with school and his inability to learn at the same pace as others. We made the decision to move my grandson to Gateway School in the fourth grade. At that time his reading level was extremely low. This was having major impact on his other subjects as well. Gateway Lab School offered small class sizes and special education specifically a reading program for children with his type of learning disability. The teaching staff at Gateway focuses on different approaches to teaching children like my grandson. They have worked diligently to find ways to get through to him and offer continued support to allow him to shine. My grandson's reading level has increased substantially which has had a positive impact on his academic success. He enjoys school and his self confidence has soared over the last four years. He is still below grade level but I have every confidence that academic success is within reach for him. I have found that the teaching staff and the administration are fully committed to find innovative ways to get through to the students despite whatever roadblocks stand in their way. I believe that it is in the best interest of children like my grandson to have alternative learning processes to allow them to shine. In saying that, I hope you will consider the renewal request that stands before you.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

*MaryAnn Kane
2622 Bardell Drive
Wilmington, DE 19808*