

**In The Matter Of:**  
*Department of Education*  
*In Re: Gateway Lab School Charter*

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*Hearing*  
*December 10, 2014*

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P U B L I C   H E A R I N G

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IN RE:    GATEWAY LAB SCHOOL APPLICATION

          FOR CHARTER RENEWAL

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Carvel Office Building  
820 N. French Street, 2nd Floor  
Wilmington, Delaware 19801

Wednesday, December 10, 2014  
- 7:47 p.m. -

BEFORE:    JENNIFER NAGOURNEY, Executive  
            Director, Charter School Office

            TERI QUINN GRAY, President, Delaware  
            State Board of Education

            DONNA JOHNSON, Executive Director,  
            Delaware State Board of Education

            CATHERINE T. HICKEY, DEPUTY ATTORNEY  
  GENERAL

            ILONA M. KIRSHON, DEPUTY ATTORNEY  
  GENERAL

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1 MS. NAGOURNEY: Good evening. I  
2 declare this public hearing is open. My name  
3 is Jennifer Nagourney. I'm the Executive  
4 Director of the Charter School Office of the  
5 Delaware Department of Education's and I've  
6 been appointed by the Secretary of Education  
7 to conduct this public hearing. The charter  
8 of Gateway Lab School has submitted an  
9 application for the renewal of its charter.  
10 The Charter School Accountability Committee  
11 recommended non-renewal. At this point I  
12 would like to introduce the other individuals  
13 with me.

14 MS. JOHNSON: My name is Donna  
15 Johnson and I'm the Executive Director of the  
16 Delaware State Board of Education.

17 MS. GRAY: I am Teri Quinn Gray,  
18 President of the Delaware State Board of  
19 Education.

20 MS. KIRSHON: I am Ilona Kirshon,  
21 Deputy Attorney General and Counsel to the  
22 State Board of Education.

23 MS. NAGOURNEY: And we will be  
24 joined in a moment with Catherine Hickey from



1 the Department of Justice who is the Counsel  
2 to us.

3 This joint public hearing is being  
4 held by the Department of Education and the  
5 State Board of Education to assist in the  
6 decision of whether the charter school should  
7 be renewed. This hearing provides the school  
8 and public with an opportunity to provide  
9 comments. I would like the record to reflect  
10 the notice of the time, date and place of  
11 today's public hearing was published in the  
12 News Journal and the Delaware State News. In  
13 addition notice was place at the Charter  
14 School Accountability Committee's official  
15 place of business, the Department of Education  
16 official website and the State public meeting  
17 calendar of the State's official website.

18 A court reporter is present so that  
19 a record of this hearing can be made. It will  
20 be necessary for each speaker to clearly  
21 identify himself or herself before beginning  
22 to speak so the court reporter will be able to  
23 note who you are. A record of this hearing  
24 will be provided to the Secretary of Education



1 and members of the State Board of Education  
2 together with any written or electronic  
3 comments submitted before or after this  
4 hearing.

5 We will proceed in the following  
6 manner. First, we will hear from any  
7 representatives of the charter who wish to  
8 comment. Then, we will take on anyone else  
9 who wishes to speak. I have all three of the  
10 speaker sign-up lists here. As you may have  
11 seen at the last hearing we have time limits  
12 and given the number of people we are going to  
13 be strictly enforcing a three-minute limit for  
14 individuals and five minutes for groups.

15 After we hear from representatives  
16 of the school we understand that certain  
17 individuals need to take a bus to leave. I  
18 would ask that after that that those folks  
19 have the opportunity to come forward first and  
20 speak and then everyone else.

21 I intend to be as liberal as time  
22 will allow in accepting comments, however, I  
23 do reserve the right to limit comments if it  
24 is purely repetitive or cumulative. If



1 someone says, I love the cafeteria food, and  
2 we hear from two other people that say, I love  
3 the cafeteria, then the fourth person who  
4 says, I love the cafeteria food we will ask  
5 you to offer something new or to sit down. I  
6 really don't want to have to do that, but I  
7 just wanted to make sure that everyone has an  
8 opportunity to speak.

9 At this time we will accept  
10 comments from representatives of the school.

11 MS. DOLAN: My name is Catherine  
12 Dolan, I'm Head of School at the Gateway Lab  
13 School. Gateway Lab School is exactly what  
14 charter schools were meant to be. It is an  
15 innovative, creative think tank for educators  
16 to experiment with the best way to meet  
17 students' needs. Charter schools were  
18 designed to be places where brainstorming,  
19 creative problem-solving and imagination were  
20 used to improve best practices in pedagogical  
21 methods.

22 And a place to make mistakes. Yes,  
23 to make mistakes. Isn't that what we tell our  
24 students? It's okay to make mistakes. Thomas



1 Edison discovered 10,000 ways not to make a  
2 light bulb before he discovered how to make a  
3 light bulb.

4 But I'll tell you what is not a  
5 mistake that I've learned from this process.  
6 It was not a mistake to put your child in  
7 Gateway Lab School.

8 (Audience applause.)

9 I know that by the overwhelming  
10 support we have seen from parents and students  
11 who have experienced Gateway. That's how I  
12 know that was not a mistake. And I'll tell  
13 you what else is not a mistake, calling your  
14 legislators and inviting them to visit your  
15 child's school because the legislators  
16 graciously accepted, they visited our school  
17 and they decided it was worth supporting.  
18 Then, they told their fellow legislators and  
19 the ground swell of support has been the  
20 result.

21 This has been a powerful lesson for  
22 our students on democracy. The voices of  
23 people are powerful in a democracy, student  
24 voices, parent voices, friends, neighbors,



1 doctors and community members, all of their  
2 voices, and the legislators listened. Let's  
3 hear it for the democracy at work.

4 (Audience applause.)

5 One the things I hear a lot about  
6 in this world of public education is justice  
7 and fairness and I hear justice and fairness  
8 equated with treating all kids the same, which  
9 made me ponder. At Gateway Lab School we have  
10 a quirky population. 60% have an IEP, an  
11 individual education plan, and, another 9%  
12 have a 504 plan for their ADHD. They march to  
13 the beat of a different drummer and maybe  
14 that's why our kids are so powerful in  
15 drumming class, but I contend that treating  
16 all kids the same is not just or fair.

17 Think about it, when you take your  
18 child to the pediatrician, do they give all  
19 kids an antibiotic? Or do they put your  
20 child's arm in a cast? No. What is fair and  
21 just is meeting every child's needs. So, hats  
22 off to the faculty and staff at Gateway Lab  
23 School because they have an unbelievable array  
24 of needs to be met in front of them every day





1 when they plan and deliver a lesson, but  
2 faithfully day in and day out they are doing  
3 the fair and just thing because they are  
4 meeting kids' needs.

5 I know it, the kids know it, their  
6 doctors know it, their parents know it and 33  
7 of our legislators know it. Tonight I want  
8 Secretary Mark Murphy and the State Board of  
9 Education to know it.

10 (Audience applause.)

11 Gateway Lab School is meeting kids'  
12 needs and they are learning. I was asked by a  
13 WHYY interviewer, Do you believe in  
14 accountability? Yes, I believe in  
15 accountability and I believe in my students.  
16 I believe they can and will learn and grow.  
17 To prove it I took all of my students from  
18 last year who were new to the school and I  
19 looked at their scores, their DCAS scores,  
20 when they entered in the fall and DCAS scores  
21 in the spring and here is a glimpse, a  
22 snapshot, of those scores.

23 They were analyzed by a  
24 statistician at the University of Delaware.



1 100% of the Math scores improved in my third  
2 graders last year and 95% of the Reading  
3 scores improved in third grade, all new  
4 students last year. It's harder when they  
5 come in in fourth, fifth, sixth and seventh  
6 grade because failure has been imprinted on  
7 them. If you send them back to where they  
8 failed, they will fail again.

9 MS. NAGOURNEY: Thank you.

10 (The remainder of the written  
11 statement of Ms. Dolan was typed into the  
12 record by the court reporter.)

13 Do I think it's the best tool? Do  
14 I think another tool might be a better  
15 yardstick? Yes. And so does the State  
16 because they have switched to Smarter  
17 Balanced. And we now have the NWEA MAP test  
18 as an internal measurement tool to guide  
19 instruction. Is it the be all and end all?  
20 No. Because any educator, any parent, any  
21 thinking individual knows that our children  
22 are more than a number on one test, on one day  
23 a year.

24 And we know that because the apple



1 doesn't fall too far from the trees in this  
2 room. We are all living, breathing, complex  
3 creatures who cannot begin to be summed up by  
4 a number on a page. We love, think, dream,  
5 hope, aspire, inspire, perspire and create.  
6 The only true constant in all of us is change.  
7 We are always learning, growing and changing,  
8 all of us, because that's life.

9           But at GLS we're on the right  
10 track. We know the earlier we intervene, the  
11 better. With early childhood education  
12 thriving, we now know that is true for all  
13 kids. Gateway Lab School is in it infancy,  
14 but it's growing and making gains.

15           Research tells us that educational  
16 reform change takes three to five years. We  
17 need time. We need three to five years to  
18 reap the results of the educational reform  
19 changes that we have put in place. We need  
20 time to learn and grow along with our  
21 students. We need time to be what charter  
22 schools were designed to be, innovative  
23 laboratories for learning.

24           Give us time to build on our



1 successes, to spread our wings and fly. Give  
2 us time to create and innovate. Give us time  
3 to learn better ways to meet kids' needs.  
4 Give us time to learn how best to be truly  
5 fair and just to all kids. Give us time to  
6 develop Gateway Gladiators full of honor,  
7 loyalty and truth.

8 MS. SOLOMON: My name is Stacy,  
9 S-T-A-C-Y, Solomon, S-O-L-O-M-O-N. Good  
10 evening, I am Stacy Solomon, the Principal of  
11 Instruction at Gateway Lab School. When I  
12 arrived at Gateway Lab School in 2013 as an  
13 interim administrator I observed this:  
14 Students feeling valued and excited about  
15 learning. Teachers with giving and accepting  
16 hearts who displayed a tremendous amount of  
17 patience in working with students with unique  
18 challenges.

19 I met parents who had finally found  
20 the right place for their children. A place  
21 where their children were willing to be  
22 themselves. A place where they were ready to  
23 learn. A place where students felt accepted  
24 for their abilities versus feeling rejected



1 for their disabilities. What I also noted was  
2 a lack of instructional focus. A lot was  
3 being done to create an environment where  
4 children want to learn. This beautiful  
5 environment is palpable when you enter our  
6 building as many visitors comment.

7 But sharp educators also know that  
8 it takes more than that to increase student  
9 achievement. Anyone who looks at our test  
10 scores since our inception knows that we  
11 needed to make changes in our instructional  
12 practices. Whether we agree or not there will  
13 always be a measure that is required by the  
14 State. It is an accountability measure. By  
15 virtue of being a public charter school we  
16 must be accountable. GLS meets standards in  
17 two areas on the framework that are critical  
18 for charter school success. Gateway Lab  
19 School is sound organizationally and  
20 financially.

21 In March of 2014 Head of School,  
22 Catherine Dolan, and I requested that a team  
23 of experts come from the University of  
24 Delaware's Delaware Academy for School



1 Leadership and they completed a Comprehensive  
2 Success Review. The CSR team verified that  
3 what we observed was indeed true and that in  
4 order to make Gateway sustainable and a place  
5 where students were growing academically  
6 change of grand proportions in the area of  
7 instruction was needed.

8 The CSR report absolutely changed  
9 the way that we do educational business at the  
10 Gateway Lab School. A clear role as the  
11 Principal of Instruction was identified for  
12 me. My background teaching in high performing  
13 charter schools and my work with underserved  
14 populations as an administrator prepared me  
15 for the role. It was time for change and I  
16 was ready to give it all I had.

17 From this came procedural changes.  
18 Changes in the school calendar and day. The  
19 development of an instructional leadership  
20 team. A standard of bell to bell teaching.  
21 An instructional focus that is displayed  
22 throughout our school and permeates all that  
23 we do. All new curricula was purchased. We  
24 implement the Common Core each day. We



1 incorporated our own internal measure NWEA MAP  
2 testing.

3 Our proficient and distinguished  
4 teachers are asked to step up and share that  
5 knowledge with others. Good instructional  
6 practices through higher order questioning and  
7 summarizing are the focus of professional  
8 development and we are holding our teachers to  
9 that every step of the way.

10 MS. JOHNSON: If you have written  
11 comments, you can give them to the court  
12 reporter. Thank you.

13 (The remainder of the written  
14 statement of Ms. Solomon was typed into the  
15 record by the court reporter.)

16 We changed our own perception of  
17 what our students can and cannot do, Our  
18 perception of time, and we became careful not  
19 to make excuses. We made language shifts and  
20 changed our focus to what we can do rather  
21 than what we can't do. Throughout all of this  
22 change we have also remained committed to the  
23 vision of the founders, small group  
24 instruction, Arts integration, our superior



1 Music and Art classes, Physical Education, the  
2 responsive classroom social curriculum, using  
3 contemporary and experiential teaching methods  
4 and a high level of parent engagement. We  
5 continue to do that and do that well.

6           Since this change all decisions  
7 start with these questions. How will this  
8 benefit our students academically? How will  
9 this assist our students and teachers in their  
10 growth? Is this aligned with the  
11 recommendations in the CSR report? How will  
12 this involve students in their achievement?

13           When I hear individuals say our  
14 students cannot learn because of their  
15 challenges or that the test is not a match for  
16 all of our students I become uneasy inside and  
17 think, Oh, yes, they can. They can because  
18 many of our regular and special education  
19 students meet their DCAS growth targets and we  
20 have teachers who meet and exceed their DCAS  
21 Component V goals. And now that test is  
22 changing to Smarter Balanced and we need to  
23 change with that. I'm not saying that it is  
24 the best measure for our students, but it is





1 the current measure. We accept that.

2 I have looked at my role this year  
3 as the person to ensure that this mindset  
4 shift is adopted and that we excel. Recently  
5 someone suggested that rigor and special needs  
6 students don't mix and to that I say not true.  
7 Rigor encourages students to think critically  
8 and creatively, more flexibly and emphasizes  
9 words like stimulating, engaging, complex,  
10 supportive, challenging, all while acquiring  
11 skills that can be applied throughout  
12 students' lives and that is my aim as an  
13 educator.

14 Secretary Murphy, we respectfully  
15 ask for more time, time to see the effects of  
16 our perception and procedural changes, time to  
17 continue the progress detailed in the status  
18 report that was requested of us by the Charter  
19 School Accountability Committee, time for  
20 transformational leadership to work at Gateway  
21 Lab School and time for us to be able to meet  
22 your accountability measures.

23 MS. NAGOURNEY: Joyce Henderson?

24 MS. HENDERSON: My name is Joyce



1 Henderson, H-E-N-D-E-R-S-O-N. I'm the  
2 president of the board of Gateway Lab School.  
3 On behalf of the board of directors we are  
4 requesting your consideration and a careful  
5 review of the school's charter that was  
6 recently denied renewal by Delaware's Charter  
7 Schools Accountability Committee. As one of  
8 the founding members at Gateway I have watched  
9 the school evolve from a simple idea to a  
10 flourishing environment for children to learn.  
11 Our first few years were spent ensuring that  
12 Gateway was staffed by teachers with a passion  
13 for students who had difficulty learning in a  
14 traditional classroom setting.

15 Gateway was modeled after the Lab  
16 School of Washington located in Washington,  
17 D. C., which has been in existence for  
18 45 years with a record of academic excellence  
19 for children with learning disabilities.  
20 Several of our founding teachers and board  
21 members had the opportunity to visit and  
22 witness how their art-infused curriculum was  
23 instrumental in transforming knowledge to  
24 students with learning challenges.



1           You know, too often these children  
2 get lost in a public school where they are  
3 viewed as a problem rather than a student who  
4 simply learns differently from their peers.  
5 It was in fall 2012, the Head of School and  
6 founder of Gateway, Pamela Draper, resigned  
7 and a regional search took place to find her  
8 replacement. The search committee was  
9 dedicated to finding someone who would be able  
10 to take the school to the next level. Would  
11 you say, Gateway, we found her?

12                           (Audience applause.)

13           As part of the interview process  
14 Ms. Dolan and the Principal, Stacy Solomon,  
15 visited the Lab School of Washington to meet  
16 key administrators and learn more about the  
17 school's curriculum. Catherine Dolan, a  
18 20-year education veteran, was selected as the  
19 new Head of School in spring 2013, was  
20 selected as the new Head of School in 2013,  
21 but stepped up to the plate in summer of 2013.  
22 Both Ms. Dolan and Ms. Solomon have done a  
23 tremendous job ensuring Gateway's continued  
24 growth and development.



1                   Following their visit to the Lab  
2 School of Washington Ms. Dolan was inspired to  
3 take a closer look at the staff, the  
4 curriculum and technology plans at Gateway.  
5 In March, as was mentioned earlier, she  
6 requested a comprehensive review of Gateway's  
7 academic performance. Immediately after  
8 receiving the results she put in place  
9 different things to ensure that Gateway  
10 teachers were equipped to carry out the  
11 instructions within the classroom.

12                   All of our teachers have been  
13 trained in effectively integrating the Arts  
14 and technology into the curriculum and have  
15 participated in ongoing professional  
16 development workshops. The workshops focus on  
17 special education law as well as teaching  
18 techniques such as asking higher order  
19 questions that prompt deep thinking and  
20 analytical skills to increase academic rigor.

21                   Ms. Dolan took the steps needed to  
22 ensure that a sound plan was in place to  
23 improve Gateway's academic curriculum by  
24 having a superb team of teachers who are



1 highly qualified to teach and understand  
2 students with learning challenges or  
3 disabilities. All of Gateway Lab teachers  
4 have certification in special education and  
5 are passionate about meeting the needs of each  
6 individual child.

7 Gateway has students who came in  
8 from mainstream schools unable to read and  
9 write. The teachers at Gateway have helped  
10 encourage and motivate them to learn how to do  
11 both. Would you agree?

12 (Audience applause.)

13 This is no small task to undertake,  
14 yet our teachers continue to rise to the  
15 challenge every time. Parents, teachers and  
16 administrators at Gateway Lab School see  
17 academic and social skills improvement in our  
18 students. However, more time is needed to  
19 capture this growth. In order to fully  
20 implement the recommendations and suggestions  
21 from DASL we need to have a sufficient amount  
22 of time. A quick fix is not the answer, but  
23 rather a long-term plan is needed for academic  
24 success.



1           If Gateway had been able to use the  
2 alternative framework for standard testing our  
3 school would have been compared to other  
4 institutions with a similar population of  
5 students. This alternative framework has been  
6 approved for the fall 2014, but, if Gateway's  
7 doors are prematurely closed, then we will not  
8 have an opportunity to see these results.

9           The current standardized tests are  
10 inadequate tools to measure the progress of  
11 students who have learning disabilities. The  
12 approval for the alternative framework is  
13 evidence that Gateway Lab School is trending  
14 in the right direction as it pertains to  
15 academic growth, but we were not given the  
16 chance to actually put this in place. Thank  
17 you.

18           (Audience applause.)

19           (The remainder of the written  
20 statement by Ms. Henderson was typed into the  
21 record by the court reporter.)

22           In order for the alternative  
23 framework to go into effect, we need to have  
24 time. Scholar Rebecca Gensler in response to



1 the emphasis placed on standardized tests  
2 following No Child Left Behind, said,  
3 "Requiring that all students in the same grade  
4 levels progress be measured by the same  
5 standardized test ignores all the work and  
6 consideration of IEP's."

7 I will conclude by saying that  
8 there is no doubt in my mind and the board of  
9 directors that Gateway has the right  
10 leadership team in place to encourage learning  
11 that prepares our students to enter high  
12 school. Gateway Lab School has given many  
13 students a second chance in school by  
14 increasing their desire to learn. We have the  
15 tools, teachers, educational partnerships,  
16 administrators, and a solid school board, all  
17 of which help make Gateway a model school for  
18 Delaware.

19 Our 212 students will suffer  
20 tremendously if Gateway's charter is not  
21 renewed. Mr. Secretary, please reconsider  
22 keeping our doors open. Thank you for your  
23 time and consideration.

24 MS. NAGOURNEY: Ms. Draper?



1 MS. DRAPER: Pamela Draper,  
2 D-R-A-P-E-R. Good evening. Gateway Lab  
3 School is in danger of closing. As a lead  
4 founder of this school I am disheartened by  
5 that possibility. GLS is a responsive  
6 classroom school, which means that our  
7 approach to teaching is based on the premise  
8 that children learn best when they have both  
9 academic and social-emotional skills. Most of  
10 our students struggle with both how to  
11 understand and communicate information  
12 effectively.

13 After years of academic failure for  
14 most of our students prior to coming to  
15 Gateway we are seeing growth. Unfortunately,  
16 the gains that have been made are not  
17 immediately evident in the high-stakes  
18 standardized testing that is used to measure  
19 that growth. The students are being measured  
20 against their neuro-typical peers across the  
21 State and appear to be failing. One cannot  
22 compare apples to oranges. Are they both  
23 fruit? Yes. But are they different in taste  
24 and texture? Absolutely. Not all students





1 learn in the same manner. Let's give these  
2 students a fighting chance to learn in a  
3 manner that works for them.

4 Standardized testing is an  
5 inadequate way to measure the progress of our  
6 students. Just getting past the anxiety,  
7 attention deficits, dyslexia, processing speed  
8 issues, eye-hand coordination, spacial  
9 awareness and sensory challenges are all major  
10 hurdles to get over prior to approaching the  
11 questions on the test.

12 Gateway teachers have received  
13 extensive professional development in the  
14 responsive classroom approach. They are also  
15 experienced in Arts-based instruction and how  
16 to specifically teach students with moderate  
17 to severe learning disabilities who have  
18 complex needs. What we are seeing at GLS is  
19 once the social-emotional needs of our  
20 students are addressed they become less  
21 anxious and more confident learners.

22 I believe that given more time the  
23 students of Gateway will be able to meet AYP  
24 and prove that their school deserves to remain



1 open because they deserve an environment that  
2 is the best place for them to learn.

3 On a personal note my youngest son,  
4 Jared, was my inspiration for starting  
5 Gateway. Like the parents that you will hear  
6 from tonight I was desperately looking for a  
7 school where he felt safe, secure and capable  
8 of success. When we started the charter  
9 application process, my hope was that he would  
10 get at least one year at Gateway to counteract  
11 the feeling of failure that hung over him like  
12 a cloud. Unfortunately, in the two years it  
13 took us to start the school he aged out.

14 He went to a wonderful charter  
15 school at the time that challenged him  
16 academically, but was socially devastating.  
17 My husband and I choiced him into a vocational  
18 high school with the hopes that the  
19 opportunity for hands-on instruction would  
20 ignite his interest in learning. That high  
21 school became a turnaround school and went  
22 through three principals in two years.

23 In his second year in an effort to  
24 raise test scores Social Studies and Science



1 was stripped from the schedule and replaced  
2 with two periods of English, two periods of  
3 Math and a DCAS prep period.

4 MS. JOHNSON: Thank you, ma'am.

5 MS. DRAPER: I have one last point.  
6 Parents should not -- as a result we had to  
7 leave, take him out of school and leave the  
8 State and take him to Maryland driving one and  
9 a half hours every day so he could graduate.  
10 Parents should not have to leave the State to  
11 find good educational options for their  
12 children as some have said they will have to  
13 do if Gateway closes.

14 (Audience applause.)

15 MS. JOHNSON: Ma'am, thank you.

16 MS. DRAPER: I implore you to give  
17 us more time.

18 MS. NAGOURNEY: Dr. Overby?

19 DR. OVERBY: Lynnette Overby,  
20 O-V-E-R-B-Y. Good evening. I'm really happy  
21 to be able to speak to you about the  
22 importance of continuing to support Gateway  
23 School, a school where 60% percent of the  
24 students are identified as needing alternative



1 forms of teaching. My talk will focus on the  
2 impact of Arts integration as an important  
3 tool for working with children with special  
4 needs. Art integration is a term applied to  
5 an approach to teaching and learning that uses  
6 the Fine and Performing Arts as a primary path  
7 to learning.

8           As a young teacher in the  
9 Washington, D. C. schools I did a research  
10 project. I had my beginning readers and one  
11 group I taught three stories and vocabulary  
12 words using creative drama and creative  
13 movement and the other the traditional way. I  
14 posed tests to both groups and guess what?  
15 The Arts-integrated group performed  
16 significantly better than the traditional  
17 group and we find this occurring again and  
18 again, especially with children who have  
19 special needs.

20           Now, children with special needs  
21 flourish in environments that provide a multi-  
22 sensory approach to learning. There are  
23 examples everywhere. There is one in New York  
24 City, the Everyday Arts For Special Education



1 program, where we have seen such gains in  
2 areas of communication, socialization,  
3 compliance with directions, time spent on task  
4 and engagement with school activities and why  
5 are there such profound results? It is  
6 because of this impact on memory and on the  
7 brain that I'm going to talk about in a little  
8 bit.

9           So, in recent literature especially  
10 in -- it's a literature review in Mind, Brain  
11 and Education where we see that they have  
12 looked at several studies and in the area of  
13 pictorial representation, elaboration,  
14 enactment, all impacted by Arts integration  
15 and have a positive impact on learning.  
16 Pictorial representation we are talking about  
17 using visual art, using live performance, all  
18 of these as a way of enhancing memory and  
19 understanding of content area.

20           Another one is enactment.  
21 Enactment means you physically embody and act  
22 out the material as my students did in the  
23 reading and understanding of comprehension of  
24 words and stories. This can apply to



1 historical, scientific, mathematical and  
2 literary content.

3 Another area is elaboration where  
4 they may learn something and then draw about  
5 it so that they encode it both pictorially and  
6 cognitively and they gain a better  
7 understanding.

8 So, all of these factors are very  
9 important for students with special needs and  
10 areas we are working on in Gateway so the  
11 teachers will be able to apply these in their  
12 teaching.

13 And, so, I just want to close by  
14 saying very few schools have an opportunity to  
15 enhance the approach to teaching and learning  
16 in a systematic and ongoing manner as Gateway  
17 is able to do. I'm working closely with the  
18 teachers and administrators of Gateway by  
19 providing 17 different sessions of  
20 professional development in the creation,  
21 implementation and assessment of Arts-  
22 integrated lessons and curricula. To become a  
23 successful Arts-integrated school requires  
24 time, professional development and support.



1 MS. JOHNSON: Thank you, ma'am.

2 MS. NAGOURNEY: Dr. Fisher?

3 DR. FISHER: Good evening.

4 MS. NAGOURNEY: Is the gentleman  
5 with you going to be speaking?

6 DR. FISHER: Five minutes.

7 MS. NAGOURNEY: If you are an  
8 individual speaker then three minutes, unless  
9 you are representing a group.

10 DR. FISHER: My name is Constance  
11 Fisher, F-I-S-H-E-R, and I'm here to speak on  
12 behalf of Gateway Lab School. I'm employed  
13 with the Delaware Academy of School Leadership  
14 known as DASL in the University of Delaware's  
15 College of Education and Human Development as  
16 a development coach. As a development coach  
17 my primary responsibility is supporting  
18 administrators in the effective implementation  
19 of the Delaware Performance Appraisal System  
20 known as DPAS II.

21 In addition, I have participated in  
22 several Comprehensive Success Reviews known as  
23 CSR's conducted by DASL. I have a doctorate  
24 in Educational Leadership, a master's degree



1 in Curriculum and Instruction and a bachelor's  
2 degree in Early Childhood Education, all from  
3 the University of Delaware.

4 I am personally familiar from my  
5 work at DASL with the CSR DASL performed at  
6 Gateway Lab School and the work Gateway has  
7 done in response to the recommendations DASL  
8 has made following review. DASL performed the  
9 CSR in the spring of 2014. Gateway requested  
10 this review from DASL in order to improve its  
11 educational performance and the review was  
12 done with Gateway's cooperation.

13 The CSR included 144 classroom  
14 observations throughout the school, interviews  
15 with teachers, administrators, parents and  
16 board members and a review of available  
17 documents. DASL then prepared a report using  
18 a 4 point rubric to identify strengths and  
19 weaknesses within key areas/criteria related  
20 to effective schools. After completing a  
21 comprehensive review of the evidence that DASL  
22 collected recommendations were prepared for  
23 Gateway to guide it in changing its  
24 educational delivery and operational systems





1 so that they would be more aligned with best  
2 practices and increased student achievement.

3           Following DASL's issuance of  
4 recommendations in the summer of 2014 I was  
5 identified as Gateway's development coach. As  
6 such, I spent -- every week I spent three  
7 hours within Gateway and as a development  
8 coach we do co-observations and walk-throughs  
9 routinely. Discussions around responses and  
10 next steps related to the Comprehensive  
11 Success Review recommendations also occur  
12 routinely.

13           Based on my observations to date I  
14 can say without reservation that Catherine  
15 Dolan, Gateway's Head of School, and Stacey  
16 Solomon, Gateway's Principal, are committed on  
17 acting on the recommendations made by DASL's  
18 School Success Review. They have embraced the  
19 recommendations and are committed to  
20 implementing a comprehensive response to the  
21 recommendations. We know that making  
22 significant changes in the operation of a  
23 school is not easy and the changes Gateway is  
24 making will take time and will not happen



1 overnight. The current leaders have the  
2 appropriate sense of urgency and are working  
3 at leading the school in the right direction.

4 Because of the manner in which the  
5 school's current leadership has responded to  
6 DASL's recommendation and with a continued  
7 commitment to do so, I expect Gateway will  
8 demonstrate continuous incremental growth that  
9 will sustain over time.

10 MS. JOHNSON: Thank you.

11 (Audience applause.)

12 MS. NAGOURNEY: It's my  
13 understanding that the bus that will be taking  
14 some of you back to school will be leaving in  
15 about 20 minutes. So, at this time -- I'm  
16 sorry, 12 minutes. Soon. We would like to  
17 give those speakers and opportunity to be  
18 heard first so we can get you on the bus.

19 MS. WILLIAMS: I personally would  
20 like the public to hear my comments before  
21 they leave as well and the parking lot will be  
22 closing at nine.

23 MS. NAGOURNEY: Representative  
24 Williams then. I also want to remind



1 everybody that the record is accumulating in  
2 writing and the product that comes from this  
3 meeting that goes into the record is a  
4 transcript. So, if you have typed-out  
5 comments, we can add them to the record as  
6 though you said them aloud. It won't be the  
7 same as being in the room and hearing the  
8 applause, but the comments will be included,  
9 read, considered and receive the attention  
10 they deserve.

11 If you instead of speaking if you  
12 would like to consider handing in statements,  
13 that will be greatly appreciated.

14 MS. WILLIAMS: I am Representative  
15 Kim Williams, W-I-L-L-I-A-M-S. I've turned  
16 these comments in already, but I think it's  
17 important to everyone to hear them as well. I  
18 just want to say what a great turnout tonight.  
19 You should be very proud of yourself for  
20 getting together and coming out and speaking.

21 Good evening, my name is Kim  
22 Williams and I'm the State Representative  
23 serving the residents of the 19th District. I  
24 would like to also recognize Representative Ed



1 Osienski who is here also. I was contacted by  
2 families who have children enrolled in  
3 Gateway. I toured the facility right before  
4 Thanksgiving and I prepared a letter, which is  
5 signed by 18 of my colleagues.

6 We are writing to you today on  
7 behalf of the families whose children attend  
8 Gateway Lab School. Many families have  
9 communicated to us expressing their concerns  
10 regarding the proposed closure of Gateway. We  
11 are aware of the Charter School Accountability  
12 Committee recommendation of non-renewal for  
13 Gateway Lab School and we recognize the work  
14 that the Committee has done.

15 We do have concerns as to why  
16 Gateway Lab School has been recommended for  
17 non-renewal, but Delaware Academy of Public  
18 Safety and Security and Positive Outcomes were  
19 both recommended for renewal under similar  
20 academic framework outcomes. Delaware Academy  
21 of Public Safety and Security did not meet the  
22 academic or the financial framework and  
23 Positive Outcomes do not meet the academic  
24 framework, but both were renewed.



1           Additionally, Positive Outcomes was  
2 named a partnership zone school in 2010 and  
3 received an additional \$600,000 in funding  
4 from the Race to the Top Grant. Positive  
5 Outcomes did not meet the standards on the  
6 academic framework in 2011, 2012 or 2013. It  
7 took four years and over \$600,000 of  
8 additional funding before Positive Outcomes  
9 met the academic framework standards. How can  
10 the State not provide the same assistance to  
11 Gateway?

12                           (Audience applause.)

13           Gateway Lab School serves  
14 58.7 percent special education students  
15 compared to the state average of 13.6 percent.  
16 This is very important. This is over four  
17 times Delaware's average. The numbers alone  
18 demonstrate the needs that this school  
19 fulfills for the families within our State.  
20 The school's mission statement states that it  
21 will provide an extraordinary educational  
22 opportunity for children who are struggling to  
23 achieve academic success in a traditional  
24 school environment utilizing research-based



1 intervention strategies and a highly-tailored,  
2 Arts-based learning environment that seeks to  
3 identify and capitalize on a student's  
4 strength and interests.

5 Gateway Lab School has made  
6 significant changes over the last year. The  
7 board hired a new school leader, Catherine  
8 Dolan, who I had the pressure of meeting. The  
9 University of Delaware's Delaware Academy for  
10 School Leadership group was brought in to  
11 complete a Comprehensive Success Review. The  
12 Comprehensive Success Review report included  
13 the current status of the areas for  
14 improvement and strategies of how to achieve  
15 the goals were also mentioned.

16 The Comprehensive Success Review  
17 report recommended the school hire someone to  
18 just focus on instruction. So, Stacy Solomon,  
19 who you also heard from tonight, was assigned  
20 as a Principal of Instructional Focus. The  
21 school's curriculum was changed for English  
22 Language Arts and Mathematics.

23 If you agree with the  
24 recommendation of the Charter School



1 Accountability Committee and close Gateway Lab  
2 School, you would need to ask yourself, Will  
3 these students be better with their school  
4 closed or will they be better served  
5 continuing where they are? Will Gateway  
6 students receive the same individualized  
7 learning that they are currently receiving?  
8 Will the students return to their feeder  
9 schools and be placed in classrooms with class  
10 sizes of 8 to 14 students? Will the students  
11 be engaged and still want to go to school  
12 every day like they do currently? Will their  
13 families be able to be involved as they are at  
14 Gateway?

15 We respectfully request that you  
16 renew Gateway's charter and monitor their  
17 progress. We all want what is best for  
18 children and keeping Gateway open that is what  
19 is best for the students and their families.

20 MS. JOHNSON: That's the time  
21 limit.

22 MS. WILLIAMS: I would have had 18  
23 of my colleagues come speak tonight for three  
24 minutes apiece, so, I am speaking for them.



1 So, I would like to be able to read their  
2 names who signed this letter. It was myself,  
3 Representative Paul Baumbach, Representative  
4 Stephanie Bolden, Representative Mike  
5 Barbieri, Representative Andria Bennett,  
6 Representative Gerald Brady, Senator Brian  
7 Bushweller, Representative Deborah Hudson,  
8 Representative Helene Keeley, Representative  
9 John Mitchell, Representative Ed Osienski,  
10 Senator Karen Peterson, Representative John  
11 Viola, Senator Bethany Hall-Long,  
12 Representative James Johnson, Representative  
13 John Kowalko, Representative Michael  
14 Mulrooney, Representative Charles Paradee and  
15 Representative Charles Potter.

16 (Audience applause.)

17 MS. WALKER: I also have to go, but  
18 I would like for the committee to hear what I  
19 have to say. I am Councilwoman Sherry,  
20 S-H-E-R-R-Y, Dorsey, D-O-R-S-E-Y, Walker,  
21 W-A-L-K-E-R. Thank you so much for your  
22 hospitality as well. What I would like to  
23 share with you is a post from November 15,  
24 2013 that I put on Facebook and it says,





1 Yesterday I went to a parent/teacher  
2 conference for my 12-year old nephew. It was  
3 so encouraging to sit among educators who care  
4 deeply for my family. They all praise him for  
5 his kind spirit. I pray all children  
6 experience this level of concern at some point  
7 in their lives.

8 My nephew, Jamal Louis Bryant, said  
9 the way they treat me they made me want to  
10 work hard. This is a lesson for all. Our  
11 attitude towards our children really does make  
12 a difference in their lives. The reason why I  
13 asked if I could come and speak fast forward  
14 one year my nephew is no longer with me. I  
15 have to wear a button because my nephew went  
16 on to Glory on July 24, 2014 of this year.

17 And Gateway Lab should not be  
18 called Gateway Lab School, it should be  
19 Gateway Lab Family because the love you  
20 extended to my family during our time of need  
21 will never be forgotten. My nephew left this  
22 earth knowing that he was somebody in this  
23 world because I paid thousands of dollars to  
24 send him to private school, but when we found



1 Gateway and sent him to Gateway Lab he told  
2 me, Aunt Sherry, I can't wait to go back to  
3 school in the fall so I can be head of the  
4 school because he was excited about being in  
5 eighth grade.

6 A really quick story. He played a  
7 game and he played basketball, the teachers  
8 against the students, and my nephew was one of  
9 the star players at the school and Ms. Dolan  
10 kept fouling him. After the game he said,  
11 Aunt Sherry, if she fouls me one more time,  
12 there is going to be a problem. I'm saying  
13 that what you did is you brought out my best  
14 at Gateway in my nephew. Thank you and God  
15 bless you.

16 MS. NAGOURNEY: Thank you. We have  
17 confirmed that the parking attendant will  
18 leave at 9:30 so everyone needs to be out.  
19 That's the moment all the parking needs to be  
20 out of the garage so we want everyone to  
21 please think of that. Is there anyone who  
22 needs to leave at the 9:30 who needs to speak?  
23 Please form a line.

24 MR. SCHWARTZ: Hi, my name is Nate



1 Schwartz and I'm a proud parent of a fifth  
2 grader at Gateway Lab School. We are relative  
3 newcomers to Gateway Lab School. I am honored  
4 tonight to deliver this binder which  
5 encompasses over 100 testimonials from  
6 parents, grandparents, friends and family  
7 members of measurable success and growth from  
8 all of our children. Also in that binder we  
9 have 32-plus state legislators and county  
10 council members all the way up to Lieutenant  
11 Governor Matt Denn in support of our school,  
12 founding board members, doctors, counselors in  
13 support of Gateway as well too.

14 From our sheer numbers of  
15 participants in this room tonight it is quite  
16 clear that the Gateway community is very  
17 strong. I'm going to hand this binder over  
18 for the public record and give the other  
19 parents the opportunity to share their  
20 stories. I'm truly honored to be a part of  
21 the Gateway Gladiator family. Thank you. I'm  
22 myself going to submit my letter of support  
23 to the school as well.

24 MS. HICKEY: This binder will be an



1 exhibit and it will be Gateway Exhibit 1.

2 MS. SCHWARTZ: Hi, I'm Donna  
3 Schwartz. You just heard from my husband Nate  
4 with the binder. We are proud parents of a  
5 fifth grader at Gateway. She just started  
6 this year. My daughter is in fifth grade.  
7 She recently transferred from our district  
8 school for kids with special needs from Red  
9 Clay.

10 My husband and I are just so  
11 impressed with the curriculum opportunity that  
12 Gateway offers our daughter. The learning is  
13 tailored to students with ADHD and other  
14 learning challenges. In these past three  
15 months my daughter wrote the first book report  
16 of her life and stood up in front of the  
17 English class to present her project. She  
18 learned about Science by building a wind-  
19 powered car and Math by graphing her car  
20 design. Her Social Studies classroom has been  
21 transferred into Dr. Who's time machine so  
22 students can travel through time learning  
23 about history.

24 Prior to attending Gateway she was



1 taught a simplified version of what typical  
2 children in her grade were learning. There  
3 was a lot of rote and representation, but not  
4 variety or spontaneity and none of the  
5 opportunities to participate in the types of  
6 creative coursework that Gateway offers.

7 Kids learn from doing and there  
8 sure is a lot of doing at Gateway. The  
9 teachers are endlessly patient and devoted to  
10 the children, always thinking of new ways to  
11 reach and teach the kids. The kids are  
12 accepted and feel part of something. At other  
13 schools they may have been excluded or labeled  
14 problem students. Gateway accepts the  
15 students as unique individuals.

16 I met several kids at Gateway who  
17 told me about their negative experiences at  
18 other schools. They don't like sharing, but  
19 like other trauma survivors they sometimes  
20 find comfort in sharing their harrowing  
21 experience. One boy told me he didn't feel  
22 safe or okay until he came to Gateway. His  
23 words brought to mind Maslow's hierarchy of  
24 needs. Simply put, kids aren't going to be



1 able to learn until they feel safe and  
2 accepted. They need to have their basic  
3 emotional needs met prior to being able to  
4 proceed onward to learn.

5 Gateway is a haven for many  
6 children, a solution where nothing else has  
7 worked in the past. It's the best chance to  
8 succeed. As a parent I know my child better  
9 than anyone else. I know she is learning at  
10 Gateway and gaining confidence. I know they  
11 expect more from her and hold her accountable  
12 to do her best. They nurture her creativity.  
13 She is happy and accepted by her peers. They  
14 offer the students an enriched opportunity for  
15 learning.

16 How could the State of Delaware  
17 consider closing a school that is offering so  
18 much to the students and using an ill-fitted  
19 model of success as justification? Gateway  
20 Lab School is doing so many things right that  
21 it just needs more time to show results. They  
22 are proactive in procuring ideas and eager to  
23 implement improved curriculum. The  
24 administration and teachers are on board, the



1 parents are invested and the kids are happy  
2 and eager to learn. We have the momentum of  
3 promise. Please give us more time to fulfill  
4 our potential.

5 (Audience applause.)

6 MS. SCHEINBERG: We are Rob and  
7 Elizabeth Scheinberg, S-C-H-E-I-N-B-E-R-G.

8 MR. SCHEINBERG: We are actually  
9 the parents of two children at Gateway, but  
10 I'm here tonight to tell you about our 13-year  
11 old. Our 13-year old is in seventh grade at  
12 Gateway. In five years she attended four  
13 schools under the statewide Delaware Autism  
14 Program. By her third grade year she was  
15 fully integrated with her DAP peers in a  
16 lecture-based classroom in our home district  
17 and she had begun to fail and fall behind.

18 Now, in seventh-grade in her fourth  
19 year with GLS we want to share with you the  
20 data that we use to gauge our daughter's  
21 success. Manding, which is only speaking the  
22 basic needs and wants, has morphed to  
23 conversation on preferred topics. Those  
24 conversations have transformed to



1 self-advocacy and after nine years of  
2 year-round school our daughter was able to  
3 inform us that she needed the summer off  
4 because she burned out.

5 Her self-advocacy has helped her  
6 develop friendships, meaningful relationships  
7 with other children and with her mentors. She  
8 is almost always reality-oriented now. She is  
9 able to plug into the outside world, yours and  
10 mine, for hours on end with only minors ticks  
11 and quiet scripted speeches as the only  
12 outward sign of her autism. Because she  
13 cannot communicate verbally we are  
14 experiencing considerably fewer meltdowns both  
15 at home and at school.

16 Our daughter arrived at Gateway  
17 with a behavior plan from DAP that was an inch  
18 thick and over the past few years it has been  
19 whittled down to just a few pages. With the  
20 proper motivation she is developing the skills  
21 to moderate her negative behaviors. With her  
22 growing ability to verbally interact with  
23 environment and peers she has transformed into  
24 a child who loves coming to school and her





1 attendance has improved dramatically.

2 In the past Delia has missed up to  
3 24 days of school because of autism and its  
4 challenges in one year. This year she has  
5 missed two days because she was sick.

6 We regularly see our daughter  
7 reading for pleasure now, a hobby that comes  
8 hand-in-hand with improved reading  
9 comprehension. Her Gateway team is helping to  
10 develop her mental math creating synapse  
11 connections that help our daughter understand  
12 why it's important and enjoyable to comprehend  
13 what she reads.

14 Finally, we are now the proud  
15 parents of a daughter who is immersed in a  
16 school culture by her own choice who seeks out  
17 both in-school clubs and after-school  
18 activities without prompting. She has been a  
19 member of the chorus, plays the flute in band,  
20 participating in the running club, hiking  
21 club, tennis and most recently basketball.  
22 Gateway has given our daughter a sense of  
23 identity. She is a Gateway Gladiator and  
24 proud of it.



1 (Audience applause.)

2 As you can see we are thrilled with  
3 our child's educational, emotional and  
4 maturational growth at Gateway. Standardized  
5 test scores just don't tell the whole story.  
6 We encourage you to get to know our children  
7 and their exceptional school and to rate our  
8 achievement on more than just one measure of  
9 success.

10 (Audience applause.)

11 MS. BURWELL: Hello, my name  
12 M-O-N-I-Q-U-E, last name Burwell,  
13 B-U-R-W-E-L-L. Good evening, ladies and  
14 gentlemen and Gladiators. I'm the mother of a  
15 fourth grade Gladiator. My daughter attended  
16 her previous school from kindergarten through  
17 third grade with a 504 plan in place. She was  
18 barely passing. My daughter received her  
19 report card the other day after being at  
20 Gateway for only three and a half months  
21 without a 504 plan in place and her report  
22 card consisted of all A's, a B and a C.

23 (Audience applause.)

24 Gateway Lab School did for my



1 daughter in only three months what her  
2 previous school couldn't do in four years.  
3 Please don't block the gateway to my  
4 daughter's success.

5 (Audience applause.)

6 MR. ZIZMONA: Hello, my name is  
7 George Zizmona, Z, as in zebra, I-Z-M-O-N-A.  
8 I'm speaking on behalf of my family, extended  
9 family, my mother-in-law who has been crying  
10 the whole time she has been here and friends.  
11 I wanted to apply a quick example of my son's  
12 progress at Gateway School. My son has  
13 disabilities, learning disabilities, and he is  
14 a fourth grader at the school. Our son,  
15 Zachary, received good grades on his most  
16 recent report card. After spending three  
17 years at his feeder school district he made  
18 only one year of progress. After a year at  
19 Gateway he received five A's and three B's on  
20 his most recent report card. He scored above  
21 average on his DCAS scores last spring as  
22 well.

23 It's also important to note some of  
24 the critical intangibles Gateway possesses to



1 enhance learning. It's their unique teaching  
2 methods, creative culture and confidence  
3 instilled in all their students. This is the  
4 reason why my son and other students are  
5 progressing. Gateway is the present and the  
6 future. Thank you.

7 (Audience applause.)

8 MS. WALDER: J-O-D-I, W-A-L-D-E-R.

9 To whom it may concern and all of you and  
10 especially the board making this decision. My  
11 children, Matt and Kate, are the most  
12 important human beings in my life. Both kids  
13 have been diagnosed with ADHD accompanied with  
14 anxiety and depression. Matt now attends his  
15 first year, seventh grade, at Gateway Lab  
16 School and has transformed into a bright,  
17 sociable and happy kid. We had a nightmare  
18 dealing with his sixth grade year at Gauger  
19 and a half a year of home-schooling, which I  
20 attempted and did not do well at.

21 Gateway has been the answer to our  
22 prayers. Kate is struggling this year to get  
23 through fifth grade at Keene Elementary and we  
24 are hoping she will be blessed to also have a



1 Gateway experience. I suffer from the same  
2 disorder that my children do, but I didn't  
3 have the opportunities and programs that  
4 Gateway provides. My school experience was a  
5 nightmare and I barely graduated.

6 My kids deserve to flourish, grow  
7 and learn in a way that they learn. Not every  
8 child learns the same way and it's unfair to  
9 expect them to be pushed into a mold they do  
10 not fit. If the Gateway Lab School is closed  
11 by the Delaware Charter School Accountability  
12 Committee my kids' educational future looks  
13 very bleak. I don't want them to slip through  
14 the cracks and disappear into a school system  
15 that is not equipped to teach them in a way  
16 that they deserve.

17 My kids are only two of so many  
18 kids just like them who deserve and need a  
19 school like Gateway Lab School. Please think  
20 about all the special needs children and the  
21 good Gateway Lab School has done and will  
22 continue to do when making your decision.

23 (Audience applause.)

24 MR. SALDAN: My name is Brandon



1 Saldan, S-A-L-D-A-N. I'm a sixth grader here  
2 at Gateway Lab School. I came to Gateway from  
3 Thurgood Marshall Elementary. I have noticed  
4 that I had lower grades when I was enrolled in  
5 my other school, but when I came to this  
6 school my grades rose. Gateway has helped me  
7 so many in my academics and this is because  
8 Gateway teaches every student in their own  
9 way. I know that this is a short speech, but  
10 it has one message. Keep this school open.

11 (Audience applause.)

12 MS. TEETER: My name is Mary  
13 Teeter, T-E-E-T-E-R. I'm representing the  
14 middle school teachers at Gateway. Gateway's  
15 philosophy and my philosophy is that all  
16 children can learn. I believe Gateway's  
17 students can learn. Gateway's students can  
18 achieve. Gateway's students can be held to a  
19 high standard. However, our students may not  
20 learn in the same way or for that matter show  
21 they have learned in the same way as what we  
22 define as the norm.

23 I can and will describe to you the  
24 learning that I see taking place at Gateway.



1 I can and will explain to you how my students  
2 struggle with seventh grade Common Core  
3 standards, but with guided practice,  
4 one-on-one help, and a lot of creativity, they  
5 flourish.

6 Seventh grade students should be  
7 able to effectively engage in a range of  
8 collaborative discussions with diverse  
9 partners. Speaking and listening skills are  
10 difficult for any teenager. In my classroom  
11 it is a particularly difficult standard to  
12 teach when six of my students have ADHD and  
13 are easily distracted. One of my students is  
14 autistic and set off by certain words and one  
15 of my students has high levels of anxiety when  
16 asked to speak out loud.

17 So, at Gateway we get creative. We  
18 start off small with direct instruction and  
19 modeling of how to have an effective  
20 conversation with a peer. We talk about the  
21 importance of eye contact, speaking clearly,  
22 asking questions and staying on topic. We  
23 practice and we practice more. We talk about  
24 topics of interest.



1           I built a makeshift campfire and  
2 have students pretend we are having a campfire  
3 discussion. We hold and toss a bean bag to  
4 signify that only one person may talk at a  
5 time. Then, we begin to learn. We take away  
6 the bean bag. We discuss the novel we are  
7 reading. We learn to effectively engage in a  
8 collaborative discussion.

9           Seventh grade students should be  
10 able to cite textual evidence to support an  
11 analysis of what a text says explicitly as  
12 well as draw inferences from a text. More  
13 than half of my students are reading below  
14 grade level or have a writing goal in their  
15 IEP. So, again, this goal cannot be taught  
16 through a note-taking and lecture technique.

17           I must teach my students to become  
18 a character in the story. They must be  
19 members of the Dinka and Nuer tribes in  
20 Southern Sudan. They read, re-read, annotate,  
21 use context clues, summarize and predict in  
22 order to fully become their character. They  
23 research in order to understand more about  
24 their past and present. They are paired with





1 EPALS partners from across the world to learn  
2 first-hand about the cultural differences.  
3 They learn a format for answering a question,  
4 using evidence to support their answer. They  
5 practice this format with a gradual release of  
6 responsibility. They learn the standard.

7 I give you these examples to help  
8 you understand the amount of time and effort  
9 Gateway teachers and students produce in order  
10 to reach high standards. I give you these  
11 examples as evidence that given the right  
12 structure and time my students can and will  
13 achieve. However, if you take away the small  
14 class sizes, the specialized one-on-one  
15 support, the safe environment that instills  
16 confidence, you will be setting my kids up for  
17 failure.

18 Last year 65% of my students met  
19 their goals on the DCAS testing. In fall of  
20 2013 only six of my students were meeting  
21 proficiency on the DCAS. At the end of the  
22 year 14 were meeting proficiency. Six of my  
23 students went from well below to meets. One  
24 of my students went from below to advanced.



1 One of my students went from well below to  
2 advanced that year.

3 Gateway was able to identify these  
4 students' specific needs, provide aggressive  
5 intervention and differentiate instruction to  
6 help these students use strategies that worked  
7 for them. Overall Gateway was able to  
8 motivate these students and help them to  
9 change their vocabulary from can't to can and  
10 will.

11 Those are the numbers. They are  
12 not, however, the full story. Imagine a young  
13 girl entering a classroom full of life. She  
14 loves stories. She can talk at length about  
15 her animals and give descriptive details that  
16 would make even the most mundane narrative  
17 vibrant and exciting. She is creative and  
18 intelligent. She is sweet and sincere.  
19 However, she is different. This same girl  
20 puts her head down when asked to write her  
21 story. It takes her ten minutes to write one  
22 sentence because she has to sound out each  
23 word before jotting it down so she can spell  
24 it correctly.



1                   She spells what W-U-T. She hates  
2 being wrong. This same girl breaks down in  
3 tears when given a passage to read and  
4 questions to answer because it takes her twice  
5 as long to read and understand what she has  
6 read. She wants so badly to do well, but her  
7 mind and body shut down after reading the  
8 first paragraph of the first passage. She  
9 needs encouragement and decoding and fluency  
10 services. She needs to be in a classroom that  
11 is able to give her maximum support in Writing  
12 and Reading. She desperately needs Gateway.

13                   This was one of my students last  
14 year. For the first month there was a lot of  
15 tears. I made her a promise we would get  
16 through it together. She started the day off  
17 in my classroom each day. We worked on  
18 homework. We read together. She asked  
19 questions. She ended her day in my classroom  
20 each day and talked about what she had  
21 learned. She learned so much and in turn  
22 taught me so much. This is the same student  
23 who went from a one to three on DCAS and ended  
24 her year the same way she started in tears,



1 but this time from happiness.

2           This year I expect nothing less.  
3 Gateway has raised the bar a step further  
4 introducing new curriculum, tools and  
5 resources to help teachers provide data-based  
6 instruction with an increased focus on the  
7 common core standards. There are leaps of  
8 learning going on at Gateway, which brings me  
9 back to my philosophy. Gateway students can  
10 learn. Gateway students can achieve. Gateway  
11 students can be held to a high standard.  
12 However, Gateway needs the time to prove this.

13           (Audience applause.)

14           MS. FAROOQUI: Good evening, my  
15 name is Ghazala Farooqui, G-H-A-Z-A-L-A,  
16 F-A-R-O-O-Q-U-I. We represent our daughter  
17 who is a sixth grader at Gateway Lab School  
18 and we are here just to tell you that she  
19 says, Do not close the school. She wants to  
20 go the school and she loves the school. We  
21 had tried the traditional school initially and  
22 that was the nightmare years. Every year I  
23 would get called. She was put an probation.  
24 That was a girl who had just a vocabulary of



1 150 words. And she was getting punished very  
2 harshly.

3 So, after two years we had no  
4 choice but to put her in a private school,  
5 which was more like a daycare center, and we  
6 were worried at that time about her academic  
7 education. In those years she actually  
8 learned that she is a bad person and she is a  
9 troublemaker.

10 So, on the first day when we took  
11 her to Gateway she told me, Mommy, I hope they  
12 don't kick me out because I'm a bad person.  
13 She spent so far two years and three and a  
14 half months and she says to me, Mommy, I'm the  
15 best of all, I'm going to be a famous  
16 celebrity one day.

17 During those years her grades have  
18 improved. Her reading level in just a little  
19 time improved from grade one reading level to  
20 grade five reading level and I was shocked to  
21 year that yesterday at her IP meeting. She is  
22 A plus in her Math. She was scared to talk in  
23 public. She performed national anthem in  
24 front of 200 guests. It was a very formal



1 banquet of the Tri-State area physicians who  
2 belong to Pakistani origin. She performed  
3 national anthem and you will see how she  
4 performed.

5           Why do you want to close the  
6 school? This is a democratic country. We  
7 choose our president and even our president,  
8 who is a very high qualified person,  
9 well-developed without any disability we give  
10 four years to perform. How can you close this  
11 school? How can you close this after you have  
12 all children with disabilities going there and  
13 you want them to perform at average level?

14           Your DCAS testing does not, does  
15 not, have a tool to measure the anxiety level,  
16 does not have a tool to measure the  
17 self-confidence. How can you do that? I  
18 mean, this is really cruel. So, I really  
19 request all of you to consider to keep this  
20 school open and why three years, why five  
21 years, why not forever because each child in  
22 that school is improving.

23           One child improved, one generation  
24 improved. So, you will cause improvement in



1 seven generations. You don't want dependent  
2 kids. You want productive kids and this is  
3 the way to go. This is the future. Keep it  
4 open not for three years, not for five years,  
5 keep it open because it is showing progress.

6 And I have studied for 22 years and  
7 I'm still studying so I can see the difference  
8 objectively. So, please, this is my request.  
9 Thank you very much.

10 (Audience applause.)

11 MR. BARAK: My name is El Ahmad  
12 Barak, no relation. I was asked when I was  
13 giving my little talk or speech to try to  
14 accentuate the positive aspects of Gateway,  
15 which I will do, but in order for that to be  
16 effective I have to give you ladies some idea  
17 of where I came from to make it more  
18 significant.

19 My son, Tzadik Barak, came from a  
20 Colonial District school. He was bullied  
21 mercilessly every day to the point that  
22 halfway through the first semester I had to go  
23 to the school every day for six weeks and took  
24 observations. What did I find? Up to 31



1 children in a class. No aides in the  
2 classroom. Not one teacher specifically  
3 trained or credentialed to deal with autism  
4 spectrum disorder. They didn't even admit  
5 until late in the game that they were not even  
6 dealing with his IEP.

7 None of the services they required  
8 were provided not from the principal, not from  
9 superintendent. We were stonewalled and  
10 treated like an enemy. We had to fight for  
11 everything and ultimately received nothing  
12 more than lip service until we timed out at  
13 the school and left. From my own  
14 investigation not one of Tzadik's neighborhood  
15 schools provides the services that he needs  
16 that Gateway is providing for him, not George  
17 Meade, not Gunning Bedford, not Calvin  
18 McCullough.

19 Gateway Lab School has created the  
20 best environment for my son to thrive  
21 educationally and socially. The staff has  
22 continued to commit to providing the services  
23 and support available to him. Having a small  
24 classroom size allows him to get the





1 specialized attention that he needs. With the  
2 support of speech and occupational therapy he  
3 is also making great strides with  
4 socialization and a sense of community.

5 Tzadik is accepted here for the way  
6 he learns, which is the emphasis of the IEP  
7 that the staff, his mother and I partnered to  
8 construct for him. It's working. His  
9 individual goals for Reading and Math are  
10 either being met or are at least showing  
11 continual growth.

12 I have to question your guidelines  
13 for measuring our school. It's my  
14 understanding your guidelines are measuring  
15 our children, ones with IEP's and 504's  
16 categorized by you as at risk, the same as  
17 unaffected children. How is this fair or even  
18 an accurate way to measure their standards of  
19 growth? Our children can learn, they are  
20 learning. Please acknowledge that they just  
21 learn differently.

22 Mr. Santantasio is my son's Music  
23 teacher. Tzadik picked up the trumpet just in  
24 February. In August of this year he performed



1 one song at a concert with my band. Where  
2 does that confidence come from? Mrs. Draper  
3 provided the vision. Mrs. Dolan is carrying  
4 the torch. Mrs. Teeter, Moyer, Campbell are  
5 the teachers that he has been affected by in a  
6 positive manner. He is more confident.

7 How do you tell a child that he has  
8 to live with the fact that every day he has to  
9 factor in and he has got to the point where he  
10 factored into his day that he is going to be  
11 mistreated and bullied without any help,  
12 without anybody to rescue him.

13 I work for myself, I'm  
14 independently employed, but there is so much  
15 that I can do. I can't sit as a sentinel in  
16 his classroom all day. He is safe, he is  
17 confident, he is respected here at Gateway.  
18 These children don't learn the way other  
19 children learn, but if you give them the  
20 opportunity to do so they thrive and they  
21 excel and they can succeed to be socialized  
22 independent adults. And isn't that what this  
23 is all about in the first place?

24 MS. JOHNSON: Thank you, sir.



1 (Audience applause.)

2 MR. BROWN: My name is Teres Brown,  
3 first name T-E-R-E-S, last name Brown,  
4 B-R-O-W-N. I just want to say that this  
5 school is very positive and all the children  
6 like their school. Mr. Santantasio taught me  
7 how to play the trombone and now I play very  
8 good, but I need to practice more. Ms. Dolan  
9 she is a very good, very good teacher. Ms.  
10 McKee she is a very good Reading teacher. Ms.  
11 Shanus, she is a good Math teacher and Ms.  
12 DeBraux she is a good Science teacher.

13 Just don't close the school down  
14 because it doesn't matter -- it just matters  
15 about learning and we should have fun by  
16 learning and all of that. So, just don't  
17 close the school down.

18 (Audience applause.)

19 MR. BURBANK: Hello, my name is  
20 Charles Burbank, B-U-R-B-A-N-K, and I'm a  
21 parent of two students at Gateway, both in the  
22 fourth grade. One of them has an autism  
23 spectrum disorder called non-verbal learning  
24 disorder compounded by ADHD, which is running



1 rampant in our school as I hear.

2 Last year at his district school my  
3 son was disenfranchised and literally damaged  
4 by the school's lack of resources for dealing  
5 with learning and behaviorally disabled  
6 children. He was disciplined harshly and  
7 repeatedly, including multiple suspensions,  
8 seven to be exact, seven suspensions in the  
9 third grade. The school frequently called us  
10 to come take him home because they just didn't  
11 know how to handle his needs.

12 He hated school every day. Told us  
13 how much he hated school, especially Music  
14 school for some reason, I'm not sure why, but  
15 for the last two months of school last year  
16 the principal excused him from Music class  
17 because he acted out almost daily in Music  
18 class and they just couldn't handle it. They  
19 had him sitting in the office doing busy work  
20 and filing during Music class for two straight  
21 months.

22 This year is our first year at  
23 Gateway and my son is thriving now. He has  
24 had no suspensions, no phone calls, no harsh



1 discipline. He actually likes school now and  
2 has joined the drum club and basketball just  
3 recently. He also likes Music now and he  
4 writes on his little calendar the days that he  
5 has a Music class so he knows which days to  
6 look forward to the most. So, thank you, Mr.  
7 S for that, that has been very important.

8 Gateway has leveled the playing  
9 field for children like my son. He has made  
10 astounding progress in just a few short  
11 months, not just academically, but socially,  
12 behaviorally, emotionally, which I am sure you  
13 all know is very important, if not more  
14 important than academic performance. You  
15 might not be able to measure these results,  
16 but they're necessary.

17 If my son is pushed back into his  
18 district school I believe not only will his  
19 test scores not improve, but he will lose the  
20 environment that has given him a chance to  
21 succeed and as Delaware offers little or no  
22 alternatives that are comparable to Gateway we  
23 just don't know what we will do if he loses  
24 the school. So, I hope you will keep it.



1 Thank you.

2 (Audience applause.)

3 MS. WARD: My name is Valerie Ward,  
4 W-A-R-D. I have a son and he is in fifth  
5 grade and he just started attending here at  
6 Gateway Lab School in September. In just the  
7 three short months that he has been there we  
8 have noticed dramatic improvements in his  
9 learning and social skills.

10 My son has been diagnosed with  
11 bipolar disorder. He is also suicidal some of  
12 the times and he has a learning disability.  
13 He has ADHD and he has had quite a few  
14 meltdowns. Since he has been attending the  
15 school he loves school. He gets himself up in  
16 the morning. He is up, in fact, before I am  
17 getting himself ready. He has everything is  
18 very organized in his bookbag where it was not  
19 before. He has his little calendar book and  
20 everything is wrote down in it.

21 His homework, his homework is done  
22 with hardly any help. He was very behind in  
23 Math. In reading he has read three chapter  
24 books and he had never read a chapter book in



1 his entire school years. He was reading  
2 little baby books with pictures in them. He  
3 has wrote the book reports himself with a  
4 little bit of help from me.

5           The teachers are phenomenal here.  
6 I mean, I just want to cry because he is doing  
7 so well in everything. He would come home  
8 from his other schools talking and say that he  
9 was an idiot, he felt stupid, he was picked on  
10 a lot. I just want to keep this Gateway Lab  
11 School open. It really -- it's a wonderful  
12 school, just wonderful.

13           (Audience applause.)

14           MS. MITCHELL: I am Margaretta  
15 Mitchell, M-A-R-G-A-R-E-T-T-A. My son started  
16 here at Gateway. He came in originally to  
17 fourth grade and he was so far behind all the  
18 other kids that we all had a meeting. We  
19 decided, you know, he is like at the bottom,  
20 bottom, he is so lost. We put him back to  
21 third grade where he would get a foundation so  
22 when he did get to fourth grade he would be  
23 able to keep up with the rest of the kids. He  
24 started third grade not even able to read the



1 word the.

2 He went on, now he is at fifth  
3 grade and he is reading at a third grade  
4 level. He is doing really well and I just  
5 feel Gateway has really given my son a chance  
6 when all the other schools wouldn't give him a  
7 chance. They wanted to send him to  
8 alternative schools. They wanted to send him  
9 to the Terry Center, Rockford. We can't meet  
10 his needs. We know he needs more help, but,  
11 unfortunately, we can't he meet his needs.  
12 So, their fix for it was sending him to an  
13 alternative school where children had  
14 behavioral problems and he would only go to  
15 school from nine to one o'clock.

16 When he started at Gateway it was  
17 really hard for him to get used to being in a  
18 full day of school because they were only  
19 having him from nine to one o'clock and he  
20 wasn't getting any instructional teaching. He  
21 was given a pamphlet of work to do each day  
22 that he couldn't read. He didn't know what he  
23 was doing.

24 I would go and meet at the school.





1 My son he had came there from the Terry Center  
2 so he was in intensive out-patient therapy and  
3 the therapist would come to the school and  
4 they would watch and they were like the school  
5 is just doing nothing for him, this is  
6 terrible.

7           They told me about Gateway and I  
8 got on the waiting list and this has just been  
9 an answer to prayer for us. If he leaves here  
10 and he has to go back to an alternative  
11 school, where will my son be? I have no idea  
12 like where would he be, where would he go, who  
13 would take the time to sit here and work with  
14 him and work with me? They would let me come  
15 in and sit down in the class because, you  
16 know, he was acting out, but it took time and  
17 it took work and everybody worked with me.

18           My son would be distraught to think  
19 where is he going to go. Where are they going  
20 to help him? Nowhere else is going to do it.  
21 They're going to push him along like they did  
22 when he got to fourth grade, just push him  
23 along until he is a problem in society where  
24 he has no education, he can't get a job.



1                   We live in the ghetto so he will be  
2 all around people that are not going to give  
3 him a good impression. You know, he needs the  
4 help that Gateway gives him to give him self-  
5 confidence and goals and he reaches them. I  
6 just cannot fathom where he would be even  
7 looking at what are my options? I'm looking  
8 at even private school. I would never be able  
9 to afford the schools that are even comparable  
10 to this school, never in my life.

11                   I just feel like to shut this down  
12 would be to fail my son, would be to send him  
13 to the wolves to just be nothing, just leave  
14 him in the dirt and care nothing for him  
15 because there is no hope without Gateway.

16                   (Audience applause.)

17                   MR. SANTANTASIO: I am Christopher  
18 Santantasio, S-A-N-T-A-N-T-A-S-I-O. I'm the  
19 Music teacher and teacher representative on  
20 the board of Gateway Lab School. I was going  
21 to start by reminding individuals in this room  
22 and even individuals who will be listening and  
23 reading these statements exactly why Gateway  
24 exists. I wanted to paint a picture of the



1 educational landscape in Delaware, but after  
2 hearing all the parents' testimonials what I  
3 knew to be true has only been confirmed, that  
4 there are no alternatives in this State for  
5 our children.

6 Gateway Lab School is trying its  
7 very hardest to address the most striking  
8 disparity in the State of Delaware and that's  
9 disparity between general education students  
10 and special education students. I don't need  
11 to remind anyone that Delaware is ranked in  
12 the bottom three in terms of the entire nation  
13 in terms of providing necessary services to  
14 special education students. That's the  
15 educational landscape that our children come  
16 from.

17 We at Gateway are setting a high  
18 bar for our students. We are implementing  
19 innovative research-based curriculum and an  
20 increasingly rigorous academic environment.  
21 We are enriching their lives with Music and  
22 the Arts. We are training and empowering our  
23 staff and we are building our students'  
24 ability to self-advocate and self-monitor and



1 we are seeing results.

2 I would ask any parent whose child  
3 was pushed out of the Arts in Music class in  
4 pursuing an instrument, in pursuing a vocal  
5 ensemble because they needed additional time  
6 to learn to read, they needed additional time  
7 to do Math, Social Studies, whatever the case  
8 may be, but at Gateway we are showing it can  
9 be done at the same time. That the students  
10 can have a rigorous arts-based education and  
11 they can get up on a stage once or twice or  
12 more times a year and they can perform. They  
13 can do things that parents tell me they never  
14 thought their child would be able to do.

15 For a child whose goal is to maybe  
16 go to school each day and show incremental  
17 improvement in their ability to read for that  
18 child to get up on stage and perform is  
19 something that is a miracle and it's a miracle  
20 that exists because of Gateway Lab School. We  
21 are a gem of innovation in Delaware's  
22 educational landscape. The schools of  
23 tomorrow will not be testing factories. They  
24 will be places of collaboration where the



1 sharing of ideas will be paramount.

2           The new information age will make  
3 traditional schooling and testing artifacts of  
4 the past, mere blips on the radar, but Gateway  
5 Lab School with our mission of Arts infusion,  
6 Arts integration and educating the entire  
7 child, that's something that will be lasting.  
8 So, as leaders of Delaware's educational  
9 community fix the climate of competition that  
10 is inhibiting our schools from collaborating.  
11 Open your minds to the many ways children are  
12 learning.

13           Never forget that achievement and  
14 learning are not one and the same. Promising  
15 our students and families high academic  
16 achievements while undermining the joy of  
17 learning is an empty promise. Have courage  
18 and you will find a willing community that  
19 will support you. Thank you.

20           (Audience applause.)

21           MR. OUTTEN: My name is Glen  
22 Outten, O-U-T-T-E-N. Good evening, my name is  
23 Glen Outten. I'm a former board member and  
24 founding board member of Gateway Lab School



1 and I also had the opportunity to with the  
2 financial institution I work at to finance and  
3 assist several of our schools in the State. I  
4 know good charter schools and I've seen some  
5 bad charter schools and I know this is a good  
6 charter school that needs to stay open.

7 I'm not a parent at the school.  
8 I'm not associated with the school anymore,  
9 but I felt like I needed to be here today. I  
10 was inspired by all the support that I saw  
11 on-line and the people that were here today  
12 and all the talk about all their children and  
13 student improvements that they have seen and  
14 how they love going to school and didn't have  
15 that opportunity before.

16 This is a very unique school, it's  
17 a special school. It's needed for our State  
18 and for our community and for our students  
19 with special education challenges, with  
20 learning disabilities. It should also be  
21 noted that the school is doing well and is in  
22 an excellent condition in the financial and  
23 organizational standards. All the school  
24 needs is time, time in the alternative



1 academic framework, and it makes a big  
2 difference for our State.

3 (Audience applause.)

4 MS. WOODSON: I am Arnetta Woodson,  
5 A-R-N-E-T-T-A, W-O-O-D-S-O-N. This is my  
6 husband, J-O-N-A-T-H-A-N. Gateway came highly  
7 recommended to me by my son's neurologist of  
8 whom I have the utmost respect for. He has  
9 been treating Jonathan for the past ten years  
10 for his neurological impairment, he has a  
11 seizure disorder, and he is extremely vested  
12 in his academic progress.

13 Due to his intellectual and  
14 physical limitations Jonathan requires a level  
15 of support that takes into consideration the  
16 variability in his health and physical  
17 well-being that may impact his ability to  
18 independently complete tasks in and outside of  
19 the classroom setting.

20 Given the circumstances, Jonathan  
21 functions best when special education services  
22 accommodations and modifications are provided  
23 in small settings to support grade level  
24 curriculum. This level of support and



1 accommodations maximizes his ability to reach  
2 his fullest potential on a daily basis. In  
3 his prior academic setting despite their best  
4 efforts the level of support that Jonathan  
5 consistently receives from the Gateway team  
6 was never effectively achieved. The Gateway  
7 team has demonstrated the ability to  
8 consistently provide the level of support that  
9 Jonathan needs and his progress this past year  
10 substantiates this as evidenced by the DCAS  
11 scores. And they're in the binder so I won't  
12 belabor you with that.

13           Although his scores are below  
14 standard Jonathan has shown significant and  
15 steady progress. Without the level of  
16 emotional, social and academic support and  
17 collaboration provided to Jonathan by the  
18 Gateway team we truly believe his ability to  
19 fully participate and thrive in his current  
20 academic program would not be possible.

21           This is a testament to the level of  
22 support, the mutual respect, the  
23 accountability and team collaboration. It is  
24 truly a team and we as parents are part of





1 that team. These core values and behaviors  
2 that are exhibited by the Gateway team are  
3 central to creating and sustaining an  
4 environment that enables parents, teachers and  
5 students to engage in ways that are extremely  
6 productive and results in measurable outcomes,  
7 not just academic.

8 In addition to measurable academic  
9 outcomes Jonathan is thriving socially and  
10 emotionally. Each and every day, Jonathan  
11 comes home from school and he is able to  
12 articulate something that he did that he was  
13 very, very proud of such as scoring a  
14 touchdown in gym and making jump shots in  
15 basketball. He raves about all the accolades  
16 that he received throughout the day by the  
17 members of the Gateway team, everybody, even  
18 though they didn't witness the actual event.  
19 So, again, they're spreading it.

20 Things like this definitely  
21 increase his confidence and sense of  
22 accomplishment as well as contribute to the  
23 development of a well-rounded person. My  
24 husband and I truly believe that this level of



1 support cannot be achieved in a traditional  
2 school setting. Therefore, we strongly  
3 support the charter renewal of Gateway Lab  
4 School.

5 (Audience applause.)

6 MR. DOOLITTLE: Bill Doolittle,  
7 D-O-O-L-I-T-T-L-E. Good evening, my name is  
8 Bill Doolittle and I am a parent of a child  
9 with a disability requiring complex supports.  
10 I'm also president elect of Delaware PTA.

11 I would like to express concerns in  
12 regard to the non-renewal potential of the  
13 State charter for the Gateway Lab School.  
14 While I'm not a Gateway parent the school  
15 would have been the only choice option I would  
16 have had and would have been practical for my  
17 child. If the final decision were to not  
18 renew the charter, not only would it seriously  
19 harm a significant number of children  
20 currently attending Gateway, but would close  
21 choice as a practical option for many families  
22 like mine and since it would send the clearest  
23 possible message that schools with a mission  
24 to support children like mine do not fit into



1 the Delaware charter program.

2 It has long been known that the  
3 framework that the decision is based on fails  
4 to appropriately fully measure the educational  
5 performance of children with disabilities,  
6 especially in regards to failing to address  
7 the equal importance of the functional  
8 curriculum and these components equivalent  
9 importance as required under IDEA and 504.

10 This failure has been known by the  
11 Department of Education since the framework  
12 was created. Yet, it has not been effectively  
13 addressed and now the children of Gateway may  
14 pay the price for the State's failing.

15 Based on the current framework's  
16 failure to equitably and effectively measure  
17 many components of performance of schools  
18 serving children with disabilities, the  
19 framework and the current recommendation  
20 causes substantial discrimination and harm to  
21 the children attending.

22 I ask the school be granted a  
23 waiver while an appropriate alternate  
24 framework can be created so that Gateway may



1 build on the current school progress and  
2 student growth. Thank you.

3 (Audience applause.)

4 MS. BURRESS: My name is Margaret  
5 Burress, B-U-R-R-E-S-S. My son is 11-years  
6 old. He is in 6th grade. He began Gateway  
7 Lab School in third grade, which was the first  
8 year that Gateway Lab School opened. Prior to  
9 attending Gateway he was in a traditional  
10 classroom for kindergarten and first grade.  
11 In kindergarten he was diagnosed with ADHD.  
12 To say he struggled in a traditional classroom  
13 setting would be an understatement.

14 By the time he finished first grade  
15 we were all heart-broken. I think I cried at  
16 every parent/teacher conference. We didn't  
17 know what we were going to do. In third grade  
18 he started Gateway Lab School. His DCAS  
19 testing scores were below standard. He has  
20 been there for third, fourth and fifth grade  
21 and now he is there for sixth grade. By the  
22 time he completed fifth grade his DCAS testing  
23 scores were three and four.

24 Some of the things that we have



1 gotten from Gateway Lab School aren't just his  
2 DCAS scores are improving, although that has  
3 been a tremendous experience, but I no longer  
4 cry at parent/teacher conferences, plus, we're  
5 more involved. My son tells me things like,  
6 Mom, I'm good at Math, or, Mom, I'm so  
7 talented I can play the trombone, the guitar  
8 and I sing in choir. Thank you, Mr. S.

9 He is bright and intelligent and at  
10 Gateway Lab School I am certain that by the  
11 time he finishes eighth grade he will be ready  
12 for high school; but, if Gateway Lab School  
13 closes and he has to go to a traditional  
14 classroom setting for middle school, I am  
15 worried about him. I am worried about his  
16 future.

17 At Gateway Lab School I know they  
18 are giving him the tools he needs to succeed.  
19 They are giving him the tools he needs not  
20 only to succeed in school, but to succeed in  
21 life. He is learning the tools to be able to  
22 help him manage his ADHD so that he will no  
23 longer need somebody to tell him stop tapping  
24 your pencil or do you need to get a fidget



1 toy? He knows he can do these things on his  
2 own.

3 (Audience applause.)

4 MS. JOHNSON: Good evening, my  
5 Patricia Johnson. My daughter's name is  
6 Laureanna Faith and her middle name really  
7 stands for something. She was born 23 weeks  
8 old, one-pound, six-ounces. So, from the  
9 beginning she has set out her own pace and her  
10 own uniqueness. She has been in the school  
11 setting since she was three-years old or three  
12 years of being born because to be able to  
13 continue the therapies that she was getting at  
14 home the State recommends three years you have  
15 to go to a school system to be able to get  
16 therapies there.

17 So, in her -- she is nine years now  
18 Gateway is her fifth school. She is in third  
19 grade. I had been waiting two years to get my  
20 daughter in Gateway. Her first three years  
21 was an excellent school, but it was a choice  
22 school. So, they sent her up to her feeder  
23 school. The first day of school when we go  
24 there -- and we have already have visited the



1 school and do all the stuff and interviewed  
2 everything. The first day of school they say,  
3 Oh, we transfer her to another school, that  
4 first day. Where is that school? We didn't  
5 know. They didn't communicate anything to us.  
6 Just they say that they didn't have what my  
7 daughter needed.

8 So, they sent her to a different  
9 school and that day we have to go and rush to  
10 a completely different school where we didn't  
11 know where it was or where the teachers was  
12 and obviously my daughter was like what is  
13 going on? She has been treated very unfair.

14 She has had a lot of medical issues  
15 and she has conquered a lot of them. She was  
16 in the NICU for six months and then in a GI  
17 unit for two more months. She didn't come  
18 home until the next year. After battling all  
19 these medical issues it has been a battle in  
20 the educational system because there is no  
21 place for my daughter.

22 If you have made your judgment  
23 based on a standardized test, it's unfair for  
24 the kids. Please evaluate our kids fairly.



1 It doesn't make any sense that the educational  
2 system already categorizes our kids with an  
3 individual educational plan or the IEP.

4 That's exactly what it means, our kids are  
5 individuals where a standard educational plan  
6 does not apply. They must be in an individual  
7 educational plan to fairly teach them and to  
8 fairly test them.

9 Give Gateway more time to keep  
10 individually educating our children. How can  
11 our DCAS scores be compared to the traditional  
12 schools when the majority of the children have  
13 higher scores and the IEP students' scores are  
14 a minority? In our school is the opposite,  
15 the majority have IEP.

16 MS. JOHNSON: Ma'am, thank you.

17 MS. NAGOURNEY: Is there anyone  
18 else who wishes to speak?

19 MS. FAWCETT: Rachel, R-A-C-H-E-L,  
20 F-A-W-C-E-T-T. I didn't prepare anything  
21 tonight. I would like to thank everybody for  
22 taking the time out to be here tonight to  
23 listen to all of our comments. Like I said, I  
24 didn't prepare anything tonight, but I felt





1 after hearing all of the parents speak I  
2 really felt compelled to tell my story.

3 My daughter has been in school in  
4 the educational setting since she was three-  
5 years old. From that time on we struggled  
6 every year. Similar to other parents I cried  
7 at parent/teacher conferences. She repeated  
8 kindergarten. She in first grade could not  
9 spell her spelling tasks and was constantly  
10 failing literally getting 30's on her tests  
11 and no one could help her. She has been in a  
12 parochial school so I spent a lot of money on  
13 her education because if not, she would be in  
14 one of the priority schools, which, as we  
15 know, are failing.

16 So, first grade she would throw up,  
17 physically get ill from the anxiety that she  
18 had in school. She would cry because she  
19 didn't want to go to school. Second grade she  
20 would come running out of her classroom where  
21 I would pick her up crying because she  
22 misbehaved that day and her teacher asked her  
23 if she took her medicine that day and she had  
24 taken her medicine that day.



1                   Now at Gateway she is excelling.  
2     She is happy. The first time she had a  
3     holiday at school and she didn't have to go to  
4     school she was disappointed and begged me to  
5     take her to school. She does not like to have  
6     days off. She joined the drum club. She  
7     played tennis in the fall. She is playing  
8     basketball this winter. Most importantly, she  
9     feels like she fits in. She doesn't feel  
10    different from the other kids. She doesn't  
11    feel like she is a problem or a distraction  
12    or, you know, antsy, and that she can't fit in  
13    with her schoolmates.

14                  The best part is that she got her  
15    report card, her very first report card, at  
16    Gateway and she received all A's and I believe  
17    it was one B and she in third grade, but she  
18    is reading on a fourth grade level and she is  
19    doing Math on a fourth grade level. The  
20    biggest part about that is she comes home to  
21    me and says, Mom, I'm reading on a fourth  
22    grade level, but my reading specialist last  
23    year told me I couldn't come out of the  
24    special Reading class because I was not



1 reading well enough.

2 This is what Gateway is doing for  
3 her. It's making her feel like she is -- it  
4 has given her the confidence she needs to  
5 learn and be educated and I do not want to  
6 either have to put her back in parochial  
7 school or her feeder. So, thank you.

8 (Audience applause.)

9 MS. NAGOURNEY: Is there anyone  
10 else who wishes to speak?

11 A VOICE: Is it documented that  
12 everybody had to leave because of the bussing  
13 situation and starting late because I feel  
14 there would be a lot more people that had  
15 something to say that weren't able to because  
16 of the parking situation and bussing situation  
17 is very unfair.

18 MS. NAGOURNEY: We will include a  
19 note about that in the record. Also the  
20 record is still open and any comments  
21 submitted will be treated the same as any  
22 statements here. So, it closes Friday, the  
23 12th of December, at midnight.

24 MS. JOHNSON: And we have received



1 a number of e-mails and those have been  
2 included in the record and will be part of the  
3 public comment as well as they have been  
4 e-mailed into the office.

5 MR. ZAPPACOSTA: I am Max  
6 Zappacosta, Z-A-P-P-A-C-O-S-T-A. I remember  
7 before I came to Gateway I was at Southern and  
8 I really didn't like it. I mean, I tried to  
9 like it, but sometimes I didn't like it. Some  
10 days I did, the other days I hated it. And I  
11 don't think I was getting good grades. And  
12 there they didn't like pay attention to the  
13 504 plan, but here they follow the 504 plan.  
14 Last year I had -- my father's cousin used to  
15 work there, but then her husband recently  
16 passed away, so, she left, but she was a good  
17 help with the 504 plan. And so is my fourth  
18 grade teach, Ms. Moyer.

19 So, like my mom always tells me to  
20 enlarge it, but I always forget, so, I'm never  
21 good at remembering anything, so. Before I  
22 always used to get bullied at Southern, but  
23 here I'm not bullied at all. So, it's a big  
24 difference and my mom always says that this



1 school was a drop from heaven and it just like  
2 fell. Because before I thought I was going to  
3 get kicked out of that school, but then  
4 Gateway popped up and, it was like, Oh, that's  
5 a nice school to go.

6 So, I'm here since it first opened  
7 and I love it. If they close it, I'm going  
8 back to the textbooks. I don't like  
9 textbooks. I think that's it.

10 (Audience applause.)

11 MS. NAGOURNEY: Is there anyone  
12 else who where like to speak?

13 MS. JOHNSON: My name is Kennya,  
14 K-E-N-N-Y-A, Johnson. Before my sister came  
15 to Gateway she went to these other schools  
16 that were not good for her. The teachers  
17 would call her names and call her stupid and  
18 then she would get bullied and she would come  
19 home crying and she wouldn't be happy; but, as  
20 soon as she came to Gateway her whole like  
21 mindset is different. She is more  
22 enthusiastic. She wants to go to school and  
23 loves her teachers and the team. She loves  
24 coming to school. She didn't have any



1 criticism about it.

2 And in the old schools she had they  
3 would call her stupid. She would get bullied.  
4 The teachers would always yell at her. They  
5 would put her in the office for no apparent  
6 reason. She would just come home crying, but  
7 at Gateway they don't do that. If Gateway  
8 does not exist anymore, my sister will have to  
9 go back to these schools and she will have to  
10 deal with getting bullied and crying every day  
11 and I don't want to deal with that.

12 MS. NAGOURNEY: Is there anyone  
13 else who wants to speak?

14 (No response.)

15 MS. NAGOURNEY: If not, the hearing  
16 is now closed. I want to thank you all for  
17 coming today. The Secretary will consider  
18 your comments as part of the decision-making  
19 process and your comments will also be  
20 available for the State Board to consider.  
21 Thank you.

22 (The hearing was concluded at 9:35  
23 p.m.)

24



1 State of Delaware)  
2 )  
3 New Castle County)  
4

5 CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER  
6

7 I, Christina M. Vitale, Certified Court  
8 Reporter and Notary Public, do hereby certify  
9 that the foregoing record, pages 1 to 93  
10 inclusive, is a true and accurate transcript  
11 of my stenographic notes taken on Wednesday,  
12 December 10, 2014 in the above-captioned  
13 matter.  
14

15 IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set  
16 my hand and seal this 12th day of December,  
17 2014, at Wilmington.  
18

19   
20

21 Christina M. Vitale, CCR  
22  
23  
24



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