

December 10, 2019

To the Charter School Accountability Committee:

I am writing to support the renewal of Gateway Lab School's charter and appreciate the Committee's and Secretary Bunting's consideration for approval. I have been on staff at Gateway since 2012, first as a teacher and currently as a Special Education Case Manager as well as a member of the Gateway Board of Directors. I was drawn to Gateway because of its mission and the staff dedication to serving students who struggled to succeed in a traditional school environment. The transformation that I have observed in so many of our students from when they entered our building to their graduation in 8th grade convinces me that Gateway Lab School has made a significant positive difference in their education.

I have worked with many students who came to us with learning challenges whose frustrations were often manifested in behavioral issues. With patience, building trusting relationships, and a passion to help students grow and succeed, our teachers and staff have helped our students become leaders, self-advocates, and develop a belief in themselves as learners. Every day, as students leave to go home, I see them give their teachers (both current and former) hugs, smiles, and high fives. When I speak to parents and guardians, I often hear them say that their child is once again excited to come to school, that they see their child's confidence and self-esteem growing, that their child finally has made friends. These social-emotional differences translate into academic growth, and Gateway Lab School values both of these as critical to our students' success.

Finally, as a relatively new member of our Board of Directors, I am excited to work with a focused, dedicated team whose desire and goal it is to hold true to our mission to maximize each student's academic ability and social growth through innovative arts-based learning in a safe and nurturing environment and to be an innovative school of excellence that prepares students for life.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Heidi Shanus  
Special Education Case Manager  
Gateway Lab School