



November 18, 2019

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

Dear CSAC Committee,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sincerely,

Joyce Dennis Henderson  
Board President & Community Director  
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302-766-0050

November 21, 2019

*To Whom It May Concern,*

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

*I support the charter renewal for the following reasons:*

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

*Thank you for your consideration.*

*Sincerely,*

*MaryAnn Kane  
2622 Bardell Drive  
Wilmington, DE 19808*