

2015-16 DDOE Charter School Annual Report Template



Gateway Lab Charter School

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I. Charter School Program

Narrative:

Mission:

Gateway Lab School's mission is to provide an individualized, arts-based learning experience in a safe and nurturing environment using innovative approaches to equip students with the tools to achieve excellence and personal growth.

Vision:

Gateway Lab School is an innovative school of excellence for unique learners that prepares students for life.

Philosophy:

The Gateway Lab School (GLS) 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. The teachers and staff of Gateway Lab School are committed to developing a sense of inquiry and love of learning in each student. This is accomplished by focusing on providing interventions in the areas of reading, oral and written language, math, science, social studies and motor skills with a focus on individualized, arts-integrated learning.

Through a comprehensive approach to social skill and character development Gateway students are equipped with the knowledge to build relationships and approach new situations with confidence. Students learn to advocate for themselves by gaining an understanding of how they best learn.

Program Description:

Gateway Lab School serves 221 students in grades 3-8 that are struggling to achieve academic success in a traditional classroom environment. Gateway Lab School models aspects of The Lab School of Washington®, a private school located in Washington, D.C., that serves students with learning differences and ADHD. The Lab School of Washington® was founded and its curriculum designed by Sally L. Smith, former head of the Graduate Program for Special Education: Learning Disabilities at American University, and recognized internationally as a leader in the field of learning disabilities. Professor Smith's techniques emphasize the arts and hands-on experiential learning to help struggling students become active learners and achieve academic success.

Key Components of Educational Program:

Gateway aims to provide an individualized education to our students. We achieve this by focusing on the following unique elements of our educational program:

- Engage NY ELA and Math curriculum- In the 2014-2015 school year, Gateway adopted the Engage NY curriculum for all ELA classes in grades 3-8. Engage NY is a common core aligned curriculum that includes thematic units in which students become fully immersed in a time period, social issue, or setting and all readings, writings, and conversations are aligned to the particular theme. Engage NY pushes students to think critically and analyze high level texts while getting them truly invested in the content. Due to the great gains shown in the ELA MAP test, Gateway Math Department made the decision to also implement Engage NY Math curriculum for all Math classes in grades 3-8. Engage NY Math “curriculum modules in mathematics are marked by in-depth focus on fewer topics. They integrate the CCLS, rigorous classroom reasoning, extended classroom time devoted to practice and reflection through extensive problem sets, and high expectations for mastery.”
- EL Education ELA Pilot Program grades 3-5- Gateway Lab School was approached by EL Education to participate in an ELA Pilot Program in which the school would incorporate Engage NY curriculum with an additional literacy and vocabulary development program. The school was approached due to our population, successful implementation of Engage NY and growth as a school. The school implemented a 2 hour literacy block in addition to RTI to successfully utilize this program.
- Small Group Instruction- Gateway Lab School serves a 57% special education population with an additional 13 504 Plans and incorporates small group instruction into all major content classes in order to properly differentiate and scaffold learning to meet our students’ unique needs. During small group instruction, students spend 15-25 minutes in a center or station with 3 to 4 other students focusing on one activity at a time to strengthen skills. Centers are run in all ELA and Math classes on Mondays and Fridays and utilized in Science and Social Studies classes for review of skills and end units of study.
- Arts Integration- Gateway Lab School integrates the arts into our general education curriculum by incorporating dance, movement, drama, visual arts, media, creative writing, play writing, public speaking, sculpting, and singing into thematic units to keep our students invested and engaged in their academic success. Integrating the arts allows our students to feel success in the classroom that they may not otherwise feel in a traditional setting. For this school year, an additional block was incorporated into the music and art instructors’ schedules to allow time to “push-in” to classes and authentically integrate art into ELA and Social Studies classes in all grades 3-8 in the school.
- Brain Breaks- Gateway currently incorporates brain breaks into our curriculum blocks. These breaks are 10-15 minute increments of time where students stop their academics and engage in movement, cooperative play, and/or team building activities that help to refocus, rejuvenate, and re-engage them in their curriculum.
- Sensory Needs- In order to meet the diverse needs of our students with ADHD, Autism, and Sensory Process Disorders, whom make up the majority of our student population, Gateway integrates sensory tools such as fidgets, standing tables, floor desks, carpet squares, and de-escalation corners into classrooms to increase focus and accessibility to learning for all students.

- Responsive Classroom- In the 2014-15 school year Gateway adopted the Responsive Classroom approach to social skill and character development. This approach equips our students with the knowledge to build positive relationships and approach new situations with confidence. Students learn to advocate for themselves by gaining an understanding of how they best learn.
- Formative and Summative Assessments- Gateway implements both formative and summative assessments using the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), a norm-referenced, adaptive assessment tool. MAP formative assessments are administered three times throughout the year providing specific data related to individual students' needs allowing for more targeted instruction within RTI groups and regular classroom instruction.
- Alternative Teacher Evaluation- Gateway was approved by the state to implement an alternative teacher evaluation system. The highlights of the evaluation system include: Increasing the frequency of times teachers are observed, Providing specific, actionable feedback teachers can master in a short amount of time, Observing all teachers, novice and veteran, to illustrate a culture of support and growth, Providing leadership with additional time in classrooms, allowing for a more well-rounded view of strengths and growth areas of instructional programs, Implementation of a coaching model
- Professional Development- Teachers at Gateway participate in Professional Learning Communities once a week focused on the areas of Academics, Culture, and Special Education. Once a month, staff participates in a targeted, half-day professional development session based on the needs shown during walkthroughs and observations by the leadership team.
- After-school clubs- Gateway students are given the opportunity to participate in a variety of clubs to enrich their academic experience. Clubs give students the opportunity to express themselves, build self-esteem, and build social and collaboration skills. Some of our clubs and activities include, drama, choir, drumming, volleyball, spirit team, basketball, drawing, chess, student government, soccer, puppeteer, and running.

Discuss Key Accomplishments of the Charter School Program Over the 2015-16 School Year

- Gateway Lab School made tremendous gains in the 2015- 2016 school year. Based on the Spring ELA MAP test, 80% of students met their growth targets set by the NWEA, and based on the Spring Math MAP test, 67% of students met their growth targets set by the NWEA. These scores exceeded our state goals of 62% of growth targets met on the ELA MAP test.
- A clear instructional focus was developed with common core standards as the foundation. Staff received on-going professional development in the areas of learning targets, student ownership, arts-integration, small group instruction, and analyzing grade-level text. Effective implementation of these strategies was monitored through a systematic approach of on-going classroom walkthroughs and DPAS II feedback.
- ELA and Math curriculum (aligned with common core standards) was continued and small group instruction was incorporated to help close the gaps of learning and achievement of our students.
- Instructional time was maximized by revamping the school year calendar (approved by DOE) and daily student schedule; teacher and students operate with a bell-to-bell schedule; common planning times are in place for teachers and paraprofessionals.

- The school continues to utilize a data analysis cycle using the Northwest Evaluation Association Measures of Academic Progress (MAP), a norm-referenced, adaptive assessment tool. MAP formative assessments were administered three times throughout the year providing specific data on individual students' needs allowing for more targeted instruction within RTI groups and regular classroom instruction.
- Teacher-held data meetings with students were conducted to set goals for the Spring MAP test and their end of year Progress Monitoring. This allowed students to take ownership of their goals for the spring.
- An on-going Partnership with a Leadership coach occurred. Gateway continues to respond to the findings of DASL's comprehensive school review (CSR). Gateway's administration partners with a DASL coach on a weekly basis.
- Gateway was chosen by EL Education to pilot a new ELA curriculum which focuses on closing achievement gaps and pushing students to think more critically.

II. Performance Reflection

Please Complete the Questions that Match the Charter School's Performance Tier.

Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
"Meets Standard" overall ratings on all of the following: - 2014-15 and 2015-16 Org Frameworks - 2014-15 and 2015-16 Financial Frameworks - 2015-16 Academic Frameworks	"Meets Standard" overall Ratings on one or more Performance Framework reports during 2014-15 and 2015-16 school years OR Opened in 2015-16 School Year, Never on Formal Review	At any point during 2015-16 school year: - Renewed with Conditions - Placed on Formal Review - Earned "Falls Far Below Standard" on any Framework Report

Tier 2 Narrative:

Academic Performance

Identify areas or factors where the school has met standard in academic performance.

- Gateway Lab School met the standard for our students being on track for graduation based on our daily attendance rate. We attribute this success based on our incorporation of small group instruction, small class sizes, focus on student's sensory and mental health needs, integration of arts, and better trained and supported teachers. These pieces of our instructional program create an environment in which our students feel comfortable, confident, and successful in our classrooms and want to learn and grow.

Identify areas or factors where the school has not met standard in academic performance. Provide an analysis of strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth in these areas. What are the school's academic performance outcomes that will improve student growth, proficiency, and college and career readiness levels as measured by the Performance Framework?

- Gateway Lab School did not meet standards in the areas of Academic Achievement, Academic Growth, and College and Career Readiness based on student performance on the Smarter Balanced Math and ELA tests.
- The strengths of our program in these areas are:
 - Our students exceeded growth targets set by the NWEA MAP test in both Math and ELA for the 2015- 2016 school year and, based on Spring scores, are closing the gap between our students' average scores and the national NWEA grade level averages.
 - Gateway worked during the 2015- 2016 school year to strengthen our transition programs in our school and make connections with local high schools so that our students are focused on college and career starting in the 6th grade.
 - The implementation of Engage NY, small group instruction, and structured RTI help us to identify strengths and needs of students and push them to be able to achieve grade level success and close gaps.
 - Data analysis after each MAP test allows teachers to target weak areas and create lessons focused on those areas to support students.
- The challenges and opportunities of our program in these areas are:
 - Many of our students come in 1.5 to 2 grade levels behind and we are consistently working to balance the grade-level and below grade-level focus in our classrooms. With the implementation of the programs listed above, we believe we are creating that balance, but it is a continued work in progress.
 - In the past, the teaching staff in the school has not been consistent, and this impacts the classroom and school community drastically and leads to inconsistent instruction in the classroom. With greater teacher retention, we have a great opportunity to train and support a teaching staff and create a schoolwide focus for instruction that is constant and rigorous for all students each year. This will allow our students to show more growth and proficiency.
 - Our Social Studies and Science curriculums are not consistently aligned to ELA and Math and this hinders our ability to utilize those subjects to help support our students' needs and growth areas. As a Social Studies and Science team, we have an

opportunity to choose curriculum that is more rigorous and CCSS aligned and to restructure the block of time and instructional focus to incorporate ELA and Math to meet the needs.

Organizational Performance

Identify areas or factors where the school has met standard in organizational performance

Gateway Lab School meet standard in **all** measures of the Organizational Performance Framework.

Organizationally, Gateway Lab School has been a sound institution for several years particularly in the areas of governance requirements, management accountability, reporting requirements, protection of student rights, facilities and transportation requirements, service payments, debt to asset ratio, and health and safety requirements.

What remains a challenge is staff credentialing requirements. Because of the small size of our staff, it is difficult for us to meet the 95% requirement. Depending on the year, 1 teacher can account for 7% of our staff. We have incorporated a more rigorous hiring process to ensure that our students have highly qualified teachers in front of them, but even with our best effort we are up against a challenge in some content areas and with mid-year resignations.

Financial Performance

Identify areas or factors where the school has met standard in financial performance.

Based on the 2015-2016 Delaware Financial Performance Framework, GLS has been rated as Meet Standard.

The following governance and reporting requirements have been met by GLS.

- Current Ratio
- Days Cash
- Enrollment Variance
- Default, Loan Covenants, & Debt Service Payment
- Debt to Asset Ratio
- Debt Service Coverage Ratio

External auditors, Barbacane and Thornton audit the school's finances annually and have found GLS to be sound and healthy. There were no recommendations made by the auditors for FY 2015-2016. It is anticipated that this performance will continue into the future. The school's financial future is secure.

The school's budget is reviewed and approved by the Board of Directors on an annual basis. A monthly financial report is reviewed by the Citizens Budget Oversight Committee (CBOC) and

the Board of Directors. The school operates with the required contingency and financial surplus to ensure fiscal viability and security.

Gateway Lab School continues to use the services of Neely & Spence Financial Consulting Services, LLC to assist with budgeting and planning. They prepare reports for weekly review by the schools Finance Committee which include monthly expenditure detail reports, staffing models based on enrollment, preliminary budget reports, and cash flow reports. This careful review of the school's finances is helpful in preparation for CBOC and Board meetings. Those involved in the school's leadership make financial decisions that are well informed as they cast vision and plan for the school's future.

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Gateway continues to carry out its strategic plan that includes a three year plan for growing operational capacity. Targeted areas include increasing the school's capacity through fundraising and strengthening student enrollment in grades that have been more challenging to fill. These two specific areas of the strategic plan have seen successes in its first year. With enrollment nearly at 103% and one grant award of \$27,000 for multisensory classroom and \$134,000 requested and additional grants being sought GLS is growing capacity.

Gateway has successfully delivered quality education to its target population to include all related services required by IDEA and State regulations. Gateway continues to address concerns regarding funding to provide these quality services. To name a few of these concerns:

- Reading Based ESY – According to 14 DE Admin Code 923.6.7, additional extended school year services are required for students that are beyond the age of seven and not yet beginning to read. This imposes an additional financial commitment for Gateway on top of the Federal Extended School Year services and 12 Month Program. An additional hour for evidence based intervention requires additional operating cost for staffing and transportation. Thirteen students qualified for this service this year which required the addition of a Wilson teacher and a paraprofessional.
- Multisensory Classroom – Gateway has experienced an increased need for an improved multisensory environment to meet the multisensory needs of our students. Our special education population is diverse and includes 16% of our students currently being identified with sensory needs and additional referrals are being screened. While sensory processing issues are often seen in autistic children, they are also found in those with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Emotional Disabilities, or with no other diagnosis at all. Gateway's special education population includes 24% students with a classification of Other Health Impairment due to Attention Deficit Disorder, 7% with Emotional Disabilities and 3 % with Autism. A number of our students come to us with behavioral records and when thoroughly assessed are often found to have sensory needs that have not be addressed.

- IDEA funding – Gateway on average gets \$2,000 less per student in IDEA funding than other charter schools in Delaware. This presents a concern for us with our student population being 57% special education. This would add up to approximately 252,000 of funding our school does not receive. Efforts to evaluate the process for which IDEA funding is distributed at the state level to appropriately support schools with larger special education population is ongoing.
- Paraprofessional needs – We have experienced a need for a higher level of qualifications for some of our paraprofessionals placed with our more complex students. The cost of these qualifications is much greater than the typical paraprofessional. The higher qualified paraprofessionals have more education and experience which enables them to implement more strategies when addressing students’ academic, social, organization, and behavioral needs.
- Resource Room Program – Seven of our students require a smaller teacher to student ratio with intense intervention and academic math and reading instruction in a very structured environment in order to make progress on their Individualized Educational Program goals which are to help them bridge the gap to success in the general education curriculum. It is our obligation to offer a continuum of services which provides a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment which may include this setting where the student is served in the regular classroom greater than or equal to 40% of the day and no more than 79% of the day. This program requires a classroom, a highly qualified special education teacher and paraprofessional to be successful.
- Identification of students after the September 30th count deadline - Since our school has a large special needs population we attract students with identified special needs and many that have not yet been identified with special needs but display many delays and weaknesses. Often times students that are identified are not appropriately identified and/or their needs were not being addressed with the correlating related services to their needs. This leads to students being identified throughout the year and there are not additional funds to cover the increase in costs for those supports and services. The September window for enrollment count does not provide adequate time for proper identification of needs. In fact, it may set a stage for over identification which we are very careful not to do.

Identify areas or factors where the school has not met standard in financial performance. Provide an analysis of strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth in these areas. What are the school’s financial performance outcomes that will demonstrate viability and sustainability as measured by the Performance Framework?

- **Under sustainability indicators 2a.** Total margin for FY2016 reflects a positive 1.10 for the year. The negative 3-year margin of 1.4 is a direct result of cumulative one-time activity for FY2014 and FY2015
 - FY2014 Facility renovations and Special Settlements
 - FY2015 Employee bonuses

- ***Under sustainability indicators 2c.*** Cash flow for FY2016 reflects a positive \$156,274 for the year. The negative 3-year cash amount of \$9,113 is a direct result of the cumulative activity over the 3-year period as impacted by FY2014 and FY2015 noted above. In all financial decision making planning processes the school is careful to clarify those needs that impact the budget one-time versus those that have a direct impact on the future growth of the budget.

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