

2014-15 DDOE Charter School Annual Report Template



Gateway Lab Charter School

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Effective December 1, 2015

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I. Charter School Program

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 212 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.

In 2014-15 Gateway created an instructional leadership team including the principal, teacher and paraprofessional representatives who have a strong understanding of content and pedagogy. The instructional leadership team led the process for adopting new curriculum as well as identifying key professional development. As a result a clear instructional focus was adopted with common core standards being the foundation. Teachers were trained in the areas of arts-integration, higher-order thinking skills and summarizing strategies to assist students in achieving 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 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.
- Math Curriculum- With the help of the instructional leadership team, the Math department chose to implement Investigations (grades 3-5) and CMP 3 (grades 6-8) curriculums as daily instructional tools. Investigations takes seriously the time students need to develop a strong conceptual foundation and skills based on that foundation. CMP 3 is a problem-centered curriculum promoting an inquiry-based teaching-learning classroom environment.
- Small Group Instruction- Gateway Lab School serves a 61% special education population 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

- Monitoring of Instructional Practices – In 2014-15 Gateway administration implemented a systematic approach to monitoring classroom instruction using routine classroom walkthroughs with teacher feedback. The walkthroughs have a clear focus on expected instructional practices.
- Professional Development- Gateway staff participates in a 50-minute PD opportunity 3 days a week every week. The Instructional Leadership Team plans out the monthly PD calendar. Throughout the 2014-15 school year the weekly PD included topics on arts integration, higher order questioning and summarizing strategies, DPAS training, and topics on special education. The professional development took the following forms:
 - a) training sessions & follow up
 - b) study groups
 - c) action research groups
 - d) peer coaching
- 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.

Key Accomplishments of the 2014- 2015 School Year

In the 2014- 2015 school year, Gateway was granted a charter modification to use the Alternative Framework for Assessment, taking effect FY 2015. As a result a “mission-specific” goal was established. In addition, Gateway Lab School’s charter was renewed with the condition of must reach “Meets Standard” on the Alternative Academic Framework. Below are Gateway’s key accomplishments for the 2014-15 school year.

- A clear instructional focus was developed with common core standards as the foundation. Staff received on-going professional development in the areas of higher-order questioning and summarizing strategies; arts-integration 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.
- New ELA and Math curriculum (aligned with common core standards) was adopted.
- Instructional time was maximized during the 2014-15 school year 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 incorporated 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 Delaware Academy of School Leaders (DASL) at the University of Delaware has 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 secured a data coach to assist with analyzing Gateway's formative and summative data to more deeply understand individual student needs.

Due to these significant efforts by both staff and students, Gateway met their Mission Specific Goal of 60% of our students meeting their individual growth target on the ELA MAP test. In the 2014-2015 school year, 61.88% of our students met their growth target in ELA. Additionally, in the 2014-2015 school year, 62% of our students met their growth target on the Math MAP test.

II. Performance Reflection

What are the school's academic performance outcomes that will demonstrate student growth, proficiency, and college and career readiness levels as measured by the Performance Framework?

Gateway is consistently working to assess its effectiveness as an educational institution. To assess our student growth and proficiency, we will use the ELA & Math MAP fall, winter, and spring data. This test is aligned to the common core and allows the school to make instructional decisions throughout the year to meet our students' needs. We assess college and career readiness through our counselor who uses Career Cruiser to help our students prepare for college and their lives beyond Gateway.

Provide an analysis of strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth in these areas.

Gateway's academic strength lies in our ability to individualize our instruction to meet the needs of our students. By incorporating small group instruction, integrating the arts, and maintaining small class sizes, we are able to engage our students in a variety of ways. The adoption of new ELA and Math curriculum, more closely aligned with the Common Core Standards will be another resource for teachers in assisting students to meet academic success. Our social skill building program and Responsive Classroom environment, allow our students to explore who they are as people and discover what they want to be in life and how they will achieve their goals. Lastly, Gateway is committed to securing staff that are trained and experienced in working with students who have special needs.

Our biggest challenge continues to be pushing our students to meet high academic standards and also remediating and meeting our students' high needs. Based off an analysis of our data we determined that a root cause that prevented us from meeting our targets set forth by the state is the number of Special Education students in our school needing targeted instruction. According to the Unit Count from 2014, 119 out of 212 students (56%) of our students have Individualize Education Plans. Of those 119 students, 48 of those students (40%) are labeled intense and complex, needing 1 to 8 or 1 to 2 instruction or support.

We consistently push ourselves to self-assess and set growth targets for our students and our school at Gateway. We can improve our academic blocks by ensuring that we teach bell-to-bell, lengthening the amount of time focused on instruction, incorporating high-level questioning daily in our work, pushing our students to summarize texts and learning, writing thorough lesson plans, incorporating our students' learning styles into our lessons, continuing to use student performance data to better understand their needs, and providing strong, targeted professional development.

List Any Academic Performance Conditions That Were Placed Upon the Charter School During the 2014-15 School Year and Discuss the Changes that the Charter School Made In Response

There was one Academic Performance condition placed on Gateway's Charter renewal: "By the end of the 2015-16 school year Gateway must reach "Meets Standard" on the Alternative Academic Framework." In response to those conditions, the school created a strong instructional focus for the school, started working with a data coach to ensure data was analyzed thoroughly and students had ownership of their data, continued working with the Delaware Academy of School Leadership to support the academic program and provide coaching to the instructional leader, curriculum was analyzed for its' effectiveness, the school created a more in-depth lesson plan template and instituted a "bell-to-bell" teaching mentality, and common core aligned curriculum was implemented to increase the rigor in the classroom. The school also put forth efforts to hire outside agencies to provide professional development on best instructional practices. As a result of these changes made, the school met its' mission specific goal for the 2014 2015 school year; 60% of students meeting their growth target on the Spring ELA MAP test.

All of our additional efforts to meet academic standards set forth by the Department of Education are highlighted in our strategic plan (attached)

Discuss the Charter School's Organizational Compliance and Soundness During the 2014-15 School Year

Gateway Lab School's Organizational Compliance and Soundness continues to Meet Standards. Gateway has met standards for the last 4 years 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.

Discuss the Charter School's Actions to Continue Improving Organizational Soundness and Compliance Each Year

Gateway will continue to ensure that we meet standards in the abovementioned areas by training new administration, board members, and business personnel on the policies and procedures that are vital to our organizational success. Additionally, we will ensure that a representative from our organization attends all state meetings and trainings on these areas. For the areas that we can improve, staff credentialing requirements, Gateway plans to

incorporate a more rigorous hiring process in which applicants must be highly qualified in order to be hired as a full-time educator at our school.

What are the school's performance expectations in meeting its organizational responsibilities including, but not limited to, administrative operations, reporting, and legal responsibilities as measured by the Performance Framework?

Educational Program

Based on the 2014-2015 Delaware Organizational Performance Framework, GLS has been rated as "Meets Standards." As a result of a focused, comprehensive approach to instruction, GLS exceeded the standards set forth in the Alternative Academic Framework established by the State Board of Education.

Measure 1b of the Organizational Performance Framework, GLS complied with all applicable laws, rules and legal requirements for students with disabilities and English Language Learners

Governance and Reporting

GLS was rated "Meets Standards for Governance Reporting according the Organizational Performance Framework. All meeting notices, minutes and the annual report can be found the GLS website.

Student and Employees

GLS received a "Meets standards" rating for protecting the rights of all students and meeting student attendance goal goals.

On measure 4c, GLS received a "Does not Meet Standard" rating because three teachers were enrolled in the Alternative Route to certification program (ARTC). An additional teacher who was certified in Elementary and Special Education was working on an Emergency Certification. The three ARTC teachers are now certified and the additional teacher has been replaced by a highly qualified teacher.

School Environment and Additional Obligations

GLS received a "Meets Standard" rating on all applicable criteria for the 2014-15 school year. The school is in compliance with facilities and transportation requirement, complying with health and safety requirements and all other obligations

Provide an analysis of strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth in these areas.

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.

Our biggest challenge continues to be 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 a highly qualified teacher in front of them, but we may continue to come up against this struggle given our staff size.

We have a goal to meet standards in every area of the Organization Framework and this requires us to consistently look for areas of improvement, self-assess, attend trainings and meetings from the state, and reach out to the Department of Education to ensure that Gateway stays a viable organization.

List Any Organizational Health Conditions That Were Placed Upon the Charter School During the 2014-15 School Year and Discuss the Changes that the Charter School Made In Response

There were no organizational health conditions placed upon the charter during the 2014- 2015 school year. According to the Organization Framework report Gateway received an Overall Rating of “Meets Standard.”

What are the school’s financial performance expectations that will demonstrate viability and sustainability as measured by the Performance Framework? Provide an analysis of strengths, challenges, and opportunities for growth in these areas.

Based on the 2014-2015 Delaware Financial Performance Framework, GLS has been rated as Meets Standard.

The following governance and reporting requirements have been and continue to be met by GLS:

- * Budget oversight committee,
- * Monthly financial reporting
- * Audit
- * Web posting of check register
- * Web posting of 990
- * Annual report

An analysis of the two areas that were rated as not meeting standards – (2a) Total Margin and (2c) Cash Flow found that these ratings were a result of planned, one-time expenditures of approximately \$472,000 in 2014 and 2015 which included, a renovation project and a teacher bonus.

External auditors, Barbacane and Thornton audit the school's finances annually and have found them to be sound and healthy. There were no recommendations made by the auditors for FY 2014-2015. 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 a 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 school's Finance Committee, which include monthly expenditure detail reports, staffing models based on enrollment, preliminary budget reports, and cash flow reports. In an effort to assist the Executive Director, Principal, and other staff members that have oversight of budgeted areas, Neely & Spence helped to create a monthly vendor-level budget that has increased transparency and accountability in how funds are being allocated and disbursed.

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.

Over the last year, the Gateway Board and school administrators have created a strategic plan that includes a three year plan for growing operational capacity. Targeted areas of the plan include increasing the school's capacity through fundraising, and strengthening student enrollment in grades that have been more challenging to fill.

List Any Financial Health Conditions That Were Placed Upon the Charter School During the 2014-15 School Year and Discuss the Changes that the Charter School Made In Response

There were no financial health conditions placed upon the charter during the 2014-2015 school year. According to the Financial Framework report Gateway received an Overall Rating of "Meets Standard" and has done so over the last four years.