

Gateway High School

1430 Scott Street
San Francisco, CA 94115
Sharon Olken, Principal

Gateway High School was founded by a group of parents and educators who believed there was a need in the Bay Area for a smaller, personalized, college preparatory public high school with a commitment to serving a diverse student population, including a significant number of students with learning differences. Since opening in 1998 with 85 freshmen, the school has grown to 467 students in grades 9–12 in 2009. Students are accepted to the high school by open lottery. In 2004, the school was granted accreditation by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC). The school has received the California Distinguished Schools Award twice, once in 2003 and again in 2007.

- ◆ High school (grades 9–12)
- ◆ 27% White
- ◆ 25% Hispanic
- ◆ 24% Asian
- ◆ 17% Black
- ◆ 7% Other
- ◆ 1% Native American
- ◆ 67% Free or Reduced-Price Lunch
- ◆ 9% English Language Learners

Gateway High School is a college preparatory charter school “committed to academic excellence through personalized, student-centered learning” (mission statement). Schoolwide learning goals include that Gateway graduates will become advocates for self, advocates for community, scholars of skill and content, and models of integrity. The curriculum at Gateway exceeds the University of California A-G requirements.

Students with diagnosed learning issues also receive case management, resource support classes, individual learning plans, annual meetings to update documentation and revise learning goals, triennial academic and psychological testing, and access to paraprofessional support in the classroom when designated by the IEP. Students who have IEPs are eligible to receive the following services: study/learning skills classes three times a week, consultation with the Reading Support Program regarding accommodations, class schedules, graduation requirements, and tutoring. Paraprofessional support in the classroom is provided according to student and classroom need. Learning skills classes of 4–8 students are taught by resource specialist providers.

Before students enter Gateway in ninth grade, students who have low or below basic scores on the reading section of the STAR testing, the language art section, or have received remediation in eighth grade are given a comprehensive group of assessments to determine what aspects of reading are giving them trouble. Gateway uses the diagnostic assessment of reading to assess

students' word recognition oral and silent reading comprehension, the Woodcock-Johnson subtest of word attack, and the Wilson reading program's assessment of decoding and encoding.

Students with diverse learning needs are supported through the school's Learning Center and Reading Support Program. The Learning Center is available to all students who need additional support. In addition to providing academic support classes and case management for students with diagnosed learning issues, the Learning Center also provides after-school tutoring, classroom accommodations, and consultation for any student experiencing academic difficulty, and provides ongoing support to parents and teachers.

Recognizing the need to support students who enter Gateway as struggling readers, the Reading Support Program works with students who are reading significantly below grade level and who have difficulty decoding unfamiliar words. Students take this class for two years, delaying the start of the Spanish elective. Using the Wilson Reading System, a multisensory, phonics-based program developed with the needs of older students in mind by experts from the Reading Clinic at Massachusetts General Hospital, students meet in small groups of no more than 5–6 students and are taught the rules and patterns that govern the underlying structure of the English language. Students learn the sounds letters and high-frequency letter combinations make, how to know what sound the vowel makes, how to break longer words down into smaller parts to facilitate reading and spelling, and strategies for remembering sight words. They also learn strategies for increasing reading fluency. In this class the rules of reading and spelling are demystified and students are transformed from non-readers to students who can understand and decode what they read. The reading specialist explained that, typically, students enter the program reading between a first- and fourth-grade level. After two years in the reading program, students are typically reading at eighth- or ninth-grade levels.

Reading strategies are a focus in every classroom at Gateway. During department meetings and collaborative planning times, all teachers participate in professional development workshops focused on improving students' literacy skills. For example, teachers examine instances where reading is important for making meaning, where reading is important for demonstrating what students know, and how to provide students with concrete strategies for reading and comprehension skills. In ninth grade, all students learn several explicit reading strategies such as Cornell Notes and Text Annotation in their English classes. Teachers also use strategies such as literature circles and Reciprocal Teaching to support students' reading development. There is a shared belief among the teachers and administrators at Gateway that all students can become strong readers with effective instruction and support.

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education under contract number ED-PEP-11-C-0068. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.