

FINAL APPLICATION REVIEWS 2009-2010			
<b>Proposed School Name:</b>	Discovery Charter School of Sustainability		
<b>Grades Served At Full Capacity:</b>	K-6		
<b>Number of Students At Full Capacity:</b>	264		
<b>Proposed School Location:</b>	TBD		
<b>Proposed Opening Year:</b>	2011-2012		
<b>Regional?</b>	Yes		
<b>Proposed Sending Districts:</b>	Conway, Deerfield, Erving, Gill-Montague, Greenfield, Hawlemont, Leverett, Mohawk, Orange, Pioneer Valley, Rowe, Shutesbury, Sunderland, and Whately		
<p><b>Mission Statement:</b>  “Discovery Charter School of Sustainability is a regional public charter school serving the diverse K-6 students of Franklin County. Our mission is to nurture and graduate youth who display academic excellence in all subjects, are self-directed dynamic thinkers, and are actively engaged in sustainable practices in their lives, their school, and their communities. Discovery will cultivate in students a strong understanding of Environment, Economy, and Equity, as the school community organizes instruction and content around the principles of fostering a more sustainable world.”</p> <p><b>Curriculum Synopsis:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Internally generated interdisciplinary curriculum based on the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks and the US Partnership’s Education for Sustainability learning standards, published in conjunction with the UN’s Decade of Education for Sustainable Development.</li> <li>Fully integrated place-based curriculum focusing on education for sustainability: integrative, systems-based, dynamic, and interdisciplinary.</li> <li>Philosophy is based on the qualities of dynamic thinking objectives (C5): curious, creative, caring, critical, and collaborative.</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Mission, Vision, and Statement of Need</b></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p><u><b>Primary Strengths</b></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Mission is filled with jargon, but defines the purpose and values of the proposed school. (AP* Section I.A.1)</li> <li>The Mission and Vision are reflected throughout the application and seem to serve as an organizing principle for the proposed school. (AP Section I.A.3 and I.B.5)</li> <li>The Statement of Need provides a rationale for the need for a science oriented curriculum and how this school will enhance or expand educational options currently available. (AP Section I.C.5)</li> </ul> </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <p><u><b>Primary Weaknesses</b></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The jargon used in the Mission and Vision statements left reviewers with many questions about the underlying meaning of the ideas presented. (AP Section I.A.4 and I.B.4)</li> <li>The application does not provide a clear description of the students the charter school intends to serve and the needs of this population. (AP Section I.C.3)</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table>		<p><u><b>Primary Strengths</b></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Mission is filled with jargon, but defines the purpose and values of the proposed school. (AP* Section I.A.1)</li> <li>The Mission and Vision are reflected throughout the application and seem to serve as an organizing principle for the proposed school. (AP Section I.A.3 and I.B.5)</li> <li>The Statement of Need provides a rationale for the need for a science oriented curriculum and how this school will enhance or expand educational options currently available. (AP Section I.C.5)</li> </ul>	<p><u><b>Primary Weaknesses</b></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The jargon used in the Mission and Vision statements left reviewers with many questions about the underlying meaning of the ideas presented. (AP Section I.A.4 and I.B.4)</li> <li>The application does not provide a clear description of the students the charter school intends to serve and the needs of this population. (AP Section I.C.3)</li> </ul>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The final application describes the pedagogy and instructional methods that will be used at the proposed school. (AP Section II.B.10)</li> <li>• The discussion of Curriculum and Instruction is consistent with the Mission and Educational Philosophy. (AP Section II.B.1)</li> </ul>	<p>Education for Sustainability (EfS) standards will lead to student achievement. (AP Section II.A.5)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Educational Philosophy is reflected throughout the application but, it is not clear how it translates into a concrete educational program or how it will be implemented. (AP Section II.A.2)</li> <li>• The final application does not provide an outline of the curriculum that will be used by the school, including the content and skills to be taught in the core content areas at each grade level as required. (AP Section II.B.4)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Assessment System, Performance, Promotion, and Graduation Standards</b></p> <p><b><u>Primary Strengths</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Primary Weaknesses</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Assessment System, Performance, Promotion and Graduation Standards are confusing. It is not clear how the assessments, portfolios and/or Individual Learning Agreements will work together and how the system and standards will be communicated to teachers, administrators, parents, and students. (AP Section II.C.3 and 4 and Section II.D.8)</li> </ul>
<p><b>School Characteristics and Special Student Populations</b></p> <p><b><u>Primary Strengths</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The application has a clear plan to maintain and build effective family-school partnerships and to gauge parental satisfaction. (AP Section II.E.23 and 13)</li> <li>• While there were concerns raised about expecting the special education administrator to also be ELL or ESL certified, the final application shows a good understanding of how the programs and procedures for special student populations operate day-to-day. (AP Section II.F.1 and 2)</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Primary Weaknesses</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standard calendar for students and teachers. It is not clear how the school will move from theory to practice and how the educational program will be implemented. Not clear how the school will be organized, especially for grades 4, 5, and 6, for instance staffing for grades 4, 5, and 6 was not clear. It's difficult to visualize a teacher's day with team teaching and two hours of preparation time. (AP Section II.E.1, 3, 4, and 5)</li> <li>• Not clear how the school plans to establish the school culture and norms, and how they relate to the disciplinary policy, for example. (AP Section II.E.10 and 11)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Enrollment and Recruitment</b></p> <p><b><u>Primary Strengths</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It appears that the proposed school continues to do aggressive and broad outreach across the county. (AP Section III.A.4)</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Primary Weaknesses</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Because the region is very large, the location of the school has yet to be identified, and the transportation plan is unclear, it is very difficult for the school to offer a viable rationale for the proposed size and growth strategy. After the first couple of years, the school anticipates kindergarten becoming the primary entry point. It is not clear how kindergarteners from across the county will travel to the school. (AP Section III.A.2)</li> </ul>