

FINAL APPLICATION REVIEWS 2009-2010			
Proposed School Name:	Spirit of Knowledge Academy Charter School		
Grades Served At Full Capacity: 7-12			
Number of Students At Full Capacity: 275			
Proposed School Location: Worcester			
Proposed Opening Year: 2010-2011			
Regional? No			
Proposed Sending Districts: Worcester			
Mission Statement: “The Spirit of Knowledge Charter School’s 7 th through 12 th grade Worcester students will create value in their lives and the lives of others through high-standards academic learning, especially in math, science and technology, gaining admission to college, and developing a positive character.”			
Curriculum Synopsis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internally generated curriculum that combines the best international school course structure, curriculum coherence, academic intensity, and content richness with the best American college requirements. Aligned with Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. High-standards academic learning. Intensive math, science, and technology with a practical application to renewable, “clean” energy and biotechnology preparing student for future studies and/or careers in these areas. Balanced combination of student-centered Soka educational principles with the more teacher-centered approach used in other high-performing urban public schools Instill positive school culture and character. 			
Mission, Vision, and Statement of Need <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <u>Primary Strengths</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Mission focuses solely on outcomes for students, and by doing so defines the purpose and values of the proposed school. (AP Section I.A.1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) Combining a rigorous academic program with the humanistic, value creating model of Japanese Soka education is an innovative idea and serves as an organizing principle for the proposed school. (AP Section I.B.1 and 5) While the Vision Statement does not describe the ways the school will positively impact all stakeholders, it directly aligns with the mission and is meaningful.(AP Section I.B.3 and 4) The Statement of Need, in general, describes the need for an additional public school option and makes the case for a math, science, and technology focused school in Worcester. (AP Section I.C.1, 4, and 5) </td> <td style="width: 50%; vertical-align: top;"> <u>Primary Weaknesses</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> None. </td> </tr> </table>		<u>Primary Strengths</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Mission focuses solely on outcomes for students, and by doing so defines the purpose and values of the proposed school. (AP Section I.A.1, 2, 3, 4, and 5) Combining a rigorous academic program with the humanistic, value creating model of Japanese Soka education is an innovative idea and serves as an organizing principle for the proposed school. (AP Section I.B.1 and 5) While the Vision Statement does not describe the ways the school will positively impact all stakeholders, it directly aligns with the mission and is meaningful.(AP Section I.B.3 and 4) The Statement of Need, in general, describes the need for an additional public school option and makes the case for a math, science, and technology focused school in Worcester. (AP Section I.C.1, 4, and 5) 	<u>Primary Weaknesses</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> None.
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Educational Philosophy, Curriculum and Instruction			

<p><u>Primary Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Educational Philosophy aligns with the proposed mission and is integrated into the implementation of a comprehensive educational program that includes high academic standards coupled with the Soka philosophy. (AP Section II. A. 1 and 2) • The Curriculum and Instruction section is clear and the application provides a rational for choosing the proposed curriculum. (AP Section II.B. 2, 3, and 10) • The application provides a very clear plan to facilitate ongoing development, improvement, and refinement of the curriculum and a clear process to evaluate the effectiveness of the curriculum and its implementation. (AP Section II.B. 1 and 2) • 	<p><u>Primary Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The case is made for providing a structured and supportive sequentially organized, content-rich curriculum, but the application does not provide specific research that shows evidence that this approach will lead to high academic achievement for the anticipated student population. (AP Section II.B. 4 and 5) • Although the application explains how the curriculum will be aligned with the Massachusetts curriculum frameworks, it is still not clear how that will actually be done successfully. (AP Section II.B. 8.)
<p>Assessment System, Performance, Promotion, Graduation Standards</p> <p><u>Primary Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Assessment System describes high academic and non-academic standards, features multiple measures of student outcomes, is consistent with the school's mission, and seems thorough, clear, credible, and sound, and is linked to curriculum and instruction (AP Section II.D.2, 4, 8, and 9) • The Performance, Promotion, and Graduation Standards are cohesive and fairly easy to understand for all stakeholders. (AP Section II.C. 1, 2,3, and 4) 	<p><u>Primary Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None.
<p>School Characteristics, Special Student Populations and Student Services</p> <p><u>Primary Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application provides a clear plan for the educational program, developing the school culture, and maintaining and building effective family-school partnerships to support student goals. (AP Section II.E. 5, 10, and 12) • The application indicates knowledge about the special education and English language learner program requirements. When asked about the program for English language learners at Advanced Math and Science Academy Charter School (AMSA) the founders unequivocally acknowledge that this is a different school with a different population of students. It is clear that they understand the requirements and are committed to fulfilling the obligations. (AP Section II.F.1,2, and 5) 	<p><u>Primary Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the school day incorporates daily mid-day tutoring and the applicant group was better able to explain through the interview how the school will meet the needs of diverse learners and students who are struggling, there are still questions about supporting students with a wide range of needs. While classes will be heterogeneous except for mathematics and physics, and the application indicates that instruction will be highly differentiated, it is not clear how that will happen, particularly in the lower grades. (AP Section II.E.6)
<p>Enrollment and Recruitment</p> <p><u>Primary Strengths</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The application, and the founding group in the interview, described an aggressive outreach and recruitment plan to include families who may 	<p><u>Primary Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None.

be less informed about options. (AP Section III.A.4)

- The proposed enrollment process is open, fair, and in accordance with the charter school statute and regulations. (AP Section III.A.5)

Capacity, School Governance, and Management

Primary Strengths

- The founding group and proposed board of trustees include members who possess a wide variety of skills and experiences. Two of the lead founders also have demonstrated, by founding AMSA, that they have the capacity to found a charter school. (AP Section III.B.3,4, and 5)
- The governance model provides a clear workable reporting structure to the board of trustees. It also clearly delineates the respective roles and responsibilities of the board and the school staff. (AP Section III.C.3 and 10)

Primary Weaknesses

- While the management structure is clear, it is not clear how the staffing plan translates into reality. (AP Section III.D. 6.)