

ABOUT MATCH FISHTANK

We believe that teachers and their students deserve access to the highest quality instructional materials. [Match Fishtank](#) shares the instructional materials we have developed, tested and refined over many years in our classrooms at Match Charter School in Boston. Our curriculum is offered for free in a convenient, openly licensed format.

Rigorous, College-Ready Curriculum

Grounded in best practices for teaching and learning, our curriculum is designed to prepare students for postsecondary success. All our lessons are built around rigorous texts, and consist of target tasks and key questions that push students to think critically and make meaning of what they read. Our central goal is to help our students become excellent readers, writers, problem-solvers, creative thinkers, and community members.

Standards-Aligned Materials

Our curriculum is aligned to the Common Core State Standards and the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Every unit and lesson identifies specific standards that are the focus of instruction. Teachers can search and use our curriculum by standard.

Flexible Content

We believe teachers need the flexibility to adapt lessons to meet the unique needs of their students. Sometimes scripted curricula can curtail teacher autonomy and creativity about how they deliver their lessons. We strive to produce unit plans and lessons that provide a comprehensive road map that ensures teacher and student success, but can still be easily adapted to fit various teaching styles and classroom formats.

Culturally Relevant

We are committed to developing curriculum that resonates with a diversity of students' lived experiences. Our curriculum is reflective of diverse cultures, races, abilities, and ethnicities, and is designed to spark students' interest and stimulate deep thinking. We are thoughtful and deliberate in selecting high-quality texts and materials that reflect the diversity of our country. Further, the flexibility of our curriculum supports culturally-relevant pedagogy as it allows teachers to easily include strategies and supports to meet the unique needs of their students.

RESEARCH-BASED APPROACH TO ELA

Our K-2 ELA curriculum is the first segment of a sequence of K-12 ELA courses that strive to create critical readers, thinkers, and writers while building content knowledge and an appreciation for quality literature. Like all of our ELA courses, our K-2 Literature and Science and Social Studies courses are designed to be "text-first", meaning the text drives instruction, followed by the standards. They are also designed to offer frequent opportunities for writing and discussion, to build knowledge and critical thinking, and to generate a lifelong love of learning.

The K-2 sequence offered on Match Fishtank is primarily a reading program that provides regular opportunities for students to read and engage with high-quality literature and non-fiction texts, build reading skills, and expand their vocabulary and content knowledge. Please note that the curriculum is not a comprehensive ELA program in that it does not include foundational skills instruction and systematic writing instruction. Schools adopting Match Fishtank's K-2 reading curriculum should plan to supplement it with a high-quality foundational skills program, such as CKLA Skills Units. Schools should also plan to provide students with additional opportunities for process based writing. Process-based writing could be added to the end of current units, or as part of a Writer's Workshop model.

Key elements of our ELA approach and the research base that supports it are described below.

Text First vs. Skills First

- Rather than organizing our lessons around specific reading skills (e.g. how to find the main idea) and teaching these skills in isolation, we organize our curriculum around carefully-selected texts that will engage students and facilitate deep thinking and skill development.
- Students spend the majority of class time closely reading extended texts, including the core unit texts and paired texts that deepen student engagement with and understanding of key ideas and thematic topics.
- Text-dependent questions in each lesson focus on the key ideas and themes presented by the texts. The questions are carefully sequenced to build a deeper understanding of the text.

Supporting Research:

Classroom time should focus on “students and teachers practicing reading, writing, speaking, and listening in direct response to high-quality” literary and informational texts of grade-level complexity (Liben and Liben, 2013). Students need to read longer texts to build stamina and engage in discussions about the full text as well as close readings of specific passages that draw students’ attention to author’s craft and text structure, word choice, and challenging vocabulary and syntax features (Coleman and Pimentel, 2012). Instruction and supports should help students make sense of these features of complexity in context.

Content Selection and Knowledge Building

- Students engage in Literature and Science and Social Studies units simultaneously to increase exposure to informational texts and build background knowledge and vocabulary.
- In our literature units, students read texts that explore themes applicable to their lives and push them to think critically about their world.

- In our Science and Social Studies units, students read nonfiction and informational texts that build their background knowledge about key historic events, scientific concepts, and their own and other cultures.
- End-of-unit projects and writing assignments allow students to apply content knowledge learned in the unit to deepen and solidify understanding.
- Content knowledge builds systematically from year to year.

Supporting Research:

“Knowledge of content and of the vocabulary acquired through learning about content are fundamental to successful reading comprehension; without broad knowledge, children's reading comprehension will not improve” (Hirsch, 2016). Scientific and historical texts need to be given the same time and weight as literary texts (Coleman and Pimentel, 2012).

Teacher Autonomy with Guidance on Decision-Making

- Our materials are designed to support innovation and differentiation without compromising content or quality.
- We provide the core content of units and lessons including text selection, standards alignment, target tasks, and text-dependent questions, but do not prescribe how to deliver each lesson.
- We provide resources to help teachers internalize units and lessons in order to bring the units to life.
- The structure and flexibility of our curriculum allows teachers to design lessons that meet the needs and diversity of the students in front of them.

Supporting Research:

Curriculum implementation consists of a dynamic relationship between teachers and curriculum materials. Curriculum materials need to be educative and support teacher decision-making. Scripted curricula can curtail teacher's interaction with the curricula (Remillard, 2005). “Instead of focusing on the perfect method to use or scripted recipe to follow, it's vital to offer a framework and perspective for making decisions” (Kang, 2016).

Language and Vocabulary Development through Discussion and Writing

- Speaking and listening, writing, and language development are intertwined and embedded in all aspects of our program design.
- Students regularly engage in academic discourse with partners, small groups, and large groups with minimal teacher facilitation. Discussion questions are carefully framed and encourage students to test out ideas, listen to other ideas, reconsider arguments and strengthen their reasoning.
- Students regularly write about what they read. Through daily on-demand writing, students learn to communicate their understanding of a text through writing.

Supporting Research:

Materials should give students extensive opportunities to write in response to texts and writing instruction should focus on the “characteristics of good writing including drawing sufficient evidence from texts, writing coherently with well-developed ideas, and writing clearly with sufficient command of standard English.” Discussion should be used to promote academic language, build literacy and communication skills, and develop critical thinking skills (Coleman and Pimentel, 2012).

Professional Development and Implementation Support

Teacher Tools

Match Fishtank provides support to teachers on curriculum implementation through an array of [teacher tools](#). Resources for elementary ELA include three different guides to teaching writing, a guide to using assessments, a guide to leading rigorous discussions, a guide to supporting English Language Learners, a guide to teaching vocabulary, and many others. We have plans in the near future to build out further resources to support teachers using our curriculum including videos and online modules for teachers focused on unpacking unit standards and essential questions, facilitating student discussions, teaching close reading, and vocabulary instruction.

Affiliated Resources

In addition to these tools, a library of 50 free online videos is available on an affiliated website called [Match Minis](#). These short, animated videos explore effective teaching practices such as running a “Turn and Talk,” leading a class discussion, and starting a lesson with a “Do Now.” Through [Match Schoolhouse](#), teachers can also access full online professional development courses on instructional practices, classroom management and coaching teachers.

Resources referenced in the creation of Fishtank ELA

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