

Match Fishtank is a free, open-source curriculum created by teachers, for teachers. To learn more about our curriculum click [here](#).

We are pleased to have received a “Meets Expectations” rating for Gateway One (Text Quality & Complexity and Alignment to Standards Components) and Gateway Two (Building Knowledge with Texts, Vocabulary, and Tasks) for our Grade 3-5 ELA curriculum. Our curriculum uses only high-quality, rigorous, and engaging fiction and nonfiction texts that promote authentic interaction with the Common Core Standards while simultaneously allowing for rich evidence-based discussions and frequent writing about texts. Our curriculum also places a strong emphasis on building knowledge and vocabulary by exploring high-interest topics and themes through strategically sequenced text-dependent questions, culminating projects, and independent reading. While we disagree with low ratings on a few indicators, we believe the “Meets Expectations” ratings for Gateways One and Two recognize the strengths of our curriculum.

Match Fishtank’s curriculum is intentionally less prescriptive about implementation than many other published curricula. Our goal was to create a culturally-relevant and standards-aligned curriculum that provides strong texts, tasks, and questions that push students and teachers to the rigor of the Common Core Standards, while also leaving teachers autonomy to decide how to teach the curriculum in their classrooms. A unique feature of our curriculum is that we do not script daily lesson plans or provide student worksheets. We believe that a rigorous ELA lesson is one where students are engrossed in a complex text, discussion, or writing assignment, and teachers are responding and giving feedback based on a deep knowledge of the text, the goals of the lesson, and student needs. Overly-scripted lesson plans can interfere with teachers’ intellectual preparation and detract from the dynamic relationship between teacher and curriculum that brings content to life for students in meaningful ways.

As a result, when it comes to specifying *how* teachers should teach, Match Fishtank’s curriculum is leaner than many other curricula. We believe this leanness is an asset and we have received overwhelmingly positive feedback from teachers across the country about the flexibility Match Fishtank offers around implementation. While many teachers find the curriculum highly usable for this reason, Match Fishtank did not meet expectations for Gateway Three (Usability) because many of the Gateway Three indicators look for more detailed prescriptive content.

Below we provide our response to the indicators where Match Fishtank lost points for Gateway Three.

For **Criterion 3a-3e** Match Fishtank did not meet expectations due to ratings on indicators 3a, 3b and 3c.

**3a - Materials are well-designed and take into account lesson structure and pacing.**

Match Fishtank's ELA curriculum partially met expectations on this indicator because it provides a "framework for lesson planning rather than a detailed lesson plan...These frameworks provide guidance for the teacher in what material to teach and what questions to ask, but do not provide pacing for the teacher." The intentional leanness of the Match Fishtank curriculum is at odds with this indicator. In addition, EdReports acknowledges that the curriculum provides teachers with a "lesson objective, reading materials required for the lesson, standards covered, target task, vocabulary, key questions, criteria for success, mastery response, and notes that provide the basic framework for teachers" and these frameworks, when combined with our resources on how to plan an effective lesson "allow the teacher to have the materials to effectively structure lessons with appropriate pacing of his/her classroom."

**3b - The teacher and student can reasonably complete the content within a regular school year, and the pacing allows for maximum student understanding.**

Match Fishtank curriculum only partially met expectations for this indicator because "the total number of lessons in both Literature and Science and Social Studies may be more than can be planned or completed in a typical 180-day school year in a traditional school setting." We include both Literature and Science and Social Studies components in our ELA curriculum to ensure that students are able to build as much background knowledge as possible while also building fluency with the features of informational texts. We teach our Science and Social Studies units during time that is traditionally reserved for humanities instruction, but acknowledge that some schools may not be able to accommodate both blocks and provide guidance on how to modify the curriculum in our course overviews.

**3c - The student resources include ample review and practice resources, clear directions, and explanation, and correct labeling of reference aids (e.g., visuals, maps, etc.)**

The review notes that "the lesson frameworks do not supply student materials or reference aids. The books that students use are purchased individually for students to annotate throughout the year." We believe the most meaningful materials for students to use are texts and that an effective ELA lesson involves students deeply engaged in a complex text, task or discussion, rather than a worksheet.

For **Criterion 3f-3j**, EdReports found that Match Fishtank partially met expectations based on scores for the following three indicators:

**3f - Materials contain a teacher's edition with ample and useful annotations and suggestions on how to present the content in the student edition and in the ancillary materials. Where applicable, materials include teacher guidance for the use of**

**embedded technology to support and enhance student learning.** While the EdReports review does state that our Teacher Tools “provide guidance for teachers on how to present the material contained in the units,” the reviewers found that the lesson frameworks “leave much up to the teacher.” Our Teacher Tools, combined with the lesson frames that “have objectives, standards, target task, key questions, and notes for the teacher” provide considerable guidance for teachers to implement Match Fishtank curriculum. Teachers have the aligned texts, questions and tasks necessary to teach a lesson, but can make implementation decisions that meet their unique students’ needs and their teaching context.

**3g - Materials contain a teacher’s edition that contains full, adult-level explanations and examples of the more advanced literary concepts so that teachers can improve their own knowledge of the subject, as necessary.** All advanced literary concepts found in the Match Fishtank curriculum surface within a text. Therefore, we think the most valuable preparation for a teacher is to deepen his or her understanding of the unit standards and the text itself. In our [Preparing to Teach an ELA Unit](#) and [Internalizing an ELA Lesson](#) guides, we highlight the importance of reading the text to build knowledge of the subject and explain other strategies to internalize the content as part of their preparation.

**3i - Materials contain explanations of the instructional approaches of the program and identification of the research-based strategies.** Our program is built off of a range of research-based strategies and ideas. See our [Program Background](#) for references to the research that supports our program.

For **Criterion 3k-3n**, EdReports found that Match Fishtank partially met expectations based on their findings for the following indicators:

**3l.ii - Assessments provide sufficient guidance to teachers for interpreting student performance and suggestions for follow-up.** EdReport’s reviewers thought our guidance to teachers on how to respond to student work was too general and left too much discretion to teachers. However, we believe teacher response to data is a critical component of student learning and that one of the best ways to determine student performance is to analyze student writing samples for mastery. To help teachers do so, we include rubrics and exemplar student answers for all assessments and exemplar responses for all target task questions. Teachers can use these tools to understand how their individual students are or are not meeting expectations.

**3m - Materials should include routines and guidance that point out opportunities to monitor student progress.** We believe that monitoring student progress is at the heart of teaching and learning. We provide guidance to teachers on how to monitor progress and adapt lessons as needed to meet a wide range of student abilities. The flexibility of our curriculum encourages this type of adaptation based on student needs; for example,

teachers may decide to do one lesson as a reading quiz to gauge how students are doing with a certain standard, or they may decide to collect particular writing samples to see evidence of student growth of a particular strategy.

For **Criterion 3o-3r** Match Fishtank did not meet expectations. The broad focus of these indicators is on whether the **materials provide teachers with strategies for meeting the needs of a range of learners so that they demonstrate independent ability with grade-level standards**. Differentiation for meeting the needs of a range of learners is at the core of our flexible curriculum. As noted by our passing score on Gateway One and Two, all students using the Fishtank curriculum have access to rigorous, grade-level texts and tasks. To help students access a particular text, teachers can scaffold based on individual student needs. Teachers can decide when to include graphic organizers for some students to help with writing, or when to include more oral language supports based on student EL levels. No single support works for all students, therefore, teachers are encouraged to use what works best for their students.