



Friends with Pens

Curricular Vision

This program aims to build relationships across communities and help students practice their reading/writing skills. This project is modeled for fourth grade classrooms forming a relationship between Jewish day schools and nearby public schools.

Students will meet at the beginning of the year, read the same book throughout the year, write letters to one another and meet a second time at the end of the year. The first meeting will be at the day school for students to get to know each other.

The second meeting will be at the public school for an end of year celebration and author visit, working with Wondermore, an organization who helps solidify author visits to schools. Teachers will receive support from the Jewish Community Relations Council throughout the program to navigate any challenges that arise and identify resources necessary to implement the program.

Academic Goals:

This program aligns with many of the 4th grade standards focusing specifically on students' ability to:

Read:

- Refer to **details and examples** in a text when explaining what the text states explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- Determine a **theme** of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text; summarize a text.
- Describe in **depth** a character, setting, or event in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., a character's thoughts, words, or actions).

Write:

- **Write opinion pieces on topics or texts**, supporting a point of view with reasons and information
- Produce **clear and coherent writing** in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.
- Write **routinely over extended time frames** (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

All above standards are taken from the 4th Grade Standards from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Curriculum Framework of 2017.



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Curricular Components:

Fall

- **October - Introductory Letters** - Students write a formal letter introducing themselves (either handwritten or via computer) that will be mailed or hand delivered to the teacher at the partner school.
- **November/December - In Person Meeting** - Students will develop relationships with the students at their partner school and build connections to a community that they might not have otherwise had.

Winter/Spring

- **January – April - Book Review Letters** – Students will deepen their comprehension skills by discussing the book with their pen pal through asking questions, generating connections and forming opinions on the book. Each student will write and receive a letter once per month.
- **May/June - Author Visit** - Students will gather at the public school partner location to hear from the author whose book they read that year. JCRC coordinates a partnership between the public school and Wondermore. Students will identify questions in advance and have the opportunity for their book to be signed by the author.

Teacher Commitments:

Program Wide Meeting - April 2020 Program Orientation: Teachers and administrators (as desired) will attend an online orientation with JCRC reviewing the expectations of the program and outlining next steps.

Breakouts: Teachers will be able to work together to create a program model that fits both their curricular needs by deciding the book to read together and content the students will be writing back and forth. Teachers can further explore other (optional) creative ways to connect the two classrooms. (Example: Zoom calls between two classrooms)

- Spring (May – June) Curriculum Design with Partner School
- Fall (September – October) Matching Meeting with Partner School
- Winter (January – February) Planning with Partner School
- Spring (March – April) Planning for Author Visit with Partner School

Program Meeting Wide – Mid-Year Check In: JCRC facilitates an opportunity for teachers to brainstorm and work with other teachers in the Greater Boston area who are also participating in the pens with pens program to share insight, ideas and reflect on the process.

Program Meeting Wide - Reflections on the Year: JCRC will lead a reflection session to gather feedback and determine future programmatic opportunities for revisions, replication or growth.