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Blackbird & Company Benchmarks

The following is a checklist that will help you assess annual student growth as a reader, writer, and thinker during grades 3—5. Over time, following our methodology, your student will become confident in the following ELA (English Language Arts) benchmarks. As you assess your student's work, you will be pleased to discover mastery in these areas. Keep in mind, mastery does not ever mean these benchmarks are a thing of the past, but rather, part of the active heart and mind of the student. There will be considerable overlap year after year, and you will observe maturity within a given skill over time. Use check marks to indicate the skill is being utilized by the student.

ELEMENTARY 3rd—5th Grade Tracking

READING

READING - Fluency
(Able to read easily and accurately)

☐ Reads aloud with expression and intonation, with attention to punctuation and phrasing
☐ Reads silently for increasing periods of time

READING - Comprehension
(Able to construct meaning from a text)

☐ Engages in purposeful listening and reading
☐ Activates and utilizes prior knowledge
☐ Makes, modifies, and confirms predictions while reading
☐ Resolves difficulties while reading by adjusting reading rate, re-reading
☐ Able to construct details and facts from text
☐ Traces character development, setting, and plot progression
☐ Answers text explicit and text implicit questions, citing evidence to defend responses
☐ Generates clarifying questions
☐ Recognizes story chronology
☐ Summarizes story or text
☐ Practices inferences
☐ Recalls and re-tells stories
☐ Identifies main ideas and visualizes via mental imagery
☐ Identifies author's perspective, viewpoint, and bias
☐ Draws conclusions and inferences
☐ Differentiates between facts and opinions

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ELA Benchmarks: 3–5

READING - Vocabulary Development

☐ Recognizes and understands specificity of introduced vocabulary
☐ Recognizes content-area words and technical or topical words
☐ Develops vocabulary through direct instruction, conversation, reading and listening to texts
☐ Uses knowledge of word structure to determine word meaning
☐ Uses context clues to determine meaning of unfamiliar and multiple meaning words
☐ Uses reference sources to learn word meanings
☐ Uses new words in new ways
☐ Examines word usage and effectiveness while reading

WRITING - Word Choice

☐ Uses clear, precise, and appropriate language
☐ Selects effective and vivid words using a dictionary or a Thesaurus
☐ Selects words to create sensory details, imagery, and characterization
☐ Uses words to create figurative language

WRITING - Sentences

☐ Recognizes the potential of each and uses the four types of sentences
☐ Combines, elaborates, and varies sentences
☐ Arranges words and phrases to craft well-formed syntax
☐ Uses parallel structure

WRITING – Conventions

☐ Uses conventional spelling, consults dictionary when necessary
☐ Knows the function of the 8 grammatical parts of speech
☐ Understands verb tenses and uses them to convey various time and state sequences
☐ Demonstrates command of capitalization and punctuation
☐ Uses a comma to separate items in a list, an introductory element, to set off words "yes" and "no" (Yes, thank you), to set off a tag question from the rest of the sentence (It's true, isn't it?), and to indicate direct address (Is that you, Theo?)
☐ Use underlining, quotation marks, or italics to indicate titles of works

WRITING - Paragraphs

☐ Crafts topic sentences to hook the reader
☐ Crafts concluding sentences to leave the reader with a twist at the end or a transition
☐ Crafts supporting sentences rich with facts and supporting details
☐ Establishes coherency that develops a central idea
☐ Selects form (organizational structure) based on purpose (function)
☐ Organizes ideas in a logical and chronological order
☐ Crafts essays with introductory, supporting, and concluding paragraphs

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ELA Benchmarks: 3–5

WRITING - Focus and Idea
☐ States a clear purpose and maintains focus
☐ Deletes extraneous information
☐ Rearranges words and sentences to improve meaning, focus, and clarity
☐ Uses sensory details, concrete examples, and imagery to elaborate

WRITING - Voice
☐ Develops a personal, identifiable voice with an individual tone/style
☐ Uses voice appropriate to audience and purpose
☐ Maintains consistent point of view

WRITING - Process
☐ Pre-writes using various strategies
☐ Develops first drafts of sentences, paragraphs, and multiple paragraphs
☐ Conferences draft by re-reading with a mentor, making changes to improve clarity
☐ Implements edits including spelling, mechanical, and grammatical errors
☐ Creates a final polished draft

WRITING - Domains
☐ Crafts narratives (stories, biographies, autobiography)
☐ Crafts expository writings (compare/contrast, problem/solution, how to, report of information)
☐ Crafts descriptive writing (paragraphs, essays, poems)
☐ Crafts persuasive writing (argumentative, opinion, editorial)

WRITING - Research
☐ Chooses and narrows topic
☐ Gathers appropriate reference sources
☐ Locates and collects information
☐ Takes notes and records findings
☐ Combines and compares information
☐ Summarizes and organizes information
☐ Evaluates, interprets, and draws conclusions
☐ Crafts a balance between original information and original ideas
☐ Respects intellectual property, avoiding plagiarism
☐ Presents report including citations

WRITING - Habits of Being
☐ Writes on a daily basis for an extended period of time
☐ Uses writing as a tool for learning, giving, and self-discovery
☐ Cares about creating ideas and the work of the writer

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HIGHER ORDER THINKING SKILLS – *HOTS*
(Applying information beyond observation and rote memory.)

Bloom's Taxonomy

6 CREATE
5 EVALUATE
4 ANALYZE
3 APPLY
2 UNDERSTAND
1 REMEMBER
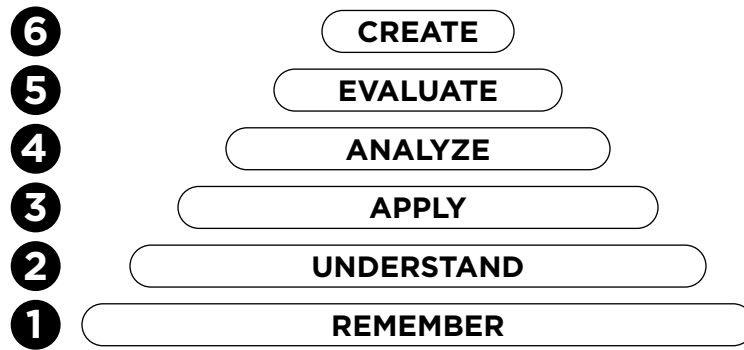
Back in the 1950s, educational psychologist, Richard Bloom developed a framework, now known as Blooms Taxonomy, to help us teachers evaluate HOTS. These skills enable students to actually apply knowledge. Students who apply will analyze, evaluate, and create. This is how ideas are born! As students progress through the CORE Integrated Literature and Writing journals, they will be analyzing character development, tracing story arc, evaluating actions, observing story themes, and much more. But most significant, each week, students will be crafting original ideas that spring from the reading—students will be creating! The Blooms Taxonomy framework is good for you, the teacher, to keep in mind as you observe and evaluate student progress.

Following is a general checklist of Higher Order Thinking Skills:

STORY
☐ Evaluates and critiques ideas presented
☐ Makes judgment about ideas presented
☐ Organizes and synthesizes ideas and information
☐ Makes judgments about ideas
☐ Analyzes and describes story connecting essential ideas, arguments, and perspectives
☐ Assimilates inferences, conclusions and generalizations supported by evidence
☐ Connects prior knowledge to story
☐ Organizes and synthesizes ideas and information
☐ Determines adequacy and appropriateness of an author's conclusion
☐ Defends assertions about a story through accurate citations
☐ Recognizes characteristics of a variety of fictional genres
☐ Identifies characteristics of a variety of non-fiction genres
☐ Identifies characteristics of poetry and song

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ELA Benchmarks: 3–5

CHARACTERS
☐ Recognizes and describes traits, actions, and motives of characters
☐ Analyzes relationships, changes, and points of view
☐ Analyzes internal conflict of characters
☐ Analyzes external conflict between characters
☐ Analyzes the effect of characters on plot and conflict

SETTING
☐ Relates setting to story problem/solution
☐ Identifies how the setting contributes to story mood

PLOT
☐ Recognizes the beginning, middle, end of a story or story section
☐ Traces overarching goals and outcomes toward resolution
☐ Traces rising action, climax, falling action/denouement to resolution/conclusion

THEMES
☐ Analyzes the central and significant message of a story
☐ Evaluates author's use of setting, plot, and characters to exhibit significant messages
☐ Identifies similarities and differences to construct a central and significant message

LITERARY APPRECIATION
☐ Shows interest in books and reading
☐ Engages in social interaction about books
☐ Reads a variety of grade-level fiction and non-fiction
☐ Reads from a variety of genres for a variety of purposes
☐ Chooses texts by drawing on personal interests, familiarity of authors, and recommendations
☐ Evaluates and critiques the quality of the literary experience

LITERARY DEVICE
☐ Recognizes the point of view of a story (1st Person, 3rd Person, Omniscient)
☐ Identifies the speaker or narrator in a selection
☐ Recognizes the difference between dialogue and narration
☐ Senses the basic mood of a story
☐ Recognizes rhetorical device
☐ Traces symbols and motif

LITERARY RESPONSE
☐ Reflects on reading through recollection and discussion
☐ Asks and answers questions
☐ Ruminates on what is written
☐ Uses evidence from the text to support interpretations, opinions, and conclusions
☐ Makes connections: text to text, text to self, and text to world