

Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills 6th Edition

DIBELS

Fourth Grade Student Materials DIBELS Benchmark Assessment

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Instructions:

These are reusable student stimulus materials. Make one copy for each person who is doing the benchmark testing. They can be laminated and comb bound for reuse.

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The Water Cycle

It is amazing to think that a dinosaur might have stepped in the water you drank last night. That is because the water you use to drink, shower, or swim in is very old. The earth has a fixed amount of water that keeps going around and around in what is known as the water cycle.

The water cycle has four main phases. The first phase is called evaporation. This occurs when the sun heats up the water in rivers, lakes, and oceans. The heat turns some of the water into vapor, or steam. At that point, the water is said to evaporate, as it becomes part of the air.

The next phase of the water cycle is called condensation. Water vapor in the air becomes cold, which causes it to change back into liquid form. The drops of water come together and form clouds. When the water becomes so heavy that the air cannot hold it any more, the next phase occurs.

In the phase of the water cycle called precipitation, dark clouds release their water, and it falls back to the earth. In warm weather, clouds release water in the form of rain or hail. When it is cold, water falls as snow or sleet. The rain, hail, snow, or sleet falls on land as well as on rivers, lakes, and oceans. This begins the final phase of the water cycle, called collection.

When water falls on land, the earth collects it. The water might run along the ground, where plants and animals may drink it. It might flow into rivers, streams, or lakes. Or the water might soak deep into the earth and become groundwater. Groundwater supports plants, which sink their roots down to find it. Human

beings dig wells or use water from underground springs to provide for their needs.

Water that falls on rivers and streams flows, sometimes for thousands of miles, into the oceans. When the sun shines on rivers, lakes, or oceans, some of the water turns into vapor. This vapor goes into the air, and the water cycle begins again.

The Land at the Top of the World

When you hear the word desert, you probably think of a hot, sandy place. There is another kind of desert, though. This desert is very cold, and for part of the year, it is wet and soggy. It is called the arctic tundra.

The arctic tundra is a barren and treeless land just below the North Pole. For up to ten months each year, this land is bitterly cold. Dry, icy winds strip moisture from everything they touch. The earth lies frozen under a thin layer of snow during the long, dark winter.

Then, for a short time, the sun shines brightly. Temperatures rise. The snow melts, and a thin layer of topsoil begins to thaw. Hardy plants spring into growth. Only fast-growing plants can survive here, since the growing season lasts a short six to ten weeks. Cotton grass, cushion plants, mosses, and lichens are plants found in the tundra during summer. These plants grow low to the ground. They can stand up to gusting winds as well as great changes in temperature.

The water from melting snow cannot soak into the frozen subsoil. It runs off into shallow streams or stands in pools and bogs. The standing water provides a perfect breeding ground for many insects. Mosquitoes and flies swarm busily, looking for an animal on which to feast.

The insects do not have to look very far. During summer, many animals move onto the tundra in search of food. Polar bears, arctic foxes, and wolves are among the predators who

roam there. They feed on plant eaters, such as caribou, snowshoe rabbits, and lemmings.

All too soon, the days shorten and temperatures begin to drop. Animals begin to move to the south. The long arctic winter will soon cover the tundra once again in snow and darkness.

Georgia O’Keeffe

“My first memory is of the brightness of light.” These are the words of Georgia O’Keeffe, a well-loved artist. She was describing a day many years earlier, before she was even a year old. Her mother had carried Georgia outdoors and placed her on a brightly colored quilt on the ground. Georgia recalled the patterns on the quilt amid the brightness of the white pillows surrounding her. Clearly, from the start, Georgia was drawn to the beauty around her.

Georgia was born over one hundred years ago and grew up on a dairy farm in Wisconsin. At that time, girls often were not educated. That was not the case in Georgia’s family, though. Georgia began school when she was only four years old. She attended the same one-room school her parents had attended. Georgia’s mother noticed her child’s interest in art. Back then, art was not taught in school, so Georgia’s mother paid for private art lessons.

After high school, Georgia studied art in Chicago and New York. Then, leaving art school behind, she began to work. One of her first jobs after graduating was teaching art at a college in the Texas Panhandle. She loved the land there. In fact, she made fifty paintings of the nearby canyons and prairies.

Although she loved the West, Georgia decided to go back to New York. There, she painted pictures of large flowers and tall buildings. Many people admired her art. One admirer was a famous gallery owner. The two spent a lot of time working together and became close. After a while, they married. They

were a happy couple, but Georgia was drawn back to the West. She tried to spend a few months each year visiting and painting in the West.

When Georgia's husband died and she was no longer tied to New York, she moved to New Mexico. Her paintings of the mountains and desert show the artist's respect for the beauty of the land. She lived there, continuing to work and paint, until she was quite old.

The Lion and the Mouse

Long, long ago, in a faraway place, the jungle animals could speak to one another. This did not necessarily mean they were all friends. In fact, most of the animals were terrified by the ferocious King Lion.

King Lion ruled over all the jungle creatures. He was so fierce that even the courageous elephants trembled in fear when King Lion roared. Small animals, in particular, tried to keep out of his way. Among these, Mouse was probably the most timid and afraid. He would scurry into his burrow at the mere sight of King Lion.

One day Mouse was busy searching for peanuts and didn't notice King Lion walking past. Considering the animal a tasty morsel, King Lion put his enormous paw on top of Mouse. Poor Mouse was terrified and begged for his life to be spared.

"Please let me go," Mouse stuttered. "If you do, I promise I will repay you for your good deed."

King Lion roared with laughter. "You could never repay me," the lion said, "but you have entertained me by even making such a suggestion. I will grant you your freedom."

Mouse scampered home, and he eventually got over his fright. Days passed, and life got back to normal. The next week, as Mouse was searching for food, he heard a terrible noise. Creeping forward, Mouse saw that King Lion had been captured by a hunter's net.

"Please, try to help me, Mouse" King Lion cried.

Using his large, strong teeth, Mouse began chewing the thick ropes holding the lion down. One by one, the ropes fell away, and soon King Lion was free!

“You have saved my life,” King Lion said to Mouse. “We will be friends forever.”

King Lion gained a good friend and learned that small friends can be excellent friends.

Airplane History

For as long as people have watched birds swirl through the air, they have longed to fly. Long ago, people would try to fly by acting like birds. They would build wings, tie them onto their arms, and then jump from a high point, flapping the wings. Sadly, this process never worked. Later, people had success in using hot-air balloons to rise into the air. There was a problem, though. The balloon went wherever the winds blew it, and the pilot had little or no control.

One hundred years ago, two brothers, Wilbur and Orville Wright, built a small, light airplane powered by a gas engine. For several years, the brothers had worked on gliding airplanes. They practiced flying in these until they were sure of their piloting skills. Finally, they knew they were ready to test the powered airplane. Sure enough, their first attempt was a success. Wilbur Wright flew more than one hundred feet in just twelve seconds. Later the same day, his brother, Orville Wright, stayed in the air for almost a whole minute, flying more than eight hundred feet. Finally, humans had achieved the dream of powered, controlled flight.

Soon others were building powered airplanes. These early airplanes were noisy, low-flying machines made of wood and cloth. Pilots sat in the open, without protection from the wind or the weather. There were no airports, so airplanes had to take off and land in fields and pastures. Pilots didn't have maps to tell them where to go. Rather, they relied on direction signals painted on barn roofs.

Since those days, airplanes have changed in dramatic ways. Today, huge, jet-powered airplanes transport people in air-conditioned comfort quickly from place to place. Airplanes also carry manufactured goods from one city or country to another. This makes it possible for people to find products from all parts of the world in their local stores. Airplanes have truly changed not only the way people travel, but the way people live.

The Tenth Birthday Party

For his tenth birthday, Carlos wanted to have a party at the neighborhood pool. Together, he and his mother made invitations for the party so that Carlos could send one to each of his friends.

On the morning of his birthday, Carlos ran outside to check the weather and was relieved to see a bright blue sky. His mother said, “Well, it looks like a perfect day for a swimming party. Now let’s have breakfast, and then we’ll get everything ready to take to the pool.”

As Carlos and his mother drove to the pool, Carlos noticed some dark clouds forming in the sky. “Oh, I hope it isn’t going to storm,” he said, remembering that lifeguards always closed the pool when there was lightning in the area.

Huge drops of rain splattered against the car’s windshield as Carlos and his mom pulled into the parking lot. As he stepped out of the car, Carlos heard a clap of thunder and then the lifeguard’s whistle.

“Everybody out of the pool!” the lifeguard yelled.

Carlos’s mother gave him a hug and said, “I am so sorry that the weather hasn’t cooperated with us. I know how much you were looking forward to swimming.”

Then Carlos saw his friends gathered under the awning of the pool building. When they spotted Carlos, the friends clapped loudly and began to sing “Happy Birthday.” Carlos ran to greet his friends and was surprised to find a table covered with good things to eat and some brightly wrapped presents.

“Why don’t you open this one right away,” said Carlos’s friend Molly.

Carlos opened the brightly wrapped present and found the board game he had been wanting.

“This is great,” Carlos exclaimed, “because even though we can’t swim, we can have fun playing this game.”

The friends hardly noticed the rain as they enjoyed Carlos’s new game. Later, they ate a delicious lunch of sandwiches, followed by Carlos’s favorite carrot cake.

Carlos watched the raindrops splash against the pool’s surface and the clouds move across the sky. This had not been the party he planned, but it turned out to be a terrific party after all.

The Youngest Rider

My name is Charlie, and I am the youngest rider on the Pony Express. The other riders call me Young Boy Charlie, because I am only twelve years old, but I have been riding for nearly ten months now, through the blistering heat and freezing cold. I ride six or more hours each day, changing horses every hour. I must tell you that yesterday was my most exciting day yet.

I was riding my favorite horse, Jennie, an excellent pinto and my last horse of the day. We were crossing a swift stream, when my horse spotted a mountain lion. Jennie reared up in fright, nearly knocking me off. Fortunately, that scared the mountain lion away.

I regained my balance, but the leather pack I was carrying fell into the stream. That pack holds all the mail, and it is my job to pass it to the next rider. I jumped off Jennie and ran down the bank, looking for the pack. I worried that the swift water had carried it away. Suddenly, a tall man appeared in front of me, holding my bag! I felt nervous, because I had heard stories about attacks on riders.

I said, "Hello, I'm Charlie, and I believe that is my bag."

Laughing, he said, "Aren't you a little young for a rider?"

The remark annoyed me, but I was accustomed to being teased. I responded, "I am nearly thirteen, and I am good enough to ride any horse in the West."

Again, he laughed loudly and then handed me the pack. "Well, good luck to you then," he said.

I thanked the man, and we parted ways. Checking inside the pack, I was relieved to find the letters were still dry. I quickly jumped on Jennie and made up for lost time, arriving at the next station right on schedule.

Maid of the Mist

Every year, my family begins planning our vacation during the cold days of winter. We pick a spot that everyone agrees on. Then we spend many pleasant evenings figuring out all the details, so we'll be ready to go when summer rolls around.

Last year we had one of our best vacations ever. We went to Niagara Falls, an amazing natural wonder. As usual, we had planned our trip in advance. One thing we all agreed on was that we wanted to take a ride on the Maid of the Mist, a large boat that takes passengers very near the falls.

After we bought our tickets, we waited on the dock for the boat. It was a short wait, and soon we were climbing aboard. The workers on the boat gave each of us a blue rain jacket, even though there was not a cloud in the sky.

“You'd better slip this on,” one of the workers said. “Without it, the spray from the falls will have you soaking wet in no time.”

The boat's large engines roared to life, and we pulled away from the dock. Before long, though, we couldn't hear the engines, because the roar of the water rushing over the falls was so loud! A heavy mist of water sprayed out from the falls, and we were grateful for the rain jackets. Still, water was dripping from my nose and covering every surface of the boat. I was glad we had planned in advance, because Dad knew to bring along a waterproof camera. Otherwise, there would have been no pictures for the scrapbook.

In all, the ride took about thirty minutes, which didn't seem quite long enough. I could have stayed, looking at those falls, for hours.

“We'll have another chance to see the falls tomorrow,” Mom reminded me. “We'll take the cable car ride and see the falls from the top instead of from the bottom.”

Suddenly, I was excited and looking forward to the next day's activity. And, unless the weather changed, I wouldn't have to worry about wearing a rain jacket.

She Reached for the Stars

Two hundred years ago when Maria Mitchell was born, most girls did not get a formal education. Instead, they learned how to cook, sew, and run a house. Boys, on the other hand, went to school to learn about math and science. Because there were few educated women, people took notice of them. Maria Mitchell was one such woman.

Maria Mitchell was born on Nantucket Island. She was lucky to have been born in this whaling village. Women were expected to be independent while the men were at sea. Maria was lucky in another way. Her father believed girls should be educated. He encouraged Maria's interest in astronomy.

Maria took a teaching job when she was sixteen years old. Then, two years later, she became a librarian. This job was perfect for her. She earned a good salary and had time to read the books that interested her.

One night, Maria was looking through her father's telescope. She enjoyed her time on the roof, studying the planets and stars. On this night, she noticed a new star. She watched it for several nights. Soon she decided it was not a star at all. It was a comet! The king of Denmark, who offered gold medals to those who discovered comets, heard of Maria's work. She was awarded a medal, and the comet was named "Miss Mitchell's Comet."

By this time, Maria had become well known. She traveled widely and worked with scientists around the world. She eventually became a professor of astronomy at Vassar College

where she continued teaching and researching until the end of her life.

Maria Mitchell served as an example to women around the world. She inspired many young women to seek careers in science. As she said, “We especially need imagination in science. It is not all mathematics, nor all logic, but is somewhat beauty and poetry.”