

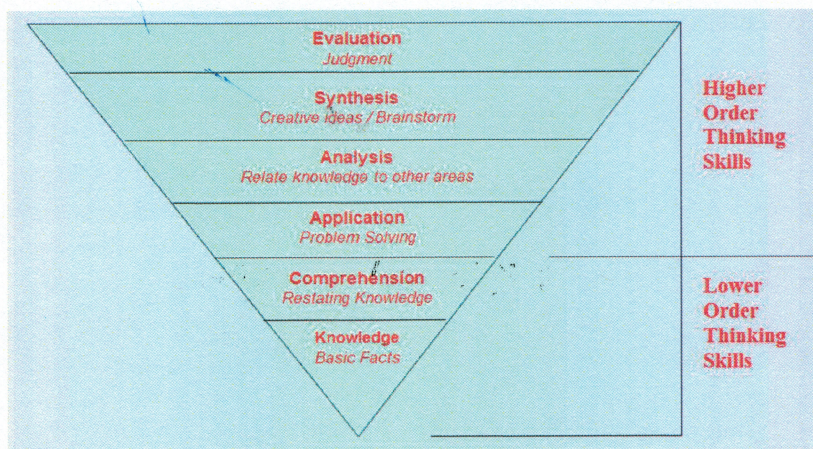
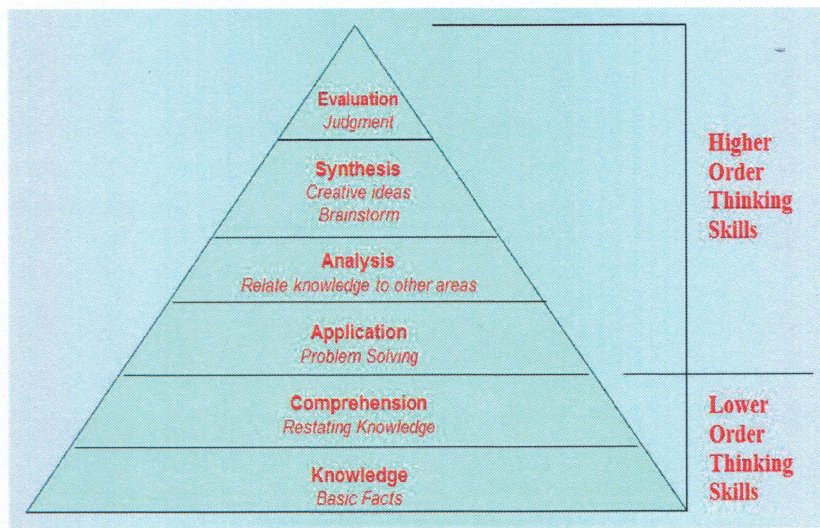


# Critical Thinking/Higher Order Skills

"Critical thinking skills" aka "higher order thinking skills" have been viewed as a positive tool for students. Although this is important to learn we believe that the "lower order" thinking skills should not be overlooked. At times the quest for higher order thinking skills, especially at lower elementary grade levels, may leave out some of the crucial building blocks to knowledge.

The chart to the right is based on Blooms taxonomy and represents the steps to learning starting from the bottom up. we should master the comprehension of the tools of knowledge such as math facts, phonics, and writing the alphabet before applying various different problem solving techniques.

***"Lower order thinking skills" are lower because they are foundational NOT because they are inferior.***



Today it appears that there is much focus on "higher order thinking skills" or "critical thinking skills. Children are taught to view problems in ways that include analytical and judgment tools they may or may not possess. They are asked to think about a variety of factors before they master the basic essential elements of solving that math problem or writing that sentence. In some cases the actual skills of correct spelling, proper grammar and absolute correct answers in math are not expected to be part of the solution. The process of thinking and the process of communicating are more important than correct answers and proper technique.

According to the American Federation of Teachers *"critical thinking consists of seeing both sides of an issue, being open to new evidence that disconfirms your ideas, reasoning dispassionately, demanding that claims be backed by evidence, deducing and inferring conclusions from available facts, solving problems, and so forth."* (1) Ask yourself if your 1st or 2nd grade student has the right experience and tools to see a variety of ways to answer a math problem or did they master the most efficient method of arriving at the correct answer? Ask yourself does my middle school student have the pre-determined correct answer that the school wanted for this social studies problem or are my family values different from the school's subjective correct response?

A very common "critical thinking" question is about a lifeboat which can carry a certain number of passengers. There is one more passenger than number of seats. Which person do you let die? Many "critical thinking/higher order thinking" skills questions require a moral judgment. Will your child's "judgment" match the expected proper response?

1. [http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/Crit\\_Thinking.pdf](http://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/periodicals/Crit_Thinking.pdf)