

California State SEL Standards and DESSA Crosswalk

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California's State Department of Education outlines standards for student social and emotional competence growth in kindergarten to grade 12 that are aligned with CASEL's five-domain competencies. The DESSA is a standardized, norm-referenced behavior rating scale that assesses the social and emotional competencies of students in kindergarten to grade 12. It can be completed by teachers, guardians, and out of school time staff in about 5-8 minutes. The DESSA is strength-based; the items focus on positive social and emotional skills. The DESSA can be used to inform how a student is progressing with their social and emotional development. This crosswalk outlines the overlap between Aperture's competencies measured by the DESSA and California state Social Emotional Learning Standards.

The DESSA is organized into subscales that provide information about eight social and emotional competencies. These competencies include:

1. **Self-awareness:** a child's realistic understanding of their strengths and limitations and consistent desire for self-improvement;
2. **Social-awareness:** a child's capacity to interact with others in a way that shows respect for their ideas and behaviors, recognizes their impact on them, and uses cooperation and tolerance in social situations;
3. **Self-management:** a child's success in controlling their emotions and behaviors, to complete a task or succeed in a new or challenging situation;
4. **Goal-directed behavior:** a child's initiation of and persistence in completing tasks of varying difficulty;
5. **Relationship skills:** a child's consistent performance of socially acceptable actions that promote and maintain positive connections with others;
6. **Personal responsibility:** a child's tendency to be careful and reliable in their actions and in contributing to group efforts;
7. **Decision making:** an approach to problem solving that involves learning from others and from their previous experiences, using values to guide action, and accepting responsibility for decisions;
8. **Optimistic thinking:** an attitude of confidence, hopefulness, and positive thinking regarding themselves and their life situations in the past, present, and future.

Table 1. Overview of Alignment of Aperture’s Competencies to California State Standards

Note. SA = Self-Awareness, SM = Self-Management, SO = Social Awareness, RS = Relationship Skills, DM = Decision-Making, GB = Goal-Directed Behavior, PR = Personal Responsibility, OT = Optimistic Thinking. This table uses the standards outlined for middle school students, however, the DESSA alignment is consistent for all grade bands.

Standard	Competencies	SA	SM	SO	RS	DM	GB	PR	OT
Self-Awareness	Identity – 1.A.3 - Students identify and explore their different social identities, including race, ethnicity, language, gender, and ability. Students begin to explore the concept of intersectionality. Students cultivate a healthy, well-grounded sense of self- confidence based on their strengths.	X							X
	Identity – 1.B.3 - Students examine and reflect on the underlying causes of emotions. Students recognize the difference between emotions and feelings. Students work to label, with specificity, their feeling states.	X							
	Identity – 1.C.3 - Students explore the concept of values: how they are formed, how they reflect our identity and experiences, and how they are applied. Students start to examine how personal perspectives and values can be challenged	X		X				X	
	Belonging – 1.D.3 - Students begin to identify their prejudices and biases and how those might impact their behaviors toward others related to being inclusive or exclusive.	X		X	X				
	Belonging – 1.E.3 - Students begin to identify what they need from communities they belong to and assess if their needs are being met. Students are aware of the ways they are or are not meeting the needs of others in their learning community.								
	Agency – 1.F.3 – Students recognize the connection between their thoughts, emotions, and behavior based on brain science. Students recognize how they express their emotions may be influenced by their culture and experiences.	X		X					
	Agency – 1.G.3 - Students develop a sense of personal power and can identify and use their personal, social, and cultural assets in healthy ways.	X					X		X
	Agency – 1.H.3 - Students examine and reflect on how beliefs about themselves and about learning intersect (mastery orientation versus performance orientation) and the impact on their optimism and confidence.	X					X		X

Standard	Competencies	SA	SM	SO	RS	DM	GB	PR	OT
Self-Management	Identity - 2.A.3 - Students explore the difference between emotion suppression and management and how to channel emotions productively. Students work on reframing feelings before acting on them.		X			X			
	Identity - 2.B.3 - Students describe how stress affects their choices and actions and practice multiple strategies to manage stress. Students choose, take ownership of, and engage in activities that promote their mental and physical health.		X					X	X
	Identity - 2.C.3 - Students consider various paths through individual and collective adversity. Students reflect on their sources of inner strength, hope, and what they look for in supportive relationships.	X	X						X
	Belonging - 2.D.3 - Students seek out and make changes based on constructive feedback and demonstrate contextually appropriate ways of giving feedback to peers, educators, and others in their learning community and family.		X		X	X			
	Belonging - 2.E.3 - Students reflect on their changing boundaries to support their growth and well-being. Students also examine and reflect on healthy boundaries within different cultures.	X	X						X
	Agency - 2.F.3 - Students identify and work toward incremental personal and collective goals in pursuit of longer-term, achievements. Students identify and commit to roles in achieving collective goals. Students begin to examine how to balance personal and collective goals.		X					X	X
	Agency - 2.G.3 - Students can create and follow routines, independently adapt to challenges and distractions, and apply perseverance strategies that work for them.		X				X		X
	Agency - 2.H.3 - Students take an active role in managing their time, activities, and responsibilities.		X				X		X

Standard	Competencies	SA	SM	SO	RS	DM	GB	PR	OT
Social Awareness	Identity – 3.A.3 - Students reflect on how social identities (e.g., cultural, racial, class, gender, linguistic, ability) impact the way people view and interact with others, including those from diverse groups.			X	X				
	Identity – 3.B.3 - Students explore differences in emotional expression and communication norms across cultures and communities and how differences can contribute to misunderstandings, but also provide opportunity for growth. Students respond compassionately to others’ experiences and demonstrate care and concern.			X	X				X
	Belonging – 3.C.3 - Students co-construct all aspects of relationship-centered, just, and caring learning environments, including shared agreements and norms for engagement. Students question the inclusivity of the curriculum.			X	X				X
	Belonging – 3.D.3 - Students know when and where to proactively seek resources and supports and begin to understand the interdependence of members of a community.			X	X	X			
	Belonging – 3.E.3 - Students reflect on how to build an accepting and inclusive learning community. Students collaborate to identify barriers to belonging for all individuals in their learning community. Students question the norms of groups and systems in healthy ways.			X			X	X	
	Agency – 3.F.3 - Students examine and reflect on how individuals act on their explicit and implicit bias, how some policies can contribute to injustice, and the damaging impact this can have on others and our society. Students explore intent versus impact.	X	X	X					
	Agency – 3.G.3 - Students accurately recognize inequities and community needs and collaborate with adults and peers to take action on real world issues in support of a more inclusive, caring, healthy, and just community.			X					X

Standard	Competencies	SA	SM	SO	RS	DM	GB	PR	OT	
Relationship Skills	Identity – 4.A.3 - Students examine and reflect on how they make decisions, how their peers influence these decisions, and how to better navigate peer-pressure situations.				X	X		X		
	Identity – 4.B.3 - Students explore different types of leadership and recognize that different leadership capacities, skills, and styles are needed in varied contexts. Students increasingly take on leadership roles and reflect on and identify areas of improvement.				X		X	X		
	Belonging – 4.C.3 - Students examine and reflect on the changing nature of friendships and other relationships and the importance of a diverse peer network. Students recognize characteristics of healthy and unhealthy relationships. Students reflect on effective communication within a relationship and the potential impact technology can have on communication and relationships.	X				X	X			
	Belonging – 4.D.3 - Students explore different cultural practices and world views. Students begin to develop skills for communication and interaction across cultures. Students recognize the importance of a lifelong commitment to reflection and self-critique as the foundation of cultural humility.					X		X	X	
	Agency – 4.E.3 - Students work with peers and adults to come up with mutually acceptable solutions that address underlying concerns on both sides.					X	X			
	Agency – 4.F.3 - Students proactively use restorative approaches, including restorative questions in conflicts. Students increasingly take responsibility for harm they may cause and look for opportunities to repair relationships. Students practice forgiveness.		X			X			X	
	Agency – 4.G.3 - Students learn and practice nonviolent communication strategies. Students use their strengths to: improve communication; voice opinions directly, with tact; and advocate to have their wants and needs met. Students engage in respectful negotiation.				X	X				X
	Agency – 4.H.3 - Students examine and reflect on the concept of microaggression. Students understand allyship and the bystander effect. Students understand that allyship is a continuous process that includes ongoing self-reflection.				X	X				

Standard	Competencies	SA	SM	SO	RS	DM	GB	PR	OT
Responsible Decision-Making	Identity – 5.A.3 - Students intentionally practice curiosity and approach diverse groups with open-mindedness. Students seek out new experiences from which they can grow.					X		X	X
	Identity – 5.B.3 - Students understand the concepts and importance of ethics and can apply them in their personal and learning contexts. Students understand their role and others’ roles in the ethical use of our planet’s resources.					X	X	X	
	Identity – 5.C.3 - Students apply an improvement-orientation and perspective to personal and social problems and can facilitate problem-solving conversations among peers.				X	X		X	X
	Belonging – 5.D.3 - Students differentiate and honor their own and others’ physical, emotional, and intellectual safety and know how identity impacts safety. Students adhere to learning environment safety standards and increasingly assess risk for themselves.	X					X		X
	Belonging – 5.E.3 - Students explore their own role as a caring citizen and resident and their social responsibility to participate in our democracy to advance collective well-being. Students reflect on the role of civic leaders and elected representatives.				X		X		X
	Agency – 5.F.3 - Students deepen their understanding of critical thinking and how to use discernment in making judgements and decisions. Students apply these skills with media messages and online sources.				X		X		X
	Agency – 5.G.3 - Students anticipate the most likely consequences of their own and others’ actions. Students identify the impacts of choices on their short- or longer-term goals and on their wider community, country, and the planet.				X		X	X	X



Aperture Education empowers over 3,000 schools and out-of-school-time programs across North America to measure, strengthen, and support social and emotional competence in K-12 youth and educators. This system enables education leaders to make strategic, data-based decisions about SEL within their organizations. The Aperture system includes the DESSA suite of strength-based assessments, CASEL-aligned intervention strategies, and robust reporting, all in one easy-to-use digital platform. Aperture has supported over one million students in their social and emotional growth and continues to develop innovative solutions to bring the whole child into focus. To learn more, visit www.ApertureEd.com.