MA State SEL Standards and DESSA Crosswalk

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The DESSA is a standardized, norm-referenced behavior rating scale that assesses the social and emotional competencies of students in grades K-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 DESSA competencies and Massachusetts state standards in Social and Emotional Health and Strand 4 of the Vocational Technical Education Framework, Employability and Career Readiness Knowledge and Skills.

How the DESSA Aligns to the MA State Social and Emotional Health and Vocational Standards

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

a) Self-awareness: a child's realistic understanding of their strengths and limitations and consistent desire for self-improvement;

b) Self-management: a child's success in controlling their emotions and behaviors, to complete a task or succeed in a new or challenging situation;

c) 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;

d) Relationship skills: a child's consistent performance of socially acceptable actions that promote and maintain positive connections with others;

e) 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;

f) Goal-directed behavior: a child's initiation of and persistence in completing tasks of varying difficulty;

g) Personal responsibility: a child's tendency to be careful and reliable in their actions and in contributing to group efforts;

h) Optimistic thinking: an attitude of confidence, hopefulness, and positive thinking regarding themselves and their life situations in the past, present, and future.

The table below shows how the eight social and emotional competencies included on the DESSA align with the MA State Standards. For each question on the DESSA, the rater is asked to indicate on a five-point scale how often the student engaged in each behavior over the past four weeks. This type of assessment is consistent with the skill-based approach that has been found to be most strongly associated with academic performance.

Table 1. Alignment of DESSA Competencies to PK – Grade 5 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

Social and Emotional Health

PK – Grade 5									
Topic	**Standard**	**SA**	**SM**	**SO**	**RS**	**DM**	**GB**	**PR**	**OT**
Mental Health	05.01 - Identify the various feelings that most people experience and describe the physical and emotional reactions of the body to intense positive and negative feelings	X		X	X				
Mental Health	05.02 - Apply methods to accommodate a variety of feelings in a constructive manner in order to promote well being			X	X				X
Mental Health	05.03 - Define character traits such as honesty, trustworthiness, self-discipline, respectfulness, and kindness and describe their contribution to identity, self-concept, decision-making, and interpersonal relationships	X			X				X
Mental Health	05.04 - Describe the effects of leadership skills on the promotion of teamwork				X				
Mental Health	05.05 - Explain and practice a model for decision-making that includes gathering information, predicting outcomes, listing advantages and disadvantages, identifying moral implications, and evaluating decisions					X			
Mental Health	05.06 - Explain how coping skills (such as perceiving situations as opportunities, taking action/exerting control where possible) positively influence self-concept	X	X			X			X
Family Life	06.01 - Describe different types of families, addressing membership and social influences, and the functions of family members			X	X				
Family Life	06.02 - Describe factors, such as character traits of individuals and life events, that can strengthen families			X	X				X
Family Life	06.03 - Identify whom to talk with about family problems and successes	X	X		X	X			
Family Life	06.04 - Identify what parents do to provide a safe, healthy environment for their children			X					
Interpersonal Relationships	07.01 - Explain why communication is essential in human relationships and identify people from whom children can learn how to communicate, such as family members, friends, community members, and members of faith-based groups			X	X			X	
Interpersonal Relationships	07.02 - Apply both verbal and non-verbal communication skills to develop positive relationships and improve the social environment of the school	X	X	X	X				
Interpersonal Relationships	07.03 - Describe the concept of friendship and contrast qualities that strengthen or weaken a friendship, including the importance of sound character in interacting with others	X		X	X				X
Interpersonal Relationships	07.04 - Describe the concepts of prejudice and discrimination			X					

Table 2. Alignment of DESSA Competencies to Grades 6 – 8 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

Social and Emotional Health

Topic	Standard	SA	SM	SO	RS	DM	GB	PR	OT
	Grades 6 - 8								
Mental Health	05.07 - Identify and describe the experience of different feelings (such as elation, joy, grief, and rage) and how feelings affect daily functioning	X		X					
Mental Health	05.08 - Identify the causes and effects of depression and how to seek help	X	X						
Mental Health	05.09 - Describe the relationships among physical appearance, changes in the body, and self-concept and esteem	X							
Mental Health	05.10 - Describe the contribution of a personal support system to good mental health	X			X				X
Family Life	06.05 - Describe how the functions, purposes, and responsibilities of family members change with life events			X	X				
Family Life	06.06 - Explain the family life cycle and recognize that raising a child is one of the most important functions of a family			X					
Family Life	06.07 - Describe those one can trust or turn to for help when needed, such as a support system that can include relatives, friends, neighbors, community organizations, and faith-based groups	X			X				X
Family Life	06.08 - Describe ways in which relationships among parents and children change during adolescence, and compare peer and parental influences			X					
Interpersonal Relationships	07.05 - Apply attentive listening, feedback, and assertiveness skills to enhance positive interpersonal communication			X	X			X	
Interpersonal Relationships	07.06 - Explain how peer pressure influences choices and apply strategies for managing negative peer pressure and encouraging positive peer pressure	X	X	X		X			
Interpersonal Relationships	07.07 - Recognize the positive contributions of character traits (such as tolerance, honesty, self-discipline, respectfulness, and kindness) to relationships, the benefit to relationships which include understanding and respecting individual differences, and the detrimental effect of prejudice (such as prejudice on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, class, or religion) on individual relationships and society as a whole	X		X	X	X		X	X
Interpersonal Relationships	07.08 - Describe the purpose of dating and acceptable dating attitudes (such as respect) and appropriate conduct				X	X		X	
Interpersonal Relationships	07.09 - Explain the benefits of abstinence, postponing sexual behavior, and setting limits on sexual behavior				X	X		X	

Table 3. Alignment of DESSA Competencies to High School 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

Topic	Standard	SA	SM	SO	RS	DM	GB	PR	OT
High School									
Mental Health	05.11 - Analyze healthy ways to express emotions and to cope with feelings, including the common causes of stress, its effects on the body, and managing stress	X	X						X
	05.12 - Identify the factors that help people deal with grief		X	X					X
	05.13 - Analyze research on health behaviors and brain chemistry and emotional functioning	X				X		X	
	05.14 - Describe theories of personality development, including identity formation, and differentiate among the concepts of ideal self, public self, and private self	X							
	05.15 - Describe the influence of gender on identity and self-concept	X							
	05.16 - Describe the signs of destructive behavior, and identify intervention strategies and kinds of professional intervention	X	X			X		X	
	05.17 - Identify common mental health disorders (for example, anxiety, schizophrenic, and mood, including depression and bipolar) and treatments (for example, psychological, biomedical)	X							
	05.18 - Identify ways in which decision-making is influenced by sound character, family, and personal beliefs					X			X
	05.19 - Explain positive techniques for handling difficult decisions	X				X		X	X
Family Life	06.09 - Explain the functions, purposes, and social significance of family from various historical periods, including modern times			X					
	06.10 - Identify the traits of a healthy family (such as responsibility, communication, trust, loyalty, respect, commitment, love, affirmation, and self-reliance) and explain the interdependence and independence of family members			X					
	06.11 - Identify steps for getting support or help, including identifying resources for families whose members have special health needs	X						X	
	06.12 - Identify the child-rearing skills (including emotional maturity to nurture children and knowledge of child development stages) and the financial resources needed for parenting							X	
	06.13 - Evaluate various types of discipline parents might use with children of different ages					X		X	
	06.14 - Describe the consequences of teen parenting from the perspectives of the teen mother, teen father, and the parents of the teens					X		X	

Topic	Standard	SA	SM	SO	RS	DM	GB	PR	OT
High School									
Family Life	06.15 - Identify desirable character traits (such as love, respectfulness, generosity, kindness, and forgiveness) and describe the development of good character, including the role of parents and family in the moral development of children	X						X	X
Family Life	06.16 - Describe considerations relevant to becoming a parent (including the various ways of becoming a parent such as foster parenting, adoption, and stepparenting)					X		X	
Family Life	06.17 - Describe parental practices that encourage literacy in young children							X	
Family Life	06.a - Identify laws related to child abuse					X		X	
Interpersonal Relationships	07.09 - Explain the benefits of abstinence, postponing sexual behavior, and setting limits on sexual behavior		X			X		X	
Interpersonal Relationships	07.10 - Identify techniques for handling anger and resolving conflicts in the family, friendships, and the workplace, including seeking help from professional and community organizations and faith-based groups	X	X		X	X			
Interpersonal Relationships	07.11 - Contrast the emotional impact on long-term relationships of positive communication (such as active listening, praise, and humor) with negative communication (such as teasing, name calling, bullying)	X	X	X	X	X			
Interpersonal Relationships	07.12 - Describe the influence of the larger social group on individual conduct (such as giving comfort, solving problems, and controlling deviant behavior through enforcing laws and the development of good character in the members of society)	X	X	X	X	X			
Interpersonal Relationships	07.13 - Explain the importance of communication in setting limits in a sexual relationship	X		X	X	X		X	
Interpersonal Relationships	07.14 - Explain the purpose of friendship in different stages of the life cycle and describe how friends can support one another in making healthy decisions			X	X				X
Interpersonal Relationships	07.15 - Recognize and identify the concept of friendship without romantic involvement and how friendship may develop into romantic relationships			X	X				
Interpersonal Relationships	07.16 - Explain the importance of responsibility and character traits such as love, respectfulness, generosity, kindness, and forgiveness, in committed relationships			X	X			X	X
Interpersonal Relationships	07.17 - Describe commitment in casual and serious relationships			X	X				

Table 4. Alignment of DESSA Competencies to Employability and Career Readiness Standards (Strand 4 of Vocational Technical Education Framework)

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

Topic		Standard	SA	SM	SO	RS	DM	GB	PR	OT
Career Exploration and Navigation	**Develop a Career Plan and Portfolio**	A.01.01 - Develop and revise career plan annually based on workplace awareness and skill attainment.						X		
		A.01.02 - Assess personal strengths and interest areas to determine potential careers, career pathways and career ladders.	X					X		X
		A.01.03 - Examine potential career field(s)/discipline(s) and identify criteria to select, secure and keep employment in chosen field(s).	X					X		
		A.01.04 - Research and evaluate a variety of careers utilizing multiple sources of information and resources to determine potential career(s) and alternatives.	X					X		
		A.01.05 - Identify training and education requirements that lead to employment in chosen field(s) and demonstrate skills related to evaluating employment opportunities.	X					X		
		A.01.06 - Explore and evaluate postsecondary educational opportunities including degrees and certifications available, traditional, and nontraditional postsecondary pathways, technical school and apprenticeships, cost of education, financing methods including scholarships and loans and the cost of loan repayment.	X					X		
		A.01.07 - Create a portfolio showcasing academic and career growth including a career plan, safety credential, resume and a competency profile demonstrating the acquisition of the knowledge and skills associated with at least two years of full-time study in the Chapter 74 program.	X					X	X	X
	Demonstrate Job Search Skills	A.02.01 - Conduct a job search and complete written and electronic job applications, resumes, cover letters and related correspondence for a chosen career path.						X	X	
		A.02.02 - Explore and evaluate postsecondary job opportunities and career pathways specific to career technical areas.						X		X
		A.02.03 - Identify role and use of social media and networking for staying current with career and employment trends as well as networking, job seeking and career development opportunities.						X		
		A.02.04 - Demonstrate ability to use social media and networking to develop useful occupational contacts, job seeking and career development opportunities.					X	X		

Employability and Career Readiness - Strand 4

Topic		Standard	SA	SM	SO	RS	DM	GB	PR	OT
Career Exploration and Navigation	Demonstrate all Phases of the Job Interview Process	A.03.01 - Gather relevant information about potential employer(s) from multiple print and digital sources, assessing the credibility and accuracy of each source.					X	X		
		A.03.02 - Identify employment eligibility criteria, such as drug/alcohol free status, clean driving record, etc.						X	X	
		A.03.03 - Practice effective interviewing skills: appearance, inquiry and dialogue with interviewer, positive attitude and evidence of work ethic and skills.	X	X		X		X		X
		A.03.04 - Explore and evaluate employment benefit packages including wages, vacation, health care, union dues, cafeteria plans, tuition reimbursement, retirement and 401K.						X		
Communication in the Workplace	Demonstrate Appropriate Oral and Written Communication Skills in the Workplace	B.01.01 - Communicate effectively using the language and vocabulary appropriate to a variety of audiences within the workplace including coworkers, supervisors and customers.	X	X	X	X				
		B.01.02 - Read technical and work-related documents and demonstrate understanding in oral discussion and written exercise.		X				X		
		B.01.03 - Demonstrate professional writing skills in work-related materials and communications (e.g., letters, memoranda, instructions and directions, reports, summaries, notes and/or outlines).					X	X		
		B.01.04 - Use a variety of writing/publishing/presentation applications to create and present information in the workplace.						X		
		B.01.05 - Identify, locate, evaluate and use print and electronic resources to resolve issues or problems in the workplace.					X	X		
		B.01.06 - Use a variety of financial and data analysis tools to analyze and interpret information in the workplace.					X	X		
		B.01.07 - Orally present technical and work-related information to a variety of audiences.						X		
		B.01.08 - Identify and demonstrate professional non-verbal communication.	X	X		X				
	Demonstrate Active Listening Skills	B.02.01 - Listen attentively and respectfully to others.	X	X	X	X				
		B.02.02 - Focus attentively, make eye contact or other affirming gestures, confirm understanding and follow directions.	X	X	X	X				
		B.02.03 - Show initiative in improving communication skills by asking follow-up questions of speaker in order to confirm understanding			X	X				

Employability and Career Readiness - Strand 4									
Topic	**Standard**	**SA**	**SM**	**SO**	**RS**	**DM**	**GB**	**PR**	**OT**
Work Ethic and Professionalism / **Demonstrate Attendance and Punctuality**	C.01.01 - Identify and practice professional time-management and attendance behaviors including punctuality, reliability, planning and flexibility.				X	X	X	X	
Demonstrate Proper Workplace Appearance	C.02.01 - Identify and practice professional appearance specific to the workplace.					X	X	X	
	C.02.02 - Identify and practice personal hygiene appropriate for duties specific to the workplace.					X	X	X	
	C.02.03 - Identify and wear required safety gear specific to the workplace.						X	X	
Accepts Direction and Constructive Criticism	C.03.01 - Demonstrate ability (both verbally and non-verbally) to accept direction and constructive criticism and to implement solutions to change behaviors.	X	X				X	X	
	C.03.02 - Ask appropriate questions to clarify understanding of feedback.					X	X	X	
	C.03.03 - Analyze own learning style and seek instructions in a preferred format that works best for their understanding (such as oral, written or visual instruction).	X					X		X
Demonstrate Motivation and Initiative	C.04.01 - Evaluate assigned tasks for time to completion and prioritization.	X				X	X		
	C.04.02 - Demonstrate motivation through enthusiasm, engagement, accurate completion of tasks and activities.		X				X		X
	C.04.03 - Demonstrate initiative by requesting new assignments and challenges.	X					X		X
	C.04.04 - Explain proposed solutions to challenges observed in the workplace.			X		X			
	C.04.05 - Demonstrate the ability to evaluate multiple solutions to problems and challenges using critical reasoning and workplace/industry knowledge and select the best solution to the problem.		X	X		X			
	C.04.06 - Implement solution(s) to challenges and/or problem(s) observed in the workplace.					X	X		
	C.04.07 - See projects through completion and check work for quality and accuracy.		X			X	X	X	

Employability and Career Readiness - Strand 4

Topic		Standard	SA	SM	SO	RS	DM	GB	PR	OT
Work Ethic and Professionalism	Demonstrate Awareness of Workplace Culture and Policy	C.05.01 - Display ethical behavior in use of time, resources, computers and information.		X			X	X	X	
		C.05.02 - Identify the mission of the organization and/or department.						X	X	
		C.05.03 - Explain the benefits of a diverse workplace.			X	X				X
		C.05.04 - Demonstrate a respect for diversity and its benefit to the workplace.			X	X				X
	Interact Appropriately with Coworkers	C.06.01 - Work productively with individuals and in teams.	X		X	X		X	X	
		C.06.02 - Develop positive mentoring and collaborative relationships within work environment.			X	X		X		X
		C.06.03 - Show respect and collegiality, both formally and informally.			X	X				X
		C.06.04 - Explain and follow workplace policy on the use of cell phones and other forms of social media.		X			X		X	
		C.06.05 - Maintain focus on tasks and avoid negative topics or excessive personal conversations in the workplace.		X			X		X	
		C.06.06 - Negotiate solutions to interpersonal and workplace conflicts.	X	X		X	X			

APERTURE EDUCATION

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.