

# Montana's Whole Child Skill Development Competencies and DESSA Crosswalk

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Montana's State Office of Public Instruction outlines Whole Child Skill Development Competencies for students in kindergarten to grade 12. Schools and districts in Montana might consider measuring student growth across these competencies using the DESSA. The DESSA is a CASEL-aligned, 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. This crosswalk outlines the overlap between Aperture's competencies measured by the DESSA and Montana's Whole Child Skill Development Competencies.

## **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 Montana Whole Child Skill Development Competencies**

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 students in grades 3-5; however, the DESSA alignment is consistent for all grade bands.

Competency	Definition	SA	SM	SO	RS	DM	GB	PR	OT
Self-Awareness	1. Label and describe emotions using a growing vocabulary (e.g., happy, excited, mad, furious, worried, scared).	X							
	2. When prompted by adults, understand the link between emotions and physical responses and behavior in self and others.	X	X						
	3. Identify and reflect upon personal self-interests and skills to develop simple goals to pursue.	X					X		X
	4. Identify strategies, such as asking for help, to persevere through undesirable tasks.	X			X	X			
	5. Identify strengths and limitations when faced with a challenge.	X							X
	6. Identify and examine their role in family and community in terms of how they view themselves and others.	X		X	X				
	7. Demonstrate honesty, integrity, and self-compassion while acknowledging mistakes as opportunities to learn.	X	X						X

Competency	Definition	SA	SM	SO	RS	DM	GB	PR	OT
Self-Management	1. Use simple techniques (e.g., breathing, counting to five) to regulate reactions to personal stressors and reduce the negative effects of stress.	X	X			X			
	2. Use simple self-monitoring strategies to regulate and express emotions to self and others.	X	X		X				
	3. Demonstrate self-regulated emotions while displaying behaviors in a manner sensitive to self and others.	X	X		X				
	4. Apply oneself to personal and/or collective goals demonstrating courage, initiative, and self-discipline.		X				X		X
	5. Identify simple strategies for planning, prioritizing, motivating oneself, and managing time when working toward short- and long-term goals (personal and/or collective).		X				X		X

Competency	Definition	SA	SM	SO	RS	DM	GB	PR	OT
Social Awareness	1. Use others' points of view to describe how personal behavior affects the emotions of others.		X	X	X				
	2. Recognize the need for empathy, compassion, and a concern for others.	X		X	X				
	3. Demonstrate strategies for working and playing in a manner sensitive to self and others.	X		X	X				
	4. Recognize different characteristics and points of view across cultural and social groups, identifying strengths of diversity.			X	X				
	5. Understand the benefits of expressing gratitude for self and others.			X	X				X
	6. Recognize and understand when social or community norms are directly or indirectly unfair to individuals or a group of people.			X	X				
	7. Identify social norms that are (directly or indirectly) unfair to individuals or a certain group of people and show courage in expressing those insights.		X	X				X	

Competency	Definition	SA	SM	SO	RS	DM	GB	PR	OT
Relationship Skills	1. Identify a trusted adult and advocate for self and others.				X			X	
	2. Describe the difference between a healthy and unhealthy relationship (e.g., set boundaries).			X	X				
	3. Build healthy relationships by recognizing the strengths and points of view of others.		X		X				X
	4. Demonstrate the ability to consider other points of view, using empathy, compassion, and active listening skills to engage in conversation during times of agreement and/or conflict across settings.		X	X	X				
	5. Use reflection strategies and social norms that are sensitive to self and others while providing and/or receiving feedback.		X	X	X				
	6. Recognize and respond to social cues across settings, in a manner that is sensitive to self and others.		X	X	X				
	7. Work cooperatively, problem solve, and negotiate conflict constructively to accomplish a goal.		X		X				X
	8. Express gratitude to promote genuine and sustained relationships.		X		X				X

Competency	Definition	SA	SM	SO	RS	DM	GB	PR	OT
Responsible Decision-Making	1. Make simple choices and decisions based on information and understand the impact of those choices and decisions on self and others.					X		X	
	2. Demonstrate curiosity and open-mindedness by asking questions and accepting either the unknown or another viewpoint.			X		X		X	
	3. Predict the potential consequences of one's behavior and actions for personal, social, or collective well-being.			X	X	X			
	4. Analyze information to arrive at the best solutions for working toward social and academic goals.					X	X	X	
	5. Demonstrate safe and caring choices (physical and emotional) about personal and social behavior within diverse settings and perspectives.			X		X		X	
	6. Reflect on how personal behavior impacts the well-being of self and others (in both school and non-school settings).		X				X		X



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