

New Jersey Social and Emotional Learning Competencies and DESSA Crosswalk

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New Jersey's State Department of Education outlines broad social and emotional learning competencies for students in kindergarten to grade 12. Schools and districts in New Jersey 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 New Jersey's Social, Emotional, and Academic Development 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 New Jersey’s Social, Emotional, and Academic Development 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. These standards are not organized by grade band.

Competency	Definition	SA	SM	SO	RS	DM	GB	PR	OT
Self-Awareness	Recognize one’s feelings and thoughts.	X							
	Recognize the impact of one’s feelings and thoughts on one’s own behavior.	X	X						
	Recognize one’s personal traits, strengths, and limitations.	X	X						X
	Recognize the importance of self-confidence in handling daily tasks and challenges.	X	X						X

Competency	Definition	SA	SM	SO	RS	DM	GB	PR	OT
Self-Management	Understand and practice strategies for managing one’s own emotions, thoughts, and behaviors.		X					X	
	Recognize the skills needed to establish and achieve personal and educational goals.		X				X		X
	Identify and apply ways to persevere or overcome barriers through alternative methods to achieve one’s goals.		X				X		

Competency	Definition	SA	SM	SO	RS	DM	GB	PR	OT
Social Awareness	Recognize and identify the thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of others.			X	X				
	Demonstrate an awareness of the differences among individuals, groups, and others’ cultural backgrounds.			X	X				
	Demonstrate an understanding of the need for mutual respect when viewpoints differ.			X	X				
	Demonstrate an awareness of the expectations for social interactions in a variety of settings.			X	X				

Competency	Definition	SA	SM	SO	RS	DM	GB	PR	OT
Relationship Skills	Establish and maintain healthy relationships.		X		X				
	Utilize positive communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.		X		X				
	Identify ways to resist inappropriate social pressure.			X	X	X			
	Demonstrate the ability to prevent and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways.		X		X	X			
	Identify who, when, where, or how to seek help for oneself or others when needed.			X	X	X			

Competency	Definition	SA	SM	SO	RS	DM	GB	PR	OT
Responsible Decision-Making	Develop, implement, and model effective problem-solving and critical thinking skills.					X		X	
	Identify the consequences associated with one's actions in order to make constructive choices.					X		X	
	Evaluate personal, ethical, safety, and civic impact of decisions.					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.