

North Carolina State SEL Guidance and DESSA Crosswalk

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North Carolina's Department of Public Instruction supports the development of student and adult social and emotional competence. The DESSA is a standardized, norm-referenced behavior rating scale. The DESSA 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 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. Alignment Between Student Social and Emotional Competence Domains and Aperture’s 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

		Aperture Competencies							
Competency	Definition	SA	SM	SO	RS	DM	GB	PR	OT
Self-Awareness	The abilities to understand one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.	X							X
Self-Management	The abilities to manage one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations.		X				X		
Social Awareness	The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, & contexts.			X					
Relationship Skills	The abilities to establish and maintain healthy and supportive relationships and effectively navigate settings with diverse individuals and groups.				X				
Responsible Decision-Making	The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations.					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.