



Connecticut EdSERT Implementation Guide for Facilitators

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Introduction

Welcome! The Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) launched a statewide social and emotional learning (SEL) assessment initiative in 2021. The goal of this initiative is to improve the social and emotional skills and habits of all Connecticut students K–12, which in turn will contribute to positive school climates and better student academic outcomes. As part of this work, CSDE wants to support their educators' well-being and capacity to build their students' social and emotional skills.

A focus on supporting educators is important for several reasons. First, educators with strong social and emotional skills are better able to teach those skills to their students.^{1,2} Second, most educators have not received preservice training in SEL.³ Third, teaching is a stressful and challenging profession, and positive well-being is critical to effective teaching.⁴ When educators feel more confident in supporting students with these skills, they create more positive learning environments and help their students achieve better outcomes.

The Educator Social-Emotional Reflection and Training (EdSERT) program supports educators as they teach, model, and reinforce social and emotional skills with their students. By participating in EdSERT, educators learn about key social and emotional skills and how those skills are reflected in their teaching practices. They learn ways to build these skills in themselves and their students. As educators learn with EdSERT, it can also support their overall well-being by promoting close relationships and connections with their colleagues and by increasing their coping skills and resilience.

This guide serves as a recommended “how-to” for facilitating educator participation in EdSERT using **professional learning communities** (PLC) as the model. However, we encourage you to adjust this guide to make it work best for you!

As the facilitator, use this guide and the EdSERT Manager's course, accessed through the Aperture System, to build an implementation plan. You'll want to ensure that there are many opportunities for educators to build community and share ideas with their colleagues based on the material they're reviewing.^{5,6} Key planning considerations are outlined in this guide.

Participation Expectations

EdSERT Facilitator Responsibilities

Note In the Aperture System, EdSERT Facilitators are referred to as EdSERT Managers. As the EdSERT Facilitator, you serve as the EdSERT Manager for your district.

- Complete the EdSERT Manager course in the Aperture System.
 - Participate in the online EdSERT Facilitator’s Community. This community is a resource to support your facilitation of EdSERT throughout the year and connect with other EdSERT facilitators across Connecticut. Aperture will use the online community to communicate key activity dates and important details with you and the other facilitators, so it is strongly recommended that you log in and actively participate in the community.
- Facilitate EdSERT participation in your school.
- Ensure educator access to EdSERT. Troubleshoot issues as necessary.
- Using relevant data, select three additional competencies in addition to Optimistic Thinking for educator learning during the school year.
- Facilitate educator learning through the **three** additional, **four** total, competencies of the eight covered in the EdSERT program.
- Monitor educator progress through modules using EdSERT Completion Reports.
- Organize and support large- and small-group professional learning community (PLC) learning opportunities.
- Support educators’ use of EdSERT strategies.
- Support the completion of educator strategy check-in surveys.
- Support the completion of pre- and post-evaluation surveys.
- **Optional:** Manage your school’s online EdSERT learning community.

Educator Responsibilities

- Complete the Introduction to EdSERT module.
- Complete the Optimistic Thinking competency module and the three additional assigned modules.
- As part of each of the four competency modules:
 - Review the content and complete the end of module check-in.
 - Complete the self-reflective assessment.
 - Complete the personal development plan.
 - Choose and implement strategies.
 - Complete a brief strategy check-in at the end of each competency cycle.

Overview and Timeline

Connecticut EdSERT Implementation Overview and Timeline

The timeline below represents an overview of the major EdSERT activities across the 2023–2024 school year. Each task is color-coded to indicate who is responsible.

Facilitator
 Educator
 Facilitator and Educator

By participating in EdSERT, all participants are asked to complete **pre- and post-evaluation surveys** in October and May, respectively. You also have the option to participate in voluntary focus groups throughout the school year to share about your experience with EdSERT.

August 2023	September 2023	October 2023	November 2023	December 2023	January 2024	February 2024	March 2024	April 2024	May 2024
Aperture system set-up.	Complete the EdSERT Manager’s Course .	Complete the CT pre-evaluation survey .	Facilitate educator participation using small-group PLC meetings and reflection discussions. (x2)	Educators complete the second competency module .	Facilitate educator participation using small-group PLC meetings and reflection discussions. (x2)	Educators complete the third competency module .	Facilitate educator participation using small-group PLC meetings and reflection discussions. (x2)	Educators complete the fourth competency module .	Facilitate educator participation using small-group PLC meetings and reflection discussions. (x2)
Ensure educators are rostered correctly.	All educators complete the Introduction to EdSERT module.	Educators complete the Optimistic Thinking module.	Send educators the link to the strategy check-in for the Optimistic Thinking competency .	Facilitate educator participation using a small-group PLC meeting and reflection discussions. (x1)	Send educators the link to the strategy check-in for the second competency .	Facilitate educator participation using a small-group PLC meeting and reflection discussions. (x1)	Send educators the link to the strategy check-in for the third competency .	Facilitate educator participation using a small-group PLC meeting and reflection discussions. (x1)	Send educators the link to the strategy check-in for the fourth competency .
Select three additional EdSERT competencies to complete after Optimistic Thinking.		Educators complete their first DESSA rating .*		Voluntary participation in focus groups.	Educators complete their second DESSA rating .*				Voluntary participation in focus groups.
		Facilitate educator participation using a small-group PLC meeting and reflection discussions. (x1)							Complete the CT post-evaluation survey .
									Educators complete their third DESSA rating .*

*If assigned to rate students

System Setup

New Aperture System Users

Aperture Education will send you an email invitation from platform@apertureed.com with the subject line “Welcome to Aperture!”

- Select the Create Account button in the email to open the activation window.
- Enter a password for your account.
- Select the checkbox to agree with the Privacy Policy and Terms and Conditions.
- Select Activate.

As an EdSERT Facilitator you have been added to the Aperture System as a **Site Leader**. Site Leaders have access to additional reports and administrative features that allow you to impersonate educator accounts for troubleshooting, view the EdSERT training completion report, and view schoolwide data for all staff and students. For a full list of features that you have access to as a Site Leader, [please refer to this document](#). You can also view a quick video walkthrough of the Site Leader role [here](#).

Now that you have access to your Aperture System account, you will need to ensure that the teachers participating in the EdSERT program also have access to the platform. If your school is already participating in the CSDE/Aperture SEL assessment initiative, your teachers most likely have accounts and can log in to get started with EdSERT. For most districts in Connecticut, Aperture has already worked with your IT team to establish an automated roster integration. To verify that your teachers have access, please follow the steps below:

Verifying that your educators have access to the Aperture System

1. [Log in to the Aperture System](#).
2. Click on the settings gear in the top right corner, then click **Admin**.
3. In the left side menu, click **Staff**.
4. On this screen, you can search for specific educators at your school to verify that they have an active Aperture System account. You will see a column titled **Status**, which will indicate whether the specific educator has activated their account. If the status column says **Active**, then this educator has already successfully logged in to the Aperture System. If it says **Invite**, then this educator has an account but has not yet been invited to create their password and log in. You can click the **Invite** button to trigger the invite email to this educator. They will receive an email that prompts them to create a password and log in. If you need to send invites to all educators, you can also click the **Batch Invite** button; then select **Educator** under **Roles**. Then click **Send Invites** to send invitations to all educators that have not logged in yet. [Alternatively, you can reach out to your school/district IT team that is responsible for managing your rosters in the Aperture System to verify that all of the necessary educators have accounts.]
5. If you find that some or all of the educators participating in the EdSERT program do not have Aperture System accounts, please follow the instructions below to add them.



Adding new educators to the Aperture System

Option 1 (Preferred): Adding new educators via automated SIS integration. Learn more about SIS integrations [here](#).

1. Work with your district IT team to add the necessary educators to your existing roster integration file. To begin the process, email DataTeam@ApertureEd.com with your IT team copied on the email, and provide the details for educators that need to be added to the system. To make this process easier, you may not need to provide individual names of educators; you can inform your IT team that you need to add a specific group of educators to the file. For example, “All teachers in grades K–4 at Washington Elementary School.”
2. Once the new educators have been successfully added to the automated roster integration, you can [send them invitations to log in by following these instructions in the Support Portal](#).

Option 2: Manually adding Training Only users to the Aperture System.

If you're not able to include the educators as part of your automated rostering process, your Program Administrator will need to import them into the Aperture System using a .csv template.

Note As a Site Leader, you will not have the ability to import users. You will need to collaborate with your Program Administrator and/or district IT team to complete these steps. This [video](#) will walk you through the process.

1. Select the gear icon in the top right corner, then select **Admin** from the drop-down menu.
2. In the left sidebar menu select **Imports**.
3. Select the radio button for **Training Only Users**, then click **Continue**.
4. Select and open the **Training Only User Import** template ([at the bottom of this Support Portal article](#)).
5. Download and open the import template.
6. Populate your file according to the column headers on row 1. Important, **DO NOT EDIT ROW 1**. Row 1 includes required headers that must remain intact for the import to be successful.

Note Site names included on the .csv file must match site names that exist in the Aperture System, otherwise those staff members will not be added during the CSV upload process.

7. Save the file as a .csv on your computer.
8. After clicking **Continue** from the previous screen in the Aperture System, click **Browse** and search for your saved .csv file.
9. Select the **Upload CSV** button on the right side.
10. If you are ready to invite staff members, select the **Invite** button from the **Staff** list on the left-side menu.
11. Verify that these site leaders are now uploaded to the Aperture System from the **Staff** list on the left-side menu.

EdSERT Success Checklist

EdSERT Planning and Preparation

EdSERT Facilitators in Connecticut schools are asked to support educators through **four** of the **eight** competencies in EdSERT during one school year beginning with Optimistic Thinking.

Using relevant school data, decide on the remaining three competencies.

Competency 1: Optimistic Thinking

Use other relevant data sources to determine the remaining three competencies.

Suggestions include:

- student DESSA data (use the Competencies report in the Aperture System to identify competencies in which student needs are highest),
- student behavioral data,
- school mental health screeners,
- information or focus areas from an existing SEL program, and
- other sources of data or information.

Competency 2:

Competency 3:

Competency 4:

Communicate the plan for which competencies you'll review during the school year with your educators. Consider using the templated language provided in Appendix A.

All EdSERT material is in the Aperture System. Use the following process to ensure that you have access to the EdSERT material in the Aperture System.

Steps for accessing EdSERT material as a facilitator:

1. Log in to the Aperture System
2. On your upper navigation bar, click the **Academy** tab and navigate to Training.
3. Scroll to the EdSERT Manager course and click **Start Course**.

Note After you have begun the EdSERT Manager course, you will be able to access and resume the course by using the EdSERT Manager link in the Aperture System Training drop-down.



If educators are having difficulties accessing EdSERT in the Aperture System, here are troubleshooting options.

The Academy tab is not on my Dashboard.	Reach out to support@apertureed.com .
An educator can see the EdSERT Course Curriculum headings only.	It is likely the educator has not yet started the course on their Dashboard. Direct your educator to access the course through the Training link first.
An educator forgot to print their module badge.	Educators can always re-enter a module. If they have completed the content for that module, they can navigate directly to the Completion Badge.

Facilitating EdSERT

For educators, EdSERT is most meaningful when they have dedicated time to reflect on and practice the skills and strategies they learn; this gives time for educators to connect with their colleagues, too.⁷

During each eight-week competency cycle, set aside time and facilitate reviewing the material through:

- An initial meeting to introduce EdSERT or each individual competency.
- One to three small-group PLC meetings to support your educators' use of EdSERT strategies, reflect on strategies they've used, connect with colleagues, and identify areas for growth.

Meeting Structure: Consider running EdSERT meetings in person, through asynchronous discussion using online forums and discussion boards (optional), or a mix of both. Example meeting structures are outlined in Appendix B. Ultimately, it is best to consider how to be intentional about providing opportunities for your educators to review their personal development plans and strategies with others. You can also offer discussion questions to your educators to facilitate conversations. The EdSERT Discussion Guides in the EdSERT Manager's Course can be used to support this. Additional examples include:

- Do you feel that your self-reflective assessment on the EdSERT teaching practices has helped you grow? Do the practices seem more important or relevant from the first time you considered them?
- Do you think your students, their families, or your colleagues have noticed a difference in your teaching practices?
- Do you want to continue using these practices?
- Did your understanding of social and emotional competence (or a specific competency area) change or improve?
- If you did not feel like you experienced growth, what can you do differently next time? Practice the strategy more faithfully? Practice the strategy more frequently? Or for longer?
- What changes in student behaviors have you noticed as a result of what you've learned by participating in EdSERT?
- Do you feel more confident completing DESSA ratings?

Optional: Consider using an online community to facilitate EdSERT through the Aperture System.

Choosing to use an EdSERT community at your school is optional. EdSERT facilitators will be responsible for educator interactions and facilitating discussion. An EdSERT Community:

- Provides a virtual learning environment for your site to engage in interactive and collaborative professional development.
- Can only be accessed by staff at your site.
- Provides unique SEL Competence Spaces to discuss each competency that your school will focus on during the school year.
- Provides educators the opportunity to post, comment, and connect with one another as they complete EdSERT and build their social-emotional knowledge.

If you are interested in including an EdSERT Community for your site, please contact CTEdSERT@ApertureEd.com.

EdSERT Completion Report

The [EdSERT Completion Report](#) displays your EdSERT completion percentage and status by individual educator. You can filter the completion results by specific modules to track participation. Follow the steps below to access and run the report.

To generate the EdSERT Completion Report:

1. Select **Data & Insights**, then select **EdSERT Completion**.
2. Choose the specific module you'd like to view in the **Modules** drop-down menu.
3. View the Percent Started and Percent Completed numbers for quick reference.
4. To view full completion details in a .csv file, click the **Export** button. This document will display all participating educators at your school and their completion status.

Key Considerations

Participating in EdSERT requires educators to engage in honest self-reflection, which can make some feel vulnerable. As the facilitator, it is important to create an environment of trust and supportive collaboration. In group settings, you might focus your discussions more on SEL for students and adults rather than personal topics. Additional considerations for creating an open, supportive, and non-threatening environment include:

- Treating your educators' self-assessment results as private and confidential. Educators can voluntarily share their ratings, at their discretion, as part of their group sharing or with a trusted colleague.
- Encouraging your educators to use the self-assessment results to improve their practices and build connections with others.
- Encouraging your educators to take a second self-assessment to measure their growth when they feel ready to.

If you have questions about EdSERT or accessing the materials in the Aperture System:

- Technical support questions? Email the Aperture Support Team at support@apertureed.com.
- Need guidance and consultation about your implementation? Reach out to CTEdSERT@ApertureEd.com.
- Consider using the online [EdSERT Facilitator Community](#) for support.

Appendix A: EdSERT Communication Email Template

Hello <SCHOOL/PROGRAM NAME> Educators!

One of our most important goals at <SCHOOL/PROGRAM NAME> is making sure that our students have the social and emotional skills to be successful in the classroom, community, and after they graduate. These skills include things like cooperating with others, being responsible, and focusing on tasks. Supporting the social and emotional knowledge, skill sets, and well-being of our educators and staff is equally vital. We're writing to tell you about our participation in EdSERT, a social and emotional learning (SEL) professional development program.

We will be implementing EdSERT from Aperture Education, which provides schools with professional development tools, self-reflective assessments, personal development plans, self-directed strategies, and teaching practices. As you're aware, we are also using an assessment suite by Aperture Education called the DESSA. The DESSA is one of the most highly regarded and widely used social and emotional assessments. It is a strength-based tool, meaning it will give you an understanding of your students' social and emotional strengths in addition to their growth opportunities—the areas where we can support them with tiered instruction. Through our participation in the EdSERT program, we will ensure that our educators receive a strong foundation in SEL and will learn new practices across all competency domains to support their own and their students' SEL development.

I hope that for these reasons, you are just as excited as I am to be a part of this journey. As a participating educator, you are expected to complete the following self-paced professional development trainings and activities throughout the 2023–2024 school year:

- The Introduction to EdSERT module
- The Optimistic Thinking competency module and three additional assigned modules
- As part of the four competency modules, you will:
 - Review the content and complete the activities.
 - Complete the self-reflective assessment.
 - Complete the personal development plan.
 - Choose and implement strategies.
 - Complete strategy check-ins.
 - Complete a brief self-reflection survey at the end of each competency cycle.
- Complete pre- and post-evaluation surveys.

You will be thoroughly trained and supported on how to complete the assigned modules in the Aperture System this school year. If you don't currently have access to the Aperture System, you will receive an email invitation soon.

I am so excited for us to launch this program, as I know it will empower you to support students in a strength-focused manner and increase your own competence and confidence in the domain of social and emotional learning.

Sincerely,

<EdSERT Facilitator>

Appendix B:

Example PLC Meeting Structure

Introduction to EdSERT (60 minutes)

- **Welcome & Introduction** to participation in EdSERT.
 - Based on your implementation outline and model, provide your educators with background information for how they'll participate in EdSERT.
- **Establish** group norms with your educators and highlight the focus of building connections with colleagues.
 - Consider using your schoolwide norms if you have them, or develop them as a group. These norms could focus on how your educators can be engaged, responsible, and respectful—focusing specifically on ways to foster their growth and connection with others.
- **Complete** the Introduction to EdSERT module.
 - Have your educators enroll in EdSERT through the Aperture System. For more information on this, refer to the refer to the System Setup section in this guide or contact CTEdSERT@ApertureEd.com.
 - After enrolling, have your educators complete the Introduction to EdSERT module individually.
- **Develop** goals with your educators for completing EdSERT.
 - Working with your educators, establish group and individual goals for their participation in EdSERT.
 - Consider recording these goals so that you can refer to them during later meetings.
- **Review and outline** the competency order and meeting structure.
 - Each meeting outline organizes the material using this suggested structure: Debrief, Define, Explore, Plan.
 - If this meeting outline doesn't work for you, consider updating it based on what works best in your school or program.
 - Establish how educators will participate in EdSERT. This could be through in-person group methods, PLCs, individually, online, both individually and online, or through a different method.



Note Use these suggested meeting structures to guide your EdSERT facilitation planning.

Competency 1: Optimistic Thinking Module Review (60 minutes)

- **Begin** the session.
 - Review the group norms you created.
 - Consider using a group check-in or icebreaker activity.
- **Debrief**
 - Provide your educators with the opportunity to discuss reflections or questions from the previous session.
- **Define** session goals.
 - Have your educators set individual goals for themselves for this competency.
 - Understand the competency content.
 - Complete the self-assessment.
 - Complete the personal development plans.
 - Plan their use of strategies.
 - **Optional:** As a group, establish group goals for this competency.
 - Meet a specific number of times during the next two months as a small group or whole group.
 - Use a specific number of strategies from this competency.
- **Explore** competency content using EdSERT through the Aperture System.
 - As a large group or in your educators’ PLC groups, review the competency professional development material.
 - Use the Optimistic Thinking Discussion Guide in the EdSERT Manager’s Course as support.
 - Have your educators complete the Optimistic Thinking Self-Assessment.
 - Have your educators complete the Optimistic Thinking Personal Development Plan.
 - Identify areas of strength, emerging practices, and growth opportunities.
- **Plan**
 - After completing their self-assessments, have educators:
 - Select Optimistic Thinking strategies to use.
 - Plan their use of the SEL strategies they choose, such as:
 - *I will use or practice this strategy [a specific number of times per week or day; on a specific date; at a specific time of day].*
 - *I will remind myself to use this strategy by _____.*
 - *I will track my use of this strategy by _____.*
 - *I will review my use of this strategy on the following date: _____.*
 - *Other considerations: _____.*

- **End** of Group Reflection.
 - How will you use this material in your classroom?
 - What do you think will be successful?
 - What will be some barriers?
 - What support do you need?

Competency 1: Small Group Competency Check-In (1 to 3 times; 30 minutes)

- **Begin** the session.
 - Review the group norms you created.
 - Consider using a group check-in or icebreaker activity.
- **Debrief**
 - Reflections or questions from previous meetings.
 - Reflections or questions from implementation.
- **Define** goals for this session.
 - Discuss personal reflections and thoughts from this competency.
 - Discuss personal development plans.
 - Check-in on strategy use.
 - Problem-solve challenges.
- **Explore** implementation.
 - Review personal development plans.
 - Use the discussion guides in the EdSERT Manager’s Course as support.
 - Share use of strategies.
 - Identify what has been going well.
 - Identify areas for improvement.
 - Recommendations for adapting or modifying strategy use.
 - Problem-solve implementation challenges.



- **Plan**

- Select or update which Optimistic Thinking strategies to use.
- Plan continued use of strategies.
 - *I will use or practice this strategy [a specific number of times per week or day; on a specific date; at a specific time of day].*
 - *I will remind myself to use this strategy by _____.*
 - *I will track my use of this strategy by _____.*
 - *I will review my use of this strategy on the following date: _____.*
 - *Other considerations: _____.*

- **End** of Group Reflection.

- What has been a highlight from learning with EdSERT?
- What has been the most useful or helpful for you?
- What has been challenging?

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Aperture Education empowers over 8,000 unique schools, over 156,000 educators and more than 2 million students across North America to measure, strengthen, and support social and emotional competence. The powerful data districts receive enables education leaders to take strategic action about SEL within their organizations. The Aperture System includes the DESSA suite of strength-based assessments, which is lauded by researchers for its high standards of reliability and validity. Educators also appreciate its ability to easily and quickly identify each student's personal social and emotional strengths and areas of needed support. Aperture partners with industry curriculum leaders to deliver research-based, CASEL™-informed intervention strategies to bolster specific areas of needed growth. With robust reporting in one easy-to-use system, Aperture is favored in districts nationwide. To learn more, visit www.ApertureEd.com.