

# Texas Positive Character Traits Education and DESSA Crosswalk

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The Texas Education Agency outlines essential knowledge and skills for positive character traits and personal skills for students in kindergarten to grade 12. Schools and districts in Texas might consider using the DESSA to measure student growth across their competencies. The DESSA is a 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. The DESSA can be used to inform how a student is progressing with their social and emotional development. This crosswalk outlines the overlap between Aperture’s competencies measured by the DESSA and the Texas Education Agency’s Essential Knowledge and Skills for Positive Character Traits and Personal 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 or youth’s realistic understanding of their strengths and limitations and consistent desire for self-improvement.
2. **Self-Management:** a child’s or youth’s success in controlling their emotions and behaviors to complete a task or succeed in a new or challenging situation.
3. **Social Awareness:** a child’s or youth’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.
4. **Relationship Skills:** a child’s or youth’s consistent performance of socially acceptable actions that promote and maintain positive connections with others.
5. **Goal-Directed Behavior:** a child’s or youth’s initiation of and persistence in completing tasks of varying difficulty.
6. **Personal Responsibility:** a child’s or youth’s tendency to be careful and reliable in their actions and in contributing to group efforts.
7. **Decision Making:** a child’s or youth’s 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:** a child’s or youth’s attitude of confidence, hopefulness, and positive thinking regarding themselves and their life situations in the past, present, and future.

**Alignment of Aperture’s Competencies to Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Positive Character Traits and Personal Skills (Grades K-2)**

Note. SA = Self-Awareness, SM = Self-Management, SO = Social Awareness, RS = Relationship Skills, GB = Goal-Directed Behavior, PR = Personal Responsibility, DM = Decision Making, OT = Optimistic Thinking

Grades K-2									
Knowledge and Skill Area	Indicator	SA	SM	SO	RS	GB	PR	DM	OT
<b>Trustworthiness</b>	Describe how personal choices lead to personal actions.	X					X	X	
	Explain what it means to be trustworthy.							X	
	Identify personal actions that build trustworthiness, including being honest and punctual.	X						X	

**Example DESSA Items:**

- Act as a leader in a peer group (PR)
- Show good judgment (DM)
- Show an awareness of their personal strengths (SA)
- Get along with different types of people (SO)

<b>Responsibility</b>	Describe and give examples of how feelings and beliefs influence personal actions.	X	X				X		
	Describe how to make personal choices before speaking and acting.					X	X	X	
	Define self-control and discuss effective self-management skills, including listening to others, managing one’s emotions, and setting goals.		X			X			
	Identify instances in which self-management skills are important.		X					X	

**Example DESSA Items:**

- Teach another person to do something (SA)
- Think before they acted (SM)
- Stay calm when faced with a challenge (SM)
- Take an active role in learning (GB)
- Serve an important role at home or school (PR)
- Follow the example of a positive role model (DM)

<b>Caring</b>	Listen actively when sharing and cooperating with others.	X							X
	Define patience and identify actions that demonstrate patience.			X	X				
	Explain and identify examples of how actions can demonstrate kindness to others.			X				X	

**Example DESSA Items:**

- Ask questions to clarify what they did not understand (SA)
- Speak about positive things (OT)
- Share with others (SO)
- Offer to help somebody (RS)
- Show the ability to decide between right and wrong (DM)

**Grades K-2 (continued)**

Knowledge and Skill Area	Indicator	SA	SM	SO	RS	GB	PR	DM	OT
<b>Good Citizenship</b>	Define fairness and identify examples of fairness when making decisions in a variety of situations.						X	X	
	Define and identify examples of school pride and patriotism.			X	X				
	Explain what it means to demonstrate respect and courtesy and why it is important to demonstrate respect and courtesy to others.		X	X	X				
	Describe ways in which individuals demonstrate respect for authority and law.						X	X	

**Example DESSA Items:**

- Prepare for school, activities, or upcoming events (PR)
- Use available resources (people or objects) to solve a problem (DM)
- Cooperate with peers or siblings (SO)
- Make a suggestion or request in a polite way (RS)
- Think before they acted (SM)

**Alignment of Aperture’s Competencies to Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Positive Character Traits and Personal Skills (Grades 3–5)**

Note. SA = Self-Awareness, SM = Self-Management, SO = Social Awareness, RS = Relationship Skills, GB = Goal-Directed Behavior, PR = Personal Responsibility, DM = Decision Making, OT = Optimistic Thinking

Grades 3–5									
Knowledge and Skill Area	Indicator	SA	SM	SO	RS	GB	PR	DM	OT
<b>Trustworthiness</b>	Identify and define traits of trustworthiness, including reliability and loyalty.	X					X	X	
	Identify and practice strategies for being honest and punctual.							X	
	Define and identify examples of unethical behavior.	X						X	

**Example DESSA Items:**

- Act as a leader in a peer group (PR)
- Show good judgment (DM)
- Show an awareness of their personal strengths (SA)
- Get along with different types of people (SO)

<b>Responsibility</b>	Explain what it means to be responsible for personal decisions and actions.	X	X				X		
	Describe positive and negative consequences of personal decisions and actions.					X	X	X	
	Identify and demonstrate effective self-management skills, including acting on feedback constructively and setting and working towards goals.		X			X			
	Describe the relationship between being responsible and being accountable.		X					X	

**Example DESSA Items:**

- Teach another person to do something (SA)
- Think before they acted (SM)
- Stay calm when faced with a challenge (SM)
- Take an active role in learning (GB)
- Serve an important role at home or school (PR)
- Follow the example of a positive role model (DM)

<b>Caring</b>	Describe how feelings impact decision making and behaviors.	X	X						X
	Identify and practice interpersonal skills, including showing consideration and compassion through listening, sharing, and cooperating with others.			X	X				
	Define empathy and discuss the connection between empathy and charity.			X				X	

**Example DESSA Items:**

- Ask questions to clarify what they did not understand (SA)
- Speak about positive things (OT)
- Share with others (SO)
- Adjust well to changes in plans (SM)
- Offer to help somebody (RS)
- Show the ability to decide between right and wrong (DM)

**Grades 3–5** *(continued)*

Knowledge and Skill Area	Indicator	SA	SM	SO	RS	GB	PR	DM	OT
<b>Good Citizenship</b>	Describe the differences and similarities among gratitude, respect, and courtesy.						X	X	
	Compare fairness and justice.			X	X				
	Demonstrate responsibility and courage when making decisions for the common good of the classroom and community.		X	X	X				
	Discuss the importance of obeying laws and rules.						X	X	

**Example DESSA Items:**

- Prepare for school, activities, or upcoming events (PR)
- Use available resources (people or objects) to solve a problem (DM)
- Cooperate with peers or siblings (SO)
- Make a suggestion or request in a polite way (RS)
- Think before they acted (SM)

**Alignment of Aperture’s Competencies to Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Positive Character Traits and Personal Skills (Grades 6–8)**

Note. SA = Self-Awareness, SM = Self-Management, SO = Social Awareness, RS = Relationship Skills, GB = Goal-Directed Behavior, PR = Personal Responsibility, DM = Decision Making, OT = Optimistic Thinking

Grades 6–8									
Knowledge and Skill Area	Indicator	SA	SM	SO	RS	GB	PR	DM	OT
<b>Trustworthiness</b>	Describe what it means to be reliable and loyal.						X	X	
	Define and give examples of honesty and integrity.							X	
	Examine the benefits of being trustworthy.	X						X	
	Describe personal actions that demonstrate trustworthiness at school, home, with peers, and within the community.			X					

**Example DESSA Items:**

- Act as a leader in a peer group (PR)
- Show good judgment (DM)
- Show an awareness of their personal strengths (SA)
- Get along with different types of people (SO)

<b>Responsibility</b>	Examine how personal beliefs, thoughts, and feelings about self can build responsibility.	X	X				X		
	Identify and describe personal role models who demonstrate what it means to be accountable for words and actions.					X	X	X	
	Discuss the benefits of practicing self-management skills.		X			X			
	Compare the benefits of responsible behavior with the consequences of irresponsible behavior.		X					X	

**Example DESSA Items:**

- Teach another person to do something (SA)
- Think before they acted (SM)
- Stay calm when faced with a challenge (SM)
- Take an active role in learning (GB)
- Serve an important role at home or school (PR)
- Follow the example of a positive role model (DM)

<b>Caring</b>	Evaluate one’s personal attitudes and mindsets about self and others.	X							X
	Discuss how feelings, decision making, personal behaviors, and interpersonal skills can influence relationships with others.			X	X				
	Explain and identify examples of how a person can demonstrate empathy through kindness, charity, generosity, and courtesy.			X				X	

**Example DESSA Items:**

- Ask questions to clarify what they did not understand (SA)
- Speak about positive things (OT)
- Share with others (SO)
- Offer to help somebody (RS)
- Show the ability to decide between right and wrong (DM)

**Grades 6–8 (continued)**

Knowledge and Skill Area	Indicator	SA	SM	SO	RS	GB	PR	DM	OT
<b>Good Citizenship</b>	Differentiate between personal responsibility and responsible decision making and give examples of each.						X	X	
	Explain how one’s personal actions can impact the perceptions of others.			X	X				
	Identify and practice a variety of conflict-resolution skills and strategies.		X	X	X				

**Example DESSA Items:**

- Prepare for school, activities, or upcoming events (PR)
- Use available resources (people or objects) to solve a problem (DM)
- Cooperate with peers or siblings (SO)
- Make a suggestion or request in a polite way (RS)
- Think before they acted (SM)



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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](http://www.ApertureEd.com).