K-3 Components of SEL & Intellectual Habits and DESSA K-8 Crosswalk

Prepared June 2023

The DESSA is a standardized, norm-referenced behavior rating scale that assesses the social and emotional competencies of students in kindergarten through the eighth grade. It can be completed by parents/guardians, teachers, and staff at out-of-school-time or community programs in about 5–8 minutes. The assessment is entirely strength-based, meaning the items are all positive social and emotional behaviors. The DESSA can be used to inform and support the implementation of an SEL program by helping educators and school staff identify students' social and emotional strengths and areas of need. It can also be used to guide SEL strategies and interventions at the individual student, small group, classroom, school, or district level and to evaluate the impact of SEL programs and support continuous quality improvement efforts to promote optimal SEL outcomes in schools and programs. The DESSA was developed and is distributed by Aperture Education. This alignment tool shows how the DESSA can be used to assess skills and measure outcomes aligned with the CT K–3 Social, Emotional, and Intellectual Habits Framework.

DESSA Scale Key

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

The following definitions for the areas of development of the components of social, emotional, and intellectual habits are sourced directly from the Connecticut State Department of Education Components of Social, Emotional, and Intellectual Habits: Grades 4–12.

- Develop a positive self-concept: the way someone thinks about, evaluates, or perceives oneself; to be aware of oneself; and aware of one's place in the community.
- Develop a positive attitude toward learning: the ability to be grateful and cheerful and maintain a growth mindset; to approach one's circumstances with optimism and enthusiasm.
- Identify and understand emotions of self and others: the ability to recognize and label emotions in oneself and others (emotion knowledge); express one's feelings in contextually appropriate ways (emotion expression).
- Develop positive interpersonal relationships: a developed aptitude enabling a person to carry on effective interactions and relationships with others, such as the ability to communicate thoughts and feeling, or to assume appropriate social responsibilities.

- Develop executive functioning skills: the mental processes required to focus, plan, and control behavioral responses in service of a goal.
- Develop logic and reasoning: the ability to recognize and use multiple perspectives and approaches (e.g., negotiate the pros and cons of ideas and solutions, analyze options using if-then rationale, and recognize cause-effect relationships) to explore, negotiate, and analyze options.
- Develop modes of symbolic representation: a method of sense-making that entails an expression of meaning using options such as visual analogy, sketch, monologue, collage, cartoon, among others, to express meaning.

Note. Grayed-out areas indicate overlap with Aperture's competencies. 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

		Kindergarten								
Area of Development	Learning Progression	Indicators	SA	SM	so	RS	GВ	PR	DM	ОТ
		Respond to the classroom environment with a positive sense of self, showing pride in own work and making positive statements about self								
Develop a	Self-awareness	Recognize one's own positive characteristics								
positive self-concept		Describe attributes of self and others, including relevant cultural characteristics of self								
	Sense of self as competent and	Attempt new activities and experiences with confidence and optimism								
	capable	Express independent thoughts and feelings								

		Kindergarten (continued)								
Area of Development	Learning Progression	Indicators	SA	SM	so	RS	GВ	PR	DM	ОТ
		Distinguish between success and areas where they still need supports								
	Sense of self as a learner	Recognize own need for adult assistance and identify someone familiar who could help them								
		Share with eagerness and pride, increasingly complex work or projects								
Develop a positive	Curiosity and	Demonstrate engagement through discussion of a growing range of topics, ideas, and tasks								
attitude toward learning	initiative	Take on challenges willingly, exploring new knowledge with adult support								
	Cooperative during learning	Use basic strategies for entering group play with adult support								
		Share materials with peers with adult support								
	experiences	Participate in group learning experiences using basic turn-taking and listening skills with adult support and guidance								
	Identifying and understanding	Identify and appropriately label basic feelings in self and others (e.g., happy, sad, mad, scared)								
Identify and understand emotions of self and others	emotions	Discuss how some basic emotions impact behavior in self and others with adult support								
	Empathy	Describe basic feelings or thoughts/ perspectives of others with adult support								
	Empathy -	Respond when others display intense emotional reactions (e.g., crying, yelling, laughing loudly)								

		Kindergarten (continued)								
Area of Development	Learning Progression	Indicators	SA	SM	so	RS	GB	PR	DM	ОТ
		Engage in practices that contribute to community well-being								
	Social awareness and interpersonal skills	Use basic social skills to ask to play with others, to share and take turns and to begin to work together with one or more peer on a game or activity with adult support								
	SKIIIS	Develop and maintain trusting, healthy relationships with school- based adults								
		Learn to cooperate with classroom- based adults								
Develop positive interpersonal relationships	Responsible	Demonstrate beginning understanding of connections between choices and outcomes in familiar situations								
,	decision making and social problem solving	Define decisions (e.g., choices) and identify in daily life in school and home								
	problem solving	Identify social norms and safety considerations that guide behavior with adult support								
		Recognize and articulate conflict in personal and familiar contexts (e.g., "Johnny took my crayon")								
	Conflict resolution	Resolve conflicts with peers with adult modeling and support using simple strategies (e.g., sharing, taking turns, apologizing)								

		Kindergarten (continued)								
Area of Development	Learning Progression	Indicators	SA	SM	so	RS	GB	PR	DM	ОТ
		Remember and follow directions that involve a sequence of 2-3 steps								
	Working memory and metacognition	Begin to use deliberate strategies (e.g., self-talk, song repetition) to organize thinking or to remember directions or sequence with adult support								
		Begin to monitor errors and/or progress, notice mistakes and make appropriate adjustments with adult support								
	Cognitive flexibility	Transition between different tasks or activities; use different ways of completing a task and shift attention as needed with adult prompting and support								
		Use basic strategies to manage intense or difficult feelings (e.g., deep breathing, take a break, draw a picture) with adult support								
Develop executive functioning	Self-regulation of impulses and emotional reaction	Initiate previously taught strategies to help delay gratification in a variety of contexts (e.g., choose an alternative activity while waiting a turn)								
skills		Identify simple and age-appropriate social norms and safety rules and use these to guide behavior								
		Name and typically follow basic rules related to privacy and personal boundaries								
		Sustain attention and complete developmentally appropriate tasks with adult support								
	Managing	Take responsibility, including planning and/or setting simple goals for own learning, while respecting the learning of others with adult support								
	attention and behavior	Engage in basic planning and goal- setting, including planning topics for investigations, defining problems and considering sources of evidence with adult support								
		Begin to use basic strategies to maintain focus in the face of distractions with adult support								

		Kindergarten (continued)								
Area of Development	Learning Progression	Indicators	SA	SM	so	RS	GВ	PR	DM	от
	Critical and analytical thinking	Begin to use evidence and critical thinking to support claims; explain own thinking and listen to others with adult support								
Develop logic	Applying known information to new experiences	Connect current and past relationships, experiences and knowledge to new situations, relationships and problem solving								
and reasoning	Reasoning and problem solving	Describe a simple problem and propose one or more possible solutions								
		Analyze attributes to classify, compare and contrast objects, events and experiences (similarities, differences and associations)								
	Symbolic representation	Use objects, actions, drawings, and an increasing array of symbols to represent ideas								
Develop modes of symbolic representation	Pretend or symbolic play	Engage in mature play, using language to create a pretend scenario over an extended time frame with complex interwoven themes and rich multifaceted roles								

Note. Grayed-out areas indicate overlap with Aperture's competencies. 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

		Grade 1								
Area of Development	Learning Progression	Indicators	SA	SM	so	RS	GВ	PR	DM	ОТ
	Self-awareness	Respond to the classroom environment with a positive sense of self and participate as a member of the school community								
		Recognize and express likes, dislikes, needs, and wants in a manner acceptable to school norms								
Develop a positive		Describe self as an individual and as a member of groups								
self-concept		Recognize the unique characteristics of their own family								
	Sense of self as competent and	Attempt new activities and experiences with confidence and optimism								
	capable	Express independent thoughts and feelings								
	Sense of self as a	Begin to appropriately ask for assistance from familiar sources								
	learner	Share increasingly complex work or projects with eagerness and pride								
	Curiosity and initiative	Engage in preferred activities that match strengths, talents, and interests								
Develop a positive attitude toward	initiative	Take risks to explore new knowledge with minimal adult support								
learning		Join and leave groups with ease as a leader or a follower as a situation demands								
	Cooperative during learning experiences	Share materials with peers with adult support								
		Use basic cooperation skills to engage in increasingly complex discussion/exploration of ideas								

		Grade 1 (continued)								
Area of Development	Learning Progression	Indicators	SA	SM	so	RS	GВ	PR	DM	ОТ
		Recognize and label feelings in self and others, beginning to use more sophisticated emotion words								
Identify and understand emotions of self and others	Identifying and understanding emotions	Discuss emotions and the impact on behavior and begin to show awareness of the intensity of emotions (e.g., can recognize when their emotions are particularly strong and they might lose control; use words such as "furious" to describe intense anger)								
		Recognize more complex feelings or thoughts/perspectives of others								
	Empathy	Offer comfort or assistance when others display indication of being hurt or upset								
		Engage in practices that contribute to community well-being								
	Social awareness and interpersonal	Use basic social skills independently and engage in positive, reciprocal relationships with peers (i.e., begin to form friendships with preferred peers)								
	skills	Develop and maintain trusting, healthy relationships with school- based adults								
		Abide by the rules and expectations of the community								
Develop positive interpersonal relationships	Responsible decision making and social problem solving	Describe the connections between choices (decisions) and consequences to self and use this information to make choices with adult support								
		Demonstrate beginning understanding of how social norms influence their decision making and behavior								
		Identify appropriate response to conflict								
	Conflict resolution	Use simple strategies to address interpersonal conflict independently and, with adult support, incorporate additional strategies (e.g., negotiating)								

		Grade 1 (continued)								
Area of Development	Learning Progression	Indicators	SA	SM	so	RS	GВ	PR	DM	ОТ
		Remember and follow multistep directions that involve more complex steps/sequences and update them with new information or changing plans								
	Working memory and metacognition	Use deliberate strategies (self-talk, song repetition) in familiar situations to remember directions or sequence								
		Show increasing independence in monitoring errors and/or progress, notice mistakes and make appropriate adjustments with adult support								
	Cognitive flexibility	Try different ways to complete a task or solve a problem, identify multiple ways to think about a situation, deliberately change thoughts or feelings in order to achieve goals								
		Use basic strategies with increasing independence to deal with upsetting emotions and seek help when necessary								
Develop executive functioning skills	Self-regulation of impulses and emotional	Initiate previously taught strategies to help delay gratification in a variety of contexts (e.g., choose an alternative activity while waiting a turn)								
	reaction	Identify simple and age appropriate social norms and safety rules and use these to guide behavior								
		Name and typically follow basic rules related to privacy and personal boundaries								
		Sustain attention to an age appropriate task or activity individually and in small groups								
	Managing attention and	Demonstrate increasing independence in taking responsibility, including planning and/or setting goals for own learning, while respecting the learning of others								
	behavior	Follow a task to completion with minimal support, even when it is challenging								
		Maintain focus with increasing independence, using more varied and sophisticated strategies								

		Grade 1 (continued)								
Area of Development	Learning Progression	Indicators	SA	SM	so	RS	GВ	PR	DM	ОТ
	Critical and analytical thinking	Use evidence and critical thinking to support claims, make simple arguments and critique the reasoning of others; explain own thinking and listen to others								
		Agree or disagree with others and give reason why								
Develop logic and reasoning	Applying known information to new experiences	Approach new situations, relationships and problem solving using information from prior experiences rather than through trial and error								
	Reasoning and problem solving	Demonstrate a willingness to try multiple strategies to solve a problem; check whether solution makes sense; may seek adult assistance								
		Analyze attributes to classify, compare and contrast objects, events and experiences (similarities, differences and associations)								
Davidan mada	Symbolic representation	Use objects, actions, drawings, and an increasing array of symbols to represent ideas								
Develop modes of symbolic representation	Pretend or symbolic play	Engage in mature play, using language to create a pretend scenario over an extended time frame with complex interwoven themes and rich multifaceted roles								

Note. Grayed-out areas indicate overlap with Aperture's competencies. 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

		Grade 2								
Area of Development	Learning Progression	Indicators	SA	SM	so	RS	GВ	PR	DM	ОТ
		See self as a valuable contributing member of family, school and other community groups								
	Self-awareness	Recognize personal strengths, assets, limitations/challenges								
Develop a positive	Describe characteristics of self and groups they belong to, including	groups they belong to, including characteristics that are not concrete (personality, preferences, cultural								
self-concept		Identify personal and academic goals								
	Sense of self as competent and capable	Practice self-advocacy skills (e.g., ask for a turn after waiting patiently for a couple of minutes, let teacher know when they cannot see or hear during lesson)								
		Explain and defend independent thoughts and feelings								
	Sense of self as a	Identify and use available supports including familiar adults and other resources (e.g., books)								
	learner	Share increasingly complex work or projects with eagerness and pride								
Develop a positive attitude toward	Curiosity and initiative	Show enthusiasm for learning by asking questions and seeking meaningful information about a topic or idea								
learning		Take risks to explore new knowledge with peers								
	Cooperative	Share materials willingly with others in order to promote group learning								
	during learning experiences	Use basic cooperation skills to engage in increasingly complex discussion/exploration of ideas								

		Grade 2 (continued)								
Area of Development	Learning Progression	Indicators	SA	SM	so	RS	GВ	PR	DM	ОТ
		Describe increasingly varied emotions and common situations that cause them								
Identify and understand emotions of self and others		Discuss emotions and the impact on behavior and begin to show awareness of the intensity of emotions (e.g., can recognize when their emotions are particularly strong and they might lose control; use words such as "furious" to describe intense anger)								
		Show ability to listen to and understand others' feelings and consider how they impact their actions with adult support								
		Offer comfort or assistance when others display indication of being hurt or upset								
	Social awareness and interpersonal skills	Demonstrate cooperation in small and large groups								
		Demonstrate ability to read nonverbal social cues								
		Demonstrate the ability to compromise, negotiate and work together with others with adult support, in both child-initiated and adult-led activities								
		Develop and maintain trusting, healthy relationships with school- based adults								
Develop positive		Identify and use skills to establish and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships								
interpersonal relationships		Analyze the outcomes and possible consequences of a set of given decisions								
	Responsible decision making	Distinguish between positive and negative peer pressure								
	decision making and social problem solving	Demonstrate concern for fairness and respect for the rights of others; respond appropriately when a rule is broken, with acceptance of responsibility and consequences								
		Distinguish between constructive and destructive ways to resolve conflicts								
	Conflict resolution	Demonstrate willingness and skill to independently resolve a problem or conflict, although may still need adult support and encouragement								

		Grade 2 (continued)								
Area of Development	Learning Progression	Indicators	SA	SM	so	RS	GB	PR	DM	ОТ
		Remember and follow multistep directions that involve more complex steps/sequences and update them with new information or changing plans								
	Working memory and metacognition	Use deliberate strategies (self-talk, song repetition) in familiar situations to remember directions or sequence								
		Show increasing independence in monitoring errors and/or progress, notice mistakes and make appropriate adjustments with adult support								
Develop	Cognitive flexibility	Consider multiple aspects of situations and/or changing circumstances to plan, make decisions and adjust thinking with adult guidance and support								
	Self-regulation of impulses and emotional reaction	Manage behavioral response to emotions most of the time, effectively using multiple strategies (e.g., utilizing skills to calm down, and applying the steps in problem solving to school and to social problems)								
executive functioning skills		Apply strategies to help delay gratification for longer periods of time with increasing independence, building upon previously taught strategies								
		Respond increasingly well to rules outside of adult supervision								
		Demonstrate appropriate assertion of personal boundaries, rights and privacy needs								
	Managing attention and behavior	Sustain attention to an age appropriate task or activity individually and in larger groups								
		Demonstrate increasing independence in taking responsibility, including planning and/or setting goals for own learning, while respecting the learning of others								
		Follow a task to completion with minimal support, even when it is challenging								
		Maintain focus with increasing independence, using more varied and sophisticated strategies								

		Grade 2 (continued)								
Area of Development	Learning Progression	Indicators	SA	SM	so	RS	GВ	PR	DM	ОТ
Develop logic and reasoning	Critical and analytical thinking	Use evidence and critical thinking to support claims, make arguments and critique the reasoning of others; decide if explanations make sense and ask appropriate questions								
	Applying known information to new experiences	Use prior relationships, experiences, and knowledge to expand understanding								
		Plan out a simple problem-solving approach, considering multiple strategies; monitor and evaluate progress and change strategies as necessary with adult support								
		Analyze attributes to classify, compare and contrast objects, events and experiences (similarities, differences and associations)								
Develop modes of symbolic representation	Symbolic representation	Use standard or self-selected objects, actions, drawings and symbols to represent increasingly complex ideas								
	Pretend or symbolic play	Use role-play over an extended period of time to explore and expand knowledge and understanding								

Note. Grayed-out areas indicate overlap with Aperture's competencies. 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

		Grade 3								
Area of Development	Learning Progression	Indicators	SA	SM	so	RS	GВ	PR	DM	ОТ
		Identify roles and responsibilities as a group member and contribute in a positive capacity								
	Self-awareness	Identify personal values, attitudes and beliefs								
Develop a positive		Describe current characteristics of self and community and identify the source or history of these characteristics								
self-concept		Identify personal and academic goals								
	Sense of self as competent and capable	Practice self-advocacy skills (e.g., ask for a turn after waiting patiently for a couple of minutes, let teacher know when they cannot see or hear during lesson)								
		Explain and defend independent thoughts and feelings								
	Sense of self as a learner	Identify multiple resources to assist in meeting learning goals								
		Share increasingly complex work or projects with eagerness and pride								
Develop a positive	Curiosity and initiative	Engage in and seek new experiences in learning independently								
attitude toward learning		Take risks to explore new knowledge independently								
	Cooperative	Share materials willingly with others in order to promote group learning								
	during learning experiences	Listen, discuss, and negotiate ideas in order to discover new learning with peers								
Identify and understand emotions of self and others	Identifying and understanding	Communicate effectively about emotional experience with adults and peers using a variety of vocabulary related to emotions								
	emotions	Recognize the connections between emotions, thoughts and behavior								
	Empathy	Show ability to listen to and understand others' feelings and consider how they impact their actions with adult support								
		Acknowledge needs of others and act accordingly								

Grade 3 (continued)										
Area of Development	Learning Progression	Indicators	SA	SM	so	RS	GВ	PR	DM	ОТ
		Celebrate group successes								
		Demonstrate ability to read and appropriately act upon nonverbal social cues								
	Social awareness and interpersonal skills	Demonstrate the ability to compromise, negotiate and work together with others with adult support, in both child-initiated and adult-led activities								
		Develop and maintain trusting, healthy relationships with school- based adults								
Develop positive interpersonal		Identify and use skills to establish and maintain healthy interpersonal relationships								
relationships	Responsible decision making and social problem solving	Take personal responsibility for one's own choices								
		Become aware when peer pressure is influencing a decision								
		Demonstrate awareness of principles of equality, fairness and respect for social norms								
		Demonstrate ability to remove oneself from a stressful situation								
	Conflict resolution	Demonstrate willingness and skill to independently resolve a problem or conflict, although may still need adult support and encouragement								

		Grade 3 (continued)								
Area of Development	Learning Progression	Indicators	SA	SM	so	RS	GB	PR	DM	ОТ
		Demonstrate ability to remember and return to place in story, song or game if interrupted, or can reorder steps or change plans as needed to meet goal								
	Working memory and metacognition	Use deliberate strategies to remember information or organize thinking in new ways								
		Use previously modeled strategies to plan, monitor and evaluate thinking processes and try new and more sophisticated strategies with adult support								
	Cognitive flexibility	Become more independent in considering multiple aspects of situations, and/or changing circumstances, to plan, make decisions and adjust thinking								
	Self-regulation of impulses and emotional reaction Managing attention and behavior	Self-monitor emotions and use strategies to manage emotions and behavioral reactions								
Develop executive functioning skills		Apply strategies to help delay gratification for longer periods of time with increasing independence, building upon previously taught strategies								
		Recognize rules and be able to generalize them to other situations								
		Demonstrate appropriate assertion of personal boundaries, rights and privacy needs								
		Demonstrate persistence to completion when working independently on age-appropriate tasks								
		Demonstrate increasing independence in taking responsibility, including planning and/or setting goals for own learning, while respecting the learning of others								
		Follow a task to completion with minimal support, even when it is challenging								
		Maintain focus with increasing independence, using more varied and sophisticated strategies								

		Grade 3 (continued)								
Area of Development	Learning Progression	Indicators	SA	SM	so	RS	GB	PR	DM	ОТ
Develop logic and reasoning	Critical and analytical thinking	Use evidence and critical thinking to support claims, make arguments and critique the reasoning of others; explain own thinking and respond to others' thinking								
	Applying known information to new experiences	Compare, contrast and evaluate experiences, tasks and events building on prior knowledge								
	Reasoning and problem solving	Consider multiple strategies and generate creative solutions to problem with peers; use an alternate method to check answers								
		Analyze attributes to classify, compare and contrast objects, events and experiences (similarities, differences and associations)								
Develop modes of symbolic representation	Symbolic representation	Use standard or self-selected objects, actions, drawings and symbols to represent increasingly complex ideas								
	Pretend or symbolic play	Use role-play over an extended period of time to explore and expand knowledge and understanding								



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.