

Second Step® Elementary Digital Program and DESSA Crosswalk

Prepared September 2024

Overview of Second Step® Elementary Digital Program

The [Second Step® Elementary digital program](#) is a universal social-emotional learning curriculum that's web-based. Its digital format enables continuous improvement based on up-to-date research and feedback, and a variety of media, activities, and interactive components provide opportunities for culturally relevant teaching. The program evolves along with students during their elementary years to set them up for success in school and throughout their lives. The program offers lessons across the following units: Growth Mindset & Goal-Setting, Emotion Management, Empathy & Kindness, and Problem-Solving.

Overview of the DESSA

The [DESSA suite of assessments](#) measures key social and emotional competencies essential for student success now and into the future. The DESSA assessments span K-12 and can be completed by educators, students, and parents or guardians. The assessments are nationally standardized, norm-referenced, strength-based behavior rating scales, measuring the positive skills and mindsets necessary for students to thrive. The six competencies measured by the DESSA, their abbreviations, and their definitions are listed here:

Self-Awareness (SA): The ability to understand emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence one's behavior; recognize strengths and limitations; and develop healthy identities and a sense of purpose.

Self-Management (SM): The ability to manage emotions and behaviors across different situations and environments and to demonstrate agency as one works to set and achieve personal and collective goals.

Social Awareness (SO): The understanding of social norms for behavior; the ability to empathize with, respect, and take the perspectives of others; and the feeling of connection and belonging with family, peers, schools, and community groups.

Relationship Skills (RS): The ability to establish and maintain healthy and positive relationships including effective communication, collaborative problem-solving, negotiating conflict, and demonstrating helpful and supportive behaviors.

Responsible Decision Making (RDM): The ability to make careful, reliable, and constructive choices about personal and social behavior that are appropriate across diverse situations; to consider the personal, social, and collective impact of one's actions; and to demonstrate curiosity and an open-mindedness to learning.

Optimistic Thinking (OT): The belief and demonstration of confidence, hopefulness, and positive thinking regarding oneself, others, and one’s life situations in the past, present, and future.

Purpose of This Crosswalk

This crosswalk highlights the alignment between the Second Step® Elementary Digital Program lessons and the competencies measured by the DESSA 2 for kindergarten through 8th grades. It demonstrates how the DESSA can be used to help districts and schools ensure students have the skills and mindsets needed to be lifelong learners.

Alignment table between Second Step® Elementary Digital Program Lessons and the DESSA Competencies with example DESSA Items

Kindergarten							
Unit 1: Growth Mindset & Goal-Setting							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 1: We Watch. We Listen. We Think.	Demonstrate they know ways to pay attention		X				
Lesson 2: Why We Pay Attention	Identify reasons to pay attention		X				
Lesson 3: Mistakes Are Okay!	Recognize mistakes are a part of learning by encouraging themselves and others when they make mistakes				X		X
Lesson 4: Practice Makes Better	Name two ways they can get better at a skill	X					
Lesson 5: Let’s Practice and Learn!	Demonstrate paying attention and using kind words to encourage themselves and others while learning something new together		X		X		
Sample DESSA Items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay focused despite a distraction (SM) Accept that making mistakes is part of learning (OT) Encourage others (RS) Work to develop their personal strengths (SA) 							
Unit 2: Emotion Management							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 6: Sometimes We Feel Happy	Give at least one reason why they think someone is feeling happy			X			
Lesson 7: Sometimes We Feel Sad	Give at least one reason why they think someone is feeling sad			X			



Lesson 8: Sometimes We Feel Mad	Give at least one reason why they think someone is feeling mad			X			
Lesson 9: We Can Feel Calm	Practice asking for help and slow breathing as ways to feel calm		X				
Lesson 10: What Are They Feeling?	Label feelings using behavioral and contextual clues and demonstrate a way to feel calm	X	X				

Sample DESSA Items:

- Recognize others’ emotions (SO)
- Stay calm when faced with a challenge (SM)
- Describe the emotion they were feeling (SA)

Unit 3: Kindness and Empathy

Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 11: We Can Be Kind	Give an example of a kind act				X		
Lesson 12: Why Kindness?	Give a reason why they think kind acts are important			X			
Lesson 13: Showing Kindness	Demonstrate two kind acts: asking “Would you like to share?” and “Would you like a hug?”				X		
Lesson 14: Kindness at School	Give at least one example of a kind act they could do in a given situation				X		
Lesson 15: Demonstrating Kindness	Give at least one example of a kind act they have done or someone has done for them	X			X		

Sample DESSA Items:

- Interact positively with classmates (RS)
- Respond to others’ feelings in kind and safe ways (SO)
- Contribute to a positive learning environment (SO)
- Make others feel welcome or included (SO)

Unit 4: Problem Solving

Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 16: We Can Say the Problem	Repeat a clearly stated problem					X	
Lesson 17: Ready to Solve Problems	Name “feeling calm” as a helpful first Step [®] for problem-solving		X				
Lesson 18: Apologizing Can Help	Demonstrate apologizing as a problem-solving strategy				X		
Lesson 19: Taking Turns and Sharing	Demonstrate offering to share or taking turns as problem-solving strategies				X		



Lesson 20: We Can Solve Problems	Demonstrate a problem-solving process					X	
<p>Example DESSA Items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay calm when faced with a challenge (SM) • Accept responsibility for their actions (RDM) • Do the right thing in a difficult situation (RDM) • Resolve conflicts positively (RS) 							

Grade 1							
Unit 1: Growth Mindset & Goal-Setting							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 1: Time to Pay Attention	Demonstrate how they pay attention		X				
Lesson 2: Everyone Gets Distracted	Name behaviors that would help them pay attention when distracted		X				
Lesson 3: You Did It!	Describe how they have gotten better at one skill they've learned	X					
Lesson 4: Helpful Thoughts	Suggest helpful thoughts to encourage themselves to keep trying	X					X
Lesson 5: We Can Do It!	Demonstrate practicing and paying attention- despite mistakes and distractions- to learn something new		X				X
Example DESSA Items:							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay focused despite a distraction (SM) Show an awareness of their personal strengths (SA) Believe they can achieve their goals (OT) Accept that making mistakes is part of learning (OT) 							
Unit 2: Emotion Management							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 6: Noticing Feelings	Name one way they can guess how someone feels			X			
Lesson 7: Sometimes We Feel Worried	Name a reason for why they think someone feels worried			X			
Lesson 8: Feeling Calm	Name a reason for why they think someone feels calm			X			
Lesson 9: Feeling Frustrated	Name a reason for why they think someone feels frustrated			X			
Lesson 10: Noticing Clues	Label feelings using behavioral and contextual clues and demonstrate a way to feel calm	X	X				
Example DESSA Items:							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize others' emotions (SO) Respect a person's right to have a different perspective (SO) Explain what caused their emotions (SA) 							
Unit 3: Kindness and Empathy							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 11: The Power of Kind Acts	Describe how kind acts can help people feel good			X	X		

Lesson 12: Ways to Be Kind	Demonstrate two kind acts: asking “Are you okay?” and offering their company			X	X		
Lesson 13: Offering Kind Acts	Demonstrate two kind acts: offering to help and inviting to join			X	X		
Lesson 14: Practicing Kind Acts	With adult support, demonstrate at least one kind act they could do for others			X	X		
Lesson 15: Demonstrating Kind Acts	Demonstrate at least one kind act they could do for others			X	X		

Example DESSA Items:

- Recognize others’ emotions (SO)
- Respond to others’ feelings in kind and safe ways (SO)
- Make others feel welcome or included (SO)
- Interact positively with classmates (RS)

Unit 4: Problem Solving

Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 16: How to Say the Problem	State a problem respectfully		X		X	X	
Lesson 17: Was It an Accident?	Identify problems caused by accidents and demonstrate an appropriate response		X			X	
Lesson 18: Ask for What You Need	Describe what they would want and need to solve a problem	X				X	
Lesson 19: We Can Make It Better	Identify ways to make amends to solve a problem	X			X	X	
Lesson 20: Solving Problems	Suggest one way to solve a problem					X	X

Example DESSA Items:

- Gather information before making an important decision (RDM)
- Do the right thing in a difficult situation (RDM)
- Think before they acted (SM)
- Cooperate with others to solve a problem (RS)



Grade 2							
Unit 1: Growth Mindset & Goal-Setting							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 1: How to Get Good at Something	Identify things they've done to get good at something	X	X				X
Lesson 2: What Mistakes Tell Us	Give at least one example of things they can do to keep going when they get stuck or make mistakes		X				X
Lesson 3: Helpful and Unhelpful Thoughts	Identify the likely outcomes of a character's helpful or unhelpful thoughts			X			X
Lesson 4: We Can Change Our Thoughts	Replace unhelpful thoughts with helpful thoughts		X				X
Lesson 5: Learn and Get Better	Apply what they've learned to give advice to someone having a hard time acquiring a new skill			X	X	X	X
Example DESSA Items:							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show an awareness of their personal strengths (SA) • Work to develop their personal strengths (SA) • Accept that making mistakes is part of learning (OT) • View negative outcomes as a learning opportunity (OT) • Focus on the positive aspects of a situation (OT) • Encourage others (RS) 							
Unit 2: Emotion Management							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 6: Feeling Proud	Identify reasons for feeling proud	X	X				
Lesson 7: Feeling Disappointed	Identify reasons for feeling disappointed	X	X				
Lesson 8: Help Yourself Feel Better	Generate helpful thoughts as a strategy to regulate strong feelings	X	X				X
Lesson 9: Different Feelings	Recognize that people can have different feelings about the same situation because of their experiences			X	X		
Lesson 10: How Do You Feel?	Explain why different people can have different feelings in the same situation			X	X		
Example DESSA Items:							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain what caused their emotions (SA) • Recognize others' emotions (SO) • Respect a person's right to have a different perspective (SO) 							

Unit 3: Kindness and Empathy							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 11: What's Empathy	Describe how empathy leads to an act of kindness			X	X		
Lesson 12: Empathy in Action	Describe how empathy has led them to show kindness to others	X		X	X		
Lesson 13: Having Empathy	Identify a kind act they could do for someone				X		
Lesson 14: Empathy at School	Use empathy to identify a kind act they could do for a person in their school community			X	X		
Lesson 15: Empathy and Kindness	Use empathy to identify a kind act they could do for a person of their choosing			X	X		
Example DESSA Items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize others' emotions (SO) Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways (SO) Make others feel welcome or included (SO) Interact positively with classmates (RS) 							
Unit 4: Problem Solving							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 16: The Way to Say a Problem	State the problem without blame				X	X	
Lesson 17: Thinking of Solutions	Generate multiple solutions to a problem					X	
Lesson 18: Which Solution?	Explain why one solution is better than another for solving a given problem					X	
Lesson 19: What Would I Want?	Generate ways to make amends to solve a problem			X	X	X	
Lesson 20: Be a Problem-Solver	Generate possible solutions and select the solution that makes sense	X				X	
Example DESSA Items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gather information before making an important decision (RDM) Do the right thing in a difficult situation (RDM) Think before they acted (SM) Resolve conflicts positively (RS) 							

Grade 3							
Unit 1: Growth Mindset & Goal-Setting							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 1: Changing Your Brain	State what happens in their brain when they learn a new skill	X					X
Lesson 2: Getting Better with Practice	Describe the connection between their own practice and effort and the changes that happened in their brain	X				X	X
Lesson 3: More Than Practice	Name two additional actions they can take to improve a skill	X	X				X
Lesson 4: Planning for Practice	Make a practice plan with a partner		X		X		
Lesson 5: Make a Practice Plan	Use a handout to make a practice plan for a skill they want to get better at	X	X				X
Example DESSA Items:							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show an awareness of their personal strengths (SA) • Work to develop their personal strengths (SA) • Persist to achieve a goal (SM) 							
Unit 2: Emotion Management							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 6: Why Emotions?	Suggest an example of information that emotions give them	X					
Lesson 7: How Angry?	Differentiate feeling annoyed, angry, and furious through contextual and behavioral clues	X					
Lesson 8: Take a Break	Recognize when and how to take a break to regulate a strong emotion		X				
Lesson 9: How Happy?	Differentiate feeling content, happy, and excited through contextual and behavioral clues	X					
Lesson 10: Strength of Feelings	Recognize differences between levels of intensity of similar emotions	X					
Example DESSA Items:							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain what caused their emotions (SA) • Explain what caused their emotions (SA) • Stay calm when faced with a challenge (SM) 							
Unit 3: Kindness and Empathy							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 11: Kindness and Friendship	Identify kind acts that can build a new friendship				X		

Lesson 12: Building a Friendship	Identify kind acts that can make existing friendships stronger				X		
Lesson 13: My Kind of Kindness	Describe different ways people prefer to be shown kindness			X	X		
Lesson 14: Asking Questions	Ask questions to determine how someone else feels and identify a kind act they might want			X	X		
Lesson 15: Do Something Kind	Generate kind acts they can do to build a friendship				X		
Example DESSA Items:							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get along well with different types of people (RS) • Interact positively with classmates (RS) • Recognize others' emotions (SO) • Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways (SO) 							
Unit 4: Problem Solving							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 16: STEP by Step	Recall a process they can use to solve problems (STEP)					X	
Lesson 17: S: Say the Problem	Restate the wants and needs of each person involved in a given problem			X	X		
Lesson 18: T: Think and E: Explore	Identify whose wants and needs are met by possible solutions			X	X		
Lesson 19: P: Pick a Solution	Pick a solution for a given problem and explain why they chose it					X	
Lesson 20: Solving a Problem	Solve a given problem using the STEP process		X			X	
Example DESSA Items:							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather information before making an important decision (RDM) • Do the right thing in a difficult situation (RDM) • Think before they acted (SM) • Contribute to creating a positive learning environment (SO) 							

Grade 4							
Unit 1: Growth Mindset & Goal-Setting							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 1: Setting a Good Goal	Use criteria to identify a class goal		X	X			
Lesson 2: Making a Plan	Make an effective plan to reach a class goal		X				
Lesson 3: Checking Our Progress	Evaluate progress toward a class goal so they can make adjustments if needed		X				
Lesson 4: Reflecting on Our Journey	Reflect on the goal-setting process	X	X				
Lesson 5: Ready, Set, Goal!	Apply the goal-setting process to a new group goal and reflect on how it went		X			X	
Example DESSA Items:							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to group or team goals (SM) Cooperate with others to solve a problem (RS) Persist to achieve a goal (SM) Show a willingness to update their thinking (RDM) 							
Unit 2: Emotion Management							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 6: The Balanced Brain	Explain why it is important to manage strong emotions		X				
Lesson 7: What is Rethinking?	Describe the benefits of rethinking a situation		X			X	X
Lesson 8: How to Rethink	Use questions to help them rethink given situations		X			X	X
Lesson 9: Take Another Look	Rethink a situation they have personally experienced	X	X			X	X
Lesson 10: Rethink It!	Rethink a variety of situations		X			X	X
Example DESSA Items:							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay calm when faced with a challenge (SM) Ask questions when they did not understand something (SA) Gather information before making a decision (RDM) Show a willingness to update their thinking (RDM) View negative outcomes as a learning opportunity (OT) 							
Unit 3: Kindness and Empathy							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 11: The Same, But Different	Explain different points of view in a given situation			X			

Lesson 12: Ask, Listen, Learn	Generate questions a person could ask to better understand someone's point of view			X		X	
Lesson 13: Seeing It Differently	Ask questions to better understand someone's point of view	X		X		X	
Lesson 14: Changing Your Mind	Explain how understanding someone's point of view could change their own thinking or actions	X		X		X	
Lesson 15: A New Point of View	Demonstrate taking another person's point of view			X		X	

Example DESSA Items:

- Respect a person's right to a different perspective (SO)
- Ask questions when they did not understand something (SA)
- Show a willingness to examine their beliefs and opinions (SA)
- Show a willingness to update their thinking (RDM)

Unit 4: Problem Solving

Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 16: A Good Problem-Solver	Explain what they can do to be a better problem-solver	X				X	
Lesson 17: Saying It Respectfully	Describe a given problem from each person's point of view			X	X	X	
Lesson 18: Exploring Outcomes	Evaluate possible solutions to a given problem					X	
Lesson 19: A Good Solution	Evaluate which solution best solves a problem					X	X
Lesson 20: STEP into Problem-Solving	Apply the STEP process to solve a problem from each person's point of view		X	X		X	

Example DESSA Items:

- Gather information before making an important decision (RDM)
- Do the right thing in a difficult situation (RDM)
- Think before they acted (SM)
- Respect a person's right to have a different perspective (SO)
- Cooperate with others to solve a problem (RS)

Grade 5							
Unit 1: Growth Mindset & Goal-Setting							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 1: The Right Goal for Me	Identify a personal goal and explain why it is right for them	X	X				
Lesson 2: My Plan	Make an effective plan to reach a personal goal		X				X
Lesson 3: Changing My Plan	Evaluate their progress toward a personal goal so they can adjust their plan if needed		X				
Lesson 4: Time to Reflect	Reflect on their experience of working toward a personal goal	X	X				X
Lesson 5: My 10-Minute Goal	Apply the goal-setting process to a new personal goal and reflect on how it went	X	X				X
Example DESSA Items:							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate a sense of who they are and what is important to them (SA) • Believe they can achieve their goal (OT) • Persist to achieve a goal (SM) • Show a willingness to update their thinking (RDM) 							
Unit 2: Emotion Management							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 6: Strong Emotions	Give an example of a recurring situation that causes them to feel strong emotions	X					
Lesson 7: What is Stress?	Identify signs and causes of stress in themselves	X					
Lesson 8: Planning for Change	Identify what a person can think or do differently to manage their strong emotion in a recurring situation	X	X			X	
Lesson 9: What Can I Change?	Identify what they can think or do differently to manage strong emotions in a recurring situation	X	X			X	
Lesson 10: Making a Change	Identify two things they can change in a recurring personal situation to preemptively manage strong emotions	X	X			X	X
Example DESSA Items:							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain what caused their emotions (SA) • Show a willingness to update their thinking (RDM) • Gather information before making a decision (RDM) 							



Unit 3: Kindness and Empathy							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 11: Empathy in the Community	Describe how people used empathy to identify and address a community problem			X		X	
Lesson 12: What's the Problem?	Identify problems in their community and the people affected			X		X	
Lesson 13: A Different Point of View	Describe different points of view to build empathy for the people affected by a community problem			X	X	X	
Lesson 14: Community Solutions	Evaluate possible solutions to a community problem					X	
Lesson 15: Your Solution	Explain how their solution meets the wants and needs of the people affected by a community problem		X	X	X	X	
Example DESSA Items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperate with others to solve a problem (RS) • Contribute to group or team goals (SM) • Gather information before making an important decision (RDM) • Respect a person's right to a different perspective (SO) 							
Unit 4: Problem Solving							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 16: Beginning to STEP	Explain how to begin the STEP problem-solving process					X	
Lesson 17: When? Where? Who?	Identify when, where, and with whom to work on different problems			X		X	
Lesson 18: Solutions Web	Predict whether a potential solution will be successful based on the points of view of everyone involved			X		X	
Lesson 19: Let's Reflect	Evaluate the outcome of a solution based on how it affected everyone involved			X		X	
Lesson 20: Putting It All Together	Apply the STEP process and consider the context in which they might best solve the problem			X		X	
Example DESSA Items: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather information before making an important decision (RDM) • Do the right thing in a difficult situation (RDM) • Think before they acted (SM) • Respect a person's right to have a different perspective (SO) • Cooperate with others to solve a problem (RS) 							