

## **Second Step® Middle School Digital Program and DESSA Crosswalk**

Prepared September 2024

### *Overview of Second Step® Middle School Digital Program*

The [Second Step® Middle School 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 middle school years to set them up for success in school and throughout their lives. The program offers lessons across the following units: Mindsets & Goals; Developing a Positive Sense of Self; Thoughts, Emotions, and Decisions; and Managing Relationships & Social Conflict.

### *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 Crosswalks*

This crosswalk highlights the alignment between the Second Step® Middle School Digital Program lessons and the competencies measured by the DESSA 2 for kindergarten through 8<sup>th</sup> 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® Middle School Digital Program Lessons and the DESSA Competencies with example DESSA Items*

Grade 6							
Unit 1: Mindsets & Goals							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 1A: Starting Middle School	Describe challenges they might face as they start middle school and identify resources where they can get help	X				X	
Lesson 1B: Helping New Students	Use empathy skills to identify ways they can help new students feel welcome and comfortable at school			X	X		
Lesson 2: How to Grow Your Brain	Describe what happens in their brains when they try something new and how their brains change with experience and practice	X				X	X
Lesson 3: Trying New Strategies	Name new strategies they can try when they’re having trouble learning something new	X	X			X	
Lesson 4: Making Goals Specific	Write a specific goal		X				X
Lesson 5: Breaking Down Your Goals	Break a big, long-term goal down into smaller, short-term goals		X				
Lesson 6: Monitoring Your Progress	Set progress markers for their goal, determine when their goal has been achieved, and determine if they need to try a new strategy to reach their goal	X	X			X	
Lesson 7-Performance Task: Bringing It All Together	Create an action plan for achieving a goal	X	X			X	
<b>Sample DESSA Items:</b>							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare for school, activities, or upcoming events (RDM)</li> </ul>							

- Make others feel welcome or included (SO)
- Update their thinking as they learn more about something (RDM)
- Set goals for themselves (SM)
- Believe they can achieve their goals (OT)
- Persist to achieve a goal (SM)

### Unit 2: Developing a Positive Sense of Self

Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 8: What Are Guiding Principles?	Identify what guiding principles are and where they come from	X					
Lesson 9: Your Guiding Principles	Use a process to identify at least one of their own guiding principles	X					
Lesson 10: Making Decisions	Describe how they can use their guiding principles to make decisions	X				X	
Lesson 11: Multiple Guiding Principles	Apply more than one guiding principle before making a decision	X				X	
Lesson 12: Thinking Short-Term and Long-Term	Evaluate how they would feel after making a decision using their guiding principles	X				X	
Lesson 13- Performance Task: Using Your Guiding Principles	Apply their guiding principle to make a decision in a given situation	X				X	

#### Sample DESSA Items:

- Demonstrate a sense of who they are and what is important to them (SA)
- Do the right thing in a difficult situation (RDM)

### Unit 3: Thoughts, Emotions & Decisions

Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 14: What Emotions Tell You	Describe why emotions matter in their lives	X					
Lesson 15: Emotions and Your Brain	Describe what happens in their brains when they feel a strong emotion	X					
Lesson 16: How Emotions Affect Your Decisions	Describe how strong emotions can influence the decisions they make	X	X			X	
Lesson 17: Managing Your Emotions	Demonstrate and evaluate strategies for managing their emotions	X	X			X	
Lesson 18: What Works Best for You?	Determine the emotion-management strategies that work best for them and choose the best strategy to use in a situation, given the context	X	X			X	

Lesson 19- Performance Task: Raising Awareness About Managing Emotions	Apply their knowledge from the unit to promote awareness about emotion management strategies at school		X	X	X		
<b>Sample DESSA Items:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain what caused their emotions (SA)</li> <li>• Know how their emotions influence their behavior (SA)</li> <li>• Stay calm when faced with a challenge (SM)</li> <li>• Do the right thing in a difficult situation (RDM)</li> <li>• Take action to solve problems (SM)</li> <li>• Contribute to a positive learning environment (SO)</li> </ul>							
Unit 4: Managing Relationships & Social Conflict							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 20: You're Changing	Describe the changes they've gone through in the past, the change(s) they're currently going through, and how those changes affect their relationships	X		X	X		
Lesson 21: Why Conflicts Escalate	Identify actions that escalate conflicts and determine ways to prevent conflicts from becoming more serious			X	X		
Lesson 22: Considering Multiple Perspectives	Examine a social conflict from multiple perspectives so they can resolve minor conflicts			X	X		
Lesson 23: Respectful Communication	Demonstrate how to use respectful language to prevent conflicts from getting worse			X	X		
Lesson 24: Resolving Challenging Conflicts	Identify and evaluate various solutions to a conflict in order to find the best solution			X	X	X	
Lesson 25: Making Amends	Demonstrate how to make amends in meaningful and restorative ways			X	X	X	
Lesson 26- Performance Task: Conflict Solvers	Demonstrate resolving a social conflict			X	X		
<b>Example DESSA Items:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay calm when faced with a challenge (SM)</li> <li>• Accept responsibility for their actions (RDM)</li> <li>• Do the right thing in a difficult situation (RDM)</li> <li>• Resolve conflicts positively (RS)</li> </ul>							

Grade 7							
Unit 1: Mindsets & Goals							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 1A: Starting Middle School	Describe challenges they might face as they start middle school and identify resources where they can get help	X		X		X	
Lesson 1B: Helping New Students	Use empathy skills to identify ways they can help new students feel welcome and comfortable at school			X	X		
Lesson 2: Creating New Pathways in Your Brain	Explain how practicing something difficult helps the brain grow new neural pathways	X				X	X
Lesson 3: Learning from Mistakes and Failure	Analyze simple and complex scenarios to determine what they can learn from making mistakes	X				X	X
Lesson 4: Identifying Roadblocks	Distinguish between internal and external roadblocks	X		X			
Lesson 5: Identifying Roadblocks 1	Think of and select appropriate strategies as part of If-Then Plans for overcoming roadblocks		X			X	X
Lesson 6: Identifying Roadblocks 2	Create an If-Then Plan to anticipate and get past a roadblock that could prevent them from achieving a goal		X			X	X
Lesson 7-Performance Task: advice on Roadblocks	Give advice to a sixth-grade student who's trying to learn something new and feels like giving up			X	X		X
<b>Sample DESSA Items:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare for school, activities, or upcoming events (RDM)</li> <li>• Encourage others (RS)</li> <li>• Accept that making mistakes is part of learning (OT)</li> <li>• Take action to solve problems (SM)</li> <li>• Believe they can overcome setbacks (OT)</li> </ul>							
Unit 2: Developing a Positive Sense of Self							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 8: What is Self-Concept?	Explain what self-concept is and why it's important	X					
Lesson 9: Your Self-Concept	Describe two or more parts of their current self-concept	X					
Lesson 10: Influences on Self-Concept	Name at least one factor that influences their self-concept	X		X			

Lesson 11: Changes in Self-Concept	Describe how their self-concept has changed over time	X					
Lesson 12: Your Future Self-Concept	Describe the self-concept they want to have in the future	X					X
Lesson 13- Performance Task: Who Will You Become?	Describe something they can do now to connect their self-concept to who they want to be in the future	X	X				X
<b>Sample DESSA Items:</b>							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate a sense of who they are and what is important to them (SA)</li> <li>• Show a willingness to examine their beliefs and opinions (SA)</li> <li>• Speak positively about their future potential (OT)</li> <li>• Set goals for themselves (SM)</li> </ul>							
<b>Unit 3: Thoughts, Emotions &amp; Decisions</b>							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 14: Emotions Matter	Explain the importance of emotions and describe how emotions can affect their thoughts and decisions	X	X			X	
Lesson 15: Fell, Think, Do	Explain how thoughts and emotions are connected and can affect their decisions	X	X			X	
Lesson 16: Unhelpful Thoughts	Distinguish helpful thoughts from unhelpful thoughts and analyze how unhelpful thoughts can negatively affect the decisions they make	X					X
Lesson 17: Reframe the Situation	Explain how to interrupt unhelpful thoughts and reframe a challenging situation	X	X				X
Lesson 18: Practicing Positive Self-Talk	Practice using positive self-talk to reframe a challenging situation	X	X				X
Lesson 19- Performance Task: Making Better Decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate how strong emotions can prompt unhelpful thoughts</li> <li>• Model strategies for managing their emotions</li> </ul>	X	X				X
<b>Sample DESSA Items:</b>							
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain what caused their emotions (SA)</li> <li>• Know how their emotions influence their behavior (SA)</li> <li>• Focus on the positive aspects of a situation (OT)</li> <li>• Speak positively about their future potential (OT)</li> </ul>							

Unit 4: Managing Relationships & Social Conflict							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 20: What Makes a Conflict Escalate?	Identify common reasons why social conflicts escalate from minor to major			X	X	X	
Lesson 21: Keeping Your Cool in a Conflict	Describe how using emotion-management strategies can prevent the escalation of a conflict		X	X	X		
Lesson 22: Conflicts and Perspectives	Explain how to listen to and consider someone else's perspective during a conflict			X	X		
Lesson 23: Resolving Conflict Part 1	Describe the perspectives of everyone involved in a conflict in a nonjudgmental way			X	X	X	
Lesson 24: Resolving Conflict Part 2	Consider possible solutions and their consequences in order to find the best solution for resolving a conflict			X	X	X	
Lesson 25: Taking Responsibility for Your Actions	Explain what to do to take responsibility for their actions and make things as right as possible			X	X	X	
Lesson 26: Performance Task: Tips for Resolving Conflicts	Identify the key elements of resolving conflicts successfully			X	X	X	
<b>Example DESSA Items:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay calm when faced with a challenge (SM)</li> <li>• Respect a persons' right to have a different perspective (SO)</li> <li>• Listen to others (RS)</li> <li>• Accept responsibility for their actions (RDM)</li> <li>• Do the right thing in a difficult situation (RDM)</li> <li>• Resolve conflicts positively (RS)</li> </ul>							

Grade 8							
Unit 1: Mindsets & Goals							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 1: Welcome!	Describe how the Second Step program can help them navigate physical, social, and emotional changes in adolescence	X	X				X
Lesson 2: Who Am I? My Identity	Name unique and important aspects of their identities	X					
Lesson 3: My Interests and Strengths	Describe how they used their personal strengths to develop an interest, skill, or ability	X					X
Lesson 4: Harnessing My Strengths	Explain how to use their strengths to get better at something new	X					
Lesson 5: Pursuing My Interests	Describe ways to make the most of positive factors and decrease the effects of negative factors while pursuing an interest or goal	X	X				X
Lesson 6: My Future Self	Describe important aspects of their future identities	X					X
Lesson 7- Performance Task: My Path Forward	Identify strengths and skills they already have and explain how they can use them to develop their interests	X	X				X
<b>Sample DESSA Items:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work to develop their personal strengths (SA)</li> <li>• Adapt well to new situations (SM)</li> <li>• Describe the things that matter most to them (SA)</li> <li>• List the personal traits that are most important to them (SA)</li> <li>• Work to develop their personal strengths (SA)</li> <li>• Focus on the positive aspects of a situation (OT)</li> <li>• Speak positively about their future potential (OT)</li> </ul>							
Unit 2: Developing a Positive Sense of Self							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 8: Agency	Explain what agency is by describing how it appears in their lives		X				
Lesson 9: Sources of Confidence	Name a specific source of confidence that led to a personal success	X	X				X



Lesson 10: How to Build Confidence 1	Name a time when they built confidence by preparing their physical and emotional states or by observing others	X	X	X			X
Lesson 11: How to Build Confidence 2	Name a time when they built confidence using encouragement from others or past experience	X	X	X			X
Lesson 12: Agency and Confidence	Make a plan to build confidence in a given area		X				X
Lesson 13- Performance Task: Your Confidence-Building Plan	Make a plan to build confidence in an area of their choice		X				X
<b>Sample DESSA Items:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize their strengths (SA)</li> <li>• Expect they will be successful (OT)</li> <li>• Believe working with others leads to greater success (OT)</li> <li>• Take action to solve problems (SM)</li> <li>• Set goals for themselves (SM)</li> <li>• Work to develop their personal strengths (SA)</li> </ul>							
<b>Unit 3: Thoughts, Emotions &amp; Decisions</b>							
<b>Lesson Name</b>	<b>Lesson Objectives</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>SM</b>	<b>SO</b>	<b>RS</b>	<b>RDM</b>	<b>OT</b>
Lesson 14: Understanding Stress and Anxiety	Recognize how stress and anxiety affect their emotions, thoughts, and bodies	X				X	
Lesson 15: Where Does Stress Come From?	Categorize common sources of stress and explain the difference between controllable and uncontrollable stressors	X		X		X	
Lesson 16: Can Stress Help You Grow?	Reframe certain types of stress as opportunities for growth	X					X
Lesson 17: Strategies for Managing Stress	Demonstrate how to choose strategies for managing stress		X			X	
Lesson 18: Changing Strategies and Getting Help	Analyze stressful situations, decide if they need to change strategies or get outside help to manage their stress, and identify people who can help them when they feel		X	X	X	X	

	their stress is unmanageable						
Lesson 19- Performance Task: My Stress- Management Plan	Create an individual plan for managing their stress		X			X	
<b>Sample DESSA Items:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain what caused their emotions (SA)</li> <li>• Know how their emotions influence their behavior (SA)</li> <li>• Focus on the positive aspects of a situation (OT)</li> <li>• Speak positively about their future potential (OT)</li> <li>• Do the right thing in a difficult situation (RDM)</li> <li>• Take action to solve problems (SM)</li> <li>• Stay calm when faced with a challenge (SM)</li> </ul>							
<b>Unit 4: Managing Relationships &amp; Social Conflict</b>							
Lesson Name	Lesson Objectives	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
Lesson 20: My Values	Identify their core values and how their behaviors demonstrate these values	X				X	
Lesson 21: Values and Relationships	Describe the connection between their values and healthy behaviors in relationships	X			X		
Lesson 22: Recognizing Others' Perspectives	Analyze conflicts from multiple perspectives to help prevent them from escalating	X		X	X	X	
Lesson 23: Finding the Best Solution	Generate and evaluate solutions to conflicts that are mutually acceptable to everyone affected			X	X	X	
Lesson 24: Making Things Right	Identify a variety of ways for making amends to restore a relationship that's been damaged	X		X	X	X	
Lesson 25: Unhealthy Relationships	Distinguish between healthy and unhealthy relationships			X	X	X	
Lesson 26- Performance Task: Guide to Healthy Relationships	Describe the importance of choosing healthy relationships, tell if a relationship is healthy, and recognize and manage unhealthy relationships			X	X	X	
Lesson 27: High School Challenges	Identify challenges many students face starting high school and people they can go to for help with these challenges	X	X	X	X		
<b>Example DESSA Items:</b>							

- Can describe the things that matter most to them (SA)
- Can list the personal traits that are most important to them (SA)
- Respect a persons' right to have a different perspective (SO)
- Listen to others (RS)
- Accept responsibility for their actions (RDM)
- Do the right thing in a difficult situation (RDM)
- Resolve conflicts positively (RS)
- Compromise for the good of the group (RDM)
- Prepare for school, activities, and upcoming events (RDM)