



# The Aperture Education Guide to Data-Driven SEL: High School Edition

A Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Approach to Build  
Students' Social Emotional Learning: School Level

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# Introduction

This guide was developed for high school teams using the DESSA System to support their students' social and emotional learning (SEL). The guide outlines the process for data-driven SEL within a multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) framework. The purpose of this guide is to help educators access, review, and **use the data** from the DESSA System to inform their SEL programs and to build the social and emotional competence (SEC) of all students.



# Setting the Stage for Data-Driven SEL

This guide is targeted for high school-level SEL implementation and assumes the following components of Universal SEL programming are in place:

- ✓ A strength-based approach to SEL that has been communicated to all stakeholders, including students and parents.
- ✓ A school-level SEL team that includes stakeholders as partners and representatives in SEL decision making.
- ✓ Evidence-based SEL programming.
- ✓ The DESSA assessments have been discussed with stakeholders.
- ✓ All users have been trained on the DESSA assessments, ratings, and reports.

If you are not yet at this point, the resources listed below can support getting started with SEL:

1. [CASEL Guide to Schoolwide Social Emotional Learning](#)
2. [Navigating SEL from the Inside Out](#)
3. [CASEL Program Guide](#)



# The DESSA System

The DESSA System delivers the DESSA assessments and provides robust reporting in an easy-to-use digital platform. The DESSA assessments, Foundational Practices, and Strategies can be used as part of an effective, data-driven, school-wide SEL program. The DESSA assessments include the following three measures:

1. **A Screener.** The DESSA-HSE mini is an eight-item screener of student social and emotional competence. The results produce a Social-Emotional Total (SET) score that provides an indication of a student's overall social and emotional competence at the time of assessment. The results can be aggregated and viewed at different levels to help educators plan how best to strengthen, adjust, or add universal supports. This screener can also help to identify students that may benefit from additional assessment. The four alternate forms of the DESSA HSE mini can be used for ongoing progress monitoring throughout the school year.
2. **An Assessment.** The DESSA-HSE is an assessment for students in grades 9-12 that provides a score for each of the six social and emotional competencies (see Figure 1) and one Social-Emotional Composite (SEC) score per student. The DESSA HSE data can help educators plan how to strengthen, adjust, or add universal and tiered supports in specific areas. The results can also be aggregated and viewed at different levels.
3. **A Student Self-Report.** The DESSA HS SSR is a nationally standardized norm-referenced, strength-based behavior rating scale measuring the social and emotional competence of high school-age students (grades 9-12). The SSR enables high school youth to report on their own social and emotional strengths, adding an important perspective to the assessment and promotion of students' social and emotional competence.



Figure 1. Competencies measured by the DESSA.

All DESSA measures report results using a *T*-score. *T*-scores are reported on a scale where 50 is the mean, and the standard deviation is 10. As strength-based measures, higher *T*-scores mean a higher level of social and emotional competence. *T*-scores are categorized into three descriptive ranges in which scores of 60 and above are considered a **strength**; scores between 41-59 are considered **typical**; and scores of 40 and below indicate a **need** for instruction.

Within the DESSA System, educators can access a set of practices and strategies to implement in their classrooms. There are **Foundational Practices**, which include a set of classroom routines and best practices that establish a positive learning environment. The DESSA System also includes **Strategies** that provide actionable ways for educators to help their students improve social and emotional skills. Each strategy targets one or more of the social and emotional competencies assessed by the DESSA. The **Tier 2 Intervention Programs** consist of five multi-week programs designed for targeted, small group instruction for students who need intensive skill building.

Students using the **SSR** complete the self-rating in the Student Portal. They can also create goals and complete challenges designed to promote stronger social and emotional competence. The Student Portal is student directed, allowing students to leverage their strengths to build their skills, or to select areas in which they have a growth opportunity.

The components of the **DESSA System** are designed for use within an MTSS framework that includes the following components:

- **Screen.** Administer the DESSA-HSE mini to all students.
- **Assess.** Administer the DESSA-HSE to students whose DESSA-HSE mini results show a need for instruction.
- **Listen.** All students can complete the SSR to encourage student voice and engagement in SEL efforts.
- **Grow.** Use the data and reports to review, select, and incorporate Foundational Practices and Strategies into instruction at universal, targeted, and individual levels.
- **Progress monitor.** Monitor social and emotional growth and change in response to SEL instruction and adjust instruction as needed.
- **Evaluate outcomes.** Evaluate social and emotional growth and change from the beginning to the end of the school year and use the information to guide continuous quality improvement efforts for SEL programming.



# Implementing the DESSA Assessments

High school implementation teams should consider a multi-year rollout of the DESSA assessments. A recommended sequence includes:

1. **Year 1:** Students complete the SSR at least twice and, if possible, three times during the school year (Fall, Winter, Spring). Educators can use SSR results to inform what strategies might best support their students. For example, if SSR results indicate that several students need more support with self-management, a teacher can integrate the Strategies that promote stronger self-management skills.
2. **Year 2:** Continue with the SSR implementation. Have teachers complete the DESSA-HSE mini for all students at least twice (beginning and end of year), or if possible, three times during the school year. For students whose DESSA-HSE mini results indicate a need for instruction, teachers complete the DESSA-HSE to get more information about the students' specific needs.
3. **Year 3:** Continue with SSR, DESSA-HSE mini, and DESSA-HSE implementation. Include opportunities during data review to compare results between teacher and student forms.

The remainder of this guide is organized into three sections. Section One describes how to implement the SSR and use the data to inform SEL programming. Section Two describes how the DESSA-HSE mini and the DESSA-HSE can be used within an MTSS framework. Section Three is for schools that choose to implement both the SSR and the DESSA and describes how to use the data from students and teachers to inform SEL programs.



# Section One: Implementing the SSR

To implement the SSR effectively, students need to be prepared to complete their ratings and and teachers, SEL coaches, and building leaders need a plan to review and respond to the data.

The checklist below is designed for high school or SEL team leaders. This checklist focuses on the planning, administrative, and logistical aspects of implementation. The schedule for when these items will be completed should be determined and communicated *prior to the beginning* of the school year. Students will need some training on the importance of SEL and self-reflection. For planning purposes, the SSR ratings take approximately 10 minutes to complete per student.

## SSR Implementation Checklist for SEL Team Leaders

- 1. Provide training for students on the importance of social and emotional skills to school and post school success. Students need to understand why it is important for them complete the SSR. Use the resources in this [Support Portal article](#) to get started.
- 2. Discuss how the SSR will provide students with immediate feedback on their social and emotional skills that can be used to create a personalized plan to improve them.
- 3. Ensure that students have access to their login information in the DESSA System.
- 4. Schedule time for students to complete their self-report ratings. You may want to schedule time at the beginning, middle, and end of school year. Ensure they can complete their ratings in a quiet room free from distractions.
- 5. Schedule time for teachers, SEL coaches, and school leaders to review SSR results.
- 6. Provide time for students to engage in the learning challenges in the Student Portal.



# Student Voice and Choice

As soon as students complete the SSR, they can view their results (see Figure 1). Students can then set goals and engage in a set of activities designed to promote and build their social and emotional skills (see Figure 2). The goal of this system is to empower student voice and to give them agency to engage in self-directed social and emotional learning.

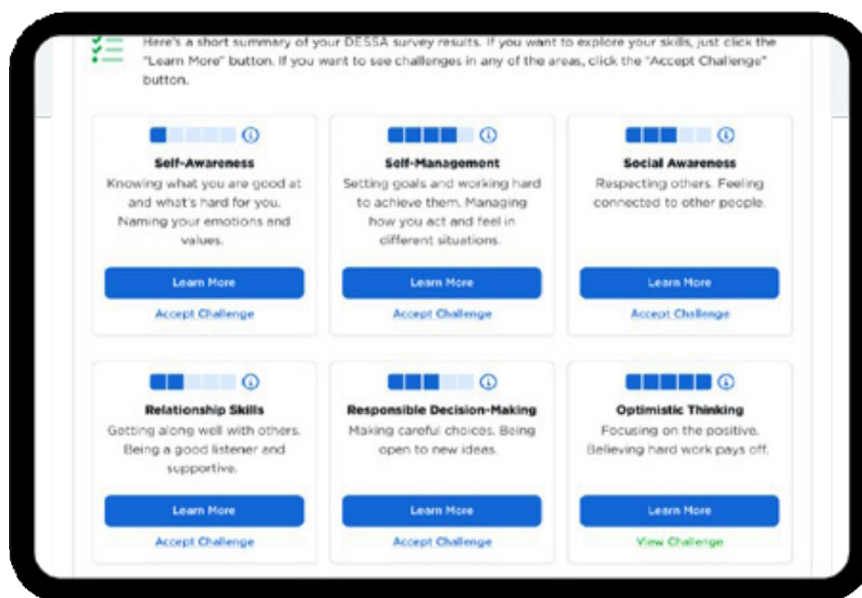


Figure 1. Sample Student SSR Results

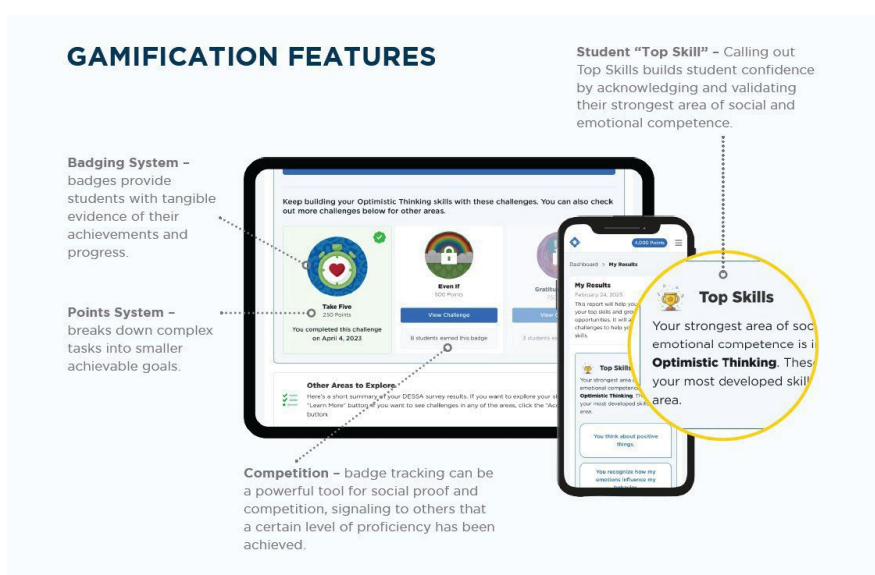


Figure 2. Sample Challenges and Features

# Analyzing Data from the SSR

Although the main purpose of the SSR is to empower students to engage in self-directed social and emotional learning, the results of the SSR can and should be reviewed to inform school and class level SEL implementation.

After each rating period, educators should engage in a data-review process, illustrated in Figure 3, that includes: 1) accessing the data, 2) reviewing the data, 3) acting on the data, and 4) continued progress monitoring.

## 1. Access the Data

Once students complete the SSR, the results will be available to them immediately, and the results can be reviewed in a variety of ways by educators and school leaders.

For educators, results will be available for students in their classrooms or programs. Higher levels of aggregated results (e.g., grade or school) are typically available to educational administrators.

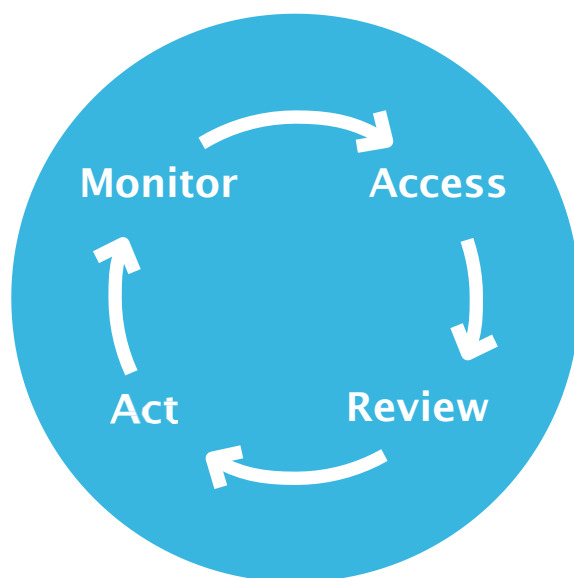


Figure 3. Recommended data review process

## 2. Review and Reflect on the Data

Data review includes looking at the results at the school, grade, group, classroom, and student levels. The review process should include SEL Team members, educators, and other key stakeholders. High school SEL teams should dedicate sufficient time for data review.

At each level (e.g., school, grade, class, student), the SEL team should follow a review process as outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. *Suggested Process for SEL Teams to Review Universal Screening Results*

Review initial screening data using the following steps as a guide.	Data Sources
1. Review DESSA SSR results at the school level – check the percentage of students in <b>strength</b> , <b>typical</b> , <b>need*</b> for instruction categories. Expected distribution is <b>16 – 68 - 16</b>	My Students Report
a. By grade/class - are there any grades or classroom level reports that differ significantly (in either positive or negative ways) from the school report?	Grade Level Report
b. By student population - are there differences in results based on racial/ethnic, gender, student service (e.g., EL, SPED) groups? Use the <a href="#">Guiding Questions for Review of Disaggregated Data</a> to reflect on disaggregated results.	Grade Level Report
c. For students whose results suggest a need for instruction, review individual student level data; the SSR results should be considered along with other data and information about the student – for example, attendance, achievement, engagement, and behavior.	My Students Report
2. If results are consistent with the expected distribution at the school, grade, and classroom level or with your school's continuous improvement plan, celebrate your team's accomplishments! Then continue with your SEL implementation and repeat this process during the next screening period.	DESSA SSR norms ( <b>16 – 68 – 16</b> ); School continuous improvement plan
3. If the results are not consistent with the expected results, work with your SEL team to:	
a. Collect additional data to better understand the situation	Observations; Other student behavioral, academic, engagement data; Implementation data, follow up teacher conversations
b. Review results to determine how best to provide support. For example, teachers may need professional development to support their SEL implementation, or SEL program implementation may require more support/resources.	SEL program implementation data, teacher conversations, PLC information
c. If your results indicate significantly more students demonstrating a need, you may choose to assess students with very low SEC <i>T</i> -scores (35 and below) first and create support plans as needed, then move on to students with SEC <i>T</i> -scores in the 36 to 40 range.	Rating export of SSR data sorted by SEC <i>T</i> -score
d. Create a plan or goal to address any areas of growth you have discovered.	

**\*Refer to resources within the Support Portal for instructions on how to pull the specific reports.**

**\*If your results indicate significantly more students demonstrating a need, you may choose to prioritize support to students with very low SEC *T*-scores (35 and below) first, then move on to students with SEC *T*-scores in the 36 to 40 range. If not already in place, you may also consider prioritizing an expanded implementation of universal SEL efforts.**

**Review Disaggregated Data.** SEL programming should be implemented with the goal of supporting educational equity. To learn whether SEL programming is supporting equitable outcomes, data should also be disaggregated into subgroups (e.g., grade level report, race/ethnicity, academic services, and economic need) and reviewed. Once data have been disaggregated, the SEL team should engage in a review process as outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. Guiding questions to review disaggregated data

Questions to consider as you review disaggregated data	Data Sources
1. For each subgroup of interest – check the percentage of students in <b>strength</b> , <b>typical</b> , <b>need</b> for instruction categories. Expected distribution is 16 – 68 - 16.	My Students Report
2. By student population - are there differences in results based on racial/ethnic, gender, student service (e.g., EL, SPED) groups?	Grade Level Report
3. Do disaggregated results suggest a need for reflection, discussion, or possibly professional development?	Guiding Questions for Educators
4. What supports are in place for this group of students?	
5. Do disaggregated results suggest differential instructional supports may be needed in the context of universal programming to support certain groups of students?	

**\*Refer to the Site Leader Reports Guide in the Support Portal for instructions on how to pull the reports.**

## Reflect on the Data

Discussions about the data should focus on the SEL team’s efforts to create a positive learning environment and provide high-quality SEL instruction for all students. The reflection process should include SEL Team members and other key stakeholders who will create goals and a related action plan for continuous quality improvement (CQI).

If the SSR results are consistent with the expected distribution, your goals, and your continuous improvement plan, celebrate your team’s efforts, continue with your SEL implementation, and repeat this process during the next rating period.

If there are areas to improve, consider the following questions as a team to identify next steps for improving your universal programming.

### Questions to Guide Improvement of Universal SEL Programming

1. Has universal, evidence-based SEL programming been implemented?
2. Have adequate resources been provided to support SEL programming (e.g., budget, professional learning, and dedicated time for instruction and practice)?
3. Is the SEL program implementation assessed regularly using an implementation rubric, and is the information used for continuous quality improvement?
4. How is your school working to ensure equitable SEL outcomes?



### 3. Act on the Data

Once you have reflected on your data, it is time to set goals, create an action plan, and then execute that plan. Goal setting based on DESSA SSR results is essential. SEL teams should set universal programming implementation goals and goals for improving student outcomes as measured by the DESSA SSR. For example, an SEL team may choose to focus SEL programming on a specific competency such as Self-Management if aggregated results suggest that it is an area of need for a high percentage of students.

### 4. Monitor Progress

The SSR can be administered up to three times during the year, in the fall, winter, and spring. SSR results can be reviewed at the school, grade, class, and student levels to see how results are changing over time. You will also review disaggregated data so you can determine whether growth is equitable for different groups of students. Then, you can reflect on whether the actions you have taken through your SEL programming support reaching the goals you have developed.

The Impact Report allows you to compare the progress of students from one rating to the next in the **strength**, **typical**, and **need for instruction** categories (see Figure 4). The Student Movement feature provides specific information on how many students from a given category (e.g., need for instruction) moved to a different category (e.g., typical, strength) between ratings (see Figure 5).

A school SEL team should also run the Impact Report by student population (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, special populations) and review the results of disaggregated data across groups (see Figure 6).

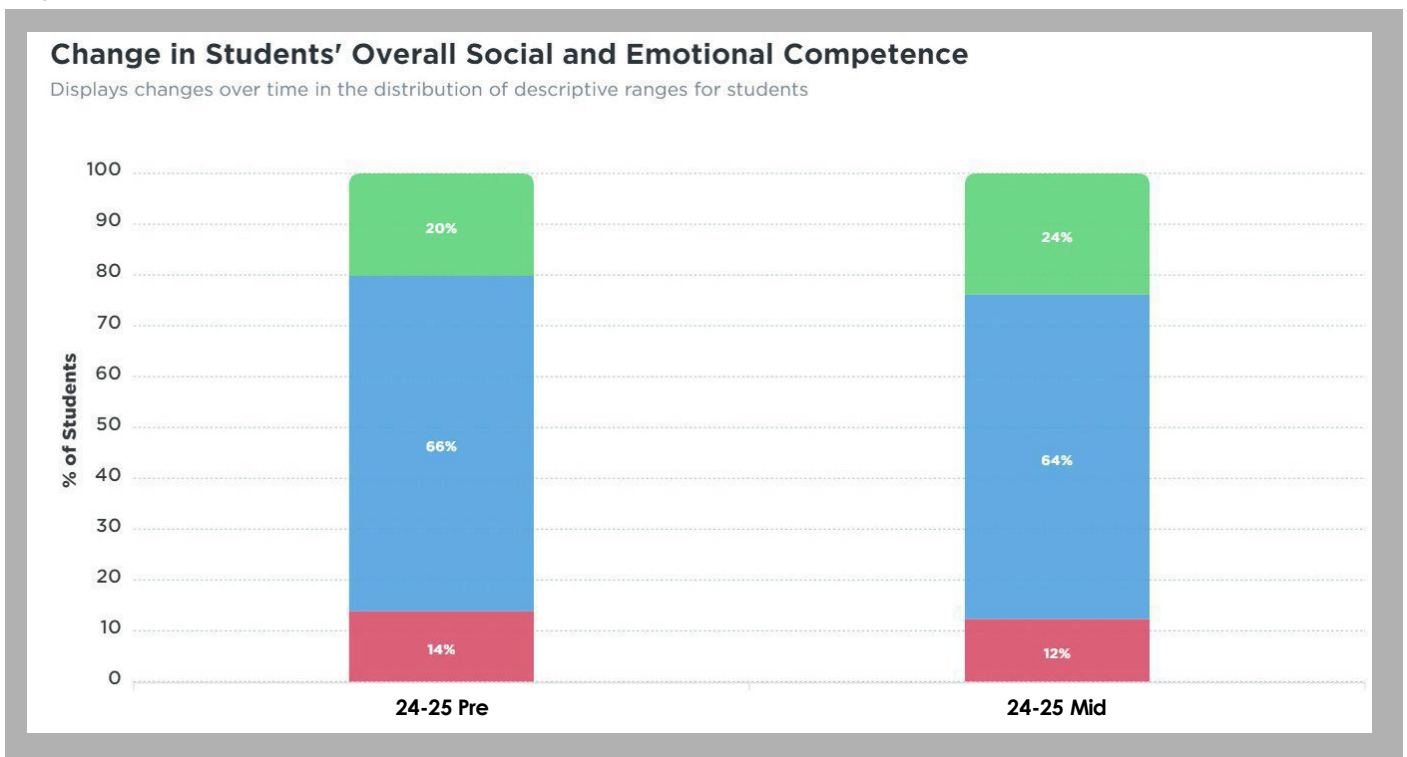


Figure 4. Sample Impact Report for SSR Data

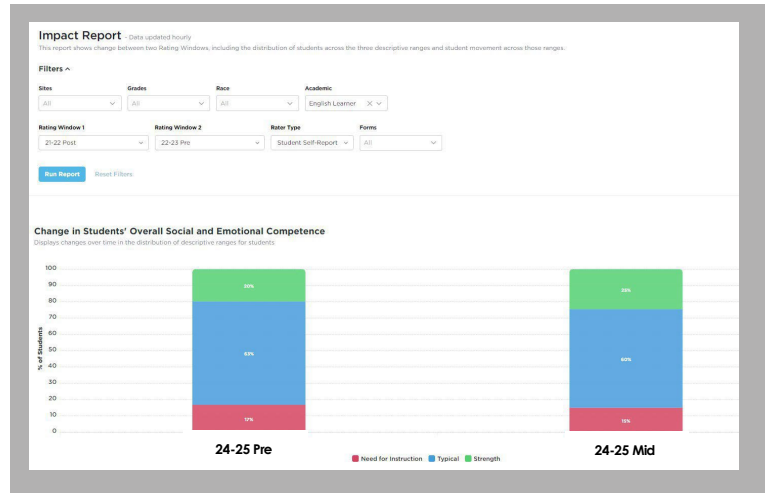


Figure 5. Sample Student Movement Report for SSR Data.

Figure 6. Sample Student Movement Report for SSR Data among English Learners.

## Things to Consider when Reviewing Progress Monitoring Data

When looking for progress, **be patient**. Although the goal of SEL programming is to build students' social and emotional competence, growth takes focused, schoolwide effort — especially for older students. Also, some students could **decline**. For example, students who experience hardship or traumatic life events between assessments may show lower social and emotional competence at follow-up. Data provided through the SSR system can help teams determine whether and when students need additional SEL support.

Seasonal changes may also affect students' progress. For instance, prior research has shown students may grow in social and emotional competence over the school year but decline over the summer (e.g., Lee, 2022). Therefore, expect students may need additional instruction and time to practice skills at the start of each school year.

# Section Two: Using the DESSA Assessments for Multi-Tiered SEL

MTSS is a prevention-focused approach to education that addresses the needs of all students through data-driven systems and services. Figure 7 illustrates how the DESSA System can be used to inform SEL programming within an MTSS framework.

The DESSA System provides several reports at the student, classroom, group, grade, and school levels. These reports allow educators to develop goals and use the Strategies to differentiate instruction to help all students build the social and emotional competencies students need to be successful.

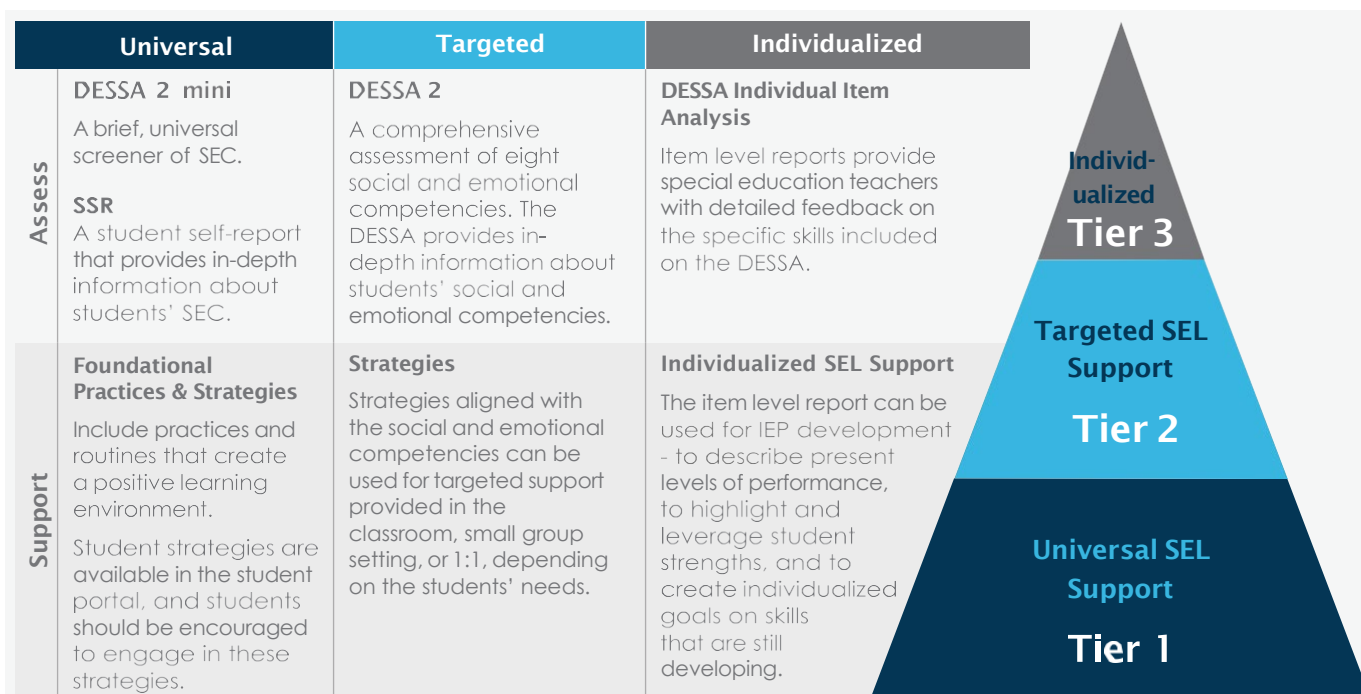


Figure 7. The DESSA System aligns with an MTSS framework.

**Universal (Tier 1)** - Universal SEL programming includes strategies and practices shown to be effective for the student population and educational context. Effective universal SEL ensures positive school climate and conditions for learning.

**Targeted (Tier 2)** - Targeted SEL is provided for students who need support in addition to the universal SEL program. SEL teams and teachers select or design interventions and supports that have demonstrated positive effects for desired outcomes and are aligned with student needs.

**Individualized (Tier 3)** - Students with significant needs may be best served through an individualized approach. Individualized supports should be designed, implemented, and monitored using a data-driven process to identify a student's unique strengths and needs.

To implement the DESSA assessments during the school year, students and teachers need to be prepared to complete their ratings, SEL teams must have a plan for administering the assessments, and there needs to be a plan to review and respond to the data.

The checklist below is designed for school or SEL team leaders and focuses on the planning aspects of implementation. The schedule for when these steps should be completed should be determined and communicated prior to the beginning of the school year. School staff will need to be adequately prepared for completing their DESSA ratings. For planning purposes, note that the DES-HSE mini takes about 1 minute to complete per student; the DESSA-HSE takes about 5 minutes per student.

## SEL Team Leader Planning for DESSA-HSE mini and DESSA-HSE Implementation Checklist\*

- 1. Ensure that teachers have training on the DESSA. Training should include how to complete the DESS-HSE mini and the DESSA-HSE. Training should also include how to review and understand results of these measures. Use this [Support Portal article](#) to check started with training options for educators.
- 2. Designate a rating window for your first DESSA-HSE mini and DESSA-HSE rating between 4-6 weeks after school start.
- 3. Provide time for teachers to complete DESSA-HSE mini ratings. For example, some sites designate a common time/day or period to ensure all ratings are completed.
- 4. Schedule and provide time for teachers to complete DESSA ratings for students whose DESSA-HSE mini results indicate a need for instruction.
- 5. Create a process and schedule time to review results at school, grade, and class levels.
- 6. Schedule when you will complete mid-year ratings. Schedule a reminder to teachers 4-6 weeks prior, so they are prepared to complete their ratings.
- 7. Schedule when you will complete end-of-year ratings. Schedule a reminder to teachers 4-6 weeks prior, so they are prepared to complete their ratings.
- 8. Schedule time to review, reflect on, and share results with stakeholders.

**When determining raters for high school students, the individual who knows the student the best should provide the DESSA rating. This individual will vary from school to school. For example, if the high school has an advisory period, that teacher would be a good choice.**

**Teachers should also prepare for DESSA-HSE mini and DESSA-HSE implementation to ensure that the assessment is administered as intended and to facilitate the use of the results. The *Teacher Planning Checklist* includes a detailed set of steps to support teachers' preparation for completing the DESSA ratings.**



## Teacher Planning for DESSA-HSE Implementation Checklist

- 1. Attend and complete the educator trainings located in the DESSA System. Under the training tab, select "Implementation Training," then "Courses." Educators will automatically be assigned courses in their individual training dashboard based on the district or program's assessments and implementation plan.
- 2. Become familiar with the DESSA-HSE mini and DESSA-HSE items by viewing the PDF versions in this [Support Portal article](#). You might also consider rating someone you know (or a fictional character) for practice.
- 3. Plan your observations strategically- what activities provide opportunities to observe the skills included in the DESSA? (e.g., building in small-group activities gives students the opportunity to cooperate, contribute to a group, etc.)
- 4. Make sure you have blocked time to complete your ratings- your school SEL team might have a schoolwide schedule or may provide a 'window' of time to complete ratings. Be sure you dedicate time for completing your ratings.
- 5. Schedule time to review your classroom DESSA-HSE mini results.
- 6. Schedule time to complete DESSA-HSE ratings for students who demonstrate a need for instruction on the DESSA-HSE mini.
- 7. Use the DESSA results to guide classroom, group, or individual student SEL instruction (more information about how to do this is included in this guide).



# Universal Screening and Programming

**Universal (Tier 1) SEL programming** is the most efficient way to proactively build the social and emotional competence of all students. Universal school SEL programming leads to a broad range of positive outcomes, including improved academic performance, positive relationships, and reduced emotional and behavioral problem behaviors (Durlak et al., 2022).

Additionally, the DESSA System includes a set of Foundational Practices (see Figure 8) that provides school teams with ideas on the universal practices they can implement to support their students' social and emotional development.

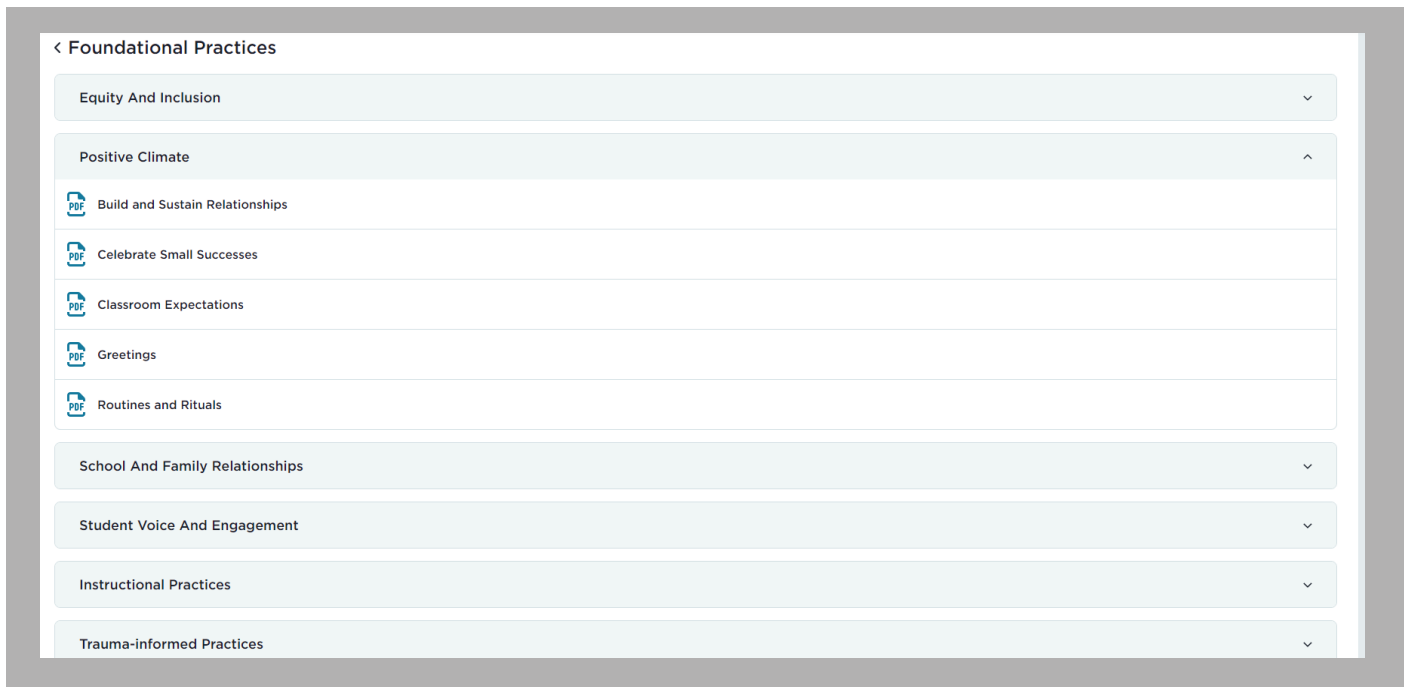


Figure 8. Foundational Practices included in the DESSA System

There is also a set of Strategies included in the DESSA System organized by the specific social and emotional competency. Strategies can be used by themselves, or they can supplement a school's SEL program. Figure 5 includes a screen shot of the Strategies for several of the social and emotional competencies within the DESSA System. SEL teams and educators can select the competency of interest and will have access to multiple strategies that target that competency. Strategies can be used at the Universal, Targeted, and Individualized levels of support.

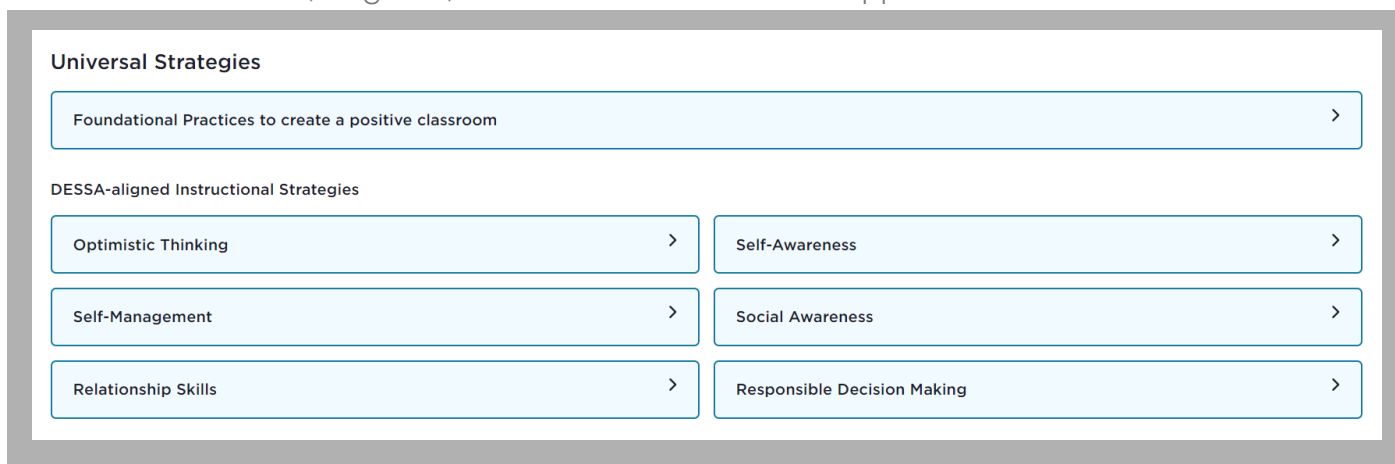


Figure 5. Strategies tab in the DESSA System

**Universal screening** using the DESSA-HSE mini can inform Tier 1 SEL programming in multiple ways. As a screening and progress monitoring tool with four unique forms, it is recommended that the DESSA-HSE mini be administered between two to three times during the school year. The first rating window should not occur until teachers have spent four weeks or longer with their students so that there is sufficient opportunity for teachers to get to know their students.

After each rating period, schools should engage in a data-review process, illustrated in Figure 10, that includes: 1) accessing the data, 2) reviewing the data, 3) acting on the data, and 4) continued progress monitoring.

## 1. Access the Data

Once an educator completes DESSA-HSE mini ratings, the results will be available to them immediately. For educators, results will be available for students they have rated in their classrooms or programs. Higher levels of aggregated results (e.g., grade or school) are typically available to educational administrators.

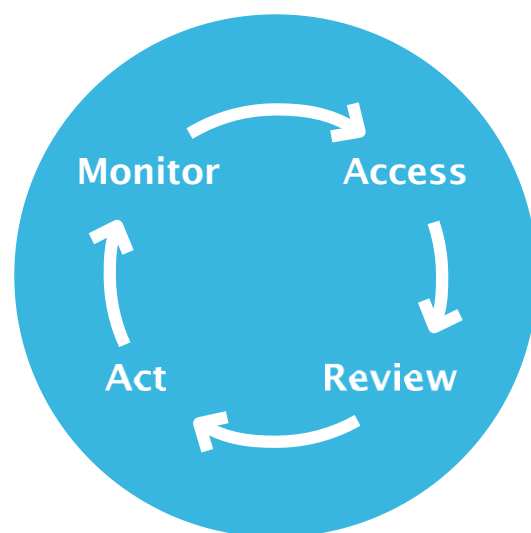


Figure 10. Recommended data review process

## 2. Review and Reflect on the Data

Data review includes looking at the results at the school, grade, group, classroom, and student levels. The review process should include SEL Team members, educators, and other key stakeholders. School SEL teams should dedicate sufficient time for data review.

At each level (e.g., school, grade, class, student), the SEL team should follow a review process as outlined in Table 3.

Table 3. *Suggested Process for SEL Teams to Review Universal Screening Results*

Review initial screening data using the following steps as a guide.	Data Sources
1. Review DESSA-HSE mini and/or SSR results at the school level – check the percentage of students in <b>strength</b> , <b>typical</b> , <b>need*</b> for instruction categories. Expected distribution is <b>16 – 68 – 16</b>	My Students Report
a. By grade/class - are there any grades or classroom level reports that differ significantly (in either positive or negative ways) from the school report?	Grade Level Report
b. By student population - are there differences in results based on racial/ethnic, gender, student service (e.g., EL, SPED) groups? Use the <a href="#">Guiding Questions for Review of Disaggregated Data</a> to reflect on disaggregated results.	Grade Level Report
c. For students whose results suggest a need for instruction, review individual student level data; the results should be considered along with other data and information about the student – for example, attendance, achievement, engagement, and behavior.	My Students Report
2. If results are consistent with the expected distribution at the school, grade, and classroom level or with your school's continuous improvement plan, celebrate your team's accomplishments! Then continue with your SEL implementation and repeat this process during the next screening period.	DESSA-mini ( <b>16 – 68 – 16</b> ); School continuous improvement plan
3. If the results are not consistent with the expected results, work with your SEL team to:	
a. Collect additional data to better understand the situation	Observations; Other student behavioral, academic, engagement data; Implementation data, Follow up teacher conversations
b. Review results to determine how best to provide support. For example, teachers may need professional development to support their SEL implementation, or SEL program implementation may require more support/resources.	SEL program implementation data, Teacher conversations, PLC information
c. If your results indicate significantly more students demonstrating a need, you may choose to assess students with very low SET <i>T</i> -scores (35 and below) first and create support plans as needed, then move on to students with SET <i>T</i> -scores in the 36 to 40 range.	Rating export of DESSA-mini data sorted by SET <i>T</i> -score
d. Create a plan or goal to address any areas of growth you have discovered.	

**\*Refer to the Site Leader Reports Guide in the Support Portal for instructions on how to pull the reports.**

**\*Students scoring in the Need for Instruction range should be assessed with the full DESSA-HSE to understand better how to support their specific needs.**

**\*\*If your results indicate significantly more students demonstrating a need, you may choose to prioritize support to students with very low SET or SEC *T*-scores (35 and below) first, then move on to students with SET or SEC *T*-scores in the 36 to 40 range. If not already in place, you may also consider prioritizing an expanded implementation of universal SEL efforts.**



**Review Disaggregated Data.** SEL programming should be implemented with the goal of supporting educational equity. To learn whether SEL programming is supporting equitable outcomes, data should also be disaggregated into subgroups (e.g., grade level report, race/ethnicity, academic services, and economic need) and reviewed. Once data have been disaggregated, the SEL team should engage in a review process as outlined in Table 4.

Table 4. Guiding questions to review disaggregated data

Questions to consider as you review disaggregated data	Data Sources
1. For each subgroup of interest – check the percentage of students in <b>strength</b> , <b>typical</b> , <b>need</b> for instruction categories. Expected distribution is 16 – 68 - 16.	My Students Report
2. By student population - are there differences in results based on racial/ethnic, gender, student service (e.g., EL, SPED) groups?	Grade Level Report
3. Do disaggregated results suggest a need for reflection, discussion, or possibly professional development?	Guiding Questions for Educators
4. What supports are in place for this group of students?	
5. Do disaggregated results suggest differential instructional supports may be needed in the context of universal programming to support certain groups of students?	

### Reflect on the Data

At the universal or Tier 1 level, discussions about the data should focus on the SEL team's efforts to create a positive learning environment and provide high-quality SEL instruction for all students. The reflection process should include SEL Team members and other key stakeholders who will create goals and an action plan for continuous quality improvement (CQI).

If the DESSA-HSE mini results at the universal level (aggregated and disaggregated) are consistent with the expected distribution, your goals, and your continuous improvement plan, celebrate your team's efforts, continue with your SEL implementation, and repeat this process next screening period.

If there are areas to improve, consider the following questions as a team to identify next steps for improving your universal programming.

### Questions to Guide Improvement of Universal SEL Programming

1. Has universal, evidence-based SEL programming been implemented?
2. Have adequate resources been provided to support SEL programming (e.g., budget, professional learning, and dedicated time for instruction and practice)?
3. Is the SEL program implementation assessed regularly using an implementation rubric, and is the information used for continuous quality improvement?
4. How is your school working to ensure equitable SEL outcomes?

### 3. Act on the Data

Once you have reflected on your data, it is time to set goals, create an action plan, and then execute that plan. Goal setting based on DESSA results is essential. SEL teams should set universal programming implementation goals and goals for improving student outcomes as measured by the DESSA.

### 4. Monitor Progress

Progress monitoring at the universal level lets you know whether your SEL programming is effective. To monitor progress, you will look at the SET T-score at the school, grade, class, and student levels to see whether and how much they are changing over time. You will also review disaggregated data so you can determine whether growth is equitable for different groups of students. Then, you can reflect on whether the actions you have taken through your SEL programming support reaching the goals you have developed.

Aperture Education recommends the process illustrated in Figure 11 for ongoing progress monitoring. As shown in Figure 11, all students are screened with the DESSA-HSE mini at the beginning of the year. Students whose DESSA-HSE mini results indicate a need for instruction are assessed with the DESSA HSE. Mid-year and end of year, students are screened with the DESSA-HSE mini, and students with a need for instruction are assessed with the DESSA-HSE. This way, schools can evaluate the growth and change in their universal program across the school year.

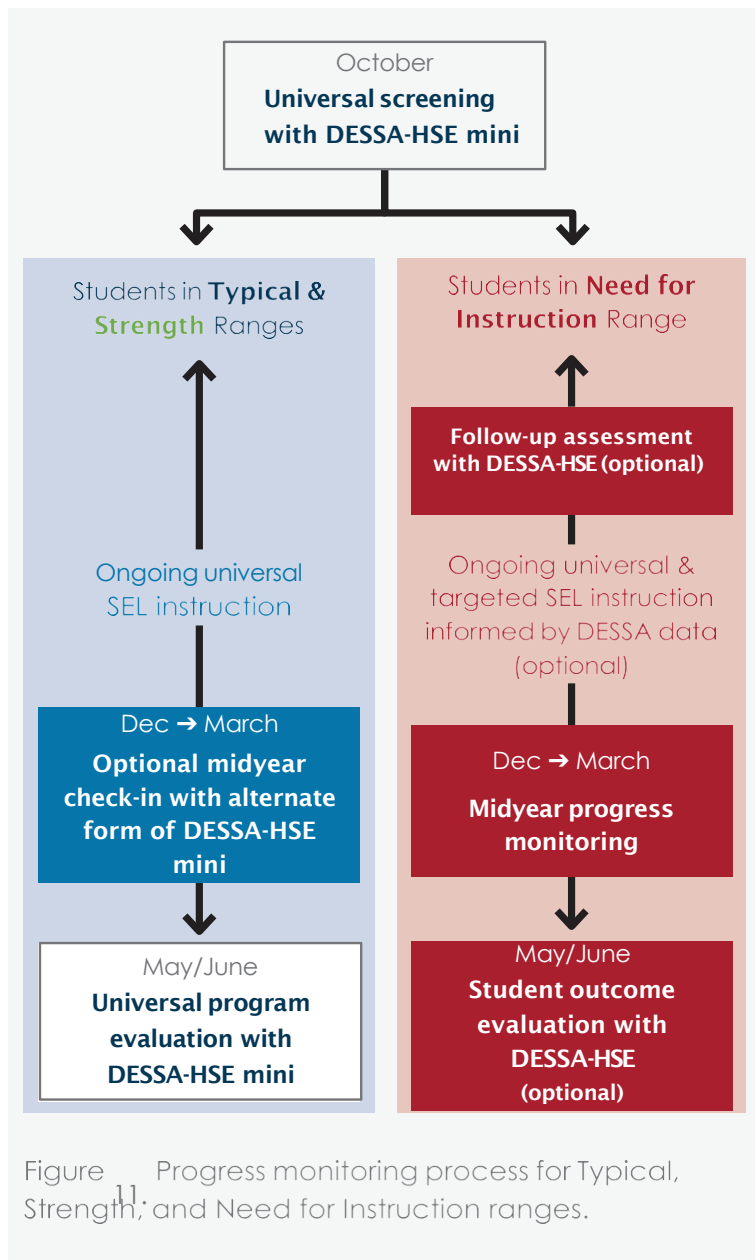


Figure 11. Progress monitoring process for Typical, Strength, and Need for Instruction ranges.

The Impact Report allows you to compare the progress of students from one rating to the next in **strength**, **typical**, **need for instruction** categories. The Student Movement feature provides specific information on how many students from a given category (e.g., need for instruction) moved to a different category (e.g., typical, strength) between ratings.

A school SEL team should also run the Impact Report by student population (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, special populations) and review the results of disaggregated data across groups.

## Things to Consider When Reviewing Progress Monitoring Data

When looking for progress, **be patient**. Aperture recommends at least 90 days between administrations of the DESSA-HSE mini to provide time for program instruction and practice, skill development and generalization, and opportunities to observe new and emerging behaviors.

Although the goal of SEL programming is to build students' social and emotional competence, growth can take time, and it takes a focused, schoolwide effort. Some students could **decline**. For example, students who experience hardship or traumatic life events between assessments may show lower social and emotional competence at follow-up. There is evidence that students experience a decline in social and emotional competence in adolescence and in transition years, so DESSA results for ninth-grade students may be lower than other grades. Data provided through the DESSA System can help teams determine whether and when students need additional SEL support.

Seasonal changes may also affect students' progress. For instance, prior research has shown students may grow in social and emotional competence over the school year but decline over the summer (e.g., Lee, 2022). Therefore, expect students may need additional instruction and time to practice skills at the start of each school year.

- It is important to identify students with declining scores and consider administering the DESSA-HSE to assess and better understand their needs.
- Students that do not respond to universal programming should be assessed with the DESSA-HSE and provided targeted SEL instruction as appropriate.
- Some sites have opted to use the DESSA-HSE to assess all their students. This gives them more detailed information about their students' social and emotional competencies to inform universal SEL programming.

# Targeted (Tier 2) Assessment and Programming Using the DESSA-HSE

Targeted SEL is designed to promote the SEL of high school students who need additional supports to benefit from SEL programming. Targeted practices begin with a strong universal SEL foundation.

Many students who need targeted support can benefit from instruction on *self-awareness* and *self-management* skills. Stronger self-awareness and self-management skills help students understand and identify the SEL skills they need to develop and when to use them (McClelland & Wanless, 2012; Montroy et al., 2014).

There are a variety of approaches for providing targeted SEL supports to high school students, and SEL teams should select the approach(es) that will best meet the needs of their students and that can be well-implemented given their school's resources. In this guide, we briefly outline three approaches to Targeted SEL programming.





# Approaches to Targeted (Tier 2) SEL Programming

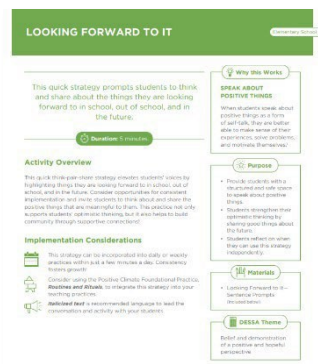
1. **Targeted Support within the General Classroom.** Not every student will require small group intervention. In fact, some students in need of instruction may be better served through targeted support within the general classroom. In this approach, a small group of students may have additional supports provided to help them develop their social and emotional competence. For example, a student working on self-awareness skills might be supported with visual rubrics and/or checklists that provide a model of expected behaviors. A student working on social awareness skills may be provided with a list or visual cue to guide their interactions in a small group setting, and the teacher can ensure that they closely monitor the group to provide immediate feedback and support.
2. **Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Tier 2 Intervention Programs.** This approach relies on the use of published programs that have been developed specifically for use within a Tier 2 setting, such as those available in the DESSA System. Our Tier 2 Intervention Programs can be delivered by a teacher or counselor and include additional instruction for key social, emotional, and/or behavioral skills. These programs align with the competencies measured by the DESSA and include between 12 - 24 lessons that help students develop the skills they need to be successful.

It is important for schools to select programs that are:

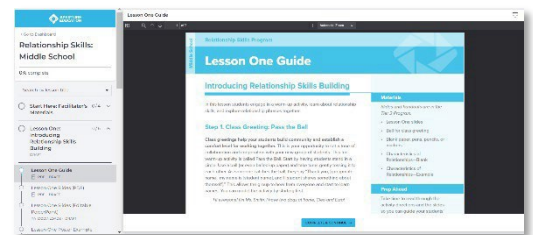
- a. Evidence-based
- b. Aligned to the needs of students
- c. Aligned with universal programs to reinforce key skills and principles

3. **Focused Interventions.** If a school is using a universal SEL program, there may be key components of that program that could be reinforced in a small group setting. Key components include things such as teaching students how to identify and name emotions or teaching specific social skills. School teams can select the specific skills and competencies they would like to support, and then focus on these specific components as part of their targeted SEL programming efforts. Many of the Strategies included in the DESSA System focus on key skills and competencies.

Click below to learn more about Aperture's DESSA-aligned Strategies and Interventions resources:



Universal Tier 1 Strategies



Tier 2 Intervention Programs

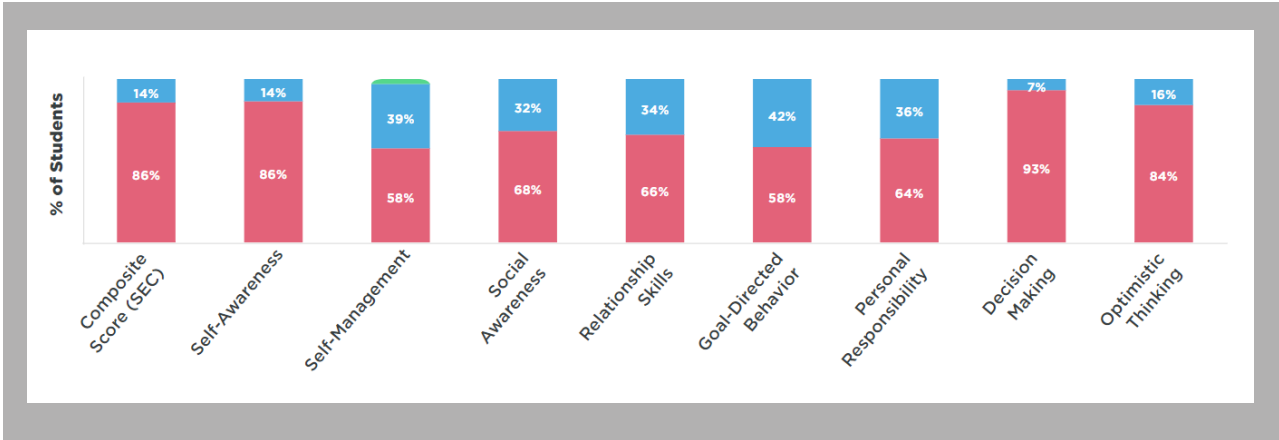
# Using the DESSA-HSE to Inform Targeted SEL Programming

As described in the [Universal Screening and Programming](#) section, students whose DESSA-HSE mini results indicate a Need for Instruction should be assessed with the DESSA-HSE. The DESSA-HSE should be used to confirm screening results and to provide the SEL team with more in-depth information about students' social and emotional competence.

The DESSA-HSE typically takes about 5 minutes per student to complete. The SEL team will need to provide teachers with the additional time needed to complete the DESSA-HSE. The SEL team should also set timelines for completing the assessment and reviewing the data. See the [implementation checklists](#) included in the beginning of this manual.

DESSA-HSE results inform Targeted SEL Programming in a variety of ways.

1. Results can be reviewed across students within a grade or class to identify potential focal areas of instruction. For example, if results indicate that several students have similar areas of need programs or strategies that target these competencies might be selected. In the example figure below, a team might focus on interventions that support stronger responsible decision making skills and that promote optimistic thinking.



2. Results can be used to create small groups. For example, students with similar needs might receive targeted instruction on that competency within a small group, and also provided the opportunity to practice skills within the general classroom setting. Teachers can also pair students who have complementary competencies to encourage peer-assisted learning, structured peer feedback, and a collaborative approach to social-emotional skill development.

**Student Competency Breakdown** [Export CSV](#)

	SEC	SA	SM	SO	RS	GB	PR	DM	OT
Townsend, Maisie	33	28	41	33	30	37	31	38	36
Mclean, Caleb	33	28	41	33	30	37	31	38	36
Wells, Kingston	33	28	41	33	30	37	31	38	36
Sanford, Brinley	33	28	41	33	30	37	31	38	36
Stuart, Emiliano	33	28	41	33	30	37	31	38	36
Mccall, Oakleigh	33	28	41	33	30	37	31	38	36
Richmond, Julius	33	28	41	33	30	37	31	38	36
Moody, Zariyah	34	39	30	33	37	41	37	28	36
Guerra, Addyson	34	39	30	33	37	41	37	28	36
Walker, Frankie	34	39	30	33	37	41	37	28	36

■ Need for Instruction   
 ■ Typical   
 ■ Strength

3. If you are also using Aperture's Strategies and Intervention, you will receive Data-Driven Recommendations for Strategies and for Tier 2 Intervention Programs based on your students' DESSA-HSE results.

4. As the school year continues, data from the DESSA-HSE mini or the DESSA-HSE can be used to progress monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of your targeted SEL program.

**Data-Driven Recommendations**  
 These SEL strategies and interventions are identified based on your students' ratings results. Each strategy offers opportunities to strengthen and grow your students' SEL competencies.

Filters ▾

**Strength**  
 Build on your students' strengths, confidence, and resilience with this strategy.

**Strategy 1: Encourage Student Voice**  
 Core Competence: Relationship Skills Use Strategy ▾

**Growth**  
 Help your students grow their SEL skills with these two strategies.

**Strategy 2: Focus on SEL**  
 Core Competence: Self-Awareness Use Strategy ▾

**Strategy 3: Student Leaders**  
 Core Competence: Responsible Decision Making Use Strategy ▾

**Tier II Programs**  
 For more intensive interventions, try the following Tier II Intervention Program:

Social Awareness & Behavior Regulation

[View all Intervention Programs](#)

After each rating period, schools should engage in a data-review process that includes: 1) accessing the data, 2) reviewing the data, 3) acting on the data, and 4) continued progress monitoring.

## 1. Access the Data

Once an educator completes DESSA-HSE ratings for students who need targeted support, the results will be available to them immediately. For educators, results will be available for students they have rated in their classrooms or programs. SEL team leaders or site administrators will be able to review data at the grade and school levels.

## 2. Review the Data

At the beginning of the school year, DESSA data should be reviewed to make decisions about how to structure and provide Targeted SEL services. The review process should include SEL Team members and other key stakeholders. School SEL teams should dedicate sufficient time for data review. The length of time will depend on school characteristics (e.g., number of students in need). In subsequent rating periods, DESSA-HSE data should be reviewed to evaluate students' progress and to inform continued Targeted SEL implementation. Table 5 provides a suggested process for SEL teams to review DESSA-HSE results to inform Targeted SEL programming.

Table 5. *Targeted SEL Programming: Guiding Questions for Using DESSA-HSE Results*

<b>Question 1: How can we use DESSA-HSE results to get started with Targeted (Tier 2) SEL programming?</b>	
<b>Review DESSA-HSE data using the following steps as a guide.</b>	<b>Data Sources</b>
1. Review DESSA-HSE results	Impact Report; Competencies Report
a. By grade/class - are there specific social and emotional competencies for which most students demonstrate a need for instruction? Are there relative strengths that can be leveraged?	Competencies Report
b. For individual students — which students might benefit from support within the general class? Which students might need more focused, targeted intervention?	My Students Report; Observational data and team discussion
2. Consider focusing targeted interventions using one of the following approaches based on your results in step one, and that best fits your middle school's SEL programming model and resources.	
a. If there are select (2-3) competencies in which most students demonstrate a need for instruction, focus targeted interventions on those areas.	Competencies Report; Consult the Growth Strategies in the Aperture System for ideas on targeted intervention
b. If all/most students have a demonstrated need for instruction across most competencies, consider beginning a targeted intervention aligned with the schoolwide focus.	Competencies Report
c. Review individual student results to determine the best fit of Targeted programming options given.	My Students Report

## Question 2: Are students who are receiving Targeted SEL supports making progress?

Review DESSA-HSE data throughout the year using the following steps.	Data Sources
1. Determine a progress monitoring schedule — we recommend 3 times per year.	School SEL Implementation Plan
2. Review ongoing progress monitoring data by group. Are most students within a Targeted group making progress across competencies? In the competencies that were the focus of support? a. If yes, celebrate your team's success and continue with your targeted SEL program. b. If no, check on targeted support implementation. Are supports delivered with fidelity? With sufficient frequency, duration, and intensity? Does the targeted program provider need training, resources, or additional support? Are the key stakeholders involved?	Impact Report  Observation; Attendance; Implementation records; Discuss with targeted program provider
3. Disaggregate results to determine whether there are differences in growth/outcomes based on race/ethnicity.	Impact Report (run by subgroup)
4. Review ongoing progress monitoring data by student. a. Is the student demonstrating growth in the targeted social and emotional competencies? If yes, continue with targeted program supports until the student can be successful without support in the universal program. b. If no, and you have determined the targeted program is effective for most students in the group, consider more intensive supports for the student.	Individual Student Report  Individual Student Report

\*Refer to the Site Leader Reports Guide in the Support Portal for instructions on how to pull the reports.

### Reflect on the Data

School teams should follow the review process outlined above and reflect on whether the results suggest that they are successful in providing high quality targeted SEL support. The reflection process should include SEL Team members and other key stakeholders with the goal of developing clear and actionable goals.

If the results at the targeted level (aggregated and disaggregated) are consistent with the expected distribution, your goals, and your continuous improvement plan, celebrate your team's efforts, continue with your Targeted SEL implementation, and repeat this process next assessment period.

If there are areas to improve, consider the questions below as a team to identify next steps for improving your targeted programming.

### Questions to guide continuous quality improvement of Targeted SEL programming

1. Has evidence-based, targeted SEL programming been implemented?
2. Have adequate resources been provided to support targeted SEL programming (e.g., budget, professional learning, and dedicated time for instruction and practice)?
3. Is the SEL program implementation assessed regularly using an [implementation rubric](#) and is the information used for continuous quality improvement?
4. How is your school working to ensure equitable SEL outcomes?



It is also important to **consider other types of data** as part of the reflection process. Information trends in attendance, academic performance, conduct, suspensions, etc. can help to put the DESSA results in context and prioritize action steps.

### 3. Act on the Data

SEL team members should discuss the DESSA-HSE results and decide on specific and actionable goals to provide high quality, targeted SEL programming for students requiring this support.

Goal setting questions based on DESSA-HSE results include:

1. What percentage of students receiving Targeted supports are currently making progress?
2. What are the decision criteria for removing Targeted supports for students who have made adequate progress?
3. Do the data indicate equitable growth and outcomes for students across various student populations?
4. Have school staff received the professional development and resources needed to implement high-quality, targeted SEL programs.

Depending on the results of your data review and reflection, your SEL team may set goals to address various aspects of your Targeted program. For example, your team might set a goal for more than 80% of students receiving targeted SEL support to make progress. If your team finds that very few students are making progress in the Targeted program, this might suggest that it is either misaligned to student needs, or that it is not well-implemented, or a combination of both. In this case, your team might set a goal to train 100% of school staff responsible for providing Targeted supports.

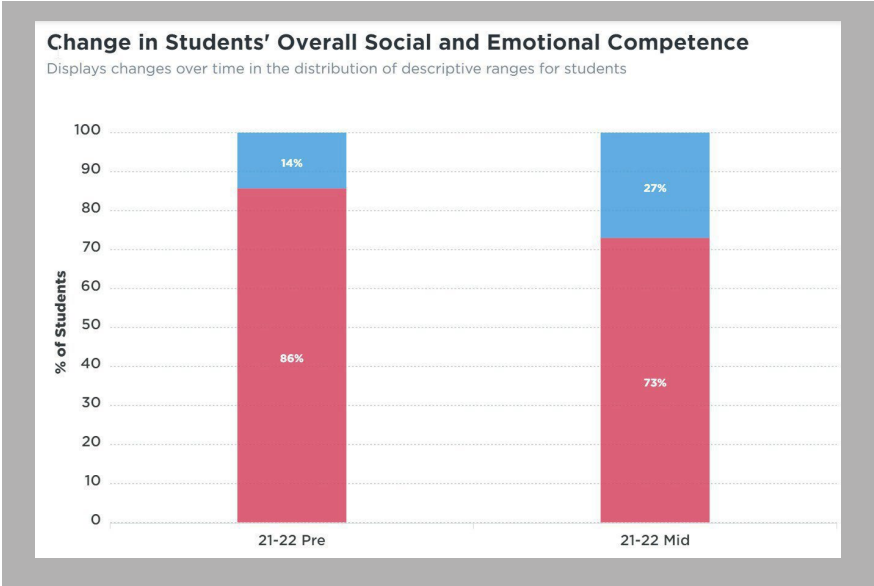
Your team can create an action plan to collect fidelity data, to review the alignment of program focus to student needs, or to improve targeted outcomes and needs.

### 4. Monitor Progress

Progress monitoring at the targeted level lets you know whether the additional supports are working to improve student social and emotional competence. To monitor progress, you will look at the students' DESSA SEC as well as scores across the competencies to see whether and how much they are changing over time. You can review these results for individual students as well as for groups of students. Then, you can reflect on whether the actions you have taken through targeted SEL programming are helping you reach your SEL goals.

The Impact Report allows you to compare the progress for groups of students from one rating to the next in **strength**, **typical**, **need for instruction** categories. The Impact Report displays data in several ways to inform your decision making. The Change in Students' Overall Social and Emotional Competence provides a visual comparison between two rating windows.

In this example below, you can see that the percentage of students receiving Targeted support whose performance on the DESSA-HSE was in the **typical** range increased from 14 to 27%. The team may use this information to set an end of year target. For example, the team may decide to set a target for 40% of students receiving Targeted support to have end of year DESSA-HSE results in the typical range.

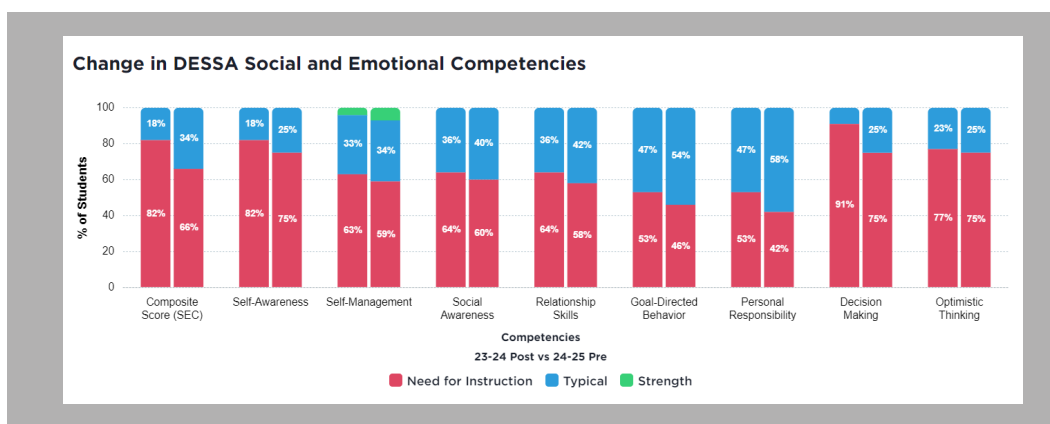


The [Impact Report](#) also provides a Student Movement graph, which indicates student movement across the **Strength** – **Typical** – **Need** range. In the sample below, 12 of 54 students who had a need for instruction in the beginning of the year were rated as **typical** mid-year. Four of 9 students whose performance was **Typical** at the beginning of the year presented with a **Need for Instruction** mid-year. The students rated as typical were rated just above the cut-off point, so they were placed in targeted need for support category.

In the example provided, an SEL team might want to investigate why nearly half of the students in the **Typical** category are now in the **Need for Instruction** category – the targeted supports provided may not be addressing students’ needs.



The [Impact Report](#) includes the “Change in DESSA-HSE Social and Emotional Competencies.” In the sample figure below, a team can see that some large changes were made. For example, the areas of self-management (from 18% to 25% of students in the **Typical** category); and Personal Responsibility (from 47% to 58%) both indicated student growth. If these competencies were the focus of targeted supports, the team may decide to expand the focus to include other competencies.



Finally, teams can review individual student progress. By looking at an individual student's results using the My Students report, a team can determine whether a specific student is making adequate progress with the targeted supports provided.

In the student example below, you can see that even though Milan's DESSA-HSE score has shifted from the **Need** to the **Typical** category, the score has only improved by one point, suggesting he has not made substantive gains in his SEC. The targeted program for Milan may need to be reviewed to ensure he has the support needed to develop his social and emotional competence.

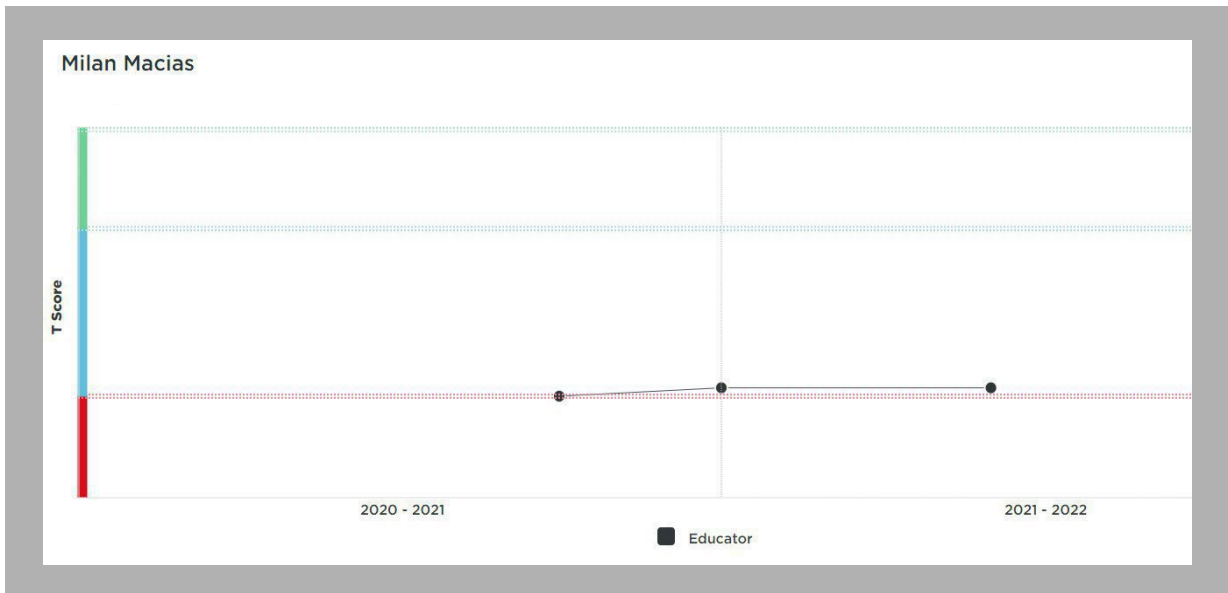


Figure 12. Sample Individual Student Report

Based on a student's results, decisions can be made about whether a change in the supports provided are needed. Table 6 below provides guidance for interpreting changes in *T*-scores and guidance on whether instructional changes are needed.

Table 6. Guidance for interpreting changes in DESSA-HSE scores.

Description of the Difference	Difference in <i>T</i> -score Units	Guidance
No change	Less than 2	Supports are ineffective. Review additional data (attendance, implementation fidelity, etc.) and address as needed, or try new strategies. Consult with student assistance personnel.
Small change	2 to 4, inclusive	Supports are somewhat effective. Increase frequency, duration, and/or intensity or try new strategies. If using only group strategies/supports, consider individualized strategies/supports.
Medium change	5 to 7, inclusive	Supports are moderately effective. Continue what you are doing. If resources permit, consider enhancing support.
Large change	8 or more	Supports are working well. Continue current plan.

**It often takes time to see sizable impacts. Large effects are tied to the use of evidence-based programming that is well-implemented.**



# Individualized (Tier 3) Assessment and Programming Using the DESSA-HSE

Individualized or Tier 3, SEL programming is designed to support the unique strengths and needs of students receiving special education services. SEL supports at this level may include intensive instruction or wraparound supports provided by special education teachers, support staff, or related services personnel.

Individualized SEL programming is most effective with a strong universal SEL foundation. Additionally, individualized SEL supports can be provided across a variety of settings including the general classroom, the cafeteria, the playground, the bus, and other school settings. It is helpful to coordinate SEL programming with families, home environments, and out-of-school programs. This can provide the student with multiple opportunities and contexts to develop their social emotional competence and can support generalization of skills.

There are a variety of approaches for providing individualized SEL supports to students, and SEL teams should select the approach(es) designed to best meet the needs of their students. In this guide, we briefly outline two individualized SEL programming approaches.

## Approaches to Individualized (Tier 3) SEL Programming

1. Intensive Social, Emotional, Behavioral Tier 3 Intervention Programs. This approach relies on the use of published programs that have been developed for students receiving special education services. Some universal SEL programs include intensive (Tier 3) interventions. Schools that use [PBIS](#) may also find social and behavioral Tier 3 programs that focus on key social, emotional, and/or [behavioral skills](#).
2. Individualized planning using DESSA-HSE results. The DESSA-HSE provides individual item analysis that can be used to create individualized plans for students. Strength-based approaches can foster more positive learning environments for students, can lead to more positive relationships with families, and can even improve programming outcomes. This process is explained more in the following section.

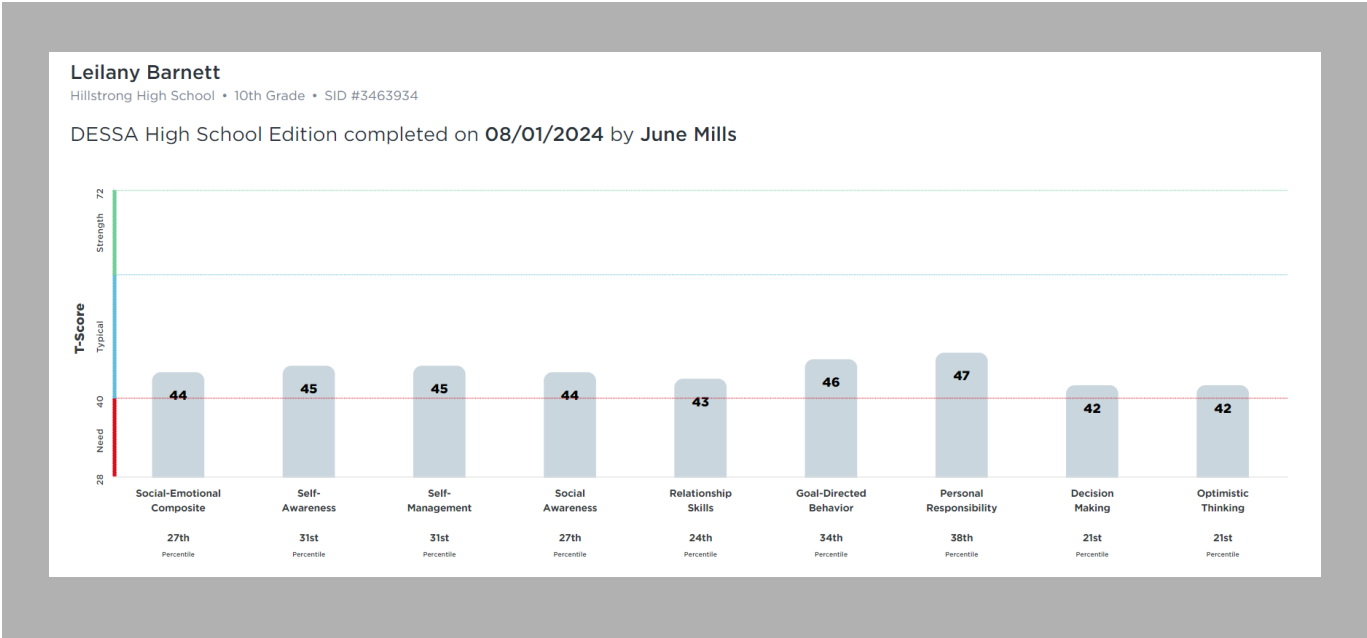
# Using the DESSA to Inform Individualized (Tier 3) SEL Programming

The DESSA-HSE is a strength-based assessment that can provide both general and special education teachers with valuable information about their students' social and emotional competence. Data from a student's DESSA-HSE results can be used to inform present levels of performance, to outline goals and objectives, and to communicate with parents about student strengths.

For each student being served at Tier 3, the data review process is primarily focused on the individual student level but follows the same steps as described for Universal and Targeted supports: 1) accessing the data, 2) reviewing the data, 3) reflecting on the data, 4) acting on the data, and 5) continued progress monitoring. SEL teams should also review data across their Tier 3 program to determine whether individualized services are effectively supporting students to achieve their goals.

## 1. Access the Data

Once an educator completes DESSA-HSE ratings for students, they should access the individual student report in the Educator Portal. The sample report below shows the first part of the report shows the student's DESSA-HSE composite score (SEC), and then includes their score for each competency.



The student report also provides an individual item analysis below this graph. The team or teacher can review the results for each item on the DESSA-HSE or can select an item analysis for one competency. Within each competency, the item analysis provides feedback on the specific skills that may be strengths or emerging strengths (e.g., in the **Strength** or **Typical** categories), and those that indicate a **Need for Instruction**.

Competency	Item	Response	Category
Self-Management	stay focused despite a problem or distraction?	Sometimes	Typical
Self-Management	adjust well to a new situation?	Sometimes	Typical
Self-Management	do the steps of a task in order?	Often	Typical
Self-Management	think before they acted?	Often	Typical
Self-Management	accept another choice when their first choice was not available?	Sometimes	Typical
Self-Management	cope well with changes in plans?	Sometimes	Typical

A student's DESSA-HSE results should be used to identify areas in which the student displays **Strength** or **Typical** skills, because these can be leveraged to support the development of other skills. An individual item analysis of each competency provides the team with detailed information that can guide individualized planning.

## 2. Review the Data

Once the team/teacher has the individual student's results, they can engage in a review process as outlined in Table 7 to get started with individualized SEL programming.

Table 7. *Individualized SEL Programming: Guiding Questions for Using DESSA-HSE Results*

Question 1: How can we use DESSA-HSE results to get started with Individualized (Tier 3) SEL programming?	
Review DESSA-HSE data using the following steps as a guide.	Data Sources
1. Review each student's DESSA-HSE results	My Students Report; Individual Student Report
a. What is the student's profile of current skills — note any competencies in which they display a <b>strength</b> – <b>typical</b> – <b>need</b> for instruction	
b. Consider how social emotional competencies in which the student is in the typical or strength range can be leveraged to promote growth in other areas.	
c. Select 1-3 competencies to focus on. It might be helpful to conduct an item analysis for an area of relative strength, as well as for an area of need.	Individual Item Analysis Section of the Individual Student Report
2. Once the team has selected individual items of focus, these can be used to describe present levels of performance.	
3. Set IEP goals based on the selected areas.	
Question 2: Are students who are receiving Individualized SEL supports making progress?	
Review DESSA-HSE data for individual students throughout the year using the following steps.	Data Sources
1. Determine a progress monitoring schedule using the DESSA — we recommend 3 times per year.	School SEL Implementation Plan
2. Review ongoing progress monitoring data for individual students. Is the student making adequate progress?	My Students Report
a. If yes, celebrate your student's success and continue with the individualized SEL program.	
b. If no, check on program implementation. Are supports delivered with fidelity? With sufficient frequency, duration, and intensity?	Observation; Attendance; Implementation records; Discuss with targeted program provider
3. Review results for all students receiving Individualized supports. What percentage of students are meeting their individualized goals? This will help the team consider whether Tier 3 SEL programming is generally effective.	Impact Report (for students receiving Special Education only)
4. Disaggregate results to determine whether there are differences in the number of students who are meeting their individualized goals.	Impact Report (run by subgroup)

It is also important to **consider other types of data** as part of the reflection process. Information trends in attendance, academic performance, conduct, suspensions, etc. can help to put the DESSA results in context and prioritize action steps.

### 3. Act on the Data

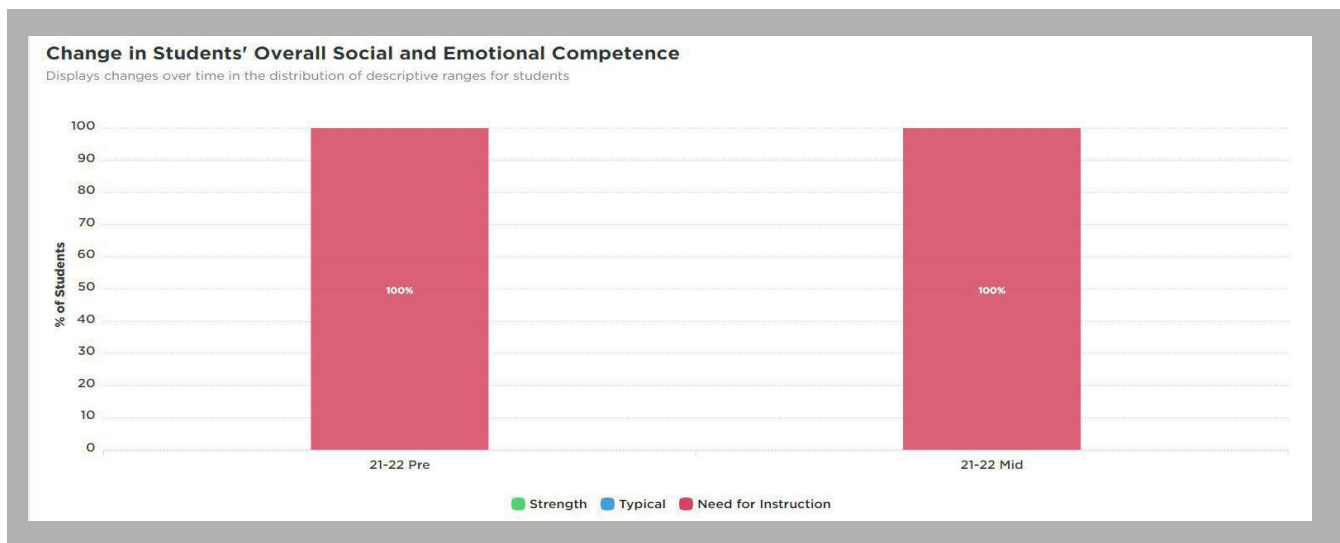
Depending on the results of your data review and reflection, your SEL team may set goals to address various aspects of your Tier 3 program. For example, your team might set a goal that more than 80% of students receiving individualized support meet their individualized goals.

If your team finds that very few students are making progress in the Individualized program, this might suggest that the Tier 3 program is misaligned to student needs, or that it is not well-implemented, or a combination of both. Your team can use an action plan to collect fidelity data, to review the alignment of program focus to student needs, and to determine whether additional resources to support positive outcomes for your Tier 3 program are needed.

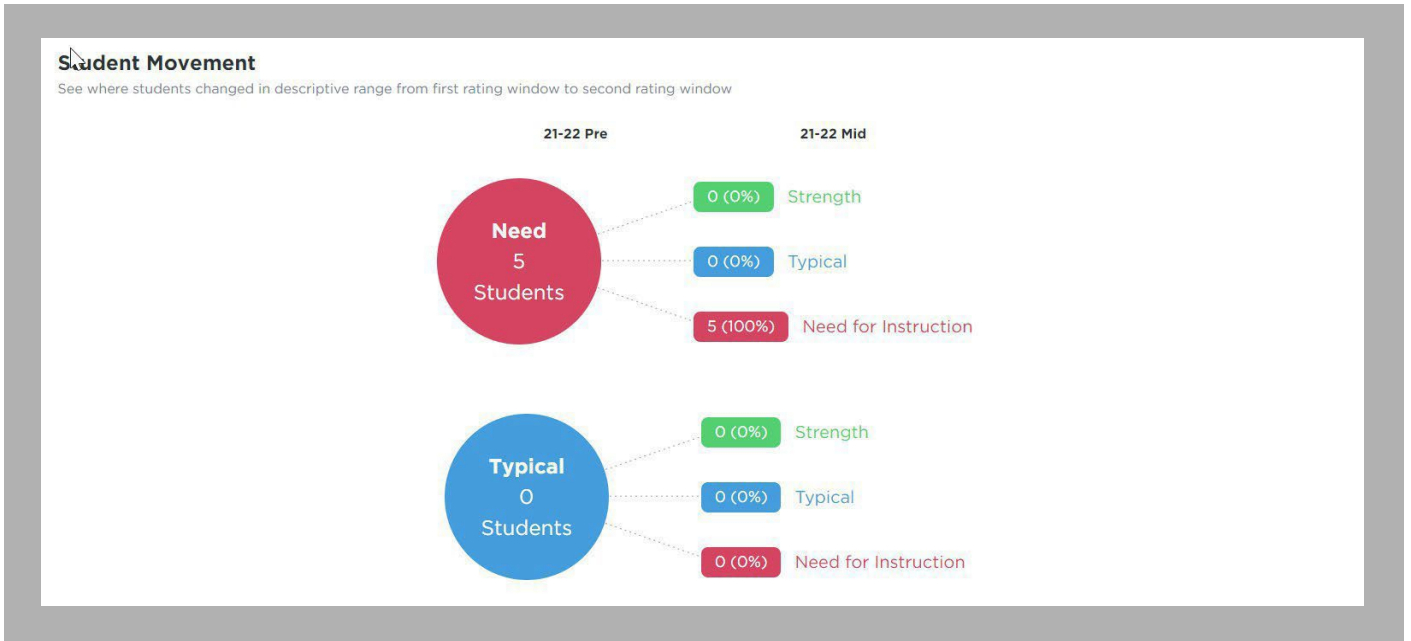
### 4. Monitor progress

Progress monitoring at the individualized level lets you know whether the student's SEL supports are leading to growth in their social and emotional competence. The DESSA-HSE results can be used to evaluate student progress towards their individualized goals. The Impact Report allows you to compare the progress from one rating to the next in **strength**, **typical**, **need for instruction** categories for students in aggregate. The "student movement" feature provides specific information on how many students from a given category (e.g., need for instruction) moved to a different category (e.g., typical, strength) between ratings.

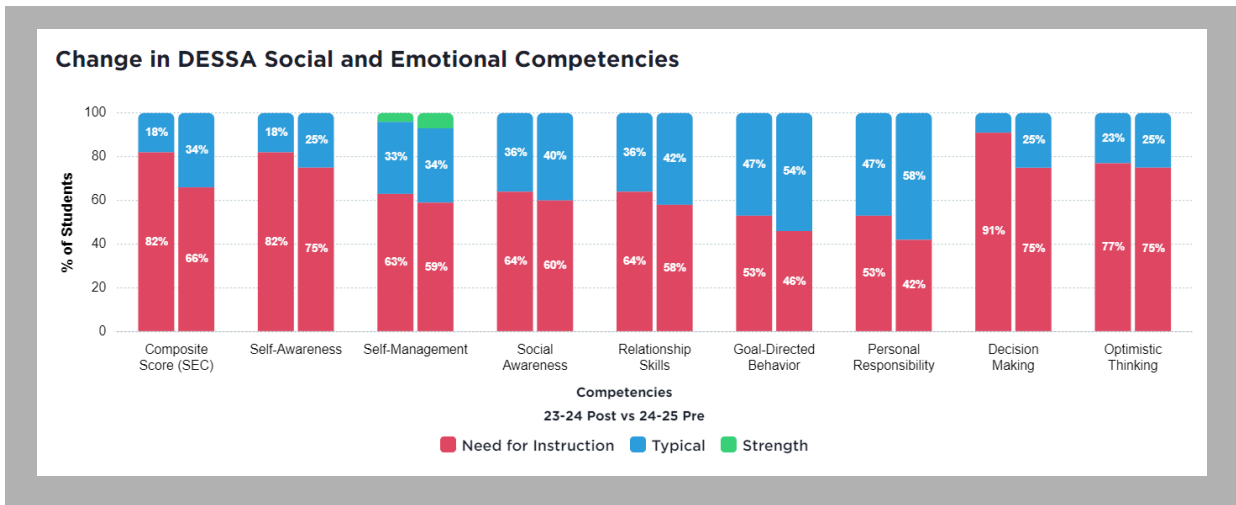
First, a team can look at the change in students' overall social and emotional competence. The screenshot of this figure shows that no students moved from the need for instruction range. The team should do a deeper look at the data.



The student movement figure provides more specific information, although in this example, we see that the five students whose DESSA-HSE ratings indicated a **Need for Instruction** remained in that category in the mid-year rating (e.g., there was no movement to different categories).



The change in DESSA Social and Emotional Competencies graph provides more detailed information about student progress. This more detailed analysis shows that students are making growth in specific competencies even if this is not reflected in the overall SEC scores. Tier 3 teams can use this information to adjust individualized supports as needed. For example, a focus on responsible decision making skill development may be helpful for students receiving Tier 3 supports.





## Section Three: Using SSR and DESSA-HSE data together

It can be helpful to use both the SSR and the DESSA-HSE to get a complete picture of students' SEC and to compare and reconcile teacher ratings with students' self-reported ratings. In this section, we outline a process for schools using both the teacher and student versions of the DESSA to get the most from their data and inform their SEL programming.

For more detailed implementation guidance on these assessments see Sections One and Two.

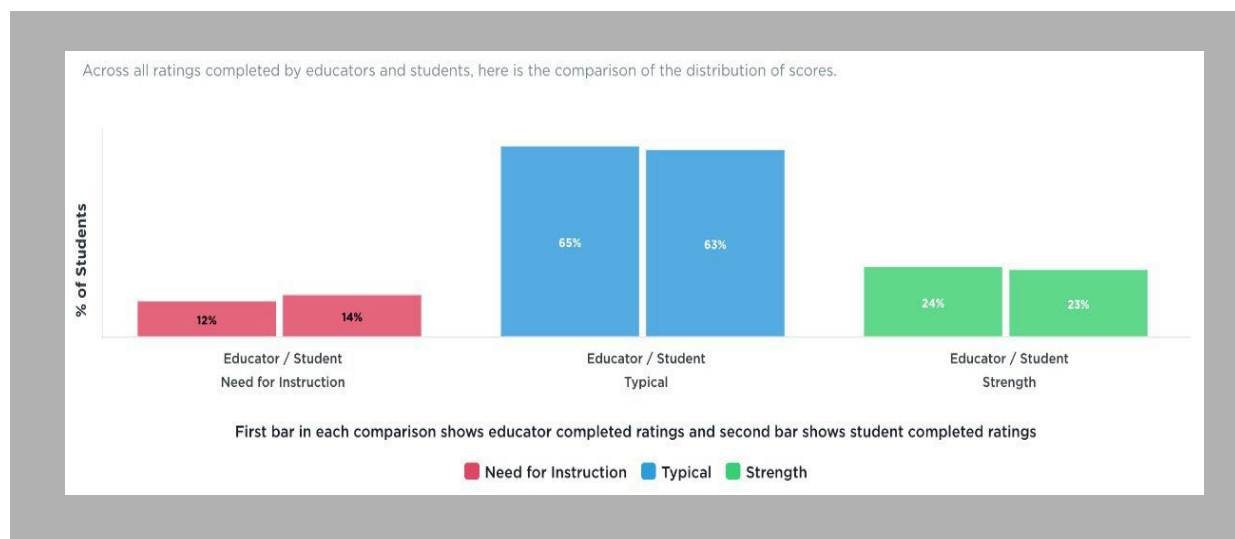


# Tier 1 and Tier 2 Review

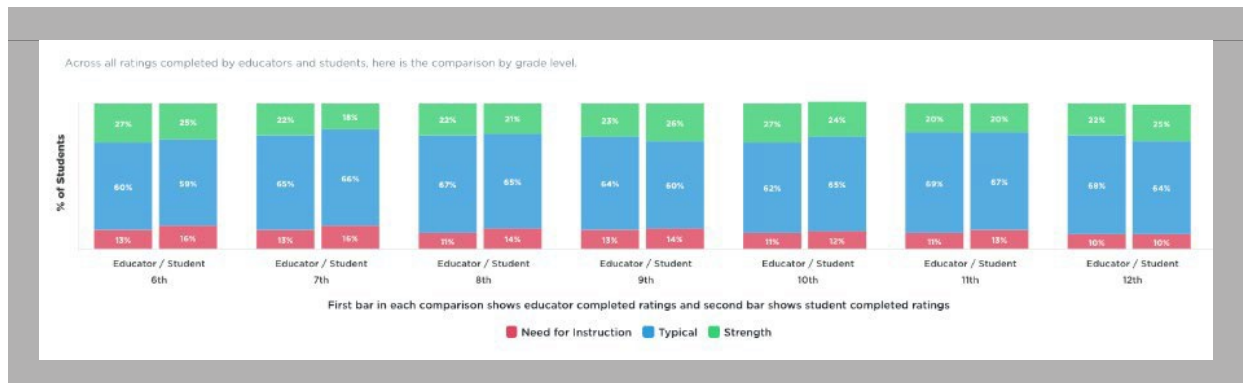
To compare outcomes of student and teacher ratings, an SEL team can use the Summary Comparison of Ratings by Educators and Students report, located under the Data and Insights tab, along with the questions outlined in Table 8 to guide the process. This report shows a side-by-side summary comparison of ratings completed by educators and students during the same rating window. This report only shows data for students with **both** educator and student ratings.

This comparison view allows educators and leaders to ensure both sets of results are taken into account for instructional planning. It provides a summary of students' overall social and emotional competence from both rater perspectives (educators and students), breaking the data down to enable administrators to compare trends across sites, grade levels, and student demographics. This data can be used to get a more complete picture of students' social and emotional competence and to compare and reconcile educator ratings with students' self-reported ratings. This information can then be used to inform targeted, data-driven instructional decisions that take both sets of ratings into account. There are several different views of the data within this report.

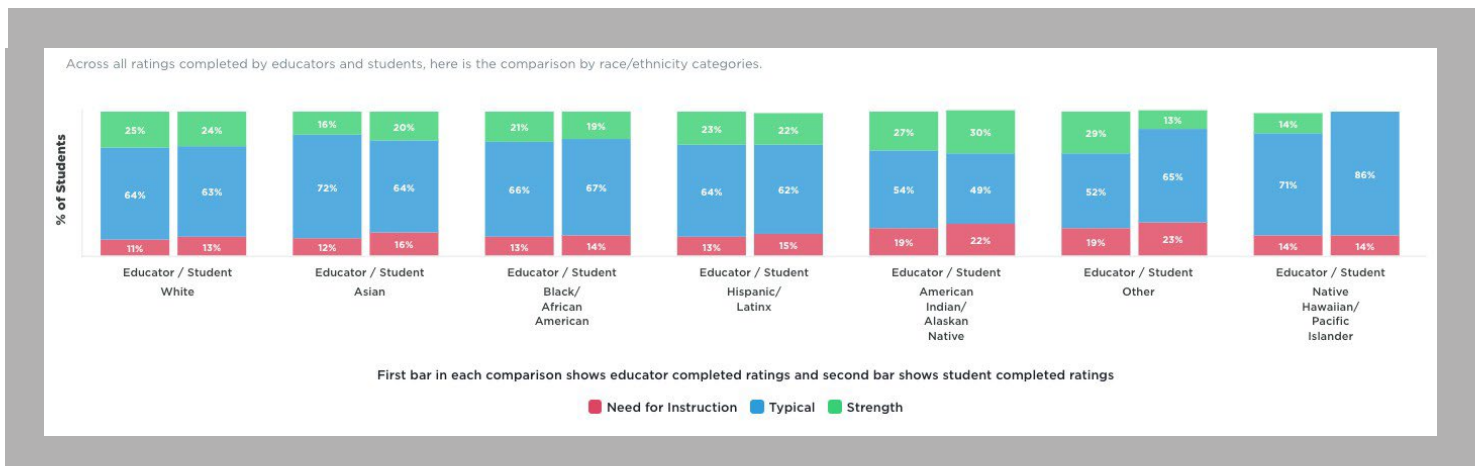
The Comparison of Students' Overall Social and Emotional Competence provides side-by-side charts of Educator-completed and student-completed DESSA results organized by overall DESSA categorical scores. With this view, you can easily see how many students fall into each category (Need, Typical, Strength) based on educator- and student-completed forms.



The Grade Level Breakout view includes educator- and student-completed DESSA categorical scores displayed by each grade level, or for the specific grade level(s) included in your report filters.



The Race/Ethnicity view provides side-by-side views of educator- and student-completed DESSA categorical scores organized by race/ethnicity.



The Student Subgroup Breakout shows the comparison by additional demographic categories across all ratings completed by educators and students. Depending on your roster data, subgroups can include things such as reduced price meals, students with IEPs, English learners, etc.

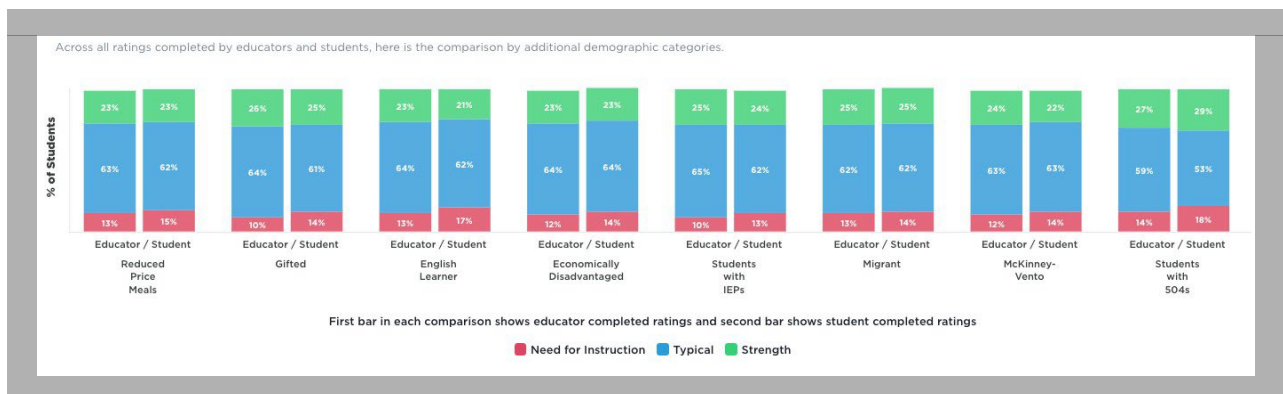


Table 8. Suggested process for reviewing and comparing SSR and DESSA-HSE mini results.

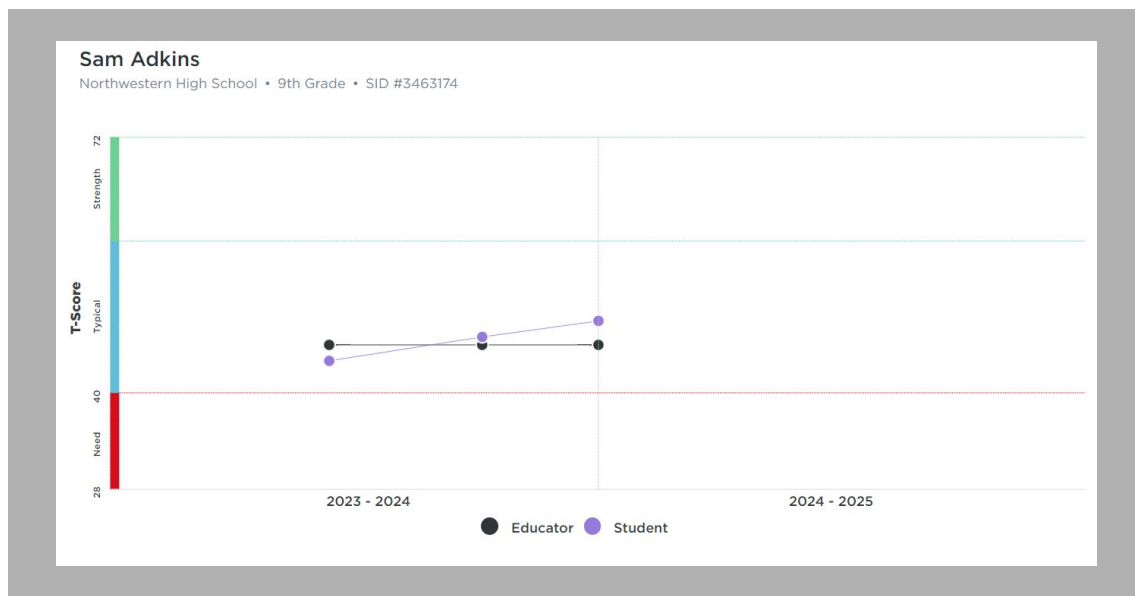
Questions to consider as you review disaggregated data	Data Sources
1. Compare DESSA-HSE mini universal screening school level results with results from the SSR- check the percentage of students in <b>strength</b> , <b>typical</b> , <b>need*</b> for instruction categories. Expected distribution is <b>16 – 68 - 16</b> .	My Students Report
a. By grade/class - are there any grades or classroom level reports that differ significantly (in either positive or negative ways) from the school report?	Grade Level Report
b. By student population - are there differences in results based on racial/ethnic, gender, student service (e.g., EL, SPED) groups? Use the Guiding <a href="#">Questions for Review of Disaggregated Data</a> and CASEL's <a href="#">Guiding Questions for Educators</a> to reflect on disaggregated results.	Guiding Questions for Educators
2. Are the results generally similar between teacher and student ratings? If so, this <i>suggests</i> shared understanding of the social emotional competencies included on the DESSA. Keep up the good work and continue with your school's SEL implementation efforts.	
3. If the results between teacher and student groups differ significantly, consider the following questions as a team. To address these questions, the SEL team should also consider coordinating discussion groups with students to gain insight into the situation.	
a. Have students and staff received adequate training to effectively implement the use of the DESSA-HSE mini and SSR?	SEL implementation plan
b. Do students understand the importance of completing the self-report measure accurately?	Student focus groups
c. On what basis are students completing their ratings? Students may draw on out-of-school contexts to respond to the SSR.	Student focus groups
d. Do teachers and students have shared understanding of the competencies and skills included on the DESSA? Class discussions that focus on the definitions of the competencies and why they are important can be helpful.	
e. Are there specific competencies in which students are reporting more need for instruction? Prioritize one or two competencies for schoolwide focus and use the growth strategies in the Aperture System (or relevant lessons from your school's SEL curriculum) to address these.	Competencies Report

\*Refer to the Site Leader Reports Guide in the Support Portal for instructions on how to pull the reports.

# Tier 3 — Individualized Assessments

The SSR and the DESSA-HSE can be used within a Tier 3 system to inform IEP and transition planning. In this way, students receiving Tier 3 SEL supports can actively participate in their individualized learning and goal setting. Results across measures can be used to support rich conversations about a student's SEL development and learning needs.

Figures 15 and 16 show a student's SSR and DESS-HSE results over time. The teacher and student can collaborate to identify areas of strengths the student can leverage to develop skills in other areas. The teacher can support the student to engage in challenges included within the student portal.



	Rating Date	Rating Window	Descriptive Range	T-Score	Percentile	Form	Grade at Rating	Rater	
<input type="checkbox"/>	01/01/2024	23-24 Mid	Typical	46	34th	DESSA-HSE mini Form 1	10th Grade	Callie Snyder	
<input type="checkbox"/>	01/01/2024	23-24 Mid	Typical	44	27th	DESSA-HSE SSR	10th Grade	Student Self-Report	
<input type="checkbox"/>	05/01/2024	23-24 Post	Typical	46	34th	DESSA-HSE mini Form 1	10th Grade	Callie Snyder	
<input type="checkbox"/>	05/01/2024	23-24 Post	Typical	47	38th	DESSA-HSE SSR	10th Grade	Student Self-Report	

Figures 15 & 16. Sample of student and teacher ratings across time.



# Conclusion

The DESSA assessments are an important part of a data-driven SEL system. This guide describes an implementation process based on best practices in SEL and MTSS. School teams may need to adapt elements to best fit their needs.

As a strengths-based assessment of social and emotional competence, it is important to emphasize that the goal across all tiers of support is not just to reduce or prevent challenging behaviors, but to develop the competencies that promote school and life success for students.



# References

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The DESSA System from Aperture Education: A Riverside Insights Company is a student resilience system that helps educators measure and strengthen social, emotional, and behavioral skills to reduce challenges that interfere with learning. The DESSA universal screening and supplemental assessments are widely used, practical, evidence-based measures of social and emotional competence of students in grades K-12. These powerful data analytic tools enable educators to identify trends, validate curriculum effectiveness, and drive positive academic and wellbeing outcomes for students. Robust reporting in the DESSA System provides insights for educators and staff to proactively differentiate instruction using DESSA-provided instructional strategies and tiered intervention resources. The DESSA System's strength-based approach is grounded in resilience theory and designed to bring the whole child into focus. To learn more, visit [www.ApertureEd.com](http://www.ApertureEd.com).