California Transformative Social and Emotional Learning Competencies and DESSA Crosswalk

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The California Department of Education aims to support and advance the efforts of educators across California who are working to fully integrate systemic social and emotional learning and equity to ensure all students develop transformative social and emotional learning competencies. These [competencies](#) include the knowledge, skills, dispositions, and capacities that children and young people can develop when the conditions are supportive to their healthy, whole development.

The DESSA suite of assessments measures key social and emotional competencies essential for student success now and into the future. The DESSA assessments span kindergarten through 12th grade 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, behaviors, 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.

This crosswalk highlights the alignment between the California Transformative Social and Emotional Learning Competencies and DESSA assessment items across the six competencies. It demonstrates how the DESSA assessments can be used by districts and schools to prepare students to function well in the classroom, in the community, and in college and careers.

Alignment between the California Transformative Social and Emotional Learning Competencies and DESSA Items

Self-Awareness The abilities to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts. This includes capacities to recognize one's strengths and limitations with a well-grounded sense of confidence and purpose.	
Includes abilities such as:	*DESSA Items*
• Identifying personal and social identities	• Demonstrate a sense of who they are and what is important to them (*SA*) • List the personal traits that are most important to them (*SA*)
• Identifying personal, cultural, and linguistic assets	• Show an awareness of their personal strengths (*SA*)
• Identifying one's emotions	• Describe the emotion they were feeling (*SA*)
• Integrating personal and social identities	• Believe working with others leads to greater success (*OT*) • Believe their contributions to a group or team matter (*OT*) • Feel comfortable being themselves in different situations (*SA*)
• Demonstrating honesty and integrity	• Do the right thing in a difficult situation (*RDM*) • Express high expectations for themselves (*OT*)
• Linking feelings, values, and thoughts	• Explain what caused their emotions (*SA*) • Know how emotions influence their behavior (*SA*) • Can tell when emotions make it hard to pay attention (*SA*)
• Examining prejudices and biases	• Show a willingness to examine their beliefs and opinions (*SA*)
• Experiencing self-efficacy	• Believe they can achieve their goals (*OT*) • Express high expectations for themselves (*OT*) • Believe they can overcome setbacks (*OT*)
• Having a growth mindset	• Accept that making mistakes is part of learning (*OT*) • View negative outcomes as a learning opportunity (*OT*) • Focus on positive aspects of a situation (*OT*) • Feel comfortable asking for help when they don't understand something (*SA*)

• Developing interests and a sense of purpose	• Work to develop their personal strengths (*SA*) • Seek out challenging tasks (*OT*)
• Reflecting on one's personal role and contributions within a community	• Can make a positive difference in the world (*OT*)

Self-Management

The abilities to harness one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors effectively in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations. This includes the capacities to delay gratification, manage stress, and feel motivation and agency to accomplish personal and collective goals.

Includes abilities such as:	*DESSA Items*
• Managing one's emotions	• Stay calm when faced with a challenge (*SM*)
• Identifying and using stress management and self-care strategies	• Calm down when they're upset (*SM*)
• Exhibiting self-discipline and self-motivation	• Stay focused despite a distraction (*SM*) • Can motivate themselves when they don't want to do something (*SM*) • Keep working until they achieve a goal (*SM*)
• Setting personal and collective goals	• Set goals for themselves (*SM*)
• Using planning and organizational skills	• Think before they acted (*SM*) • Work carefully on projects or schoolwork (*SM*) • Prepare for school, activities, or upcoming events (*RDM*)
• Showing the courage to take initiative	• Take action to solve problems (*SM*)
• Demonstrating personal and collective agency	• Make positive contributions to their class, school, or community (*SM*) • Contribute to group or team goals (*SM*)
• Cultivating resilience and overcoming adversity	• Keep trying when unsuccessful (*SM*) • Believe they can achieve their goals (*OT*) • Believe they can overcome setbacks (*OT*)

Social Awareness	
The abilities to understand the perspectives of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures, and contexts. This includes the capacities and practices to feel compassion for others; understand broader historical, cultural, and social norms for behavior in different settings; and recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.	
Includes abilities such as:	*DESSA Items*
• Leaning into others' perspectives with curiosity	• Respect a person's right to have a different perspective (*SO*)
• Recognizing and acknowledging the inherent strengths in others	• Show appreciation of others (*SO*)
• Demonstrating empathy and compassion	• Recognize others' emotions (*SO*)
• Showing concern for the feelings of others	• Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways (*SO*)
• Identifying diverse cultural and social norms, including unjust ones	• Contribute to creating a positive learning environment (*SO*)
• Recognizing situational demands and opportunities	• Adjust their behavior to match different settings (*SO*) • Agree to and follow expectations for their behavior (*SO*)
• Understanding the influences of biased and racist systems and structures on mindset, behavior, and actions	• Show a willingness to examine their beliefs and opinions (*SA*)
• Creating and maintaining a just and caring community	• Contribute to creating a positive learning environment (*SO*) • Help make their class a place where everyone can learn (*SO*) • Make others feel welcome or included (*SO*) • Can make a positive difference in the world (*OT*)

Relationship Skills	
The abilities to establish, maintain, and restore healthy and supportive relationships and to effectively navigate settings with differing social and cultural demands and opportunities among individuals and diverse groups. This includes the capacity to use restorative practices to reflect on the impact of their words and actions and to repair and heal relationships with others.	
Includes abilities such as:	*DESSA Items*
• Listening actively, communicating effectively, and self-advocating	• Listen to others (*RS*)
• Developing mutually healthy and productive relationships	• Encourage others (*RS*) • Interact positively with classmates (*RS*) • Compliment or congratulate others (*RS*)
• Making and maintaining trusting, respectful friendships	• Good at making and keeping friends (*RS*)

• Demonstrating gratitude	• Show appreciation for others (*SO*)
• Demonstrating cultural humility and competence	• Get along well with different types of people (*RS*)
• Practicing collaborative problem-solving focused on the common good	• Cooperate with others to solve a problem (*RS*)
• Attending to harm or conflict through restorative practices	• Resolve conflicts positively (*RS*)
• Resisting negative social pressure	• Do the right thing in a difficult situation (*RDM*)
• Showing leadership and contributing productively in groups	• Can make a positive difference in the world (*OT*) • Believe their contributions to a group or team matter (*OT*)
• Standing up for the rights of others	• Stand up for a friend or classmate (*RS*)

Responsible Decision-Making	
The abilities to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across diverse situations. This includes the capacities to consider ethical standards and safety concerns, and to evaluate the benefits and consequences of various actions for personal, social, and collective well-being.	
Includes abilities such as:	*DESSA Items*
• Demonstrating curiosity and open-mindedness	• Demonstrate openness to new situations, experiences, and people (*RDM*) • Show a willingness to update their thinking (*RDM*) • Ask questions when learning new things (*RDM*) • Show a willingness to examine their beliefs and opinions (*SA*)
• Demonstrating honesty, integrity, and fairness	• Do the right thing in a difficult situation (*RDM*) • Agree to and follow expectations for their behavior (*SO*) • Accept responsibility for their actions (*RDM*) • Express high expectations for themselves (*OT*)
• Learning how to make a reasoned judgment after analyzing information, data, and facts	• Gather information before making an important decision (*RDM*) • Ask for advice when needed (*RDM*)
• Identifying solutions for personal and social problems	• Do the right thing in a difficult situation (*RDM*) • Can compromise for the good of the group (*RDM*)
• Anticipating and evaluating the consequences of one's actions	• Accept responsibility for their actions (*RDM*)

• Recognizing how critical thinking skills are useful both inside and outside of school	• Update their thinking as they learn more about something (*RDM*)
• Reflecting on one's role to promote personal, family, and community well-being	• Demonstrate a sense of who they are and what is important to them (*SA*) • Believe their contributions to a group or team matter (*OT*) • Can make a positive difference in the world (*OT*)
• Considering personal and collective safety concerns	• Do the right thing in a difficult situation (*RDM*) • Accept responsibility for their actions (*RDM*)
• Evaluating personal, interpersonal, community, and institutional impacts	• Gather information before making an important decision (*RDM*) • Accept responsibility for their actions (*RDM*)

DESSA

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 well-being 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.