

Delaware SEL Competencies, Benchmarks, and Performance Indicators and DESSA Crosswalk

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The Delaware Department of Education's mission is to prepare every learner for success in school and life. As such, the state provides the [Delaware Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Competencies, Benchmarks, and Performance Indicators](#), published in 2020, to help children build resilience through enhanced social competence and strong relationships in order for them to achieve success.

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 Delaware SEL Benchmarks and DESSA assessment items across the six competencies. This tool can help support the integration of SEL throughout the school day and help ensure every student in Delaware has the skills they need to succeed.

Alignment between Delaware SEL Benchmarks and DESSA Items

Self-Awareness	
<i>Benchmarks</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
1A. Demonstrate an awareness of one's own emotions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the emotion they were feeling (SA) Explain what caused their emotions (SA) Know how their emotions influence their behavior (SA) Can tell when their emotions make it hard to pay attention (SA)
1B. Demonstrate an awareness of personal qualities and interests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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) Describe the things that matter most to them (SA) Feel comfortable being themselves in different situations (SA)
1C. Demonstrate an awareness of one's own strengths and opportunities for growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show an awareness of their personal strengths (SA) Work to develop their personal strengths (SA) Listen to feedback so they can improve (SA) Imagine a positive future for themselves (OT)
1D. Demonstrate a sense of personal responsibility and advocacy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show willingness to examine their beliefs and opinions (SA) Agree to and follow expectations for their behavior (SO) Accept responsibility for their actions (RDM) Ask for advice when needed (RDM)
1E. Identify external and community resources and supports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask questions when they did not understand something (SA) Feel comfortable asking for help when they don't understand something (SA) Believe working with others leads to greater success (OT) Expect that they will be successful (OT)

Self-Management	
<i>Benchmarks</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
2A. Understand and use strategies for managing one's own emotions and behaviors constructively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay focused despite a distraction (SM) • Think before they acted (SM) • Stay calm when faced with a challenge (SM) • Can motivate themselves when they don't want to do something (SM)
2B. Set, monitor, adapt, and evaluate one's own goals to achieve success in school and life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set goals for themselves (SM) • Take action to solve problems (SM) • Keep trying when unsuccessful (SM) • Work carefully on projects or schoolwork (SM) • Persist to achieve a goal (SM) • Contribute to group or team goals (SM) • Believe they can achieve their goals (OT)

Social Awareness	
<i>Benchmarks</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
3A. Demonstrate awareness and consideration of other people's emotions, perspectives, and social cues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize others' emotions (SO) • Respect a person's right have a different perspective (SO) • Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways (SO) • Show appreciation for others (SO)
3B. Exhibit civic responsibility in multiple settings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believe they can make a positive difference in the world (OT) • Contribute to creating a positive learning environment (SO) • Help make their class a place where everyone can learn (SO) • Adjust their behavior to match different settings (SO)
3C. Demonstrate an awareness of and respect for human dignity, including culture and differences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make others feel welcome or included (SO)

Relationship Skills	
<i>Benchmarks</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
4A. Use positive communication and social skills to interact effectively with others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interact positively with classmates (RS) • Do nice things for people (RS) • Listen to others (RS)
4B. Develop and maintain positive relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good at making and keeping friends (RS) • Get along well with different types of people (RS) • Encourage others (RS) • Compliment or congratulate others (RS)
4C. Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage, and/or resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Able to resolve conflicts positively (RS) • Cooperate with others to solve a problem (RS) • Stand up for a friend or classmate (RS)

Responsible Decision-Making	
<i>Benchmarks</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
5A. Consider and use multiple factors in decision making, including ethical and safety factors, personal and community responsibilities, and short-term and long-term goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather information before making an important decision (RDM) • Update their thinking as they learn more about something (RDM) • Stand up for a friend or classmate (RS)
5B. Develop, implement, and model effective decision-making skills to deal responsibly with academic and social situations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept responsibility for their actions (RDM) • Do the right thing in a difficult situation (RDM)



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.