

Indiana's Social-Emotional Learning Competencies and DESSA Crosswalk

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The Indiana Department of Education [Social-Emotional Learning Competencies](#) address social and emotional well-being through a neurodevelopmental culturally responsive framework. The foundation for these competencies has been developed from the most current brain research, social-emotional research, and trauma and culturally responsive best practices.

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 Indiana's Social-Emotional Competencies and DESSA assessment items across the six competencies. It demonstrates how the DESSA assessments can be used by districts and schools to ensure every Indiana student develops the skills to be fully and authentically engaged in their own social and emotional learning, be more connected to school, and become more empowered learners.

Alignment between the Indiana Social-Emotional Learning Competencies and DESSA Items

1. Sensory Motor Integration Sensory motor integration refers to the ability to have body awareness and recognize sensations in the body. Gaining sensory-motor integration is an important skill for managing transitions, changing routines, increasing alertness for learning, and improving regulation	
<i>Competencies</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
1A. Students demonstrate an understanding of body awareness and sensations in the body.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize their emotions (SA) • Know how emotions influence their behavior (SA) • Explain what caused their emotions (SA)
1B. Students manage transitions and changes in routine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapt well to new situations (SM) • Can adjust their behavior to match different settings (SO)

2. Insight Insight refers to the ability to know your emotions and how they affect your thoughts and actions. Gaining insight is an important skill for building self-confidence, self-esteem, and empathy for others. Insight helps students recognize their own strengths and areas of growth.	
<i>Competencies</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
2A. Students identify a wide range of emotions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize their emotions (SA) • Describe an emotion they were feeling (SA)
2B. Students recognize personal strengths.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show an awareness of their personal strengths (SA) • Work to develop their personal strengths (SA)
2C. Students demonstrate self-efficacy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept that making mistakes is part of learning (OT) • Speak positively about their future potential (OT) • Believe they can achieve their goals (OT) • Believe they can overcome setbacks (OT) • Expect that they will be successful (OT)

3. Regulation Regulation refers to the ability to recognize and manage one's emotions. Regulation skills build positive self-control, positive self-discipline, and impulse control.	
<i>Competencies</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
3A. Students demonstrate self-control.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think before they acted (<i>SM</i>) • Stay focused despite a distraction (<i>SM</i>) • Calm down when they are upset (<i>SM</i>)
3B. Students recognize life stressors and have strategies to manage them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay calm when faced with a challenge (<i>SM</i>) • Ask for advice when needed (<i>RDM</i>) • Do the right thing in a difficult situation (<i>RDM</i>)
3C. Students practice personal responsibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree to and follow expectations for their behavior (<i>SO</i>) • Accept responsibility for their actions (<i>RDM</i>) • Can update their thinking as they learn more about something (<i>RDM</i>) • Prepare for school, activities, or upcoming events (<i>RDM</i>)

4. Collaboration Collaboration refers to the ability to work well with others, including in the group and teamwork environment. Collaboration works to build positive communication and conflict management skills.	
<i>Competencies</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
4A. Students demonstrate communication skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to others (<i>RS</i>) • Recognize others' emotions (<i>SO</i>) • Listen to feedback so they can improve (<i>SA</i>) • Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways (<i>SO</i>) • Interact positively with classmates (<i>RS</i>)
4B. Students understand teamwork and works with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to group or team goals (<i>SM</i>) • Get along well with different types of people (<i>RS</i>) • Cooperate with others to solve a problem (<i>RS</i>)
4C. Students apply conflict management skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolve conflicts positively (<i>RS</i>) • Can compromise for the good of the group (<i>RDM</i>)

5. Connection Connection refers to the ability to have strong social awareness, giving students the ability to take the perspectives of others, and empathize with people of diverse backgrounds and cultures	
<i>Competencies</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
5A. Students treat others fairly and respectfully, is able to see multiple perspectives and is open-minded.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect a person's right to have a different perspective (SO) • Demonstrate openness to new situations, experiences, and people (RDM) • Show a willingness to update their thinking (RDM) • Listen to others (RS)
5B. Students demonstrate care and concern for others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show appreciation of others (SO) • Recognize others' emotions (SO) • Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways (SO) • Make others feel welcome or included (SO) • Get along well with different types of people (RS) • Do nice things for people (RS) • Stand up for a friend or classmate (RS) • Encourage others (RS)

6. Critical Thinking Critical thinking refers to the ability to make constructive choices and understand metacognitive strategies to enhance learning. Critical thinking skills build responsible decision-making, analytical, and critical inquiry skills which are necessary to approach learning from an innovative, creative, multicultural, and ethical lens.	
<i>Competencies</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
6A. Students demonstrate an understanding of metacognition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show an awareness of their personal strengths (SA) • Can recognize their strengths (SA) • Set goal for themselves (SM)
6B. Students understand the decision-making process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather information before making an important decision (RDM) • Do the right thing in a difficult situation (RDM) • Accept responsibility for their actions (RDM)

6C. Students analyze, synthesize, & evaluate the thinking process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate openness to new situations, experiences, and people (<i>RDM</i>) • Update their thinking as they learn more about something (<i>RDM</i>) • Ask questions when learning new things (<i>RDM</i>) • Gather information before making an important decision (<i>RDM</i>)
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7. Mindset Mindset refers to the ability to demonstrate cognitive flexibility and willingness to learn. Developing mindset is a critical learning skill for building perseverance, adaptability, self-discovery, resilience, and to be able to receive and give constructive feedback.	
<i>Competencies</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
7A. Students demonstrate a willingness to learn, especially when faced with challenges or following a failure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work to develop their personal strengths (<i>SA</i>) • Accept that making mistakes is part of learning (<i>OT</i>) • Seek out challenging tasks (<i>OT</i>) • Update their thinking as they learn more about something (<i>RDM</i>)
7B. Student practices flexible and innovative thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • View negative outcomes as a learning opportunity (<i>OT</i>) • Update their thinking as they learn more about something (<i>RDM</i>) • Believe they can overcome setbacks (<i>OT</i>) • Demonstrate openness to new situations, experiences, and people (<i>RDM</i>) • Show a willingness to examine their beliefs and opinions (<i>RDM</i>)
7C. Students accept constructive feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to feedback so they can improve (<i>SA</i>) • Feel comfortable asking for help when they don't understand something (<i>SA</i>) • Listen to others (<i>RS</i>) • Accept responsibility for their actions (<i>RDM</i>)



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.