

# Kansas Social-Emotional Character Development Standards and DESSA Crosswalk

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The [Kansas Social-Emotional Character Development Standards](#), published in 2023, provide a framework to schools for integrating social-emotional learning (SEL) with character development so that students will learn, practice and model essential personal life habits that contribute to academic, career and personal 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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 Kansas Social-Emotional Character Development Standards and DESSA assessment items across the six competencies. It demonstrates how the DESSA assessments can be used by districts and schools to ensure every Kansas student develops the skills to be fully and authentically engaged in their own social and emotional learning and be successful in their academic, career, and personal goals.

### Character Development

**Definition:** Developing skills to help students identify, define and live in accordance with core principles that aid in effective problem-solving and responsible decision-making

**Rationale:** Our schools have the job of preparing our children for American citizenship and participation in an interdependent world. Success in school and life is built upon the ability to make responsible decisions, solve problems effectively, and to identify and demonstrate core principles.

#### I. Core Principals

<i>Standards</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
A. Recognize, select and ascribe to a set of core ethical and performance principles as a foundation of good character and be able to define character comprehensively to include thinking, feeling and doing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate a sense of who they are and what is important to them (SA)</li> <li>• List the personal traits that are most important to them (SA)</li> <li>• Accept responsibility for their actions (RDM)</li> </ul>
B. Develop, implement, promote and model core ethical and performance principles.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree to and follow expectations for their behavior (SO)</li> <li>• Express high expectations for themselves (OT)</li> <li>• Make positive contributions to their class, school, or community (SM)</li> <li>• Contribute to creating a positive learning environment (SO)</li> </ul>
C. Create a caring community. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consider it a high priority to foster caring attachments between fellow students, staff and the community.</li> <li>2. Demonstrate mutual respect and utilize strategies to build a safe and supportive culture.</li> <li>3. Take steps to prevent peer cruelty or violence and deal with it effectively when it occurs digitally, verbally, physically and/or relationally.</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show appreciation for others (SO)</li> <li>• Recognize others' emotions (SO)</li> <li>• Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways (SO)</li> <li>• Do nice things for people (RS)</li> <li>• Respect a person's right to have a different opinion (SO)</li> <li>• Interact positively with classmates (RS)</li> <li>• Stand up for a friend or classmate (RS)</li> <li>• Resolve conflicts positively (RS)</li> </ul>

II. Responsible Decision-Making and Problem-Solving	
Standards	DESSA Items
<p>A. Develop, implement and model responsible decision-making skills.</p> <p>1. Consider multiple factors in decision-making, including ethical and safety factors, personal and community responsibilities, and short-term and long-term goals.</p> <p>2. Organize personal time and manage personal responsibilities effectively.</p> <p>3. Play a developmentally appropriate role in classroom management and school governance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather information before making an important decision (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• Do the right thing in a difficult situation (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• Accept responsibility for their actions (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• Update their thinking as they learn more about something (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• Prepare for school, activities, or upcoming events (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• Ask questions when learning new things (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• Ask for advice when needed (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• Work carefully on projects or schoolwork (<i>SM</i>)</li> <li>• Think before they acted (<i>SM</i>)</li> <li>• Agree to and follow expectations for their behavior (<i>SO</i>)</li> <li>• Contribute to creating a positive learning environment (<i>SO</i>)</li> </ul>
<p>B. Develop, implement and model effective problem-solving skills.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather information before making an important decision (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• Do the right thing in a difficult situation (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• Update their thinking as they learn more about something (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• Cooperate with others to solve a problem (<i>RS</i>)</li> <li>• Take action to solve problems (<i>SM</i>)</li> <li>• Think before they acted (<i>SM</i>)</li> <li>• Stay calm when faced with a challenge (<i>SM</i>)</li> </ul>

## Personal Development

Focus is on skill development through personal understanding - using the lens of intrapersonal learning.

**Definition:** Developing skills that help students identify, understand and effectively manage and regulate their thoughts, mindsets, feelings and behaviors.

**Rationale:** Personal and academic success are built upon the ability to consider thoughts, understand feelings and manage one's responses. Personal thoughts, feelings and mindsets impact management of experiences and determine behavior outcomes.

### I. Self-Awareness

Understanding and expressing personal thoughts, mindsets and emotions in constructive ways.

<i>Standards</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
A. Understand and analyze thoughts, mindsets and emotions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize their emotions (SA)</li> <li>• Describe the emotion they were feeling (SA)</li> <li>• Explain what caused their emotions (SA)</li> <li>• Know how their emotions influence their behavior (SA)</li> </ul>
B. Identify and assess personal qualities and external supports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize their strengths (SA)</li> <li>• Work to develop their personal strengths (SA)</li> <li>• Listen to feedback so they can improve (SA)</li> <li>• List the personal traits that are most important to them (SA)</li> <li>• Feel comfortable asking for help when they don't understand something (SA)</li> <li>• Ask for advice when needed (RDM)</li> <li>• Describe the things that matter most to them (SA)</li> <li>• List the personal traits that are most important to them (SA)</li> </ul>

### II. Self-Management

Understanding and practicing strategies for managing thoughts and behaviors, reflecting on perspectives, and setting and monitoring goals

<i>Standards</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
A. Understand and practice strategies for managing and regulating thoughts and behaviors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay calm when faced with a challenge (SM)</li> <li>• Calm down when they are upset (SM)</li> <li>• Motivate themselves when they don't want to do something (SM)</li> <li>• Keep trying when unsuccessful (SM)</li> <li>• Do the right thing in a difficult situation (RDM)</li> </ul>

B. Reflect on perspectives and emotional responses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways (SO)</li> <li>• Make positive contributions to their class, school, or community (SM)</li> <li>• Contribute to creating a positive learning environment (SO)</li> <li>• Help make their class a place where everyone can learn (SO)</li> <li>• Respect a person's right to have a different perspective (SO)</li> <li>• Do nice things for people (RS)</li> <li>• Agree to and follow expectations for my behavior (SO)</li> <li>• Accept that making mistakes is part of learning (OT)</li> <li>• View negative outcomes as a learning opportunity (OT)</li> </ul>
C. Set, monitor, adapt and evaluate personal goals to achieve in school and life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set goals for themselves (SM)</li> <li>• Take action to solve problems (SM)</li> <li>• Work to develop their personal strengths (SA)</li> <li>• Contribute to group or team goals (SM)</li> <li>• Keep working until they achieve a goal (SM)</li> <li>• Believe they can achieve their goals (OT)</li> </ul>

<b>Social Development</b> <b>Definition:</b> Developing skills that establish and maintain positive relationships and enable communication with others in various settings and situations <b>Rationale:</b> Building and maintaining positive relationships and communicating well with others are central to success in school and life. Recognizing the thoughts, feelings and perspectives of others leads to effective cooperation, communication and conflict resolution.	
I. Social Awareness	
Standards	DESSA Items
A. Recognize the thoughts, feelings and perspectives of others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize others' emotions (SO)</li> <li>• Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways (SO)</li> <li>• Respect a person's right to have a different perspective (SO)</li> <li>• Listen to others (RS)</li> </ul>

B. Demonstrate awareness of cultural development and a respect for human dignity and differences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get along well with different types of people (<i>RS</i>)</li> <li>• Make others feel welcome or included (<i>SO</i>)</li> <li>• Demonstrate openness to new situations, experiences, and people (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• Show a willingness to update their thinking (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• Respect a person's right to have a different perspective (<i>SO</i>)</li> <li>• Stand up for a friend or classmate (<i>RS</i>)</li> </ul>
II. Interpersonal Skills	
<i>Standards</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
A. Demonstrate communication and social skills to interact effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to others (<i>RS</i>)</li> <li>• Encourage others (<i>RS</i>)</li> <li>• Compliment or congratulate others (<i>RS</i>)</li> <li>• Stand up for a friend or classmate (<i>RS</i>)</li> <li>• Get along well with different types of people (<i>RS</i>)</li> </ul>
B. Develop and maintain positive relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good at making and keeping friends (<i>RS</i>)</li> <li>• Get along well with different types of people (<i>RS</i>)</li> <li>• Show appreciation for others (<i>SO</i>)</li> </ul>
C. Demonstrate an ability to prevent, manage and resolve interpersonal conflicts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to others (<i>RS</i>)</li> <li>• Resolve conflicts positively (<i>RS</i>)</li> <li>• Cooperate with others to solve a problem (<i>RS</i>)</li> <li>• Can compromise for the good of the group (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• Respect a person's right to have a different opinion (<i>SO</i>)</li> </ul>



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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 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](http://www.ApertureEd.com).