Maryland SEL Competencies and DESSA Crosswalk

October 2024

Maryland has articulated a vision that all students are engaged and active learners who are self-aware, caring, respectful, connected to others, responsible decision-makers, academic achievers, and positive contributors to their school and community. As such, the state provides a Cross-Curricular Social and Emotional Learning Overview that identifies some of the alignments made between CASEL's SEL competencies and related skills with the Maryland Fine Arts, Health, and Physical Education standards. The document serves as a resource to help local school systems, schools, and educators expand and support SEL opportunities for students.

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 five core SEL competencies, their related skills, and DESSA assessment items. This tool can help support the integration of SEL throughout the school day and help ensure every student in Maryland has the skills they need to succeed.

Maryland SEL Core Competencies and DESSA Items Crosswalk

Self-Awareness	
Related Skills	*DESSA Items*
Identifying Emotions	• Recognize their emotions (*SA*) • Describe the emotion they were feeling (*SA*) • Explain what caused their emotions (*SA*) • Know how their emotions influence their behavior (*SA*)
Accurate Self-Perception	• Demonstrate a sense of who they are and what is important to them (*SA*) • Ask questions when they did not understand something (*SA*) • Listen to feedback so they can improve (*SA*)
Recognizing Strengths	• Show an awareness of their personal strengths (*SA*) • Work to develop their personal strengths (*SA*)
Self-confidence	• Speak positively about their future potential (*OT*) • Express high expectations for themselves (*OT*) • Feel comfortable being themselves in different situations (*SA*)
Self-efficacy	• Believe they can achieve their goals (*OT*) • Seek out challenging tasks (*OT*) • View negative outcomes as a learning opportunity (*OT*) • Accept that making mistakes is part of learning (*OT*)

Self-Management	
Related Skills	*DESSA Items*
Impulse Control	• Think before they acted (*SM*)
Stress Management	• Stay calm when faced with a challenge (*SM*)
Self-Discipline	• Stay focused despite a distraction (*SM*)
Self-Motivation	• Motivate themselves when they don't want to do something (*SM*) • Keep trying when unsuccessful (*SM*) • Persist to achieve a goal (*SM*)
Goal Setting	• Set goals for themselves (*SM*) • Take action to solve problems (*SM*) • Contribute to group or team goals (*SM*)
Organizational Skills	• Work carefully on projects or schoolwork (*SM*) • Prepare for school, activities, or upcoming events (*RDM*)

Social Awareness	
Related Skills	*DESSA Items*
Perspective-taking	• Respect a person's right to have a different perspective (*SO*)
Empathy	• Recognize others' emotions (*SO*)
Appreciating diversity	• Show appreciation for others (*SO*) • Make others feel welcome or included (*SO*) • Get along well with different types of people (*RS*)
Respect for others	• Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways (*SO*) • Help make their class a place where everyone can learn (*SO*) • Agree to and follow expectations for their behavior (*SO*)

Relationship Skills	
Related Skills	*DESSA Items*
Communication	• Listen to others (*RS*)
Social Engagement	• Help make their class a place where everyone can learn (*SO*) • Feel like they belong in their school (*SO*) • Agree to and follow expectations for their behavior (*SO*)
Relationship-building	• Good at making and keeping friends (*RS*) • Get along well with different types of people (*RS*) • Interact positively with classmates (*RS*) • Compliment or congratulate others (*RS*) • Do nice things for people (*RS*) • Encourage others (*RS*) • Stand up for a friend or classmate (*RS*)
Teamwork	• Cooperate with others to solve a problem (*RS*) • Resolve conflicts positively (*RS*) • Can compromise for the good of the group (*RDM*)

Responsible Decision-Making	
Related Skills	*DESSA Items*
Identifying problems	• Ask questions when learning new things (*RDM*)
Analyzing situations	• Gather information before making an important situation (*RDM*)
Solving problems	• Compromise for the good of the group (*RDM*) • Take action to solve problems (*SM*)
Evaluating	• Ask for advice when needed (*RDM*) • Do the right thing in a difficult situation (*RDM*)

Reflecting	• Update their thinking as they learn more about something (*RDM*) • Show a willingness to examine their beliefs and opinions (*SA*)
Ethical responsibility	• Accept responsibility for their actions (*RDM*) • Prepare for school, activities, or upcoming events (*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.