

Massachusetts Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Framework and DESSA Crosswalk

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Massachusetts's [Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Framework](#), published in 2023, establishes a vision for all Massachusetts students to develop health and physical literacy through engagement in comprehensive, well-rounded, inclusive, medically accurate, developmentally and age-appropriate educational opportunities that include physical education, health education, and the development of social and emotional competencies. By developing self-efficacy and agency to lead health-promoting lives, students will be prepared to navigate the complexities of our global society by applying health-promoting skills to a variety of situations and recognize their role in shaping health outcomes at the personal, community, and global levels.

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 Massachusetts's Comprehensive Health and Physical Education Framework and DESSA assessment items across the six competencies. It demonstrates how the DESSA assessments can be used by schools to implement educational programming and strategies that enhance students' mental, emotional, and physical health.

Practice 1: Decision-making and Problem-solving Make health-promoting, informed, responsible decisions and solve problems in a variety of health-related situations.	
<i>Practice Components</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students make informed, responsible decisions to lead a lifestyle that enhances overall well-being, across numerous aspects of health. • Students can thoughtfully apply a developmentally and age-appropriate decision-making process in a situation or solve or address a problem that they are facing. • Students can examine their options and the respective consequences, consider the ways in which personal beliefs and values impact their decision, consider the role of external forces on decisions and opportunities, and evaluate the results of their decision. • In developmentally and age-appropriate ways, and through a variety of health-related situations, students can apply a decision-making model to evaluate the benefits and risks of various alternatives when addressing problems. • Students can differentiate between a decision that can be made individually versus a decision that may need assistance. • Students can work collaboratively in a variety of settings and groups to solve problems while navigating group dynamics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather information before making an important decision (<i>RDM</i>) • Do the right thing in a difficult situation (<i>RDM</i>) • Accept responsibility for their actions (<i>RDM</i>) • Describe the things that matter most to them (<i>SA</i>) • List the personal traits that are most important to them (<i>SA</i>) • Show a willingness to examine their beliefs and opinions (<i>SA</i>) • Feel comfortable asking for help when they don't understand something (<i>SA</i>) • Ask for advice when needed (<i>RDM</i>) • Listen to others (<i>RS</i>) • Can compromise for the good of the group (<i>RDM</i>) • Cooperate with others to solve a problem (<i>RS</i>) • Can adjust their behavior to match different settings (<i>SO</i>)

Practice 2: Self-management and Goal Setting Set goals, engage in health-promoting behaviors, and avoid risky behaviors.	
<i>Practice Components</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In developmentally and age-appropriate ways, students recognize and regulate their emotions, actions, and behaviors in different situations to effectively manage stress, control impulses, and self-motivate. Students use health-promoting strategies (e.g., deep breathing, physical activity, asking for help) and avoid risk behaviors (e.g., using food or alcohol to cope) to meet their social, emotional, and physical needs. • Students take personal responsibility for their health while recognizing the aspects of their overall health and well-being that are the result of factors outside of their control and seek supports to navigate those health challenges. They engage in health-promoting behaviors in a variety of settings and can explain how these behaviors contribute to a positive quality of life and prevent injury and disease. • Students must become self-aware through self-reflection and examination of their identities, lives, habits, and behaviors in order to identify, adopt, and maintain health-promoting behaviors and lifestyles. • They set both short-term and long-term goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART goals). Often this includes identifying who can help (e.g., physical education teacher, parent/guardian or family member, community organization) when assistance is needed to set and achieve a personal health goal. For older students, this may include describing how personal health goals can vary with changing abilities, priorities, opportunities, and responsibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize their emotions (SA) • Know how their emotions influence their behavior (SA) • Can tell when their emotions make it hard to pay attention (SA) • Can calm down when they're upset (SM) • Stay focused despite a distraction (SM) • Stay calm when faced with a challenge (SM) • Can motivate themselves when they don't want to do something (SM) • Feel comfortable asking for help when they don't understand something (SA) • Ask for advice when needed (RDM) • Listen to others (RS) • Do the right thing in a difficult situation (RDM) • Express high expectations for themselves (OT) • Accept responsibility for their actions (RDM) • Speak positively about their future potential (OT) • Set goals for themselves (SM) • Take action to solve problems (SM) • Persist to achieve a goal (SM) • Recognize their strengths (SA) • Demonstrate a sense of who they are and what is important to them (SA) • Work to develop their personal strengths (SA) • Believe they can achieve their goals (OT) • Expect that they will be successful (OT) • Think before they acted (SM)

Practice 3: Social Awareness, Relationship, and Communication Skills Enhance relationships, personal health, and the health of others through social awareness and effective communication.	
<i>Practice Components</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are socially aware individuals who recognize the complexities of the world around them, including the role of health on individual and community success and outcomes. • Students understand the interconnectedness of health, how others' health impacts individuals' health and vice versa. • They can take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. They seek to better understand others and their perspectives. • They treat all individuals with respect and employ strategies to meaningfully engage with family, school, and community resources and supports. • They establish and maintain meaningful and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups (e.g., people with differing perspectives, people with disabilities, people of various racial/cultural identities, etc). • They use verbal and non-verbal skills to develop and maintain healthy personal relationships and ask for and offer assistance to enhance the health of self and others. • In developmentally and age-appropriate ways, students communicate clearly and effectively (with considerations for ability and culture) in a variety of settings, situations, and cultural contexts. • They cooperate with others, recognize and navigate complex group dynamics, resist inappropriate social pressure, constructively negotiate conflict, and respectfully and assertively communicate needs, wants, and feelings in order to support their health and avoid violence. • Students develop the ability to extract information from a variety of forms of communication and apply it in new settings and circumstances. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect a person's right to have a different perspective (SO) • Listen to other (RS) • Recognize others' emotions (SO) • Get along well with different types of people (RS) • Is good at making and keeping friends (RS) • Make others feel welcome or included (SO) • Show appreciation of others (SO) • Interact positively with classmates (RS) • Contribute to creating a positive learning environment (SO) • Ask for advice when needed (RDM) • Encourage their friends or classmates (RS) • Adjust their behavior to match different settings (SO) • Is able to resolve conflicts positively (RS) • Cooperate with others to solve a problem (RS) • Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways (SO) • Compromise for the good of the group (RDM) • Believe their contributions to a group or team matter (OT) • Update their thinking as they learn more about something (RDM)

Practice 4: Movement Skills

Demonstrate competence in, and knowledge of, a variety of movement concepts, principles, motor skills, and physical fitness components in order to engage in purposeful and health-promoting physical activity, including sports and games.

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Primarily through physical education, in developmentally and age-appropriate ways, students demonstrate competence in skill themes and movement concepts and principles in order to effectively and safely move, balance, and control their bodies in a variety of contexts.• Students engage in physical activities, sports, and games to support their physical literacy journey and develop competence in order to improve and maintain overall health; to exhibit prosocial involvement with others; and to foster the enjoyment and motivation needed to participate in lifelong fitness and physical activity.• Students know the components and principles of fitness, can develop a fitness program, and have the ability to use movement in ways that enhance overall health and well-being. Students recognize that the value of physical activity is multi-purpose and can vary based on social and cultural context.• Students acknowledge the culturally diverse ways individuals within communities engage in physical activity. As students progress on their physical literacy journey, they recognize opportunities to use physical movement for health, enjoyment, challenge, self-expression, and/or social interaction and incorporate opportunities for physical movement into their daily life. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Think before they acted (<i>SM</i>)• Adjust their behavior to match different settings (<i>SO</i>)• Agree to and follow expectations for their behavior (<i>SO</i>)• Can motivate themselves when they don't want to do something (<i>SM</i>)• Encourage their friends or classmates (<i>SO</i>)• Interact positively with classmates (<i>RS</i>)• Contribute to group or team goals (<i>SM</i>)• Focus on the positive side of things (<i>OT</i>)• Set goals for themselves (<i>SM</i>)• Imagine a positive future for themselves (<i>OT</i>)• Take action to solve problems (<i>SM</i>)• Seek out things that challenge them (<i>OT</i>)• Can describe the things that matter most to them (<i>SA</i>) |
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Practice 5: Self-awareness and Analyzing Influences.

Examine how emotions, thoughts, needs, values, beliefs, and other factors (both internal and external) influence behaviors and articulate how these influences impact health behavior and outcomes.

<i>Practice Components</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In developmentally and age-appropriate ways, students can recognize their own identities, feelings and needs, describe them to others, express emotions in ways appropriate for ability and with consideration for culture and use strategies that promote health to manage them.• Students develop and expand their physiological vocabulary to describe how their bodies feel and emotional vocabulary to describe their feelings.• Students show empathy by applying what they know about their own feelings to infer what others may be experiencing and respond with compassion.• Students recognize the various influences around them and critically evaluate these influences to understand how they enhance or inhibit well-being.• Students understand that influences may include the culture in which they are immersed, economic systems, peers and families, media, and technology.• Students consider how individual actions intersect with personal and community health and well-being, and ways that external factors such as social and political factors shape our environment and our health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demonstrate a sense of who they are and what is important to them (SA)• Describe the things that matter most to them (SA)• Recognize their emotions (SA)• Describe the emotion they were feeling (SA)• Recognize others' emotions (SO)• Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways (SO)• Do nice things for people (RS)• Make others feel welcome or included (SO)• Do the right thing in a difficult situation (RDM)• Feel comfortable being themselves in different situations (SA)• Believe working with others leads to greater success (OT)• Make positive contributions to their class, school, or community (SM)

Practice 6: Information and Resource Seeking Access, evaluate, and use valid and reliable health information, products, services, and related resources.	
<i>Practice Components</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students seek out developmentally and age-appropriate information from reliable sources to enhance health and well-being. • Media literacy is enhanced by students analyzing sources of information and resources to determine the level to which media information and resources help or hinder health. • Students know how to use health products (e.g., toothbrushes, adhesive bandages, deodorant, reproductive health products, heart rate monitors) in ways appropriate for the given situations. They also determine the accessibility of products and services that enhance health that are appropriate for their given context or situation. • Students can seek out health services and resources that are culturally relevant and responsive to their needs for both themselves and others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather information before making an important decision (RDM) • Can update their thinking as they learn more about something (RDM) • Ask questions when learning new things (RDM) • Feel comfortable asking for help when they don't understand something (SA) • Listen to feedback so they can improve (SA) • Ask for advice when needed (RDM) • Take action to solve problems (SM)

Practice 7: Self-Advocacy and Health Promotion Promote personal, family, and community health and well-being.	
<i>Practice Components</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In developmentally and age-appropriate ways, students can recognize their own and others' health needs (e.g., physical activity, health care, clean air) and act effectively to address those needs on their own. • Students encourage others to embrace similar behaviors and support their efforts with a variety of valid and reliable resources. • Students recognize when and how to advocate for health needs for themselves, their family, and their community. • Students make requests to promote personal well-being and share accurate information about health issues that are meaningful and relevant to them. They will also encourage, influence, and support peers to make positive health-related choices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take action to solve problems (<i>SM</i>) • Believe working with others leads to greater success (<i>OT</i>) • Encourage their friends or classmates (<i>RS</i>) • Believe their contributions to a group or team matter (<i>OT</i>) • Take action to solve problems (<i>SM</i>) • Can make a positive difference in the world (<i>OT</i>) • Expect that they will be successful (<i>OT</i>) • Ask for advice when needed (<i>RDM</i>) • Feel comfortable asking for help when they don't understand something (<i>SA</i>) • Cooperate with others to solve a problem (<i>RS</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.