Mississippi's Social Emotional Learning Standards and DESSA Crosswalk

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The Mississippi Department of Education finalized the state's first ever Social Emotional Learning Standards in 2021. These standards help address the social and emotional needs of all students, improves student capacity to engage in academic learning, and prepares them to meet college and career readiness standards.

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 Mississippi Social Emotional Learning 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 Mississippi student develops the skills to ensure their success in school and in life.

Domain 1: Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is the ability to identify one's thoughts, values and emotions and recognize how these shape behaviors. Self-awareness involves the assessment of one's abilities (i.e., strengths and areas of growth) and includes the need for confidence, optimism and knowledge of which areas can be improved.

Anchor Standards	DESSA Items
1A. Identify emotions and related feelings in one's self.	• 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*)
1B. Develop an accurate perception of one's self (i.e., beliefs, values, skills, talents, and interests).	• Recognize their strengths (*SA*) • Describe the things that matter most to them (*SA*) • Can list the personal traits that are most important to them (*SA*) • Feel comfortable being themselves in different situations (*SA*)
1C. Determine one's strengths and areas for growth.	• Recognize their strengths (*SA*) • Work to develop their personal strengths (*SA*) • Listen to feedback so they can improve (*SA*) • Feel comfortable asking for help when they don't understand something (*SA*)
1D. Develop personal responsibilities and a feeling of one's abilities, qualities and judgment.	• Seek out challenging tasks (*OT*) • Speak positively about their future potential (*OT*) • Focus on the positive aspects of a situation (*OT*)

Domain 2: Self-Management	
Self-management is the ability to self-regulate emotions, thoughts and behaviors across settings and to set and work towards personal and academic goals.	
Anchor Standards	*DESSA Items*
2A. Develop skills necessary to control impulses and appropriately manage thoughts, stress, emotions, and behaviors in school, home and community life.	• Think before they acted (*SM*) • Can calm down when they're upset (*SM*) • Stay calm when faced with a challenge (*SM*) • Adapt well to new situations (*SM*) • Make positive contributions to their class, school, or community (*SM*)
2B. Identify and utilize skills needed in organization and self-motivation.	• Take action to solve problems (*SM*) • Can motivate themselves when they don't want to do something (*SM*) • Work carefully on projects or schoolwork (*SM*)
2C. Demonstrate ability to set and accomplish specific tasks and goals.	• Set goals for themself (*SM*) • Contribute to group or team goals (*SM*) • Keep working until they achieve a goal (*SM*) • Keep trying when unsuccessful (*SM*) • Adapt well to new situations (*SM*) • Believe they can achieve their goals (*OT*) • Express high expectations for themselves (*OT*) • Imagine a positive future for themselves (*OT*)

Domain 3: Social Awareness	
Social awareness is the ability to empathize with and relate to others, including those from diverse backgrounds. Social awareness involves understanding societal norms for behavior and contribution to community well-being.	
Anchor Standards	*DESSA Items*
3A. Demonstrate an understanding of others' emotions and perspectives, including social cues.	• Recognize others' emotions (*SO*) • Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways (*SO*) • Respect a person's right to have a different opinion (*SO*)
3B. Develop an awareness of and respect for individual differences, including cultural diversity.	• Respect a person's right to have a different perspective (*SO*) • Show appreciation for others (*SO*) • Make others feel welcome or included (*SO*)
3C. Identify and develop an understanding of societal norms for the well-being of school, home, and community	• Adjust their behavior to match different settings (*SO*) • Agree to and follow expectations for their behaviors (*SO*) • Contribute to creating a positive learning environment (*SO*) • Help make their class a place where everyone can learn (*SO*)

Domain 4: Relationship Skills	
Relationship skills include the ability to effectively communicate, cooperate, seek and provide support to others, manage conflict, and effectively handle peer pressure in order to establish and maintain positive relationships.	
Anchor Standards	*DESSA Items*
4A. Demonstrate the ability to effectively communicate, utilize social skills, and support others.	• Interact positively with classmates (*RS*) • Get along well with different types of people (*RS*) • Listen to others (*RS*) • Encourage others (*RS*) • Compliment or congratulate others (*RS*)
4B. Develop and maintain positive relationships with others.	• Good at making and keeping friends (*RS*) • Do nice things for people (*RS*)

4C. Demonstrate the ability to successfully manage and resolve conflict in relationships.	• Resolve conflicts positively (*RS*) • Cooperate with others to solve a problem (*RS*) • Stand up for a friend or classmate (*RS*) • Respect a person's right to have a different opinion (*SO*)

Domain 5: Responsible Decision-Making	
Responsible decision-making includes the ability to make constructive choices and problem-solve based on safe, ethical, and social norms while evaluating the outcomes of previous choices.	
Anchor Standards	*DESSA Items*
5A. Develop, implement, and model effective choice making skills at school, at home, and in the community.	• Gather information before making an important decision (*RDM*) • Ask questions when learning new things (*RDM*) • Ask for advice when needed (*RDM*) • Update their thinking as they learn something new (*RDM*) • Can make a positive difference in the word (*OT*) • Believe their contributions to a group or team matter (*OT*)
5B. Analyze outcomes of decisions including the consideration of their effects on others.	• Do the right thing in a difficult situation (*RDM*) • Compromise for the good of the group (*RDM*) • Prepare for school, activities, or upcoming events (*RDM*) • Accept responsibility for their actions (*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.