

New Jersey Social and Emotional Learning Competencies and DESSA Crosswalk

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The [New Jersey Social and Emotional Learning Competencies](#), published in 2017, articulate the social emotional learning goals for all New Jersey students. Promoting social and emotional learning enhances the building of positive school climates and the healthy development of young people.

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 New Jersey Social Emotional Learning 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 New Jersey 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 New Jersey SEL Competencies and DESSA Items

Self-Awareness	
<i>Sub-Competencies</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
Recognize one's feelings and thoughts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize their emotions (SA) Describe the emotion they were feeling (SA)
Recognize the impact of one's feelings and thoughts on one's own behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain what caused their emotions (SA) Know how their emotions influence their behavior (SA) Tell when their emotions make it hard to pay attention. (SA)
Recognize one's personal traits, strengths, and limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show an awareness of their personal strengths (SA) Ask questions when they did not understand something (SA) Demonstrate a sense of who they are and what is important to them (SA) Work to develop their personal strengths (SA) List the personal traits that are most important to them (SA) Listen to feedback so they can improve (SA)
Recognize the importance of self-confidence in handling daily tasks and challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seek out challenging tasks (OT) Believe they can achieve their goals (OT) Believe they can overcome setbacks (OT) Seek out things that challenge them (OT) Expect that they will be successful (OT)

Self-Management	
<i>Sub-Competencies</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
Understand and practice strategies for managing one's own emotions, thoughts, and behaviors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay focused despite a distraction (SM) Think before they act (SM) Calm down when they are upset (SM) Motivate themselves when they don't want to do something (SM)

Recognize the skills needed to establish and achieve personal and educational goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set goals for themselves (<i>SM</i>) • Believe they can achieve their goals (<i>OT</i>) • Persist to achieve a goal (<i>SM</i>)
Identify and apply ways to persevere or overcome barriers through alternative methods to achieve one's goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep trying when unsuccessful (<i>SM</i>) • Take action to solve problems (<i>SM</i>) • Persist to achieve a goal (<i>SM</i>) • Believe they can overcome setbacks (<i>OT</i>)

Social Awareness	
<i>Sub-Competencies</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
Recognize and identify the thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize others' emotions (<i>SO</i>) • Listen to others (<i>RS</i>)
Demonstrate an awareness of the differences among individuals, groups, and others' cultural backgrounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get along well with different types of people (<i>SO</i>) • Respect a person's right to have a different perspective (<i>SO</i>) • Demonstrate openness to new situations, experiences, and people (<i>RDM</i>) • Make others feel welcome or included (<i>SO</i>)
Demonstrate an understanding of the need for mutual respect when viewpoints differ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect a person's right to have a different perspective (<i>SO</i>) • Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways (<i>SO</i>) • Show appreciation of others (<i>SO</i>)
Demonstrate an awareness of the expectations for social interactions in a variety of settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjust their behavior to match different settings (<i>SO</i>) • Agrees to and follows expectations for their behavior (<i>SO</i>) • Help make their class a place where everyone can learn (<i>SO</i>)

Responsible Decision-Making	
<i>Sub-Competencies</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
Develop, implement, and model effective problem-solving and critical thinking skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updates their thinking as they learn more about something (<i>RDM</i>) • Cooperate with others to solve a problem (<i>RS</i>) • Take action to solve problems (<i>SM</i>)
Identify the consequences associated with one's actions in order to make constructive choices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think before they act (<i>SM</i>) • Do the right thing in a difficult situation (<i>RDM</i>) • Accept responsibility for their actions (<i>RDM</i>)
Evaluate personal, ethical, safety, and civic impact of decisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather information before making an important decision (<i>RDM</i>) • Believe their contributions to a group or team matter (<i>OT</i>)

Relationship Skills	
<i>Sub-Competencies</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
Establish and maintain healthy relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good at making and keeping friends (<i>RS</i>) • Make others feel welcome or included (<i>SO</i>) • Get along well with different types of people (<i>RS</i>)
Utilize positive communication and social skills to interact effectively with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage friends and classmates (<i>RS</i>) • Compliment or congratulate others (<i>RS</i>) • Listen to others (<i>RS</i>) • Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways (<i>SO</i>)
Identify ways to resist inappropriate social behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree to and follow expectations for their behavior (<i>SO</i>) • Think before they acted (<i>SM</i>) • Stand up for a friend or classmate (<i>RS</i>) • Do the right thing in a difficult situation (<i>RDM</i>)
Demonstrate the ability to prevent and resolve interpersonal conflicts in constructive ways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resolve conflicts positively (<i>RS</i>) • Cooperate with others to solve problems (<i>RS</i>) • Respect a person's right to have a different opinion (<i>SO</i>)

<p>Identify who, when, where, or how to seek help for oneself or others when needed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask for advice when needed (<i>RDM</i>) • Help make their class a place where everyone can learn (<i>SO</i>) • Is comfortable asking for help when they don't understand something (<i>SA</i>)
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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.