

# North Carolina Portrait of a Graduate and DESSA Crosswalk

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The [North Carolina Portrait of a Graduate](#) articulates the durable skills and mindsets students need to need to thrive in the post-secondary plan of their choice. These competencies can help districts, schools, and educators guide instruction that allows for deeper student learning, skill attainment, and bridges the gap between K-12 education and workforce readiness.

The DESSA suite of assessments measures key social and emotional competencies essential for student success now and into the future. The DESSA assessments span K-12 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.

This crosswalk highlights the alignment between the North Carolina Portrait of a Graduate Competencies and the DESSA assessment items. This tool demonstrates how districts and schools can use DESSA assessments to ensure every North Carolina student is well equipped to pursue and achieve their postsecondary goals after graduation.

## Alignment Between the North Carolina Portrait of a Graduate Competencies and DESSA Items

Adaptability	
<i>Indicators</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
Demonstrate agility in thought processes and problem-solving.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ask questions when they did not understand something</li><li>• Show a willingness to update their thinking</li></ul>
Accept feedback, praise, setbacks, and criticism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Listen to feedback so they can improve</li><li>• View negative outcomes as a learning opportunity</li><li>• Seek out challenging tasks</li><li>• Focus on the positive aspects of a situation</li><li>• Work to develop their personal strengths</li><li>• Accept responsibility for their actions</li></ul>
Balance diverse viewpoints and beliefs to reach workable solutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Respect a person's right to have a different perspective</li><li>• Get along well with different types of people</li><li>• Cooperate with others to solve a problem</li><li>• Resolve conflicts positively</li></ul>

Demonstrate flexibility when navigating challenging situations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjust their behavior to match different settings.</li> <li>• Adapt well to new situations</li> </ul>
Exhibit steadfastness despite difficulty, opposition, and/or failure.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay calm when faced with a challenge</li> <li>• Persist to achieve a goal</li> <li>• Keep trying when unsuccessful</li> </ul>

Collaboration	
<i>Indicators</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
Contribute and respond to diverse perspectives to achieve a common goal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect a person's right to have a different perspective</li> <li>• Contribute to group or team goals</li> <li>• Believe working with others leads to greater success</li> </ul>
Leverage strengths to resolve conflict and foster teamwork.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show an awareness of their personal strengths</li> <li>• Cooperate with others to solve a problem</li> <li>• Resolve conflicts positively</li> <li>• Accept responsibility for their actions</li> </ul>
Interact respectfully with others in digital and in-person interactions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect a person's right to have a different opinion</li> <li>• Make others feel welcome or included</li> </ul>
Embrace a variety of roles in a group as a participant and a leader.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree to and follow expectations for their behavior</li> <li>• Encourage others</li> <li>• Show appreciation for others</li> <li>• Believe their contributions to a group or team matter</li> </ul>

Communication	
<i>Indicators</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
Articulate thoughts and ideas effectively using oral, written, and nonverbal communication skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work carefully on projects or schoolwork</li> </ul>
Listen to decipher meaning, values, attitudes, and intentions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to others</li> <li>• Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways</li> </ul>
Ask questions and synthesize messages to seek understanding.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask questions when they did not understand something</li> </ul>
Engage in productive discourse to resolve disagreements.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resolve conflicts positively</li> <li>• Interact positively with classmates</li> <li>• Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways</li> </ul>

Craft communication for a range of purposes and audiences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjust their behavior to match different settings.</li> <li>Get along well with different types of people</li> </ul>
Use storytelling and public speaking to express ideas and connect with others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help make their class a place where everyone can learn</li> </ul>

Critical Thinking	
<i>Indicators</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
Analyze, assess, and reconstruct personal thought processes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update their thinking as they learn more about something</li> </ul>
Apply thinking that is clear, rational, and evidence-based.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stay focused despite a distraction</li> <li>Think before they acted</li> <li>Ask questions when learning new things</li> <li>Gather information before making an important decision</li> </ul>
Evaluate and prioritize solutions to difficult or complex problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gather information before making an important decision</li> <li>Ask questions when they did not understand something</li> <li>Work carefully on projects or schoolwork</li> <li>Do the right thing in a difficult situation</li> </ul>
Employ creative improvements to systems, processes, and organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Take action to solve a problem</li> <li>Make positive contributions to their class, school, or community</li> <li>Believe they can make a positive difference in the world</li> </ul>

Empathy	
<i>Indicators</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
Demonstrate understanding, sensitivity, concern, and respect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize others' emotions</li> <li>Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways</li> <li>Interact positively with classmates</li> </ul>
Share in others' feelings, opinions, and experiences through personal and digital connections.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recognize others' emotions</li> <li>Interact positively with classmates</li> </ul>

Value and embrace diverse cultures and unique perspectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect a person's right to have a different perspective</li> <li>• Get along well with different types of people</li> <li>• Demonstrate openness to new situations, experiences, and people</li> </ul>
Foster belonging and trust through mutual respect and dialogue.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways</li> <li>• Make others feel welcome or included</li> <li>• Encourage others</li> </ul>

Learner's Mindset	
<i>Indicators</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
Possess an ongoing desire to learn, unlearn, and relearn.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to feedback so they can improve</li> <li>• Update their thinking as they learn more about something</li> </ul>
Embrace curiosity to experience new ideas, demonstrate growth, and persist through challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask questions when they did not understand something</li> <li>• Work to develop their personal strengths</li> <li>• Seek out challenging tasks</li> <li>• Persist to achieve a goal</li> <li>• Keep trying when unsuccessful</li> <li>• Express high expectations for themselves</li> </ul>
Translate knowledge to provide different contexts to drive change and innovation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update their thinking as they learn more about something</li> </ul>
Develop positive attitudes and beliefs about learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept that making mistakes is part of learning</li> <li>• Listen to feedback so they can improve</li> </ul>

Personal Responsibility	
<i>Indicators</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
Adhere to a set of core values that are evident in choices and actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate a sense of who they are and what is important to them</li> <li>• List the personal traits that are most important to them</li> </ul>
Earn trust and respect through honest, principled behaviors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do the right thing in a difficult situation</li> <li>• Do nice things for people</li> <li>• Accept responsibility for their actions</li> </ul>

Honor commitments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agree to and follow expectations for their behavior</li> <li>• Prepare for school, activities, or upcoming events</li> </ul>
Recognize how personal decisions and actions have impacts beyond self.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept responsibility for their actions</li> <li>• Contribute to a positive learning environment</li> <li>• Help make their class a place where everyone can learn</li> <li>• Compromise for the good of the group</li> </ul>
Take ownership of decisions and persevere through challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept responsibility for their actions</li> <li>• Keep trying when unsuccessful</li> <li>• Persist to achieve a goal</li> <li>• Motivate themselves when they don't want to do something</li> </ul>
Demonstrate self-control and composure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay calm when faced with a challenge</li> <li>• Calm down when they're upset</li> <li>• Think before they acted</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).