

# Rhode Island Social Emotional Learning Standards and DESSA Crosswalk

January 2025

The Rhode Island Department of Education Council for Elementary and Secondary Education endorsed the [Rhode Island Social Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Standards](#) in 2017. These standards help guide schools to integrate these skills into academic instruction and create a climate of safety, security and belonging for all students and adults.

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 Rhode Island SEL Standards and DESSA assessment items. This tool can help support the integration of SEL throughout the school day and help promote school and life success for all Rhode Island students.

## Alignment between the Rhode Island SEL Standards and DESSA Items

<b>1. Self-Awareness</b>	
The ability to recognize one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior and to assess one's strengths and limitations.	
<i>Learning Standard</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
1A. Individual demonstrates an understanding of one's emotions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize their emotions (SA)</li> <li>• Describe the emotion they were feeling (SA)</li> <li>• Explain what caused their emotions (SA)</li> <li>• Know how their emotions influence their behavior (SA)</li> <li>• Can tell when their emotions make it hard to pay attention (SA)</li> </ul>
1B. Individual identifies when help is needed and who can provide it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel comfortable asking for help when they don't understand something (SA)</li> <li>• Ask questions when they did not understand something (SA)</li> <li>• Listen to feedback so they can improve (SA)</li> </ul>
1C. Individual demonstrates awareness of their own personal rights and responsibilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the things that matter most to them (SA)</li> </ul>
1D. Individual demonstrates knowledge of their own personal strengths, cultural and linguistic assets, and aspirations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• List the personal traits that are most important to them (SA)</li> <li>• Show an awareness of their personal strengths (SA)</li> <li>• Work to develop their personal strengths (SA)</li> <li>• Imagine a positive future for themselves (OT)</li> <li>• Expect that they will be successful (OT)</li> <li>• Believe they can achieve their goals (OT)</li> </ul>
1E. Individual seeks to understand and identify their own prejudices and biases.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show a willingness to examine their beliefs and opinions (SA)</li> </ul>

## 2. Self-Management

The ability to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations and to set and work toward personal and academic goals.

<i>Learning Standard</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
2A. Individual demonstrates the skills to manage one's emotions, thoughts, impulses and stress in constructive ways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think before they acted (SM)</li> <li>• Stay focused despite a distraction (SM)</li> <li>• Calm down when they're upset (SM)</li> <li>• Stay calm when faced with a challenge (SM)</li> </ul>
2B. Individual manages materials, space, time and responsibilities effectively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Motivate themselves when they don't want to do something (SM)</li> <li>• Work carefully on projects or schoolwork (SM)</li> </ul>
2C. Individual demonstrates skills to develop, evaluate, modify and achieve goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set goals for themselves (SM)</li> <li>• Take action to solve problems (SM)</li> <li>• Contribute to group or team goals (SM)</li> <li>• Persist to achieve a goal (SM)</li> <li>• Believe they can achieve their goals (OT)</li> </ul>
2D. Individual demonstrates a resilient attitude and growth mindset, even in the face of adversity and challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adapt well to new situations (SM)</li> <li>• Keep trying when unsuccessful (SM)</li> <li>• Believe they can overcome setbacks (OT)</li> <li>• View negative outcomes as a learning opportunity (OT)</li> <li>• Accept that making mistakes is part of learning (OT)</li> <li>• Focus on the positive aspects of a situation (OT)</li> </ul>

## 3. Social Awareness

The ability to take the perspective of others and empathize with them, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures, and to understand norms for behavior.

<i>Learning Standard</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
3A. Individual reads social cues and responds appropriately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recognize others' emotions (SO)</li> <li>• Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways (SO)</li> <li>• Adjust their behavior to match different settings (SO)</li> </ul>
3B: Individual seeks to understand and demonstrates respect for individuals, including those with diverse backgrounds, cultures, abilities, languages, and identities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect a person's right to have a different perspective (SO)</li> <li>• Show appreciation for others (SO)</li> </ul>

<p>3C: Individual demonstrates empathy for other people's emotions and perspectives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make others feel welcome or included (SO)</li> <li>• Recognize others' emotions (SO)</li> <li>• Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways (SO)</li> </ul>
<p>3D: Individual recognizes and respects leadership capacity in oneself and others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help make their class a place where everyone can learn (SO)</li> <li>• Show appreciation for others (SO)</li> <li>• Make others feel welcome or included (SO)</li> </ul>
<p>3E: Individual contributes productively to one's school, family, workplace, and community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contribute to creating a positive learning environment (SO)</li> <li>• Help make their class a place where everyone can learn (SO)</li> <li>• Agree to and follow expectations for their behavior (SO)</li> <li>• Believe their contributions to a group or team matter (OT)</li> <li>• Can make a positive difference in the world (OT)</li> </ul>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>4. Relationship Skills</b> The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressures, and to seek and offer help when needed.</p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Learning Standard</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>DESSA Items</i></p>
<p>4A. Individual uses communication and interpersonal skills to interact effectively with others, including those with diverse backgrounds, cultures, abilities, languages, and identities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interact positively with classmates (RS)</li> <li>• Get along well with different types of people (RS)</li> </ul>
<p>4B. Individual uses appropriate communication strategies and interpersonal skills to maintain relationships with others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good at making and keeping friends (RS)</li> <li>• Encourage their friends or classmates (RS)</li> <li>• Listen to others (RS)</li> <li>• Compliment or congratulate others (RS)</li> <li>• Do nice things for people (RS)</li> </ul>
<p>4C. Individual demonstrates the skills to respectfully engage in and resolve interpersonal conflicts in various contexts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resolve conflicts positively (RS)</li> <li>• Cooperate with others to solve a problem (RS)</li> </ul>
<p>4D. Individual recognizes when others need help and demonstrates the ability to provide or seek assistance.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stand up for a friend or classmate (RS)</li> <li>• Believe working with others leads to greater success (OT)</li> </ul>

### 5. Responsible Decision Making

The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms and to evaluate the consequences of actions and to consider the safety and well-being of others.

<i>Learning Standard</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
5A. Individual applies problem-solving skills to engage responsibly in a variety of situations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather information before making an important decision (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• Prepare for school, activities, or upcoming events (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• Ask for advice when needed (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• Accept responsibility for their actions (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• View negative outcomes as a learning opportunity (<i>OT</i>)</li> </ul>
5B. Individual uses and adapts appropriate tools and strategies to solve problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate openness to new situations, experiences, and people (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• Update their thinking as they learn more about something (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• Ask for advice when needed (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• Believe working with others leads to greater success (<i>OT</i>)</li> </ul>
5C. Individual evaluates impact of decisions on self, others and the given situation and adjusts behavior appropriately.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept responsibility for their actions (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• Compromise for the good of the group (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• Do the right thing in a difficult situation (<i>RDM</i>)</li> </ul>
5D. Individual considers ethical, safety, and societal factors when making choices and decisions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do the right thing in a difficult situation (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• Accept responsibility for their actions (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• Can make a positive difference in the world (<i>OT</i>)</li> </ul>
5E. Individual considers and responds appropriately to external influences (e.g. media, peers, authority figures) on decision-making.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather information before making an important decision (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• Ask questions when learning new things (<i>RDM</i>)</li> <li>• Show a willingness to update their thinking (<i>RDM</i>)</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).