

# Utah Social Emotional Learning and DESSA Crosswalk

October 2024

In 2022, the Utah State Board of Education published a Technical Assistant Document for their definition of [Social and Emotional Learning \(SEL\)](#). The document creates a shared vision of what social and emotional learning looks like for the six outcomes included in Utah's SEL definition. Possessing SEL skills are critical aspects of academic learning and long-term success in life.

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 12<sup>th</sup> 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 Utah's Social and Emotional Learning Outcomes and the DESSA assessment items across the six competencies. It demonstrates how the DESSA assessments can be used by districts and schools to ensure every Utah student develops the knowledge, attitude, and skills to be authentically successful in academic settings, establishing relationships, and accomplishing their long-term goals.

<b>Outcome 1: Understand and Manage Emotions</b> The knowledge, attitudes, and skills to objectively examine, understand, and effectively manage emotions, thoughts, and behaviors	
<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name and identify a wide range of emotions</li> <li>• Understand the range of intensity of emotions</li> <li>• Deepen their understanding of their own emotions</li> <li>• Recognize the physiological responses associated with different emotions</li> <li>• Understand the brain's response to emotions</li> <li>• Understand how their thoughts, behaviors, and emotions are connected</li> <li>• Understand how external experiences or internal thoughts can influence emotions</li> <li>• Understand how culture may influence understanding and the interpretation of emotions</li> <li>• Understand how emotions and thoughts interact to influence behavior in different situations</li> <li>• Communicate a variety of emotions</li> <li>• Identify strategies which can help manage emotions</li> <li>• Demonstrate personal agency to use stress management strategies</li> <li>• Demonstrate self-discipline and self-motivation</li> <li>• Manage emotions and behaviors in a variety of circumstances, including interpersonal conflict and in response to challenging situations</li> <li>• Recognize and accept that their perspective may differ from the perspective of others</li> <li>• Experience a belief in their abilities and capacity to manage emotions successfully</li> <li>• Recognize how interactions with others may impact their own emotions</li> <li>• Understand how their emotions may impact others</li> <li>• Show awareness of their strengths and limitations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can recognize their emotions (SA)</li> <li>• Describe the emotion they were feeling (SA)</li> <li>• Know how their emotions influence their behavior (SA)</li> <li>• Explain what caused their emotion (SA)</li> <li>• Can tell when their emotions make it hard to pay attention (SA)</li> <li>• Stay calm when faced with a challenge (SM)</li> <li>• Can motivate themselves when they do not want to do something (SM)</li> <li>• Can calm down when they are upset (SM)</li> <li>• Stay focused despite a distraction (SM)</li> <li>• Respect a person's right to have a different perspective (SO)</li> <li>• Recognize others' emotions (SO)</li> <li>• Believe they can achieve their goals (OT)</li> <li>• Believe they can overcome setbacks (OT)</li> <li>• Expect that they will be successful (OT)</li> <li>• Show an awareness of their personal strengths (SA)</li> <li>• Work to develop their personal strengths (SA)</li> <li>• Seek out challenging tasks (OT)</li> </ul>

## Outcome 2: Set and Achieve Positive Goals

The knowledge, attitude, and skills to set goals, plan one's actions to reach those goals, and carry out those plans to completion

Outcomes	DESSA Items
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify goals and aspirations</li><li>• Set strengths-based goals</li><li>• Build routines that facilitate goal achievement</li><li>• Articulate what they will do, rather than what they will not do, to achieve a goal</li><li>• Distinguish between wants, needs, and preferences</li><li>• Set short- and long-term goals that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-sensitive (SMART)</li><li>• Sequence steps in a task and/or towards a goal, with awareness of potential barriers</li><li>• Determine how to be flexible and change course, if needed</li><li>• Accurately assess the length of time to accomplish a task or to achieve an outcome</li><li>• Use available resources to organize and track progress towards a goal</li><li>• Develop awareness of their resources, strengths, and needs</li><li>• Develop a sense of self-efficacy and a positive outlook for the future</li><li>• Persist through difficulty, uncertainty, and discomfort</li><li>• Demonstrate the motivation and agency needed to accomplish personal/shared goals</li><li>• Demonstrate patience and the ability to delay gratification</li><li>• Manage stress and emotions when making a mistake or facing a challenge</li><li>• Assess who might be able to support in establishing accountability and reaching one's goals</li><li>• Recognize and celebrate progress towards goals</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Set goals for themselves (SM)</li><li>• Can recognize their strengths (SA)</li><li>• Work to develop their personal strengths (SA)</li><li>• Keep working until they achieve a goal (SM)</li><li>• Believe they can achieve their goals (OT)</li><li>• Can motivate themselves when they do not want to do something (SM)</li><li>• Believe they can overcome setbacks (OT)</li><li>• Adapt well to new situations (SM)</li><li>• Take action to solve problems (SM)</li><li>• Update their thinking as they learn more about something (RDM)</li><li>• Gather information before making an important decision (RDM)</li><li>• Can imagine a positive future for themselves (OT)</li><li>• Expect that they will be successful (OT)</li><li>• Contribute to group or team goals (SM)</li><li>• Listen to feedback so they can improve (SA)</li><li>• Ask for advice when needed (RDM)</li><li>• Focus on the positive side of things (OT)</li><li>• Can calm down when they are upset (SM)</li></ul>

### Outcome 3: Feel and Show Empathy for Others

The knowledge, attitude, and skills to be aware of, understand, and be sensitive to the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of others, including those from diverse background, cultures, and contents

Outcomes	DESSA Items
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate the ability to perceive and articulate others' perspectives across a variety of situations and experiences</li> <li>• Recognize strengths in others</li> <li>• Identify diverse social norms, including unjust ones, and how they influence the thoughts, behavior, and emotions of others</li> <li>• Recognize that others' perspectives and behaviors are the result of many complex factors from an individual's knowledge and experience</li> <li>• Understand differences across cultural norms and expectations, including the contexts in which those norms and expectations are developed</li> <li>• Conduct themselves in online and group spaces in a respectful and compassionate way, regardless of the level of anonymity or the actions of other members of the group</li> <li>• Show regard and compassion for the feelings of others and consider the impact of their actions on others</li> <li>• Value the individual contributions made by each team member to cultivate a culture of community</li> <li>• Demonstrate the ability to get along with and collaborate with others from different backgrounds, with different strengths/needs, and with different abilities</li> <li>• Understand and self-reflect that their perspective can be limited by their own experiences and background</li> <li>• Deepen their understanding of themselves holistically (e.g., with respect to academics, cognition, identity and culture, historical experiences, and social and community context) in order to understand how they relate to others</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respect a person's right to have a different perspective (SO)</li> <li>• Demonstrate openness to new situations, experiences, and people (RDM)</li> <li>• Show appreciation for others (SO)</li> <li>• Get along well with different types of people (RS)</li> <li>• Make others feel welcome or included (SO)</li> <li>• Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways (SO)</li> <li>• Can adjust their behavior to match different settings (SO)</li> <li>• Agree to and follow expectations for their behavior (SO)</li> <li>• Make positive contributions to their class, school, or community (SM)</li> <li>• Contribute to creating a positive learning environment (SO)</li> <li>• Cooperate with others to solve a problem (RS)</li> <li>• Can compromise for the good of the group (RDM)</li> <li>• Believe their contributions to a group or team matter (OT)</li> <li>• Show a willingness to examine their beliefs and opinions (SA)</li> <li>• Ask questions when they did not understand something (SA)</li> <li>• Stand up for a friend or classmate (RS)</li> <li>• Listen to others (RS)</li> <li>• Can update their thinking as they learn more about something (RDM)</li> <li>• Listen to feedback so they can improve (SA)</li> <li>• Ask for advice when needed (RDM)</li> <li>• Feel comfortable asking for help when they don't understand something (SA)</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrate curiosity to better understand unfamiliar perspectives and experiences</li> <li>• Show awareness of the concept of stereotyping and respectfully challenge stereotyping when it occurs</li> <li>• Recognize and critically consider unjust situations, not only on behalf of themselves but others who may be affected</li> <li>• Demonstrate listening in discussions and disagreements with the intent to understand before responding</li> <li>• Allow information and experiences shared by others to inform and update their perspective</li> <li>• Identify family, school, and community resources and supports that can assist in developing empathy for others</li> </ul>	
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#### **Outcome 4: Establish and Maintain Positive Relationships**

The knowledge, attitude, and skills to maintain healthy and supportive relationships with individuals and groups from diverse backgrounds

<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand and articulate the importance of connections with others and utilize appropriate skills to establish and maintain relationships</li><li>• Engage in relationships, including close relationships, that are safe, stable, and respectful</li><li>• Articulate and communicate needs in an effective, respectful way and recognize the way things are communicated impacts others</li><li>• Interpret both verbal and non-verbal information, and respond appropriately</li><li>• Show respect to others regardless of differences</li><li>• Advocate appropriately for their individual belief system while respecting the rights of others to hold their own beliefs</li><li>• Collaborate with others from diverse backgrounds</li><li>• Maintain healthy boundaries with others</li><li>• Respect the boundaries others set</li><li>• Recognize relationships have varying stages and demonstrate the types of behaviors that are appropriate at each stage</li><li>• Demonstrate they are dependable, trustworthy, and can be counted on to keep their commitments</li><li>• Provide emotional support to others</li><li>• Give and receive honest feedback</li><li>• Seek or offer help when needed</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Good at making and keeping friends (<i>RS</i>)</li><li>• Get along well with different types of people (<i>RS</i>)</li><li>• Interact positively with classmates (<i>RS</i>)</li><li>• Do nice things for people (<i>RS</i>)</li><li>• Encourage others (<i>RS</i>)</li><li>• Listen to others (<i>RS</i>)</li><li>• Recognize others' emotions (<i>SO</i>)</li><li>• Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways (<i>SO</i>)</li><li>• Make others feel welcome or included (<i>SO</i>)</li><li>• Contribute to creating a positive learning environment (<i>SO</i>)</li><li>• Respect a person's right to have a different perspective (<i>SO</i>)</li><li>• Help make their class a place where everyone can learn (<i>SO</i>)</li><li>• Stand up for a friend or classmate (<i>RS</i>)</li><li>• Compromise for the good of the group (<i>RDM</i>)</li><li>• Cooperate with others to solve a problem (<i>RS</i>)</li><li>• Contribute to group or team goals (<i>SM</i>)</li><li>• Believe working with others leads to greater success (<i>OT</i>)</li><li>• Accept responsibility for their actions (<i>RDM</i>)</li><li>• Listen to feedback so they can improve (<i>SA</i>)</li><li>• Ask for advice when needed (<i>RDM</i>)</li></ul>

### Outcome 5: Make Responsible Decisions

The knowledge, attitude, and skills to make caring and constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions across various situations

<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrate curiosity and open mindedness</li><li>• Understand and utilize critical thinking skills</li><li>• Brainstorm different approaches</li><li>• Recognize choices have intended and unintended consequences</li><li>• Recognize the role emotions play in decision making</li><li>• Collect data to inform decisions</li><li>• Analyze all the relevant information to come to a decision or find a solution</li><li>• Assess, monitor, and reflect on progress</li><li>• Evaluate the consequences of one's own actions on self and the community</li><li>• Consider multiple sides of an issue when seeking a solution to a problem or making a decision</li><li>• Determine the impact of a decision upon individuals and the community</li><li>• Critically analyze all available materials, information, sources</li><li>• Analyze and reflect on errors, misconceptions, and outcomes</li><li>• Explore possible solutions for both personal and social problems</li><li>• Evaluate how social norms and expectations influence decisions</li><li>• Understand social pressures and how to resist pressures that may lead to unsafe or unethical decisions</li><li>• Explain their reasons for making a decision</li><li>• Anticipate and evaluate the consequences of their actions</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrate openness to new situations, experiences, and people (<i>RDM</i>)</li><li>• Show a willingness to update their thinking (<i>RDM</i>)</li><li>• Gather information before making an important decision (<i>RDM</i>)</li><li>• Ask questions when learning new things (<i>RDM</i>)</li><li>• Know how their emotions influence their behavior (<i>SA</i>)</li><li>• Think before they acted (<i>SM</i>)</li><li>• Do the right thing in a difficult situation (<i>RDM</i>)</li><li>• Work carefully on projects or schoolwork (<i>SM</i>)</li><li>• Make positive contributions to their class, school, or community (<i>SM</i>)</li><li>• Respect a person's right to have a different perspective (<i>SO</i>)</li><li>• Believe they can make a positive difference in the world (<i>OT</i>)</li><li>• Listen to feedback so they can improve (<i>SA</i>)</li><li>• Accept that making mistakes is part of learning (<i>OT</i>)</li><li>• View negative outcomes as a learning opportunity (<i>OT</i>)</li><li>• Accept responsibility for their actions (<i>RDM</i>)</li></ul>



<b>Outcome 6: Self Advocate</b> The knowledge, attitude, and skills to effectively communicate and assert personal needs and wants	
<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect on their circumstances and needs</li> <li>• Set personal values and boundaries</li> <li>• Recognize when they need help</li> <li>• Evaluate and defend their thinking</li> <li>• Ask for the support they need to balance mental, physical, social, and emotional wellness</li> <li>• Effectively communicate their needs</li> <li>• Request help, support, or assistance appropriately</li> <li>• Identify available resources and how to access them</li> <li>• Differentiate between situations requiring peer support and those requiring adult or professional help</li> <li>• Identify adults that can provide them with support specific to a need</li> <li>• Identify the right support for the problem they face</li> <li>• Identify their strengths and weaknesses</li> <li>• Utilize existing strengths to offset weaknesses</li> <li>• Understand what actions they need to take to achieve a positive outcome</li> <li>• Make decisions about learning experiences</li> <li>• Make choices to demonstrate their learning</li> <li>• Ask for additional time to complete a project</li> <li>• Understand what feedback benefits them and what feedback does not</li> <li>• Be persistent to get their needs met</li> <li>• Ask for clarification when they do not understand</li> <li>• Understand their responsibility for their own success</li> <li>• Set challenging but achievable goals</li> <li>• Assert personal needs with a sense of confidence and purpose</li> <li>• Challenge existing structures and norms to meet individual needs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel comfortable asking for help when they don't understand something (SA)</li> <li>• Feel comfortable being themselves in different situations (SA)</li> <li>• Can describe the things that matter most to them (SA)</li> <li>• Can list the personal traits that are most important to them (SM)</li> <li>• Ask for advice when needed (RDM)</li> <li>• Believe working with others leads to greater success (OT)</li> <li>• Can recognize their strengths (SA)</li> <li>• Work to develop their personal strengths (SA)</li> <li>• Listen to feedback so they can improve (SA)</li> <li>• Believe they can overcome setbacks (OT)</li> <li>• Expect that they will be successful (OT)</li> <li>• Focus on the positive side of things (OT)</li> <li>• Prepare for school, activities, or upcoming events (RDM)</li> <li>• Ask questions when learning new things (RDM)</li> <li>• Accept that making mistakes is part of learning (OT)</li> <li>• Take action to solve problems (SM)</li> <li>• Set goals for themselves (SM)</li> <li>• Believe they can achieve their goals (OT)</li> <li>• Seek out things that challenge them (OT)</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).