

Vermont Portrait of a Graduate and DESSA Crosswalk

October 2024

A Vermont [Portrait of a Graduate](#), updated in 2023, specifies the cognitive, personal, and interpersonal skills and abilities that students should be able to demonstrate upon graduation. It can be used as a tool for reviewing and refining proficiency-based graduation requirements, as well as a guide for making instructional decisions.

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.

This crosswalk highlights the alignment between a Vermont Portrait of a Graduate and the DESSA assessment items and demonstrates how the DESSA assessments can be used by districts and schools to ensure every student has the skills needed as an ideal Vermont graduate.

Alignment between a Vermont Portrait of a Graduate and DESSA Items

Learner Agency	
<i>Performance Indicators</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
1. Students take ownership of their own learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ask questions when learning new things• Prepare for school, activities, or upcoming events• Take action to solve problems• Seek out things that challenge them• Motivate themselves when they don't want to do something• Listen to feedback so they can improve• Work to develop their strengths
2. Students develop their own voice and the ability to use it in a variety of settings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feel comfortable being themselves in different situations• Stand up for a friend or classmate• Make positive contributions to their class, school, or community• Believe their contributions to a group or team matter

3. Students have high expectations for themselves and see themselves as lifelong learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express high expectations for themselves • Update their thinking as they learn more about something • Expect that they will be successful • Believe they can achieve their goals • Can imagine a positive future for themselves
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Global Citizenship	
<i>Performance Indicators</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
1. Students recognize that our world is increasingly complex and interdependent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect a person's right to have a different perspective • Get along well with different types of people • Believe they can make a positive difference in the world
2. Students understand and exercise their rights and responsibilities within a democratic society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather information before making an important decision • Listen to others • Accept responsibility for their actions • Think before they act • Make positive contributions to their class, school, or community
3. Students study a non-native language and understand the importance of learning about other cultures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate openness to new situations, experiences, and people • Show a willingness to update their thinking

Academic Proficiency	
<i>Performance Indicators</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
1. Students understand essential concepts in academic domains and apply this knowledge in authentic situations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update their thinking as they learn more about something
2. Students ask questions effectively to acquire knowledge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions when learning new things • Ask questions when they did not understand something
3. Students acknowledge their growth and identify possibilities for continued learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize their strengths • Work to develop their personal strengths • Seek out challenges • Believe they can achieve their goals

Well-Being	
<i>Performance Indicators</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
1. Students develop strategies and interpersonal skills to manage stress, promote mental health and cultivate positive relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay calm when faced with a challenge • Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways • Interact positively with classmates • Take action to solve problems
2. Students recognize the value of healthy behaviors and physical activity in promoting health, enjoyment, self-expression and social interaction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the things that matter most to them • List the personal traits that are most important to them
3. Students have the knowledge necessary to make financially responsible decisions that are integral to their everyday lives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather information before making an important decision • Set goals for themselves • Ask questions when they did not understand something • Speak positively about their future potential

Critical Thinking & Problem Solving	
<i>Performance Indicators</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
1. Students use inquiry to solve real-world problems with innovation, creativity and curiosity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions when learning new things • Demonstrate openness to new situations, experiences, and people • Gather information before making an important decision
2. Students participate in a collaborative problem-solving and decision-making process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperate with others to solve a problem • Contribute to group or team goals • Compromise for the good of the group • Believe their contributions to a group or team matter
3. Students evaluate information critically.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show a willingness to examine their beliefs and opinions • Do the right thing in a difficult situation

Communication	
<i>Performance Indicators</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
1. Students communicate effectively using oral, written and nonverbal (body language) strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make their class a place where everyone can learn • Listen to others • Interact positively with classmates • Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways
2. Students communicate through a variety of media and create a positive digital footprint.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapt well to new situations • Make positive contributions to their class, school, or community
3. Students take into consideration multiple points of view.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respect a person's right to have a different perspective • Demonstrate openness to new situations, experiences, and people • Show a willingness to update their thinking



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.