

Virginia Social Emotional Learning Guidance Standards and DESSA Crosswalk

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[The Virginia Social Emotional Learning \(SEL\) Guidance Standards](#), published in 2020, help drive Virginia's commitment to ensure that every student attends a school that maximizes their potential and prepares them for the future: academically, socially, and emotionally. The practices included in the SEL standards are aligned with the 5 C's of the Profile of a Virginia Graduate: critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, communication, and citizenship, to ensure students are ready for college and the workforce.

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 Virginia SEL Standards and DESSA assessment items across the six competencies. It demonstrates how the DESSA assessments can be used by districts and schools to ensure every Virginia student, from kindergarten through 12th grade benefits from a positive, interactive and engaging environment and develops the skills necessary to succeed after graduation.

Self-Awareness	
<i>Overarching Concept</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
SeA1: Recognize and understand the interaction between one's own thoughts and emotions. (Critical Thinking)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize their emotions (SA) • Describe the emotion they were feeling (SA) • Explain what caused their emotions (SA)
SeA2: Develop a positive identity and recognize personal strengths, interests, values, and challenges. (Creative Thinking)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize their strengths (SA) • Demonstrate a sense of who they are and what is important to them (SA) • Work to develop their personal strengths (SA) • Seek out things that challenge them (OT) • Speak positively about their future potential (OT)

Self-Management	
<i>Overarching Concept</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
SeM1: Develop and demonstrate strategies for managing and expressing one's own emotions to persevere in challenging situations. (Communication)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay calm when faced with a challenge (SM) • Keep trying when unsuccessful (SM) • Think before they acted (SM) • Believe they can overcome setbacks (OT)
SeM2: Demonstrate the skills related to achieving personal and academic goals. (Creative Thinking)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set goals for themselves (SM) • Motivate themselves when they don't want to do something (SM) • Persist to achieve a goal (SM) • Work carefully on projects or schoolwork (SM) • Contribute to group or team goals (SM)

Social Awareness	
<i>Overarching Concept</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
SoA1: Demonstrate the ability to empathize with and show gratitude for others, including those with different and diverse perspectives, backgrounds and cultures (Collaboration)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize others' emotions (SO) • Make others feel welcome or included (SO) • Show appreciation of others (SO) • Respect a person's right to have a different perspective (SO) • Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways (SO)

Relationship Skills	
Overarching Concept	DESSA Items
ReS1: Apply positive verbal and non-verbal communication and listening skills to interact with others, form and maintain positive relationships, and resolve conflict constructively. (Communication)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to others (RS) • Interact positively with classmates (RS) • Resolve conflicts positively (RS) • Encourage others (RS) • Good at making and keeping friends (RS) • Do nice things for people (RS)
ReS2: Demonstrate the ability to effectively collaborate and navigate relationships while valuing different and diverse perspectives, backgrounds and cultures. (Collaboration)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get along well with different types of people (RS) • Cooperate with others to solve a problem (RS)

Decision-Making	
Overarching Concept	DESSA Items
DeM1: Demonstrate the ability to evaluate, through reflection, the benefits and consequences of various actions within the decision-making process. (Critical Thinking)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather information before making an important decision (RDM) • Ask questions when learning new things (RDM) • Update their thinking as they learn more about something (RDM)
DeM2: Demonstrate the ability to make ethical decisions as a global citizen and evaluate outcomes based on one's own identity and the impact on humanity. (Citizenship)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept responsibility for their actions (RDM) • Do the right thing in a difficult situation (RDM) • Compromise for the good of the group (RDM) • Demonstrate openness to new situations, experiences, and people (RDM)



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.