

North Dakota Portrait of a Graduate and DESSA Crosswalk

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The [North Dakota Portrait of a Graduate](#) articulates the Essential Skills students need to be ready for their postsecondary, career, and/or military interests. These competencies can help districts interested in building personalized, competency-based systems to direct instruction, influence learning environments, and select assessments to help each North Dakota graduate with attributes necessary to succeed throughout their educational career and beyond.

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 Dakota Portrait of a Graduate Essential Skills and the DESSA assessment items. This tool demonstrates how districts and schools can use DESSA assessments to ensure every North Dakota student develops the 21st century skills that prepare them to thrive after graduation.

Alignment Between the North Dakota Portrait of a Graduate Essential Skills and DESSA Items

Adaptability	
Attribute Description	DESSA Items
Respond positively and productively to feedback, praise, setbacks, and criticism.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen to feedback so they can improve• View negative outcomes as a learning opportunity• Focus on the positive aspects of a situation• Work to develop their personal strengths• Stay calm when faced with a challenge• Show a willingness to update their thinking• Accept responsibility for their actions
Understand, navigate, and balance diverse views and beliefs to reach workable solutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Respect a person's right to have a different perspective• Get along well with different types of people

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperate with others to solve a problem • Resolve conflicts positively
Analyze situations and create a plan using self-awareness and self-management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather information before making an important decision • Think before they acted • Ask questions when they did not understand something

Collaboration	
<i>Attribute Description</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
Share responsibility by applying individual strengths to build collective commitment and action.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show an awareness of their personal strengths • Believe their contributions to a group or team matter • Contribute to group or team goals • Accept responsibility for their actions
Intentionally contribute to the group effectiveness in pursuit of a shared vision.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to group or team goals • Cooperate with others to solve a problem • Believe working with others leads to greater success
Cultivate a culture of community that elicits diverse perspectives and contributions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to creating a positive learning environment • Respect a person's right to have a different opinion • Make others feel welcome or included • Encourage others

Communication	
<i>Attribute Description</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
Apply active listening skills, interpret meaning from others' communications, and generate a response.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to others • Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways
Organize and express ideas in a form appropriate for the audience and purpose.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work carefully on projects or schoolwork • Agree to and follow expectations for their behavior

Learner's Mindset	
<i>Attribute Description</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
Independently seek varied learning experiences that align with their needs, passions, values, and life goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List the personal traits that are most important to them • Work to develop their personal strengths • Seek out challenging tasks • Express high expectations for themselves
Take ownership of the learning process by applying feedback, experiences, and self-reflection to synthesize knowledge that guides ideas, actions, and goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to feedback so they can improve • Can update their thinking as they learn more about something • Set goals for themselves • Persist to achieve a goal • Believe they can achieve their goals • Take action to solve a problem • Ask questions when they did not understand something • Keep trying when unsuccessful

Critical Thinking	
<i>Attribute Description</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
Apply self-disciplined thinking that is clear, rational, and open-minded.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay focused despite a distraction • Think before they acted • Motivate themselves when they don't want to do something
Consistently improve the quality of one's own thinking by acknowledging bias and assumptions, being socially aware, and understanding global perspectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update their thinking as they learn more about something • Respect a person's right to have a different perspective • Get along well with different types of people • Demonstrate openness to new situations, experiences, and people
Gather and assess relevant information, raise credible questions, and come to well-reasoned conclusions and solutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather information before making an important decision • Ask questions when learning new things • Ask questions when they did not understand something • Work carefully on projects or schoolwork • Do the right thing in a difficult situation

Empathy	
<i>Attribute Description</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
Seek, understand, and productively respond to diverse points of view, feelings, and experiences of others.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get along well with different types of people • Respect a person's right to have a different perspective • Recognize others' emotions • Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways • Listen to others • Resolve conflicts positively
Analyze the effect of personal behavior in order to treat others with respect, compassion, and inclusivity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make others feel welcome or included • Interact positively with classmates • Accept responsibility for their actions • Show appreciation of others

Perseverance	
<i>Attribute Description</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
Exhibit positive attitudes, persistence, curiosity, and self-reflection while pursuing knowledge and growth.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imagine a positive future for themselves • Expect they will be successful • Focus on the positive aspects of a situation • Express high expectations for themselves • Seek out challenging tasks • Believe they can achieve their goals • Listen to feedback so they can improve
Use failure as a learning opportunity, navigate adversity, and adapt to keep moving forward using strengths and available supports.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept that making mistakes is part of learning • View negative outcomes as a learning opportunity • Speak positively about their future potential • Adapt well to new situations • Recognize their strengths



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.