

# Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Positive Character Traits and Personal Skills and DESSA Items Crosswalk

April 2025

The [Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Positive Character Traits and Personal Skills](#), published in 2020, introduces students to character traits that empower them to be good citizens who are trustworthy, responsible, and caring. The character traits reflect positive beliefs, attitudes, and mindsets; provide opportunities for self-reflection; and permit students to apply effective strategies to make decisions, solve problems, and behave responsibly.

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 the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Positive Character Traits and the DESSA items. It demonstrates how the DESSA assessments can be used by Texas districts and schools to ensure every student has the knowledge, skills, and mindsets needed for success now and into the future.

## Alignment between the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Positive Character Traits and DESSA Items by Grade Band

<b><i>Kindergarten through Grade 2</i></b>	
<b>(1) Trustworthiness</b>	
<i>Essential Knowledge:</i> The student understands how personal choices and actions relate to character building.	
<i>Essential Skills</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
(A) describe how personal choices lead to personal actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Demonstrate a sense of who they are and what is important to them</li><li>• Accept responsibility for their actions</li><li>• Do the right thing in a difficult situation</li><li>• Agree to and follow expectations for their behavior</li><li>• Stand up for a friend or classmate</li></ul>
(B) explain what it means to be trustworthy	
(C) identify personal actions that build trustworthiness, including being honest and punctual	

<p align="center"><b>(2) Responsibility</b></p> <p><i>Essential Knowledge:</i> The student understands the concept of responsibility and how personal actions demonstrate responsibility.</p>	
<i>Essential Skills</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
<p>(A) describe and give examples of how feelings and beliefs influence personal actions</p> <p>(B) describe how to make personal choices before speaking and acting</p> <p>(C) define self-control and identify instances in which self-control is important</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know how their emotions influence their behavior</li> <li>• Can tell when their emotions make it hard to pay attention</li> <li>• Think before they acted</li> <li>• Motivate themselves even when they don't want to do something</li> <li>• Stay focused despite a distraction</li> <li>• Stay calm when faced with a challenge</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>(3) Caring</b></p> <p><i>Essential Knowledge:</i> The student understands how personal actions demonstrate characteristics of caring.</p>	
<i>Essential Skills</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
<p>(A) define patience and identify actions that demonstrate patience</p> <p>(B) explain and identify examples of how actions can demonstrate kindness to others</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to others</li> <li>• Stay calm when faced with a challenge</li> <li>• Accept that making mistakes is part of learning</li> <li>• Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways</li> <li>• Encourage others</li> <li>• Show appreciation of others</li> <li>• Make others feel welcome or included</li> </ul>
<p align="center"><b>(4) Citizenship</b></p> <p><i>Essential Knowledge:</i> The student understands how personal actions can demonstrate good citizenship.</p>	
<i>Essential Skills</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
<p>(A) define fairness and identify examples of fairness in a variety of situations</p> <p>(B) define and identify examples of patriotism</p> <p>(C) explain what it means to demonstrate respect and courtesy and why it is important to demonstrate respect and courtesy to others</p> <p>(D) define good citizenship</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do the right thing in a difficult situation</li> <li>• Demonstrate a sense of who they are and what is important to them</li> <li>• Respect a person's right to have a different perspective</li> <li>• Interact positively with classmates</li> <li>• Get along well with different types of people</li> <li>• Contribute to creating a positive learning environment</li> <li>• Make others feel welcome or included</li> </ul>

<b>Grade 3 through Grade 5</b>	
<b>(1) Trustworthiness</b>	
<i>Essential Knowledge:</i> The student understands how personal responsibility relates to being trustworthy.	
<i>Essential Skills</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
<p>(A) identify and define traits of trustworthiness, including reliability and loyalty</p> <p>(B) identify and practice strategies for being honest and punctual</p> <p>(C) define and identify examples of unethical behavior</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept responsibility for their actions</li> <li>• Do the right thing in a difficult situation</li> <li>• Good at making and keeping friends</li> <li>• Stand up for a friend or classmate</li> <li>• Express high expectations for themselves</li> <li>• Prepare for school, activities, or upcoming events</li> <li>• Think before they acted</li> </ul>
<b>(2) Responsibility</b>	
<i>Essential Knowledge:</i> The student understands how personal choices are associated with responsibility.	
<i>Essential Skills</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
<p>(A) explain what it means to be responsible for personal decisions and actions</p> <p>(B) describe positive and negative consequences of personal decisions and actions</p> <p>(C) identify and demonstrate ways to practice self-control</p> <p>(D) describe the relationship between being responsible and being accountable</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept responsibility for their actions</li> <li>• Prepare for school, activities, or upcoming events</li> <li>• Gather information before making an important decision</li> <li>• Think before they acted</li> <li>• Listen to feedback so they can improve</li> <li>• View negative outcomes as a learning opportunity</li> <li>• Accept that making mistakes is part of learning</li> <li>• Motivate themselves even when they don't want to do something</li> <li>• Stay focused despite a distraction</li> <li>• Stay calm when faced with a challenge</li> <li>• Express high expectations for themselves</li> </ul>

(3) Caring	
<i>Essential Knowledge:</i> The student understands how personal actions demonstrate characteristics of caring.	
<i>Essential Skills</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
<p>(A) describe how feelings impact decision making and behaviors</p> <p>(B) explain how one can show patience, consideration, and compassion</p> <p>(C) define empathy and discuss the connection between empathy and charity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe the emotion they were feeling</li> <li>• Explain what caused their emotions</li> <li>• Recognize others' emotions</li> <li>• Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways</li> <li>• Stay calm when faced with a challenge</li> <li>• Listen to others</li> <li>• Make others feel welcome or included</li> <li>• Interact positively with classmates</li> <li>• Encourage others</li> </ul>
(4) Citizenship	
<i>Essential Knowledge:</i> The student understands that personal responsibility is associated with citizenship.	
<i>Essential Skills</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
<p>(A) describe the differences and similarities among gratitude, respect, and courtesy</p> <p>(B) compare fairness and justice</p> <p>(C) discuss the importance of obeying laws and rules.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show appreciation of others</li> <li>• Respect a person's right to have a different perspective</li> <li>• Interact positively with classmates</li> <li>• Get along well with different types of people</li> <li>• Stand up for a friend or classmate</li> <li>• Do the right thing in a difficult situation</li> <li>• Contribute to creating a positive learning environment</li> </ul>

<b>Grade 6 through Grade 8</b>	
<b>(1) Trustworthiness</b>	
<i>Essential Knowledge:</i> The student understands how personal choices and actions build trustworthiness.	
<i>Essential Skills</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
<p>(A) describe what it means to be reliable and loyal</p> <p>(B) define and give examples of integrity</p> <p>(C) examine the benefits of being trustworthy</p> <p>(D) describe personal actions that demonstrate trustworthiness at school, home, with peers, and within the community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good at making and keeping friends</li> <li>• Stand up for a friend or classmate</li> <li>• Do the right thing in a difficult situation</li> <li>• Accept responsibility for their actions</li> <li>• Agree to and follow expectations for their behavior</li> <li>• Express high expectations for themselves</li> </ul>
<b>(2) Responsibility</b>	
<i>Essential Knowledge:</i> The student understands how personal beliefs and feelings influence our sense of responsibility.	
<i>Essential Skills</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
<p>(A) examine how personal beliefs, thoughts, and feelings about self can build responsibility</p> <p>(B) identify and describe personal role models who demonstrate what it means to be accountable for words and actions</p> <p>(C) discuss the benefits of practicing self-control</p> <p>(D) compare the benefits of responsible behavior with the consequences of irresponsible behavior</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Express high expectations for themselves</li> <li>• Believe they can achieve their goals</li> <li>• Motivate themselves when they don't want to do something</li> <li>• Work to develop their personal strengths</li> <li>• Know how their emotions influence their behavior</li> <li>• Accept responsibility for their actions</li> <li>• Prepare for school, activities, or upcoming events</li> <li>• Do the right thing in a difficult situation</li> <li>• Agree to and follow expectations for their behavior</li> <li>• Can tell when their emotions make it hard to pay attention</li> <li>• Stay focused despite a distraction</li> <li>• Stay calm when faced with a challenge</li> <li>• Think before they acted</li> <li>• Calm down when they're upset</li> <li>• Gather information before making an important decision</li> </ul>

(3) Caring	
<i>Essential Knowledge:</i> The student understands how characteristics of caring impact personal relationships.	
<i>Essential Skills</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
<p>(A) evaluate one's personal attitudes and mindsets about self and others</p> <p>(B) discuss how feelings, decision making, and personal behaviors can influence relationships with others</p> <p>(C) explain and identify examples of how a person can demonstrate empathy through kindness, charity, generosity, and courtesy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show a willingness to examine their beliefs and opinions</li> <li>• Demonstrate openness to new situations, experiences, and people</li> <li>• Believe working with others leads to greater success</li> <li>• Respect a person's right to have a different perspective</li> <li>• Update their thinking as they learn more about something</li> <li>• Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways</li> <li>• Compromise for the good of the group</li> <li>• Make others feel welcome or included</li> <li>• Get along well with different types of people</li> <li>• Do nice things for people</li> <li>• Interact positively with classmates</li> <li>• Encourage others</li> <li>• Compliment or congratulate others</li> <li>• Show appreciation for others</li> </ul>
(4) Citizenship	
<i>Essential Knowledge:</i> The student understands how the character trait of citizenship impacts personal relationships.	
<i>Essential Skills</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
<p>(A) discuss the roles and responsibilities of citizens</p> <p>(B) explain how one's personal actions can impact the perception of others</p> <p>(C) describe how justice, fairness, and freedom are related</p> <p>(D) identify and practice a variety of conflict-resolution skills and strategies</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make positive contributions to their class, school, or community</li> <li>• Make a positive difference in the world</li> <li>• Do nice things for people</li> <li>• Make others feel welcome or included</li> <li>• Accept responsibility for their actions</li> <li>• Do the right thing in a difficult situation</li> <li>• Agree to and follow expectations for their behavior</li> <li>• Resolve conflicts positively</li> <li>• Listen to others</li> <li>• Respect a person's right to have a different opinion</li> <li>• Compromise for the good of the group</li> <li>• Cooperate with others to solve a problem</li> </ul>

<b>Grade 9 through Grade 12</b>	
(1) Trustworthiness <i>Essential Knowledge:</i> The student understands how trustworthiness is viewed in society, politics, and the local and global community.	
<i>Essential Skills</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
<p>(A) examine how the power to make decisions relates to personal actions</p> <p>(B) analyze how the decisions and actions of leaders in society, politics, and the local and global community demonstrate integrity</p> <p>(C) examine the legal and social consequences of unethical behavior</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take action to solve problems</li> <li>• Set goals for themselves</li> <li>• Do the right thing in a difficult situation</li> <li>• Update their thinking as they learn more about something</li> <li>• Ask for advice when needed</li> <li>• Gather information before making an important decision</li> <li>• Accept responsibility for their actions</li> <li>• Agree to and follow expectations for their behavior</li> <li>• Express high expectations for themselves</li> <li>• Make a positive difference in the world</li> </ul>
(2) Responsibility <i>Essential Knowledge:</i> The student understands how leaders demonstrate responsibility in relationships, families, societies, politics, and the global community.	
<i>Essential Skills</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
<p>(A) identify and describe personal role models who demonstrate what it means to be accountable for words and actions</p> <p>(B) identify and discuss real-world examples of taking personal responsibility for one's words and actions</p> <p>(C) identify and evaluate strategies for practicing self-control in a variety of situations</p> <p>(D) define perseverance and identify strategies for demonstrating perseverance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept responsibility for their actions</li> <li>• Prepare for school, activities, or upcoming events</li> <li>• Make positive contributions to their class, school, or community</li> <li>• Do the right thing in a difficult situation</li> <li>• Agree to and follow expectations for their behavior</li> <li>• Stay calm when faced with a challenge</li> <li>• Think before they acted</li> <li>• Calm down when they're upset</li> <li>• Persist to achieve a goal</li> <li>• Motivate themselves when they don't want to do something</li> <li>• Keep trying when unsuccessful</li> <li>• View negative outcomes as a learning opportunity</li> <li>• Believe they can achieve their goals</li> <li>• Expect that they will be successful</li> <li>• Believe they can overcome setbacks</li> </ul>

(3) Caring	
<i>Essential Knowledge:</i> The student understands how characteristics of caring influence society and impact the global community.	
<i>Essential Skills</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
<p>(A) evaluate one's personal attitudes and mindsets about self and others</p> <p>(B) discuss how feelings, decision making, and personal behaviors impact relationships within society</p> <p>(C) identify strategies for how a person can show empathy through one's actions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show a willingness to examine their beliefs and opinions</li> <li>• Demonstrate openness to new situations, experiences, and people</li> <li>• Believe working with others leads to greater success</li> <li>• Respect a person's right to have a different perspective</li> <li>• Update their thinking as they learn more about something</li> <li>• Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways</li> <li>• Compromise for the good of the group</li> <li>• Make others feel welcome or included</li> <li>• Get along well with different types of people</li> <li>• Do nice things for people</li> <li>• Interact positively with classmates</li> <li>• Encourage others</li> <li>• Compliment or congratulate others</li> <li>• Show appreciation for others</li> </ul>
(4) Citizenship	
<i>Essential Knowledge:</i> The student understands how character traits of citizenship influence our personal view of society and the local and global community.	
<i>Essential Skills</i>	<i>DESSA Items</i>
<p>(A) explain the impact of personal actions on the family, school, and local and global community</p> <p>(B) practice the roles and responsibilities of citizenship in a variety of settings</p> <p>(C) apply conflict resolutions skills</p> <p>(D) participate in constructive dialogues with those of differing viewpoints</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make positive contributions to their class, school, or community</li> <li>• Make a positive difference in the world</li> <li>• Do nice things for people</li> <li>• Make others feel welcome or included</li> <li>• Accept responsibility for their actions</li> <li>• Do the right thing in a difficult situation</li> <li>• Agree to and follow expectations for their behavior</li> <li>• Resolve conflicts positively</li> <li>• Listen to others</li> <li>• Respect a person's right to have a different opinion</li> <li>• Compromise for the good of the group</li> <li>• Cooperate with others to solve a problem</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).