

CharacterStrong's PurposeFull People and DESSA Crosswalk

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CharacterStrong's [PurposeFull People Scope and Sequence](#), updated in 2024, offers lessons and activities to teach and integrate social skills, emotional regulation skills, and character development for Pre-K to 5th grade.

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 CharacterStrong's PurposeFull People Scope and Sequence and DESSA assessment items across six competencies. It demonstrates how the DESSA assessments can be used by districts and schools to help students develop their character and support life-readiness.

Be Kind: Social Skills	
Skill	DESSA Items
Pre-K/Kinder	
Listening: Understand the importance of listening and practice Strong Listening. • Our eyes are ready • Our ears are listening • Our brains are focused • Our hearts are caring	• Stay focused despite a distraction (SM) • Listen to others (RS)
1 st Grade	
Friendship: The ability to make and keep friends. Skills: • Understanding how my actions impact others • Communicating with Kindness	• Interact positively with classmates (RS) • Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways (SO)
2 nd Grade	
Understanding Conflict Resolution: Identify a conflict and work towards solving it. Strategies: • Is the conflict big or small? • Name your emotion • Talk it out, move it out, breathe it out	• Describe the emotion they were feeling (SA) • Resolve conflicts positively (RS)
3 rd Grade	
Perspective-Taking: To consider a situation from another person's point of view. Skills: • Work to understand others' thoughts & feelings • Consider how to respond after understanding other people's point of view	• Respect a person's right to have a different perspective (SO) • Respond to others' feelings in kind and safe ways (SO) • Recognize others' emotions (SO)
4 th Grade	
Practicing Conflict Resolution: The ability to find peaceful solutions. Skills: • Identify and determine size of problem • Communicate emotion • Make a choice to resolve the conflict	• Describe the emotion they were feeling (SA) • Explain what caused their emotions (SA) • Cooperate with others to solve a problem (RS) • Resolve conflicts positively (RS)
5 th Grade	
Leadership: The ability to positively influence and support others. Skills: • Positively influence others • Role model what it looks like to be a positive member of the class or school.	• Contribute to group or team goals (SM) • Contribute to creating a positive learning environment (SO) • Encourage others (RS)

Be Strong: Executive Functioning	
Skill	DESSA Items
Pre-K/Kinder	
Following Directions: The ability to follow what an adult is telling you to do and practice following a 3-step instruction model: - Pay attention - Ask questions for understanding - Follow directions the first time	- Stay focused despite a distraction (<i>SM</i>) - Ask questions when they did not understand something (<i>SA</i>) - Work carefully on projects or schoolwork (<i>SM</i>)
1 st Grade	
Focusing: Maintain attention and effort until a task is complete. Strategies: - Strong Listening - Ignoring distractions - Thought awareness	- Listen to others (<i>RS</i>) - Stay focused despite a distraction (<i>SM</i>) - Think before they acted (<i>SM</i>) - Persist to achieve a goal (<i>SM</i>)
2 nd Grade	
Engagement: Being an active participant in school. Skills: - Leading, contributing, & collaborating in groups - School and community involvement - Building positive relationships	- Contribute to group or team goals (<i>SM</i>) - Contribute to creating a positive learning environment (<i>SO</i>) - Cooperate with others to solve a problem (<i>RS</i>)
3 rd Grade	
Flexible Thinking: The ability to adapt to new situations and challenges. Skills: - Finding multiple solutions to problems - Handling unplanned changes in schedules or situations	- Adapt well to new situations (<i>SM</i>) - Show a willingness to update their thinking (<i>RDM</i>) - Demonstrate openness to new situations, experiences, and people (<i>RDM</i>)
4 th Grade	
Organization: Keeping track of time, tasks, and things (using the 3T's model-Time, Tasks, Things). Skills: - Time management (prioritize & plan) - Organizing materials	- Prepare for school, activities, or upcoming events (<i>RDM</i>) - Work carefully on projects or schoolwork (<i>SM</i>)
5 th Grade	
Goal Setting: Setting an important target that you can work towards. Skills: - Target - Set a goal and visualize the result - Obstacles - Anticipate and plan for them - Plan - Plan at least 3 action steps	- Believe they can achieve their goals (<i>OT</i>) - Persist to achieve a goal (<i>SM</i>) - Prepare for school, activities, or upcoming events (<i>RDM</i>) - Gather information before making an important decisions (<i>RDM</i>)

Be Well: Emotion Regulation	
Skill	DESSA Items
Pre-K/Kinder	
Identifying Emotions: The ability to notice & name my own emotions. Focus skills: Name and use 4 emotion words	Describe the emotion they were feeling (SA)
1 st Grade	
Emotion Awareness: Understand what I feel and how it impacts myself or others. Skills: - Identify body cues and physical feelings - Use emotion vocabulary correctly	- Describe the emotion they were feeling (SA) - Explain what caused their emotions (SA)
2 nd Grade	
Emotion Regulation: The ability to manage and respond to situations that trigger emotions. Strategies: - Breathe It Out - Move It Out - Talk It Out	- Stay calm when faced with a challenge (SM) - Think before they acted (SM)
3 rd Grade	
Emotion Advocacy: To appropriately share how I feel and ask for what I need. Skills: - I-Statements: I feel ____ when ____ and I would like ____. - Use emotion vocabulary correctly	- Describe the emotion they were feeling (SA) - Explain what caused their emotions (SA)
4 th Grade	
Positive Self-Talk: Turn unhelpful thoughts into more helpful thoughts. Skills: - Notice the unhelpful thoughts in response to a situation - Turn them into more helpful thoughts	- Focus on the positive aspects of a situation (OT) - Accept that making mistakes is part of learning (OT) - View negative outcomes as a learning opportunity (OT) - Speak positively about their future potential (OT)
5 th Grade	
Stress Management: Learn and use strategies for coping with stress. Skills: - Notice the body's reaction to feeling stress - Create plans and practice strategies to regulate stress and/or prevent stress	- Stay calm when faced with a challenge (SM) - Explain what caused their emotions (SA)



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.