Harmony Curriculum and DESSA Crosswalk

December 2025

The [Harmony Curriculum](#) is a research-based social and emotional learning program for Pre-K through Grade 6 that helps children build healthy relationships and develop essential communication and problem-solving skills. The program promotes inclusive classroom communities and supports whole-child development through everyday practices and lessons that encourage collaboration, empathy, and respect. Harmony provides educators with tools and resources to integrate relationship-building activities, discussions, and self-reflection into daily routines, creating a positive and supportive learning environment.

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, parents, or guardians. These nationally standardized, norm-referenced, strength-based behavior rating scales assess the positive skills, behaviors, and mindsets that support students' thriving.

The six competencies measured by the DESSA, their abbreviations, and their definitions are:

- 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 Harmony Curriculum and DESSA assessment items across the six competencies. It demonstrates how districts and schools can use DESSA assessments to integrate assessment data with Harmony's evidence-based strategies to foster healthy relationships, communication, problem-solving, and inclusive classroom communities**.**

Pre-K & K						
Unit 1: Diversity & Inclusion						
This unit promotes a community environment in the classroom as children learn to recognize and appreciate one another's similarities and differences.						
Lesson Name and Description	**SA**	**SM**	**SO**	**RS**	**RDM**	**OT**
1.1 Getting to Know One Another Students discuss the value of getting to know classmates and play a game in which they share information about themselves with their peers.	X		X	X		X
1.2 Discovering Commonalities Students discuss how talking and spending time with their peers can help them find things in common with one another and in particular, what they have in common with a buddy.	X		X	X		X
1.3 Learning from Diversity Students discuss how everyone is different in some way, which makes each person unique and interesting, and then work with a buddy to create a collage that reflects their differences.	X		X	X		X
1.4 Building Community Students discuss what it means to belong to a community and then work together to create a visual poster or picture of their classroom community.			X	X	X	
Unit 2: Empathy & Critical Thinking						
Children develop empathy (the ability to identify with and understand another person's emotions), reduce stereotyped thinking, and learn critical thinking skills.						
Lesson Name and Description	**SA**	**SM**	**SO**	**RS**	**RDM**	**OT**
2.1 Recognizing Feelings Children learn to identify and demonstrate the physical signs of different emotions, discuss how various emotions look, sound, and feel and practice demonstrating and identifying different emotions.	X		X			
2.2 Predicting Feelings Students learn how to think ahead and predict emotions that could result from a given situation and practice predicting how a peer feels in different situations.			X			
2.3 Explaining Feelings Students learn to think back to what happened first or look for situational cues to understand reasons for someone's feelings. They brainstorm reasons why people have different feelings.			X			
2.4 Having Empathy Students learn empathy and brainstorm ways to show empathy and caring to someone in different situations.			X	X		
2.7 Understanding that People Can Change Students learn the potential for growth, learning, and change in themselves and others, and identify how they have changed.	X	X				X

Pre-K & K						
Unit 3: Communication Healthy and unhealthy communication patterns are explored, and children practice effective ways of engaging with others.						
Lesson Name and Description	**SA**	**SM**	**SO**	**RS**	**RDM**	**OT**
3.1 Listening to Others Students discuss the importance of being thoughtful and careful listeners and practice how to use whole-body listening skills (eye looking, ears listening, mouth quiet, body still) during a game.		X				
3.2 Responding to Others Students discuss the importance of reciprocal communication and practice "talking back and forth" with a peer.		X		X		
3.3 Being Assertive Students discuss the importance of speaking up in a respectful way and practice how to Speak Up and Speak Kindly.			X	X	X	X
Unit 4: Problem Solving Children learn constructive approaches to resolving conflict, focusing on conflict-resolution steps that facilitate healthy relationship patterns.						
Lesson Name and Description	**SA**	**SM**	**SO**	**RS**	**RDM**	**OT**
4.1 Identifying Problems Students discuss the first two steps in problem-solving (Stop, Talk), practice recognizing different perspectives, and state the problems described in peer scenarios.	X		X	X	X	
4.2 Solving Problems Students discuss the last two steps in problem-solving (Think, Try), practice generating positive solutions to presented scenarios, and hone their problem-solving skills with a peer during a collaborative project.			X		X	
4.3 Cooperating Students discuss teamwork skills and pair up on a collaborative construction activity.			X	X		
4.4 Being Considerate Students discuss being mindful of others and practice strategies for self-regulation during a dance.		X	X	X		

Pre-K & K						
Unit 5: Peer Relationships Children practice positive social skills and learn the qualities that are important to friendship, the consequences of bullying, and how to provide peers with support.						
Lesson Name and Description	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
5.1 Caring for Others Students discuss the importance of being caring toward others and practice giving compliments and doing something kind for a peer.	X		X	X		
5.2 Being Inclusive Students discuss the importance of making sure everyone feels welcome and practice involving others in a musical game.	X		X	X		
5.3 Making Amends and Forgiving Students discuss the elements of making amends and then generate ways to do so in peer conflict scenarios.			X		X	
5.4 Reflecting and Connecting Students discuss feelings and memories of the school year and create a display of their favorite class recollections.	X					X

Grades 1 & 2						
Unit 1: Diversity & Inclusion This unit promotes a community environment in the classroom as children learn to recognize and appreciate one another's similarities and differences.						
Lesson Name and Description	**SA**	**SM**	**SO**	**RS**	**RDM**	**OT**
1.1 Getting to Know One Another Students discuss the value of getting to know classmates, and play a game in which they share information about themselves with their peers.	X		X	X		X
1.2 Discovering Commonalities Students discuss how talking and spending time with their peers can help them find commonalities. This gives students an opportunity to find what they have in common with a buddy.	X		X	X		X
1.3 Learning from Diversity Students discuss how everyone is different and unique, how diversity allows everyone to learn with and from one another, and have an opportunity to share things about themselves with their peers.	X		X	X		X
1.4 Building Community Students discuss what it means to belong to a community and then work together to create a visual poster or picture of their classroom community.			X	X	X	
Unit 2: Empathy & Critical Thinking Children develop empathy (the ability to identify with and understand another person's emotions), reduce stereotyped thinking, and learn critical thinking skills.						
Lesson Name and Description	**SA**	**SM**	**SO**	**RS**	**RDM**	**OT**
2.1 Recognizing Feelings Students discuss how various emotions look, sound, and feel and then illustrate and discuss the internal and external physical cues of different emotions.	X		X			
2.2 Predicting and Explaining Feelings Students discuss how to think ahead and predict someone's feelings, how to think back or look for clues to explain someone's feelings, and practice predicting feelings form situations while playing a game.			X			
2.3 Relating Thoughts, Feelings, and Behaviors Students discuss the relations among thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, and practice creating their own Think-Feel-Do chains for a given situation.	X			X		
2.4 Having Empathy Students discuss what it means to have empathy for someone, and brainstorm ways to show empathy and caring to someone in different situations.			X	X		
2.7 Understanding that People Can Change Students discuss the potential for growth, learning, and change in each person, and practice turning entity (fixed) thinking into incremental (change) thinking.		X				X

Grades 1 & 2						
Unit 3: Communication Healthy and unhealthy communication patterns are explored, and children practice effective ways of engaging with others.						
Lesson Name and Description	**SA**	**SM**	**SO**	**RS**	**RDM**	**OT**
3.1 Listening and Responding to Others Students discuss effective and ineffective communication behaviors and practice listening, responding, and taking turns while talking with a peer.		X	X	X		
3.2 Engaging in Conversation Students discuss behaviors that are "conversation makers" or "conversation breakers" and participate in a whole-group conversation game.			X	X		
3.3 Being Assertive Students discuss situations in which it is important to speak up and practice assertiveness by using the Speak Up, Speak Kindly approach.			X	X		X
Unit 4: Problem Solving Children learn constructive approaches to resolving conflict, focusing on conflict-resolution steps that facilitate healthy relationship patterns.						
Lesson Name and Description	**SA**	**SM**	**SO**	**RS**	**RDM**	**OT**
4.1 Identifying Problems Students discuss the first two steps in problem-solving (Stop, Talk), practice recognizing different perspectives, and state the problems described in peer scenarios.	X		X	X	X	
4.2 Solving Problems Students discuss the last two steps in problem-solving (Think, Try), practice generating positive solutions to problems presented in scenarios, and engage in problem-solving with a peer during a collaborative project.			X		X	
4.3 Cooperating Students discuss teamwork skills and work together on a collaborative activity.			X	X		
4.4 Recognizing How Behaviors Affect Other Students discuss how their behaviors affect others and learn how to compromise in order to be considerate and far to others.		X	X			

Grades 1 & 2						
Unit 5: Peer Relationships Children practice positive social skills and learn the qualities that are important to friendship, the consequences of bullying, and how to provide peers with support.						
Lesson Name and Description	**SA**	**SM**	**SO**	**RS**	**RDM**	**OT**
5.1 Caring for Others Students discuss the importance of being caring toward others, practice doing something kind, and give compliments to peers.			X			
5.2 Being Inclusive Students discuss the importance of making sure that everyone feels welcomed and included, consider the causes and consequences of exclusionary behaviors, and brainstorm ways to help others.			X	X		
5.3 Making Amends and Forgiving Students discuss the importance of being honest and taking responsibility for one's mistakes, and practice describing and demonstrating ways to do so in peer-conflict scenarios.	X	X	X		X	
5.4 Reflecting and Connecting Students discuss feelings and memories at the end of the school year and create a yearbook of their favorite class memories.	X					X

Grade 3						
Unit 1: Diversity & Inclusion This unit promotes a community environment in the classroom as children learn to recognize and appreciate one another's similarities and differences.						
Lesson Name and Description	**SA**	**SM**	**SO**	**RS**	**RDM**	**OT**
1.1 Who We Are Students are provided with the opportunity to get to know one another by sharing items of importance with their classmates.	X		X	X		
1.2 The Things We Have in Common Students play the Commonalities game to identify similarities they have with peers in the classroom.	X		X	X		X
1.3 Learn Something New Students learn to value differences by teaching new skills and learning from one another.	X		X	X		
1.4 Classroom Identity Students develop a common classroom identity by working together to create a classroom name and motto.			X	X		
Unit 2: Empathy & Critical Thinking Children develop empathy (the ability to identify with and understand another person's emotions), reduce stereotyped thinking, and learn critical thinking skills.						
Lesson Name and Description	**SA**	**SM**	**SO**	**RS**	**RDM**	**OT**
2.1 Thought Connections Students participate in a game to illustrate the connections among their thoughts, feelings, and actions.	X					X
2.2 Feelings Detectives Students participate in empathy-related exercises to practice recognizing feelings in other people and to illustrate that people can have different feelings when faced with the same situation.			X	X		
2.3 Think Like a Caterpillar Students participate in exercises to promote the perspective that personalities and abilities can change and improve (a Caterpillar Mindset).	X		X			X
2.4 Pop That Stereotype Students participate in exercises to illustrate the problems associated with stereotyped thinking and to practice thinking in non-stereotyped ways.	X	X	X		X	

Grade 3						
Unit 3: Communication Healthy and unhealthy communication patterns are explored, and children practice effective ways of engaging with others.						
Lesson Name and Description	**SA**	**SM**	**SO**	**RS**	**RDM**	**OT**
3.1 Communication Blooper or Booster Students learn communication roadblocks Communication Bloopers) and strategies (Communication Boosters) by identifying them in a role-play game.	X		X	X		
3.2 Communication Boosters: Listening and Supporting Students learn about using Boosters when communicating with others, and they have an opportunity to practice these strategies with a partner.	X		X	X		
3.3 Collaboration in Action Students practice using Communication Boosters and avoiding Communication Bloopers in a cooperative learning group activity.	X		X			
Unit 4: Problem Solving Children learn constructive approaches to resolving conflict, focusing on conflict-resolution steps that facilitate healthy relationship patterns.						
Lesson Name and Description	**SA**	**SM**	**SO**	**RS**	**RDM**	**OT**
4.1 The Animals of Conflict Students identify common conflicts that occur at school and discuss different approaches to resolving them.			X	X		
4.2 Stop, Think, and Cool Off! Students practice monitoring and rating their feelings in conflict situation and learn to use Calm Breathing as a tool to regulate their emotions.	X	X			X	
4.3 Talk It Out and Clear It Up Students learn a framework for how to effectively communicate their feelings and thoughts during conflict situations.	X	X	X	X	X	
4.4 Let's Step It Up Students practice resolving conflict using the Step It Up approach by engaging in role-play with a partner.	X	X	X	X	X	

Grade 3						
Unit 5: Peer Relationships Children practice positive social skills and learn the qualities that are important to friendship, the consequences of bullying, and how to provide peers with support.						
Lesson Name and Description	**SA**	**SM**	**SO**	**RS**	**RDM**	**OT**
5.1 What Makes a Friend? Students develop an awareness of qualities in a friend that are valued by everyone.	X		X	X		
5.2 Friendship Pledge Students meet in groups to discuss and compare important friendship qualities. Students take a Friendship Pledge, committing to treating friends according to their chosen key friendship qualities.	X		X	X		
5.3 I've Got Your Back Students identify specific ways they can provide support to each other and practice engaging in these behaviors during a competition.			X	X		
5.4 Battle the Bullies Students learn about the roles of the bully, the target, and the bystander in bullying incidents. Through a play-writing and role-play exercise, students identify and practice strategies for responding to bullying behavior.			X	X		

Grade 4						
Unit 1: Diversity & Inclusion This unit promotes a community environment in the classroom as children learn to recognize and appreciate one another's similarities and differences.						
Lesson Name and Description	**SA**	**SM**	**SO**	**RS**	**RDM**	**OT**
1.1 Who We Are Students are provided with the opportunity to get to know one another by sharing items of importance with their classmates.	X		X	X		
1.2 The Things We Have in Common Students play the Commonalities game to identify similarities they have with peers in the classroom.	X		X	X		X
1.3 Learn Something New Students learn to value differences by teaching new skills and learning from one another.	X		X	X		
1.4 Classroom identity Students develop a common classroom identity by working together to create a classroom name and motto.			X	X		
Unit 2: Empathy & Critical Thinking Children develop empathy (the ability to identify with and understand another person's emotions), reduce stereotyped thinking, and learn critical thinking skills.						
Lesson Name and Description	**SA**	**SM**	**SO**	**RS**	**RDM**	**OT**
2.1 Pop That Thought Bubble! Students participate in exercises to illustrate the connections among their thoughts, feelings, and actions, and they practice thinking in positive and inclusive ways.	X				X	
2.2 Learning from Empathy Students play the Empathy Game to practice recognizing one another's feelings and perspectives, and responding in understanding ways.	X		X			
2.3 Caterpillar Thoughts Students participate in exercises to promote the perspective that personalities and abilities can change and improve (a Caterpillar Mindset).	X		X			
2.4 Stereotype Detective Students participate in exercises to identify stereotypes, observe stereotyped messages in the environment, and practice thinking in non-stereotyped ways.	X		X		X	

Grade 4						
Unit 3: Communication Healthy and unhealthy communication patterns are explored, and children practice effective ways of engaging with others.						
Lesson Name and Description	**SA**	**SM**	**SO**	**RS**	**RDM**	**OT**
3.1 Name That Communication Blooper! Students learn communication roadblocks (Communication Bloopers) by identifying them in a role-play game.	X		X	X		
3.2 The Communicator Students participate in a game to illustrate the connections among their thoughts, feelings, and actions.	X		X	X		
3.3 Communication in the Environment Students identify Communication Bloopers and Boosters in their environment.	X		X	X		
3.4 Collaboration in Action Students practice suing Communication Boosters and avoiding Communication Bloopers in a cooperative learning activity.	X		X	X		
Unit 4: Problem Solving Children learn constructive approaches to resolving conflict, focusing on conflict-resolution steps that facilitate healthy relationship patterns.						
Lesson Name and Description	**SA**	**SM**	**SO**	**RS**	**RDM**	**OT**
4.1 Watch and Learn Students identify different conflict styles and evaluate the costs and benefits associated with each style.	X		X	X		
4.2 Stop, Think, and Cool Off! Students practice monitoring and rating their feelings in conflict situations, then practice different relaxation strategies to assist them in calming their bodies.	X	X				
4.3 Talk It Out and Clear It Up Students learn a framework for how to effectively communicate their feelings and thoughts during conflict situations.	X	X	X	X		
4.4 Let's Step It Up Students practice resolving conflicts using the Step It Up approach by engaging in role-play with a partner.	X	X	X	X		

Grade 4						
 Children practice positive social skills and learn the qualities that are important to friendship, the consequences of bullying, and how to provide peers with support.						
Lesson Name and Description	**SA**	**SM**	**SO**	**RS**	**RDM**	**OT**
5.1 What Makes a Friend? Students develop an awareness of qualities in a friend that are valued by their peers and themselves.	X		X	X		
5.2 Clique Busters Students engage in exercises that illustrate how social cliques can be exclusive and harmful. Students develop and commit to using strategies to create a socially inclusive environment in their classroom and school.			X	X		
5.3 I've Got Your Back Students identify specific ways they can provide support to each other and practice engaging in these behaviors in a classroom or grade-wide competition.			X	X		
5.4 Battle of the Bullies Students learn about the roles of the bully, the target, and the bystander in bullying incidents. Through a play-writing and role-playing exercise, students identify and practice strategies for responding to bullying.	X		X	X		

Grades 5 & 6

Unit 1: Diversity & Inclusion

This unit promotes a community environment in the classroom as children learn to recognize and appreciate one another's similarities and differences.

Lesson Name and Description	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
1.1 Who We Are Students are provided with the opportunity to get to know one another by sharing items of importance with their classmates.	X		X	X		
1.2 The Things We Have in Common Students play the Commonalities game to identify similarities they have with peers in the classroom.	X		X	X		X
1.3 Learn Something New Students learn to value differences by teaching new skills and learning from one another.	X		X	X		
1.4 Classroom Identity Students develop a common classroom identity by working together to create a classroom name and motto.			X	X		

Unit 2: Empathy & Critical Thinking

Children develop empathy (the ability to identify with and understand another person's emotions), reduce stereotyped thinking, and learn critical thinking skills.

Lesson Name and Description	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
2.1 Thought Bubbles Students participate in exercises to illustrate the connection between their thoughts, feelings and actions, and they practice thinking in positive and inclusive ways.	X		X		X	
2.2 Walking in Someone Else's Shoes (WISES) On Day 1, students learn how to identify emotional states, understand different perspectives, and respond emotionally to others. On Day 2, students play the WISES Game to practice these skills.	X		X	X		
2.3 To Change Like a Caterpillar Students play the To Change Like a Caterpillar Game, which promotes the perspective that personalities and abilities can change and improve (a Caterpillar mindset).	X		X			
2.4 Thinking Outside the Box Students participate in exercises to illustrate the problems associated with stereotypes, and work together to develop strategies to prevent stereotyping.	X		X			

Grades 5 & 6						

Unit 3: Communication

Healthy and unhealthy communication patterns are explored, and children practice effective ways of engaging with others.

Lesson Name and Description	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
3.1 Name That Communication Blooper! Students learn about potential problems, or "Bloopers," that occur when communicating with others.			X	X		
3.2 The Communicator Students identify effective strategies, or "Boosters," to use when communicating with others.			X	X		
3.3 Communication in the Media Students identify Communication Bloopers and Boosters in the media.			X			

Unit 4: Problem Solving

Children learn constructive approaches to resolving conflict, focusing on conflict-resolution steps that facilitate healthy relationship patterns.

Lesson Name and Description	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
4.1 The Animals of Conflict Students identify common conflicts that occur at school and discuss different approaches to resolving these conflicts.			X	X		
4.2 Name That Conflict Style Students recognize their own conflict style and practice identifying the consequences associated with each.	X		X	X		
4.3 Step It Up Students practice a step-by-step approach to reinforce their conflict resolution skills.			X	X		
4.4 Practice Makes Perfect On Day 1, students select a conflict scenario and craft a script that resolve it using the Step It Up approach. On Day 2, they hone their script, rehearse and role-play their resolution for the class.	X		X	X		

Unit 5: Peer Relationships

Children practice positive social skills and learn the qualities that are important to friendship, the consequences of bullying, and how to provide peers with support.

Lesson Name and Description	SA	SM	SO	RS	RDM	OT
5.1 What Makes a Friend? Students develop an awareness of qualities in a friend that are valued by their peers and themselves.	X		X	X		
5.2 I've Got Your Back Students identify existing peer support in their classroom, and practice providing support in a classroom or grade-wide competition.			X	X		
5.3 Talk It Out Students discuss the value of creating friendships with diverse peers, and develop strategies to maximize the benefits of these friendships.			X	X		
5.4 Battle the Bullies Students develop awareness of the costs associated with bullying and identify strategies for coping with bullying. Students learn about the roles of the bully, the target, and the bystander in bullying incidents.	X		X	X		

DESSA

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.