

A photograph of a graduation ceremony with students in caps and gowns. The image is semi-transparent and serves as a background for the text.

Lowell Public Schools
Social Emotional Learning:
Addressing our Students SEL Needs





SY20/21 SEL Initiatives

Benefits of Social and Emotional Learning

Good science links Social & Emotional Learning to the following:

STUDENT GAINS

- Social-emotional skills
- Improved attitudes about self, others, and school
- Positive classroom behavior
- 11 percentile-point gain on standardized achievement tests

- Conduct problems
- Aggressive behavior
- Emotional distress

REDUCED RISKS FOR FAILURE

- *SEL Task Force*
- *DESSA Assessment Tool*
- *Enhanced Social Emotional Learning Curriculum*
- *Restorative Justice Practices*

Source: Durlak, J.A., Weisberg, R.P., Dymnicki, A.B., Taylor, R.D., and Schellinger, K. (2011). The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based





Social Emotional Task Force 2020-2021

- Many members of the TaskForce were involved in the Return to School cohort over the summer months to assist with determining recommendations for SY20/21 SEL needs.
- The SEL Task Force focus is to examine feasible remote and hybrid SEL curriculum options and implementation for K-12.
- Task Force members divided into 3 cohorts: Elementary, Middle and High School/District.
- 10 member team was accepted to three year SEL/Mental Health Academy to provide PD and create district roadmap
- Each cohort representative will provide communication amongst assigned schools in order to create better communication and consistency throughout the entire district.



The DESSA Comprehensive System: A New Tool to Assess Social-Emotional Strengths & Resilience

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What is the DESSA SEL Assessment?

The Devereux Students Strengths Assessment (DESSA), originally developed by the Devereux Center for Resilient Children, is the flagship social emotional learning assessment of Aperture Education's DESSA System. It is a standardized, strength-based behavior rating scale completed in 5 to 8 minutes and used by educators and parents to measure the social-emotional competence for children in grades K-8 (the DESSA-High School Edition is available for students grades 9-12).

Grounded in resilience theory and directly aligned to the CASEL framework, the DESSA is a user-friendly, practical social emotional learning assessment that meets the highest professional standards. The DESSA is commonly used to inform the delivery of SEL at tier 1 or tier 2 as well as measuring the results of that delivery.



Identifying Student Strengths Using DESSA's 8 Social & Emotional Competencies



DESSA Scale Structure

- Social Emotional Composite
- Eight Scales
 - Self Awareness
 - Self-Management
 - Social-Awareness
 - Relationship Skills
 - Goal-Directed Behavior
 - Personal Responsibility
 - Decision Making
 - Optimistic Thinking



Why the DESSA Social Emotional Learning Assessment Tool?

Research-Based: The DESSA is both nationally standardized and norm-referenced, with a standardization sample of n=2494. In addition, it exceeds the recommended standard for rater reliability. For more specific information, visit our DESSA 101 page.

Progress Monitoring: In addition to the full, 72-item DESSA and 43-item DESSA-HSE, the DESSA-mini (a shorter, 8-item social emotional learning assessment) can be used to monitor your students' social and emotional development throughout the school year, providing actionable data to steer quality SEL intervention.

CASEL Aligned: Aperture Education's 8 social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies are directly aligned to the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) highly-regarded five SEL competency framework.

Why Choose the DESSA contd:

DESSA[™] Social-Emotional Strengths Assessment K-8 Grade

DESSA-mini

- Provides a snapshot of K-8th grade students' social emotional competence
- Four equivalent 8-item forms
 - Completed in 1 minute by teachers
 - Yields one score – Social-Emotional Total Score
- The DESSA-mini allows for:
 - Universal screening
 - Determination of need for instruction
 - Repeated evaluation of progress

DESSA[™] Social-Emotional Strengths Assessment High School Edition 9-12 Grade

DESSA-HSE mini

- Provides a snapshot of 9th-12th grade students' social emotional competence
- Four equivalent 8-item forms
 - Completed in 1 minute by teachers
 - Yields one score – Social-Emotional Total Score
- The DESSA-mini allows for:
 - Universal screening
 - Determination of need for instruction
 - Repeated evaluation of progress

Multi-lingual: The DESSA is provided in both English and Spanish, serving all raters – including families – who may not speak English as a first language.

Personalized Use: Along with access to the DESSA, DESSA-HSE, and DESSA-mini, users also have access to the full suite of growth strategies and foundational practices, as well as 24/7 system support and a team of dedicated personnel. This ensures that each users experience is efficient, yet personalized.

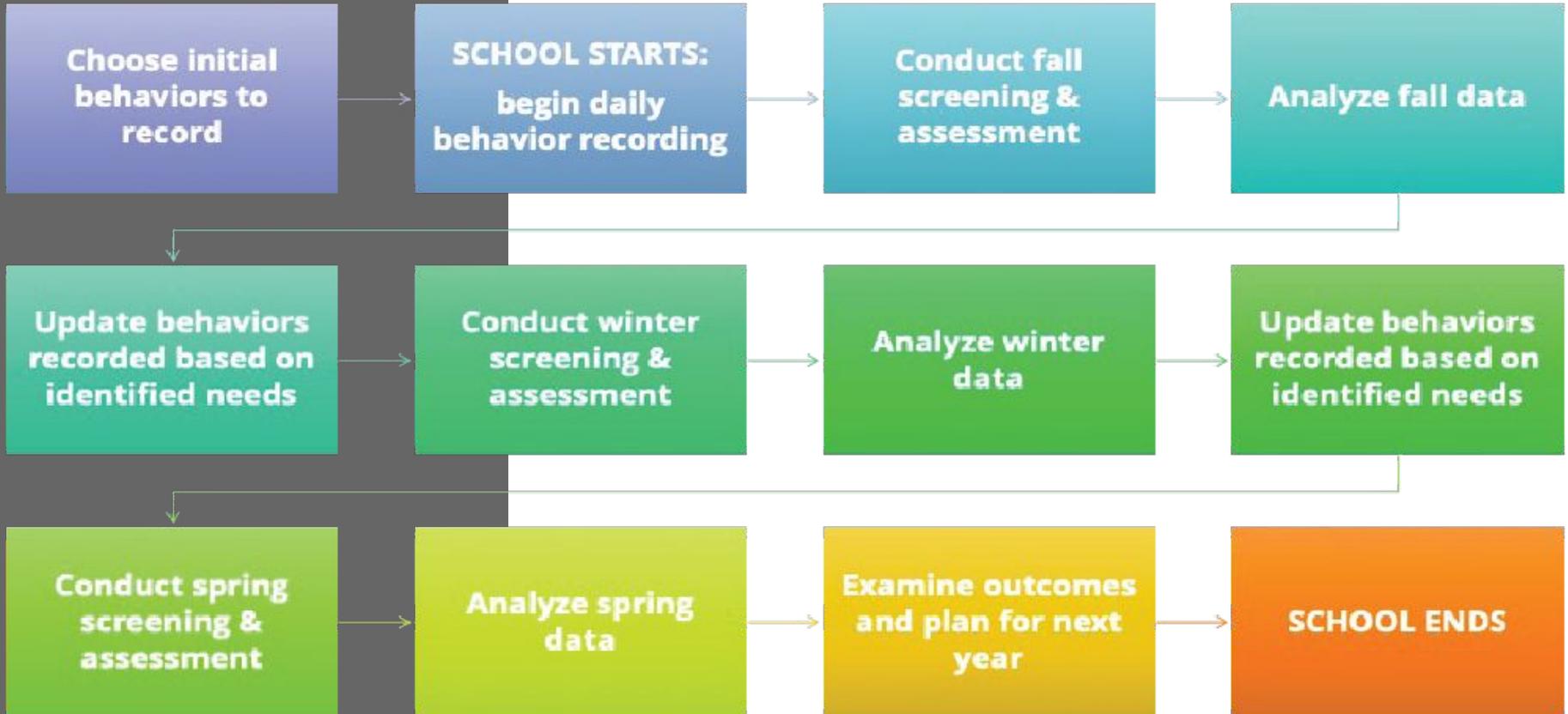
Alignment: The DESSA adheres to CASEL's model, Second Step and other evidence based curriculum.



Steps for District Wide Implementation:

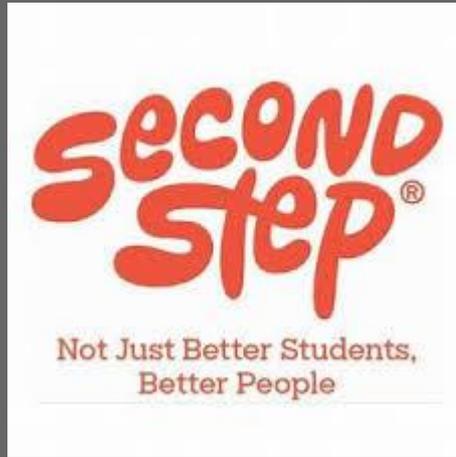
- Building Administration Teams will be trained via 90 minute webinar based by cohort, offered Sept 9th.
- All Teachers will be trained in 40 minute webinar before students return and then again in the winter/spring.
- Classroom teacher will assess students through the DESSA Mini (1 minute per student)
- If student rating is found to be below T-score of 40, teacher then would complete full DESSA assessment (5 minutes per student)
- Multiple staff members as well as parent can also complete.
- Data can be utilized to alert support staff of at risk students, assist with identifying needs for accommodations & additional resources, providing objectives for classroom SEL lessons.

Example of DESSA School Timeline





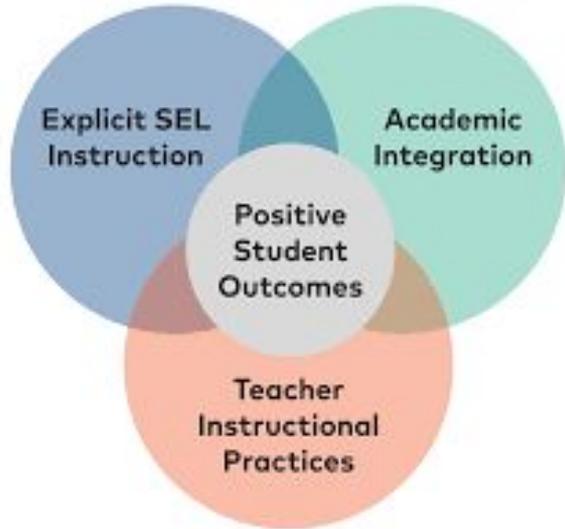
Social Emotional Learning Curriculum Offering throughout the District



- Second Step is a social skills program K-8 rooted in social-emotional learning (SEL) that helps transform schools into supportive, successful learning environments uniquely equipped to encourage children to thrive. It offers curriculum that aim to reduce impulsive and aggressive behaviors while increasing social competence and empathy. It offers content in empathy, emotion management, impulse control, problem solving and anger management and are all aligned with CASEL.
- Second Step recently introduced remote and hybrid offerings for their Middle School package. Many of the LPS middle schools have signed on to not only use this resource but have used this opportunity to build the 25 lessons into the school day upon students return to school whether in person or virtually.

Open Circle

Open Circle Connections



- *Open Circle* provides a unique, evidence-based social and emotional learning program for grades K-5. Open Circle aims to: proactively develop children's skills for recognizing and managing emotions, empathy, positive relationships and problem solving. The consistent teaching and practice of these skills in the curriculum and Open Circle's whole-school approach to social and emotional learning are critical parts of a school's bullying prevention effort.
- Open Circle is currently already being utilized in some schools and with grant funding through the DESE will be expanding throughout the district (20 new teachers will be trained this school year). The Open Circle model can be tailored to be used in virtual classroom setting with teachers and their students.



Restorative Justice Model

“Restorative Justice (RJ) is a theory of justice that focuses on mediation and agreement rather than punishment. Offenders must accept responsibility for harm and make restitution with victims.”

- Restorative Justice Programs and initiatives have been utilized in several ways throughout the district prior to COVID (after school, circles during the school day and after school programs).
- With grant funding opportunities for this school year we are helping the district to grow further initiatives (coaching and staff professional development) under the RJP umbrella to address social injustices as well as transfer RJP offerings to additional schools through partnerships with Suffolk University Center for Restorative Justice.

