



Program Alignment: RULER and DESSA

The Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence and Aperture Education created this program alignment document between RULER and the DESSA. The purpose of this document is to show the ways in which RULER programming for kindergarten through fifth grade relates to the competencies assessed by the DESSA for kindergarten through eighth grade.

RULER is an evidence-based approach to social and emotional learning (SEL) developed at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence. RULER also is an acronym for the five skills of emotional intelligence, including *recognizing* emotions in oneself and others, *understanding* the causes and consequences of emotions, *labeling* emotions with a nuanced vocabulary, *expressing* emotions in accordance with cultural norms and social context, and *regulating* emotions with helpful strategies. RULER supports school communities in understanding the value of emotions, building the skills of emotional intelligence, and creating and maintaining positive climates. RULER for Elementary School programming is designed for students in grades K through 5 and includes routines that embed into classroom activities as well as a curriculum divided into 5 units focused on (1) community, safety, and climate, (2) the RULER skills, (3) self- and social awareness, (4) personal values and emotion regulation, and (5) empathy, perspective taking, and community restoration.

The DESSA is a standardized, norm-referenced behavior rating scale that assesses the social and emotional competencies of students in kindergarten through the eighth grade. It can be completed by parents/guardians, teachers, and staff at out-of-school time or community programs in about 5-8 minutes. The assessment is entirely strength-based, meaning the items are all positive social and emotional behaviors. The DESSA can be used to inform and support the implementation of an SEL program by helping educators and school staff identify students' social and emotional strengths and areas of need. It can also be used to guide SEL strategies and interventions at the individual student, small group, classroom, school, or district level; and can be used to evaluate the impact of SEL programs and support continuous quality improvement efforts to promote optimal SEL outcomes in schools and programs.

The DESSA was developed and is distributed by Aperture Education and is not affiliated with the RULER approach developed at the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence.

DESSA SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL COMPETENCIES

Self-Awareness

Self-Management

Social Awareness

Relationship Skills

Goal-Directed Behavior

Personal Responsibility

Decision Making

Optimistic Thinking

RULER Skill-Building Activities: Staff personal and professional learning, pre-K to 12 classroom content, and family engagement materials include activities to enhance development of the five RULER skills of emotional intelligence.

Recognizing emotions in oneself and others

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Understanding the causes and consequences of emotions

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Labeling emotions with a nuanced vocabulary

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Expressing emotions in accordance with cultural norms and social context

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Regulating emotion with helpful strategies

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RULER Tools: RULER builds a common language and set of strategies for the entire school community. Beginning with a shift in mindset, leaders, educators, students, and families learn why emotions matter and how the skills of emotional intelligence can be cultivated. RULER continues with four foundational tools and teaching of Feeling Words.

The “Emotions Matter” Mindset:

To support a school-wide mindset around the importance of developing emotional intelligence and a positive emotional climate, RULER begins with research and reflections on the impact of emotions on learning, decision making, relationships, and wellbeing.

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RULER Tool #1: The Charter

Designed to build and sustain positive emotional climates, the Charter represents agreed-upon norms for how everyone in a school, classroom, home, or other space want to feel and what needs to happen for those feelings to be consistently present.

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RULER Tool #2: The Mood Meter

By organizing our thinking around feelings into two qualities of emotions: energy and pleasantness, the Mood Meter enhances self- and social awareness and supports the development of a nuanced vocabulary and a strategic repertoire for emotion management.

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RULER Tool #3: The Meta-Moment

With the goal of improving reflective practices and self-management, the Meta-Moment provides a process for identifying and developing one’s “best self” and for shifting from automatic, unhelpful reactions to strategic, effective responses that align with that “best self.”

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RULER Tool #4: The Blueprint

Through a process for reflecting on and resolving interpersonal conflict, the Blueprint promotes perspective taking, builds empathy, develops conflict resolution skills, and provides a means for restoring relationships and communities affected by conflict.

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Feeling Words

Staff development, student learning units, and family engagement content include the introduction of a rich vocabulary of feeling words that empower students and teachers to describe, understand, and manage the full range of human emotions.

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