

Office of School Wellness to support Social Emotional Skills through DESSA

We are excited to let you know that our Elementary and Middle Schools will again be using the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment Comprehensive System (DESSA) for students in grades k-8. Social and Emotional Skills are closely tied to both academic achievement and success in other areas of school and life. Social skills include behaviors like making and keeping friends, showing respect for others, and resolving disagreements in positive ways. Emotional skills include behaviors like being able to recognize one's own and others' emotions, and showing healthy self-control.

The DESSA curriculum focuses on 8 strength based areas: Personal Responsibility, Optimistic Thinking, Goal Directed Behavior, Social Awareness, Decision Making, Relationship Skills, Self-Awareness, and Self-Management. These are skills that are included in the day to day classroom lessons and in the expectations of the schools.

Screenings will be given 2-3 times per year and consist of 8 questions that are completed by the classroom teacher. Sample questions include:

During the past 4 weeks, how often did the child show appreciation of others? Make a suggestion or request in a polite way? Keep trying when unsuccessful? Share with others?

Based on screenings, each student will fall into one of 3 tiers (Strength, Typical, Need), which will help identify students who may benefit from additional small group or individual instruction to strengthen his or her social and emotional skills. If your child would benefit from additional support, you will be notified and asked to provide permission beforehand. A post screening will be completed to assess student growth.

We are fortunate to partner with Plymouth State University, who is supporting this effort through a grant. Because we will share some data with PSU, each child will be given a number code that cannot be tracked back to the child's name. We take the responsibility of protecting personal information very seriously.

Letters will be sent home with all k-8 students prior to beginning the screenings. Parents may "opt out" for their child(ren). We encourage you to learn more about Social Emotional Skills, the DESSA screener and curriculum, and to see the 8 questions by visiting <http://www.apertureed.com/dessa-overview/>.

Please feel free to contact Barbara Slayton at the Office of School Wellness at 934-3108 with any questions or concerns.