



STATE OF CONNECTICUT  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION



**TO:** Superintendents of Schools  
**FROM:** Glen Peterson, Education Division Director  
**DATE:** April 5, 2021  
**SUBJECT:** Devereux Student Strengths Assessment System Information Sessions

Thank you for your ongoing interest and support in strengthening student social-emotional skills. On the fall 2020 social-emotional learning (SEL) statewide scan that the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) conducted, districts expressed a clear need for SEL assessment. In response, the CSDE will make the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) System available to districts at no cost. The DESSA comprehensive assessment system includes the DESSA-mini, the universal screener, and the DESSA, an in-depth assessment. This strength-based assessment suite provides a data-driven approach to SEL, leading directly to strategies and interventions for students and enabling schools to document progress, evaluate outcomes, and continuously improve their SEL programming over time.

**What districts are eligible to participate in the DESSA?**

All public-school districts in Connecticut are eligible to implement the DESSA Assessment System. The CSDE will cover all training and onboarding costs, as well as licensing for all DESSA, the DESSA-mini, reporting, and support.

**What is the first step to sign up my district?**

The first step is to join one of the mandatory information sessions, which will outline the process of joining a cohort, expectations for the districts and schools, and expectations from the state.

[Monday, April 19 3-5 PM](#)

[Thursday, April 29 1-3 PM](#)

[Monday, May 3 3-5 PM](#)

[Wednesday, May 5 1-3 PM](#)

**When are the cohorts launching?**

Cohort 1 will sign on no later than June 25, 2021. There are 25 district seats available. Implementation will begin in October 2021.

Cohort 2 will sign on in October 2021. There are 75 district seats available. Implementation will begin in January/February 2022.

## Why the DESSA?

- 1. Make decisions with strengths-based data:** Founded in resiliency, the Aperture system gives you real-time data on screener results, so you can quickly identify students in need of SEL instruction and gaps across your population.
- 2. CASEL:** Alignment to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning Competencies.
- 3. Dive deeper:** For students who need extra support, a trusted teacher and student support staff can complete the full DESSA in 5-8 minutes, so your staff can get a clear picture of areas of strengths and growth for each student.
- 4. Take action with strategies:** Utilize your SEL data to select strategies to help all students strengthen their SEL skills.

Please direct any questions to Kimberly Traverso at [kimberly.traverso@ct.gov](mailto:kimberly.traverso@ct.gov).