

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

Over two decades of research has helped us understand the important roles social and emotional skills play in each child's success in school, in the community, and, eventually, in higher education and the workplace. Skills such as demonstrating self-control, persisting at challenging tasks, making good decisions, and working well in groups are all necessary to being successful students and adults. The process by which students learn these and other similar skills is called social and emotional learning. To support our students in developing essential social and emotional skills that will help them become successful and responsible adults, we need help in understanding student strengths and needs.

As we have done for the past several years, our teachers will be using a tool called the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment, or DESSA, which was developed by the Devereux Center for Resilient Children. This tool asks teachers to rate how often a student has demonstrated specific social and emotional skills in the past month.

Sample DESSA questions include:

- How often did the child keep trying when unsuccessful?
- How often did the child get things done in a timely fashion?
- How often did the child work well in groups?

The purpose of the DESSA is to identify which social and emotional skills your child has already learned and what skills he or she might still need to develop. Once we identify the skills students still need to learn, classroom teachers and the school counselor will provide direct instruction for those skills to classrooms and small groups as indicated. Our goal is to ensure that your child is continuously developing the social and emotional skills that they need for lifelong success.

While the DESSA is just one component of our social and emotional learning program, we want to make sure that you are informed of our use of this instructional tool. We believe that the information gathered from the DESSA will be beneficial to your child's overall success both inside and outside of the classroom.

We are excited to utilize the DESSA in our social and emotional learning program this school year! If you have any questions, please feel free to call or email either Mrs. Hayes (jhayes@litchfieldsd.org) or Mr. Mitchell (dmitchell@litchfieldsd.org).

Sincerely,

Jennifer Hayes

Jennifer Hayes, M.Ed
School Counselor