



Customer Spotlight

KALAMAZOO YOUTH DEVELOPMENT NETWORK

About Our DESSA System Customer Spotlight

KALAMAZOO YOUTH DEVELOPMENT NETWORK (KYD)

The Kalamazoo Youth Development (KYD) Network (www.kydnet.org/) serves as the out-of-school-time intermediary for Kalamazoo County Michigan. KYD Network's fiscal agent is the United Way of the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region.

The KYD Network's mission is to ensure youth are college, career, and community ready by age 21. In 2014, the KYD Network adopted social and emotional learning as one of its key focuses. It formed an SEL "Affinity Group" – a group within the KYD Network whose sole focus was social and emotional learning. The group began researching SEL assessments and ultimately adopted the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) to screen students for social and emotional competencies. It has used Aperture's DESSA System online platform to administer the DESSA to approximately 1,000 students to date.

Why Kalamazoo Selected The DESSA System

The KYD Network selected the DESSA because the DESSA measures the core SEL competencies identified by the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL). They also liked the online intervention strategies that Apperson provides.

Currently the 20 organizations in KYD Network's SEL initiative collect DESSA data three times during the school year and once over the summer. Data are used to determine how well out-of-school-time organizations are meeting the SEL needs of their students and to identify trends among groups of students. The KYD Network is using the Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA) from the David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality to identify staff training needs and has created a robust training program for the organizations in the network. The KYD Network provides training to the organizations in SEL instruction and on administering the DESSA and it uses the DESSA data to provide targeted instruction and strategies for the organizations that need it. Some of the support that the KYD Network offers includes:

- An SEL coach who regularly reviews the network's SEL data to identify where organizations are struggling and creates action plans for the organizations. The coach tailors SEL strategies to help the organizations address specific needs.
- An SEL tool kit listing all of the documents that the organizations will be using in their SEL work, including links to the DESSA and to specific strategies. Users can also upload their own strategies into the online tool kit.
- An annual SEL forum organized by the KYD Network which focuses intensely on professional development around SEL.

The KYD Network has reported improvements in students' SEL skills since implementing its SEL program and the DESSA System SEL assessments. It recorded improvements across the board in the second year of the initiative. This year it began to disaggregate the data to identify trends based on gender and race.

The KYD Network also says its SEL program has improved staff retention. One of the out-of-school-time organizations that historically struggled with staff turnover said that, in 2016 for the first time, all of its staff returned. The KYD Network believes that having consistent, strong training and support is motivating employees to stay.

The KYD Network believes focusing on students' social and emotional wellbeing is in the DNA of out-of-school-time organizations. Therefore, measuring the effectiveness of their SEL programs is as important for out-of-school-time organizations as academic accountability is for K-12 school districts.

The KYD Network plans to continue to screen students using Aperture's DESSA System. It participated in the norming of the high school version of the DESSA and plans to adopt that assessment too once it is available. The network is also continuing to do deep dives into its SEL data to develop even more targeted solutions for the students it serves.



DIY: Universal SEL Screening + Targeted Interventions

3 EASY DO-IT-YOURSELF STEPS TO SEL SCREENING & TARGETING INTERVENTIONS

STEP **UNIVERSALLY SCREEN**

1

- Use the 8-item DESSA-mini form to screen the population in less than 1 minute per child.
- The screening will result in a Social and Emotional Total (SET) score. The DESSA-mini also produces a RTI-aligned descriptor of the SET designating whether the child has Need for Instruction, Strengths, or is exhibiting Normal SEL competence.
- Review aggregate scores across classes and between grade levels. What patterns do you see?

STEP **ASSESS FOR SPECIFIC NEEDS**

2

- Review SET scores for individual students. How many students has the DESSA-mini identified as having a Need? Use this data to determine which students you want to assess more fully.
- Using the 72-item full DESSA, assess the children you have decided you need to know more about. It will take about 5 to 8 minutes per child.
- The DESSA will yield scores and descriptors that show relative strengths and needs across 8 specific SEL competencies. Now you know not only WHO has the need, but WHAT the needs are.

STEP **USE INTERVENTIONS**

3

- Now that you know who has a need for instruction and precisely where the need is you can create a plan for delivering targeted instruction.
- DESSA System contains over 100 strategies and lessons you can use for both universal instruction and targeted intervention.
- Consider using the DESSA data to group students with like needs and using support staff to deliver group instruction.
- For students requiring additional instruction, consider using the individual strategies and supplement with Evo's take-home lessons.

Ready To Take SEL Further?

CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING IDEAS:

- Use the DESSA-mini every 4-6 weeks to monitor progress.
- Ask parents to complete the DESSA on their children and compare results in a parent teacher conference.
- Consider including DESSA competencies on office referral forms to see trends between behavioral infractions and SEL needs.