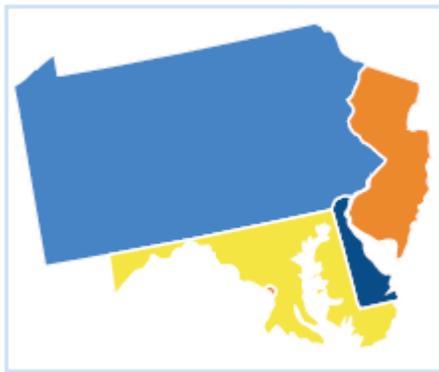


FACTSheet

Serving the education community in Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania

Research-Based Instruments for Measuring Students' Soft Skills



Educators are increasingly emphasizing development of students' soft skills to promote career readiness.^{i,ii} Soft skills (sometimes called social-emotional skills) are interpersonal or intrapersonal competencies such as ability to work in a team, taking responsibility for completion of a task, and communication. Education researchersⁱⁱⁱ and business leaders^{iv} agree that soft skills are a critical component of college and career success.

To help educators identify and improve their students' soft skills, research organizations such as the RAND Corporation and the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) have compiled information about measures of key soft skills. This fact sheet provides a

sample of instruments for assessing soft skills that can help educators identify students' strengths or challenges with different soft skills, such as teamwork or conscientiousness.

The information in this fact sheet is excerpted from two sources that provide more comprehensive lists of instruments for assessing soft skills:

- ❖ CASEL Compendium^{v,vi}
- ❖ RAND Education Assessment Finder, which refers to the CASEL Compendium and extends it^{vii}

This fact sheet groups soft skills according to the categories developed in the CASEL Compendium:



Self-Awareness: Being able to accurately assess personal feelings, interests, values, and strengths, leading to a sense of self-efficacy



Self-Management: Handling one's emotions in productive ways, coping with situations, persevering



Social Awareness: Seeing another's perspective, having empathy, recognizing similarities and differences



Relationship Skills: Promoting effective exchanges with others, communicating, listening, expressing thoughts and positions



Responsible Decision Making: Identifying and solving problems, analyzing situations

The table lists instruments, noting each instrument's focal categories, subscales (if applicable), sample items (if provided by the developer), mode of administration (e.g., online or paper), cost, the website where the instrument can be accessed, target grade levels (if available), and additional relevant notes.

Instruments for assessing soft skills, for use with middle school and high school students

Instrument/ focal categories	Subscales	Sample items	Mode	Cost	Additional notes (e.g., grade levels, technical quality)
<p><u>ACT Tesseract Mental Toughness Scale for Adolescents*</u></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Grit/Responsibility ❖ Teamwork/ Cooperation ❖ Composure/ Resilience/ ❖ Curiosity/Ingenuity ❖ Leadership/ Communication Style (latest version) 	<p>Agree/disagree format:^{viii}</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ I finish my homework assignments before they are due. ❖ After studying hard, if I don't do as well as I hoped, I am likely to look over the items I missed to learn from them. <p>Forced-choice format (students pick statements that are most and least like them):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ If I tell my teacher I will do something, I do it. ❖ I perform well on assignments that require me to use my imagination. 	<p>Online, completed by student</p>	<p>\$10 per student</p>	<p>Grades 6–12</p> <p>Evidence of technical quality is summarized in the RAND Education Assessment Finder.</p> <p>ACT provides a scoring report and classifies students as developing, approaching, demonstrating, or mastering.</p>
<p><u>Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale–Second Edition (BERS-2): Parent Rating Scale, Teacher Rating Scale, Student Rating Scale</u></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Interpersonal Strength ❖ Family Involvement ❖ School Functioning ❖ Affective Strength ❖ Career Strength 	<p>From the BERS-2 Teacher Rating Scale:^{ix}</p> <p>This student...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Maintains positive family relationships ❖ Accepts responsibility for own actions ❖ Pays attention in class ❖ Identifies own feelings 	<p>Paper and pencil. Student forms are self-report.</p>	<p>\$208 for an introductory kit, \$73 for an examiner's manual, \$39 for teacher rating scales, \$39 for parent rating scales, \$39 for youth rating scales, and \$39 for summary forms.</p>	<p>Grades 5–12</p> <p>Evidence of technical quality is summarized in the RAND Assessment Finder separately for the parent form, teacher form, and student form.</p> <p>BERS-2 scores are norm-referenced (based on a nationally representative sample of students) and a scoring manual and software are provided by the assessment developers.</p>

Instrument/ focal categories	Subscales	Sample items	Mode	Cost	Additional notes (e.g., grade levels, technical quality)
<p><u>Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA)</u></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Self-Awareness ❖ Social Awareness ❖ Self-Management ❖ Goal-Directed Behavior ❖ Relationship Skills ❖ Personal Responsibility ❖ Decision Making ❖ Optimistic Thinking 	<p>During the past 4 weeks, how often did the child...^x</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Try to do her/his best? ❖ Cope well with insults and mean comments? ❖ Do things independently? ❖ Contribute to group efforts? ❖ Get things done in a timely fashion? 	<p>Paper or online. Completed by parents or guardians, teachers, or staff.</p>	<p>\$115.95 for a kit that includes the manual, norms reference card, and 25 record forms (hand scoring is required).</p> <p>The online Scoring Assistant costs \$32.25 for 25 online forms.</p>	<p>Grades K–8</p> <p>Evidence of technical quality is summarized in the RAND Education Assessment Finder.</p> <p>DESSA is designed for schoolwide assessment, but report formats are available online for individuals, classes, and schools.</p>
<p><u>EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-Being*</u></p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Engagement ❖ Perseverance ❖ Optimism ❖ Connectedness ❖ Happiness 	<p>Almost never/almost always format:^{xi}</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ I finish whatever I begin. ❖ I am optimistic about my future. ❖ I am a hard worker. ❖ In uncertain times, I expect the best. ❖ I get completely absorbed in what I am doing. ❖ I have friends that I really care about. 	<p>Paper form or online. Self-report and self-scored.</p>	<p>Free after registering online</p>	<p>Grades 5–12</p> <p>Evidence of technical quality is summarized in the RAND Education Assessment Finder.</p> <p>Scores are computed for each domain as the average of the four items that belong to that domain, and results can be presented as a profile (a simple bar graph) listing each domain separately. The instrument can be used for pre- and post-testing.</p>

Instrument/ focal categories	Subscales	Sample items	Mode	Cost	Additional notes (e.g., grade levels, technical quality)
<u>Holistic Student Assessment (HSA)</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Resiliencies ❖ Relationships ❖ Learning & School Engagement 	<p>Not at all/almost never format:^{xii}</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ I like being active and moving my body. ❖ I stand up for things that matter to me. ❖ I like to figure out how things work. ❖ When I try to accomplish something, I achieve it. 	<p>Paper or online. Self-report format.</p>	<p>\$3.85 per student The developer requires that users participate in an HSA training webinar.</p>	<p>Grades 4–12</p> <p>Evidence of technical quality is summarized in the RAND Education Assessment Finder.</p> <p>Student and group reports are available that emphasize strengths and challenges. Scores are calculated by the assessment developer using nationally representative norms, based on a random stratified sample. This instrument can be used for pre- and post-testing.</p>
<u>Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)*</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Emotional Problems ❖ Conduct Problems ❖ Hyperactivity ❖ Peer Problems ❖ Prosocial Behavior 	<p>Not true/certainly true format:^{xiii}</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Nervous or clingy in new situations ❖ Constantly fidgeting or squirming ❖ Often fights with other children ❖ Shares readily with other children ❖ Kind to younger children 	<p>Paper or online. Self-report, with teacher and parent report.</p>	<p>The paper version is free, and pricing is negotiable for online administration.</p>	<p>Grades K–12</p> <p>Evidence of technical quality is summarized in the RAND Education Assessment Finder separately for the parent or teacher version and the self-assessment.</p> <p>This instrument is intended for use as a screening tool for emotional and behavioral problems.</p>

* These instruments are cited in the RAND Education Assessment Finder but not the CASEL Compendium. In these cases, REL Mid-Atlantic has determined categories based on alignment with the CASEL category definitions above.

ENDNOTES

- ⁱ Vercelletto, C. (2018, August 21). Soft skills are just as important as academics, say educators and parents in new survey. *Education Dive*. Retrieved from <https://www.educationdive.com/news/soft-skills-are-just-as-important-as-academics-say-educators-and-parents-i/530566/>
- ⁱⁱ Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. (2018, March 5). *Teaching soft skills for the global economy: Start small*. Retrieved from <http://inservice.ascd.org/teaching-soft-skills-for-the-global-economy-start-small/>
- ⁱⁱⁱ National Research Council. (2012). *Education for life and work: Developing transferable knowledge and skills in the 21st century*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. Retrieved from <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/13398/education-for-life-and-work-developing-transferable-knowledge-and-skills>
- ^{iv} American Management Association. (2012). *Critical Skills Survey*. Retrieved from <http://playbook.amanet.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/2012-Critical-Skills-Survey-pdf.pdf>
- ^v Denham, S.A., Ji, P., & Hamre, B. (2010). *Compendium of preschool through elementary school social-emotional learning and associated assessment measures*. Chicago, IL: Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning and Social and Emotional Learning Research Group, University of Illinois at Chicago. Retrieved from <https://casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/compendium-of-preschool-through-elementary-school-social-emotional-learning-and-associated-assessment-measures.pdf>
- ^{vi} Haggerty, K., Elgin, J., & Woolley, A. (2011). *Social-emotional learning assessment measures for middle school youth*. Seattle: Social Development Research Group, University of Washington. Retrieved from <https://www.search-institute.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/DAP-Raikes-Foundation-Review.pdf>
- ^{vii} RAND Corporation. (n.d.). *RAND Education Assessment Finder*. Retrieved from <https://www.rand.org/education-and-labor/projects/assessments/tool.html>
- ^{viii} ACT. (2018). *ACT Tessera methodology*. Iowa City, IA: Author. Retrieved from <http://www.act.org/content/act/en/products-and-services/act-tessera/methodology.html>
- ^{ix} PRO-ED, Inc. (2018). *Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale—Second Edition (BERS-2)*. Austin, TX: Author. (Example items retrieved from <https://www.rand.org/education-and-labor/projects/assessments/tool/2000/behavioral-and-emotional-rating-scale-teacher-form.html>.)
- ^x Aperture Education. (2018). *Devereux Student Strengths Assessment*. Fort Mill, SC: Author. (Example items retrieved from <https://www.kaplanco.com/content/products/DESSAIntroduction.pdf>.)
- ^{xi} Kern, P., Benson, E., Steinberg, E., & Steinberg, L. (2014). *The EPOCH Measure of Adolescent Well-Being*. Retrieved from http://www.peggykern.org/uploads/5/6/6/7/56678211/epoch_measure_of_adolescent_well-being_102014.pdf
- ^{xii} PEAR Institute. (2014). *Overview of measurement tools: Holistic Student Assessment*. Belmont, MA: Author. (Example items retrieved from <https://bostonbeyond.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/12/HSA-Overview.pdf>.)
- ^{xiii} Department of Health and Ageing, Canberra. (2003). *Mental health national outcomes and casemix collection: Overview of clinician-rated and consumer self-report measures, version 1.50*. Canberra, Australia: Author. (Example items retrieved from https://depts.washington.edu/dbpeds/Screening%20Tools/Strengths_and_Difficulties_Questionnaire.pdf.)