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Tim Lemke

**Director of Special Education
& Pupil Services**

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

We are thrilled to share an exciting opportunity taking place this school year! Experience and research have helped us more fully understand the important role social-emotional skills play in each student's success in and outside of school. 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 skills are called social-emotional learning (SEL).

To support our students in developing these essential skills to become successful and responsible adults, we will be implementing an SEL universal screening process. As part of this process, our teachers will be utilizing a strength-based tool called the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA), a social-emotional screening and assessment tool. Using this universal screening tool, teachers will assess the degree to which each student has demonstrated specific social-emotional skills in the past month.

Sample DESSA questions include:

- How often did the child keep trying when unsuccessful?
- How often did the child offer to help somebody?
- 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 universal social-emotional screening is to identify each student's overall current social-emotional competency. It is recommended that those identified as needing further social emotional skill development be assessed more in-depth to identify which specific social emotional skills the student has already learned, and what specific social-emotional skills need to be developed. The DESSA assessment targets eight key social-emotional skills. Once a student's social-emotional growth areas are identified, a plan to target and teach those skills will be developed and shared with parents/guardians.

The results of this screening will not be included on report cards, will not have any impact on grades, and will not be used to make any diagnostic or evaluation decisions. The results will only be viewable by your child(ren)'s teachers and select school staff such as the principal, associate principal, school psychologist or counselor. DESSA is published by Aperture Education. Our district chose DESSA in part because of Aperture Education's strong commitment to respecting and protecting your student's privacy. Thousands of schools nationwide use DESSA and trust Aperture Education with protecting their students' data.

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

We are excited to implement DESSA this school year during a screening window that runs from January 16, 2023-February 17, 2023. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Tim Lemke, Director of Special Education and Pupil Services at tim.lemke@wfbschools.com. Additionally, you can view the [Parent FAQ document from DESSA HERE](#).

Regards,

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