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September 24, 2026

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s),

We are excited to begin our fifth year of using the Devereux Student Strengths Assessment (DESSA) to support the social and emotional learning (SEL) of our students in Kindergarten through Grade 12. We know that skills such as self-control, teamwork, and persistence are important not only for success in school, but also for building positive relationships and navigating life beyond the classroom.

The DESSA is a strengths-based screening tool that helps teachers understand how frequently students demonstrate important social-emotional skills. For example, teachers may rate how often a student "kept trying when unsuccessful" or "worked well in groups." Middle and high school students will also have the opportunity to complete a Student Self-Report, allowing them to reflect on their own strengths and skills.

There are two updates to this year's DESSA process:

- We will be using the DESSA Second Step Edition, which is the only assessment aligned with the Second Step® curriculum for students in Kindergarten through Grade 8.
- We are beginning the assessment process one week earlier than in previous years. This will provide our staff with additional time to review and use the information to support students.

The results of the DESSA help our teachers identify individual strengths as well as areas where students may benefit from additional support. This information allows us to provide targeted instruction and meaningful opportunities for students to practice and strengthen their social-emotional skills.

Our goal is to ensure that every student has the skills and support they need to feel successful, connected, and confident both in school and throughout life.

Key Details

Privacy: The DESSA, published by Aperture Education, is designed with student privacy in mind. Your child's assessment data will not be shared with third parties.

Parent Resources: Additional information and resources, including access to a Parent Portal with helpful strategies for supporting social-emotional learning at home, are available at Aperture Education Parent Portal.

Opt-Out Deadline: If you would prefer that your child not participate, please contact your child's teacher or school counselor by **Friday, October 2, 2026**.

Assessment Dates: The first DESSA rating period will take place **October 5–16, 2026**.

We appreciate your partnership in supporting the social-emotional growth and well-being of our students. Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Dawn DeLia
Director of Pupil Services
dawn.delia@lebanonct.org

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