

**The Devereux Early Childhood Assessment
(DECA) Program & the National Association for
the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Early
Childhood Program Standards
Revised August, 2012**

About DCRC and NAEYC:

The Devereux Center for Resilient Children's (DCRC) Early Childhood Initiative has been developing high-quality, research-based assessment tools, strategy guides, and resilience-based resources for the past decade. The mission of the DCRC is to promote social and emotional development, foster resilience, and build skills for school and life success in all children from birth through school-age, as well as to promote the resilience of the adults who care for them. Two key programs central to the DCRC are the DECA Infant and Toddler Program for ages birth through 36 months, and the DECA Preschool Program for ages 3 through 5; together the birth through five continuum is referred to as “The DECA Program”. The DECA Program consists of assessment tools, strategies, and planning resources for teachers, caregivers, and families to promote resilience and healthy social and emotional development in young children.

NAEYC has six core values in their code of ethics that guide the underlying philosophy of the accreditation standards: NAEYC has made a commitment to:

- Appreciate childhood as a unique and valuable stage of the human life cycle
- Base work on knowledge of how children develop and learn
- Appreciate and support the bond between the child and family
- Recognize that children are best understood and supported in the context of family, culture, community, and society
- Respect the dignity, worth, and uniqueness of each individual (child, family member, and colleague)
- Respect diversity in children, families, and colleagues

- Recognize that children and adults achieve their full potential in the context of relationships that are based on trust and respect

(Source: NAEYC Position Statement: Code of Ethical Conduct, revised 2005, <http://www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSETH05.pdf>).

In addition to supporting all of the NAEYC principles, the DCRC promotes these underlying values driving the development of all resources, research, advocacy efforts and professional development. “The DCRC values and promotes:

- The strengths, happiness and resilience of all children.
- The well-being of the adults who parent, nurture and educate children.
- Strength-based approaches.
- Strong partnerships between families and child-serving professionals.
- Collaboration between the fields of early childhood and mental health to optimize positive outcomes.
- Data-driven decision making.”

(Source: *Promoting Resilience in Preschoolers: A Strategy Guide for Early Childhood Professionals, Second Edition, 2012, p. 3-4*)

Rationale for this Crosswalk:

This crosswalk illustrates how the DECA Infant and Toddler Program and the DECA Preschool Program correlate with the *NAEYC Criteria for High-Quality Early Childhood Programs*. Early childhood programs striving to achieve or maintain NAEYC accreditation will find the DECA Program a useful system in pursuit of this goal. Outlined in the crosswalk below are the ten program standards set forth by the NAEYC governing board.

Each of the ten standards falls under a category according to the early childhood education stakeholder. There are four groups of early childhood education stakeholders: children, teachers, family and community partners, and the program administration. The majority of

the standards focus on children—the most important stakeholders. The remainder of the ten standards focus on other stakeholders and the programmatic structure they build to support quality.

(Source: NAEYC Introduction to Accreditation Standards, revised 2008, <http://www.naeyc.org/academy/primary/standardsintro>).

NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards	How the DECA Program meets NAEYC Standards and helps programs achieve or maintain accreditation
<p><i>Program Standard 1: Relationships</i></p> <p>The program promotes positive relationships among all children and adults to encourage each child’s sense of individual worth and belonging as part of a community, and to foster each child’s ability to contribute as a responsible community member.</p>	<p>The DECA suite of assessments measure strengths related to protective factors and social and emotional health in infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children.</p> <p><i>When adults reflect on and assess the positive qualities in a child, the DECA works as a catalyst to strengthen relationships between that child and the significant adults in his or her life.</i> In addition to the information provided through the assessment itself, strategies are offered for teachers and caregivers in <i>Promoting Resilience in Preschoolers: A Strategy Guide for Early Childhood Professionals, Second Edition</i> and <i>Strategies Guide for Infants and Toddlers</i>. Several chapters are specifically devoted to encouraging supportive interactions, responsive care giving, and partnerships between caregivers, teachers, and families. Two accompanying guides for the families of infants and toddlers or preschoolers, entitled <i>Promoting Resilience For Now and Forever: A Family Guide for Supporting the Social and Emotional Development of Young Children, Second Edition</i>, specifically focus on encouraging and building supportive interactions and relationships between children and their families.</p>

NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards	How the DECA Program meets NAEYC Standards and helps programs achieve or maintain accreditation
<p><i>Program Standard 2: Curriculum</i></p> <p>The program implements a curriculum that is consistent with its goals for children and promotes learning and development in each of the following areas: social, emotional, physical, language, cognitive.</p>	<p>The DECA Program offers strength-based practices to enhance any curriculum. These resilience and quality-building strategies provide ways to strengthen a program’s mental health systems, particularly in the areas of social and emotional development. Included in the strategies are tips that simultaneously work to compliment other areas of development such as physical, cognitive, pre-literacy, and language skills.</p> <p><i>The DECA Program strategies and planning framework were designed to fit within and enhance existing systems and practices surrounding children’s social and emotional development and mental health.</i> A program wanting to offer a rich focus on children’s social and emotional health would find the DECA Program a welcome addition to their existing curriculum.</p>

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<p><i>Program Standard 3: Teaching</i></p> <p>The program uses developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and effective teaching approaches that enhance each child’s learning and development in the context of the program’s curriculum goals.</p>	<p><i>Promoting Resilience in Preschoolers: A Strategy Guide for Early Childhood Professionals, Second Edition</i>, an entire resource of teaching strategies for the preschool classroom, as well as the <i>Strategies Guide for Infants and Toddlers</i> for group and home settings, is included in the DECA Program resources. These strategies were compiled from a thorough review of the literature on social and emotional quality and resilience-building in young children, as well as by gaining insight from a wealth of infant, toddler, and early childhood experts. <i>When the DECA Program was developed, strict requirements were followed in selecting strategies and teaching practices that were based on research, and both developmentally and culturally appropriate.</i></p>

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<p><i>Program Standard 4: Assessment of Child Progress</i></p> <p>The program is informed by ongoing systematic, formal, and informal assessment approaches to provide information on children’s learning and development. These assessments occur within the context of reciprocal communications with families and with sensitivity to the cultural contexts in which children develop. Assessment results are used to benefit children by informing sound decisions about children, teaching, and program improvement.</p>	<p><i>The DECA suite of assessments for infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children are strength-based, standardized, norm-referenced assessments of protective factors. Each instrument is a technically sound and socially relevant tool.</i> Contained in the suite are the DECA for Infants and Toddlers (DECA-I/T) and DECA for Preschoolers (DECA-P2). A standardization sample of over 2000 teachers/caregivers and parents provided responses regarding the frequency of positive behaviors observed in the child’s natural learning environments, mainly, home and school. The information gained through assessment of a child’s protective factors helps teachers, caregivers, and families individualize strategies to help each child in the areas of social and emotional skill development, and also leads to strong school readiness skills as infants, toddlers and preschooler develop strong, healthy approaches to learning. All information from the assessment results can be easily compiled (scored by hand, or by using the e-DECA version) to highlight the strengths and areas for improvement in each child and each classroom/group setting.</p> <p>Additionally, strategies are offered that help build the quality and social emotional focus of the home and</p>

learning environment, as well as offering individualization tips for children. Tools to evaluate quality practices are offered in the form of the CARE Checklists and the Reflective Checklists for Teaching Practices. These reflective tools for teachers and caregivers, coupled with other observation tools, are completed at several points through the program year to help measure outcomes and plan improvements to the group/classroom practices.

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<p><i>Program Standard 5: Health</i></p> <p>The program promotes the nutrition and health of children and protects children and staff from illness and injury.</p>	<p><i>Promoting the mental wellness and health of children is one of the key principles underlying development and use of the DECA Program.</i> To optimize health of the whole child, mental wellness must be an intentional teaching in the early learning environment. The DECA Program helps provide opportunities for promotion of strong mental health at both the child and program levels. In addition, the DECA Program philosophy and accompanying professional development opportunities emphasize the importance of the mental wellness of program staff and the other significant adults in a child’s life. <i>Building Your Bounce</i> is an adult resilience journal, created by the DCRC: Early Childhood Initiative, designed to help adults reflect upon and plan for their own mental wellness, health, and resilience. A set of research-based checklists called the <i>Devereux Adult Resilience Scale (DARS)</i> are included in the journal, and are free on our website (www.CenterForResilientChildren.org).</p>

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<p><i>Program Standard 6: Teachers</i></p> <p>The program employs and supports a teaching staff that has educational qualifications, knowledge, and professional commitment necessary to promote children’s learning and development and to support families’ diverse needs and interests.</p>	<p>When teachers are attuned to looking at a child’s strengths, they are in general more positive adults and healthy role models for the children and families with whom they work. <i>The DECA Program, with its central focus on children’s strengths and resilience, offers both the data (through assessment), and the ideas (through the accompanying strategies) to help teachers make and maintain their learning environment as a positive, healthy place for children.</i></p>

NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards	How the DECA Program meets NAEYC Standards and helps programs achieve or maintain accreditation
<p><i>Program Standard 7: Families</i> The program establishes and maintains collaborative relationships with each child’s family to foster children’s development in all settings. These relationships are sensitive to family composition, language and culture.</p>	<p>Families are key to the successful implementation of the DECA Program. <i>Through the guiding framework of the DECA Program (collecting information and completing assessments, planning and implementing, and evaluating child and program progress), families are included and vital to every step.</i> Families are integral in helping identify areas in the classroom that may need improvement, as well as helping be keen observers of behaviors in their child. Completing the same set of questions on the assessment tool(s) that the teacher completes shows families that their input regarding their child’s strengths and areas of growth is truly valued. Information gathered from the assessment is then used to individualize and plan for each child’s success in the classroom and home environment. Finally, each child is monitored throughout the year to make sure that he or she is making necessary gains in the area of protective factors.</p>

NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards	How the DECA Program meets NAEYC Standards and helps programs achieve or maintain accreditation
<p><i>Program Standard 8: Community Relationships</i></p> <p>The program establishes relationships with and uses the resources of the children’s communities to support the achievement of program goals.</p>	<p>One of the underlying principles of the DECA Program is that it supports relationships between professionals in the fields of mental health and early childhood, as well as the family. Using strength-based terminology that all parties will understand and relate to, the DECA Program eases communication around the difficult topic of children’s mental health. <i>When programs have the benefit of services from mental health providers, the DECA Program is a very useful way for all parties involved with a child to assess, plan, and work together on strengthening children’s protective factors.</i></p>

NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards	How the DECA Program meets NAEYC Standards and helps programs achieve or maintain accreditation
<p><i>Program Standard 9: Physical Environmental</i></p> <p>The program has a safe and healthful environment that provides appropriate and well-maintained indoor and outdoor physical environments. The environment includes facilities, equipment, and materials to facilitate child and staff learning and development.</p>	<p>The DECA Program promotes a healthy, quality physical learning environment for children. The DECA Program resources and professional development opportunities emphasize the link between positive learning environments and more positive child behaviors. <i>The DECA Program offers resources that help teachers and caregivers reflect on quality and make the necessary improvements that will make the physical environment as positive as possible.</i> Additionally, the DECA Program philosophy encourages early childhood professionals to take a look at their existing practices through “social and emotional lenses”, finding simple but meaningful ways to strengthen children’s mental health. When children are interacting in healthy, quality environments, positive behaviors outweigh behavioral issues.</p>

NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards	How the DECA Program meets NAEYC Standards and helps programs achieve or maintain accreditation
<p><i>Program 10: Leadership and Management</i></p> <p>The program effectively implements policies, procedures, and systems that support stable staff and strong personnel, fiscal, and program management so all children, families, and staff have high quality experiences.</p>	<p><i>The DECA Program helps professionals at the management level, as well as within the learning environment itself, establish and maintain as welcoming and safe a program as possible.</i> Strong leadership leads to staff being more equipped to support the families and children with whom they work. Two resources for adults, <i>Building Your Bounce</i> and the <i>Devereux Adult Resilience Scale (DARS)</i> will help all adults focus on strengthening their own resilience in order to be the best role model possible for young children. When program leaders support strength-based assessment and strategies, they provide the best experience possible for staff, families, and children.</p>

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