

This crosswalk illustrates how the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) Program correlates with the National Association for the Education of Young Children (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. These ten recommended standards represent “essential, interlocking elements of high quality programs for all children from birth through kindergarten” (NAEYC, 2005).

There are six values that guide the underlying philosophy of the accreditation standards:

- The uniqueness of childhood as a developmental phase;
- The essential contribution to optimal child learning and development of reciprocal, respectful relationships with children and their families;
- The distinctive opportunity from birth through kindergarten to support children’s intellectual, language, and social-emotional development;
- The essential role of partnerships with families and communities;
- The significance of a strong program infrastructure in providing high-quality care and education; and
- The importance of the quality of children’s lives in the present, not only as preparation for the future.

The philosophy behind the development and use of the DECA Program not only adheres to these six underlying values, but also adds these additional underlying principles and goals.

The DECA Program...

- Supports a strength-based philosophy of observing, assessing and planning for young children, in efforts to enhance and build upon what a child “can do”, instead of focusing on what they cannot yet do;
- Works to meld the fields of early childhood and mental health to wrap a system of wellness around each child;
- Attempts to infuse recommended practices into what a program is already doing, so as not to add additional paperwork or stress to the lives of early childhood professionals; and
- Supports early childhood professionals in their needs and efforts to be data-driven professionals, working to establish a strong evidence-based system of success for each child.

NAEYC Early Childhood Program Standards	How the DECA Program meets NAEYC Standards and helps programs achieve or maintain accreditation
<p><b>Program Standard 1: Relationships:</b> 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 is an assessment of a child’s strengths related to protective factors. 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. In addition to the information provided through the assessment itself, strategies are offered in the DECA Program <i>Classroom Strategies guide</i> that specifically focus on encouraging and building supportive interactions between the child and adults in the classroom.</p>
<p><b>Program Standard 2: Curriculum:</b> The program implements a curriculum that is consistent with its goals for children and promotes learning and development in each of the following domains: aesthetic, cognitive, emotional, language, physical and social.</p>	<p>The DECA Program offers a plethora of complimentary activities to any curriculum. These resilience and quality-enhancing strategies provide opportunities that work to build a program’s mental health systems, particularly in the areas of social and emotional development. Included in the strategies suggested are also ideas that simultaneously work to strengthen other areas of development including physical, cognitive, pre-literacy, and language skills. 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>
<p><b>Program Standard 3: Teaching:</b> 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>The <i>Classroom Strategies guide</i>, an entire resource of teaching strategies, is included in the DECA Program resources. These strategies were compiled from a wealth of early childhood experts, following strict requirements of selecting ideas that were both developmentally and culturally appropriate.</p>
<p><b>Program Standard 4: Assessment of Child Progress:</b> 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</p>	<p>The DECA, a standardized, norm-referenced assessment of protective factors in children, is a technically sound and socially relevant tool. The DECA is based on both teacher and parent response to 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 not only works to help</p>

<p>contexts in which children develop. Assessment results are used to benefit children by informing sound decisions about children, teaching, and program improvement.</p>	<p>individualize the program for each child in the areas of social and emotional skill development, but also leads to strong school readiness skills as children develop strong, healthy approaches to learning. All information from the DECA results can be easily compiled to highlight the strengths and the areas in need of improvement in each classroom. Strategies are offered that are tied to improvements in the classroom as well as each individual child.</p>
<p><b>Program Standard 5: Health:</b> The program promotes the nutrition and health of children and protects children and staff from illness and injury.</p>	<p>Mental wellness and health of children is one of the key goals underlying development and use of the DECA Program. For a child to be truly healthy, this area cannot be overlooked. The DECA Program helps provide opportunities for strong mental wellness at both the child and program levels. In addition, the DECA Program philosophy and accompanying training opportunities emphasize the importance of the mental wellness of program staff and the other significant adults in a child's life.</p>
<p><b>Program Standard 6: Teachers:</b> 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. The DECA Program, with a strong focus on children's strengths and resilience, offers both the data, in the form of assessment, and the ideas to help teachers keep their classroom a positive, healthy place for children.</p>
<p><b>Program Standard 7: Families:</b> 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 a partner in the DECA Program process. From the first step of the DECA Program (Collect Information), through the remaining steps (Assess, Compile and Analyze Results, Plan, and Evaluate Progress), families are included and necessary every step along the way. Families are integral in helping identify areas in the classroom that may need improvement, as well as helping be keen observers of healthy and troublesome behaviors in their child. Completing the same set of questions on the DECA that the teacher completes shows families that their input is truly valued as to their child's strengths and areas of growth. Information gathered from the assessment</p>

	<p>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>
<p><b>Program Standard 8: Community Relationships:</b> 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 terminology that all parties will understand and relate to, the DECA Program eases communication around the difficult topic of challenging behaviors. In addition, 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 the child's protective factors.</p>
<p><b>Program Standard 9: Physical Environmental:</b> 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>Key to the strategies offered in the DECA Program is a healthy, quality physical learning environment for children. As outlined in the DECA Program resources and emphasized in all trainings, if the environment is not of quality, challenging behaviors will not be far behind. Resources are offered to help each classroom reflect upon its quality and make the necessary improvements that will make the physical environment as positive as possible. When children are interacting in healthy, quality environments, it is more common to see positive behaviors outweigh behavioral issues.</p>
<p><b>Program 10: Leadership and Management:</b> The program's design and maintenance of its physical environment support high-quality program activities and services and allow for optimal use and operation. Well-organized, equipped, and maintained environments support program quality by facilitating the learning, comfort, health, and safety of those who use the program. Programs enhance quality by creating a welcoming and accessible setting for children, families, and staff.</p>	<p>Evident in all areas of the DECA Program improvement strategies is the need to create a sense of attachment between the child and the adults in their lives. This is done by having professionals who make the classroom as friendly, welcoming, and safe as possible. Strong leadership leads to strong staff, which best support the families and children with whom the staff work.</p>