



Using the *Second Step* Pre/K and Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) Programs Together



The *Second Step* and DECA programs are both used nationwide to help strengthen the social and emotional skills of young children. Together they provide an excellent means to assess, build, and strengthen children's social skills, protective factors, and resilience. The attached alignment chart shows how the concepts taught in the *Second Step* lessons link to DECA protective factors and strategies for the classroom.

What is the *Second Step* Program?

The award-winning *Second Step* violence prevention curriculum integrates academics with social and emotional learning. Children learn and practice vital social skills, such as empathy, emotion management, problem solving, and cooperation. These essential life skills help children in the classroom, on the playground, and at home. The *Second Step* program has been shown to reduce discipline referrals, improve school climate by building feelings of inclusiveness and respect, and increase the sense of confidence and responsibility in students. The program includes teacher-friendly lessons, training for educators, and parent-education tools.

What is the DECA Program?

Based on resilience theory, the DECA Program is a five-step system for assessing children's skills, planning for instruction, and evaluating progress. Central to the DECA Program is the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA), a standardized measure of attachment, self-control, and initiative—three within-child protective factors that serve as building blocks for social and emotional skill development, school readiness, and resilience. The accompanying *Classroom Strategies* guide contains strategies to aid teachers in strengthening children's protective factors. An additional resource, *For Now and Forever*, offers families clear explanations of the protective factors, along with strategies to build social skills at home.

Using the Programs Together

The benefit for educators in using the *Second Step* and DECA programs together is the ability to focus on the *Second Step* goals of preventing aggression and building social and emotional skills while emphasizing the DECA Program philosophy of protective-factor strengthening and resilience building.

Educators can use information from the DECA assessment to help identify which children are strong in the three main DECA Program protective factors: attachment, initiative, and self-control. Then they can use *Second Step* lessons to help build strengths in these protective factors, as well as other social and emotional skill areas. In addition, educators can use the DECA social and emotional skill-building strategies offered in the classroom and parent guides to support *Second Step* skills and concepts, and the *Second Step* focus on empathy further enhances the DECA strategies.

Before teaching a *Second Step* lesson, teachers can refer to the attached alignment chart to note which protective factors they are building in the lesson.



How the *Second Step* Preschool/Kindergarten Curriculum Aligns with the DECA Program

Second Step Unit I: Empathy Training

Goal: To help children develop empathy skills. Children with good empathy skills can identify emotions, take others’ perspectives, and respond emotionally to others.

Key elements: Identifying feelings and showing care and concern

| Second Step lesson overview | DECA protective factors that will be strengthened through this Second Step lesson | Sample DECA strategy to help enhance this Second Step lesson |
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| <p>Lesson 1, Setting the Stage for Second Step Study: Establish rules for group discussion and identify listening skills. Children will be able to name and demonstrate class rules and identify clues that someone is listening. (card 1)</p> | <p>Self-control: Children are more likely to follow the rules when they help set them. When there are just a few rules, it’s easier for children to remember what they are supposed to do. They feel more competent and in control of their actions.</p> | <p>In the <i>DECA Classroom Strategies Guide</i> (CSG), a strategy for establishing rules is outlined with tips for the teacher to involve the children in the rule-making process. (CSG, p. 93)</p> |
| <p>Lesson 2, Feelings: Children will be able to name some basic feeling words (happy, sad, angry/ mad) when presented with physical clues and demonstrate use of group rules. (cards 2–4)</p> | <p>Attachment, self-control, and initiative: Learning to recognize and name feelings helps children develop trust, gain self-control, learn to problem solve, and grow in confidence as they play with others more successfully.</p> | <p>Suggestions are offered for educators and parents for providing materials that allow children to explore and express their feelings. (CSG, p. 59)</p> |
| <p>Lesson 3, More Feelings: Children will be able to identify more complex feelings when presented with physical cues (surprised, afraid/scared, yucky/disgusted). (cards 5–7)</p> | <p>Attachment, self-control, and initiative: Young children tend to view events and experiences from their own perspectives, so they find it difficult to see other points of view. Adults can help them learn to understand their own feelings and express them in acceptable ways. With maturity and experience, children become more aware of other people’s feelings and better able to interact positively with others.</p> | <p>Ideas are offered to help children understand their feelings and the feelings of others. (CSG, p. 94)</p> |
| <p>Lesson 4, We Feel Feelings in our Bodies: Children will be able to understand that physical cues can help them identify their feelings. (card 8)</p> | <p>Attachment and self-control: As children learn about their feelings and the expression of those feelings within their own bodies, they begin to develop self-regulation skills. Self-regulation skills are essential as children adapt and adjust their expressions, emotions, and energy level in accordance with the ever-changing world in which they learn and play.</p> | <p>Games are suggested that help children cooperate and self-regulate, in turn helping children recognize and express emotions at the same time. (CSG, p. 83)</p> |

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| <p>Lesson 5, Feelings Change: Children will be able to understand that feelings can change and identify times when their feelings about a situation have changed. (card 9)</p> | <p>Attachment, self-control, and initiative: With the use of books and other classroom props (such as puppets, felt boards, etc.), children can think about what the characters feel and do and what happens next as a result of their actions. Children then learn to relate their personal experiences to those of the fictional characters, and eventually are able to apply what they have learned to situations in the future.</p> | <p>Through use of feelings books and other props, children will learn to relate experiences of characters to their own personal experiences. (CSG, p. 80)</p> |
| <p>Lesson 6, Same or Different? Children will be able to compare physical and emotional similarities and differences between two children. Children will be able to understand that people can have different feelings about the same situation. (card 10)</p> | <p>Attachment, self-control, and initiative: Children’s self-concept comes from defining who they are and what makes them similar to and different from other people. An accurate self-concept leads a child to build skills, competence, and self-esteem.</p> | <p>Items are recommended for the learning environment that support children’s development of a sense of self, helping them define what makes them similar to and different from other people. (CSG, p. 58)</p> |
| <p>Lesson 7, Accidents: Children will be able to understand the meaning of the word <i>accident</i> and know what to say when they do something by accident. (card 11)</p> | <p>Self-control and initiative: It is important for children to understand the difference between an intentional and unintentional incident that may lead to the same negative result, such as a child getting hurt. Children gain independence, self-control, and confidence when they can learn to recognize problems on their own and begin the problem-solving process. Children can learn to analyze a situation and respond appropriately to the intention of the behavior.</p> | <p>Strategies are offered to teach children problem-solving skills and encourage them to use their skills to resolve conflicts. (CSG, p. 84)</p> |
| <p>Lesson 8, I Care: Children will be able to show they care about someone and understand that listening is one way to show that you care. (card 12)</p> | <p>Attachment, self-control, and initiative: Children can gain a sense of community and belonging by participating in a small group. It is easier for them to develop trusting relationships with teachers and peers, pay attention, share ideas, and listen and respect each other.</p> | <p>Suggestions for dividing the class into smaller groups for meetings, story time, and other group events are offered. (CSG, p. 79)</p> |

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| <p>Lesson 9, I Help: Children will be able to identify how they can help in various situations and demonstrate helping behaviors. (card 13)</p> | <p>Self-control and initiative: When children do things for themselves, they feel powerful and competent. These feelings strengthen self-esteem and give children the self-confidence to take on challenges and build new skills and knowledge.</p> | <p>Suggestions are provided to support children’s growing independence and competence. (CSG, p. 94)</p> |

Second Step Unit II: Emotion Management

Goal: To help children manage strong emotions such as frustration, excitement, disappointment, and anger. Emotion management includes calming down, impulse control, and focus, or the ability to remain focused on a goal while resisting external distractions.

Key elements: Identifying strong feelings, ways to calm down, and anger management

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| <p>Lesson 1, Strong Feelings: Children will be able to understand that feelings vary in strength and apply the concept to their own feelings about different situations. (card 14)</p> | <p>Self-control: Every child is an individual with unique skills, interests, and needs. Children vary in their ability to use self-control, and thus the positive guidance approach a teacher would take in helping them deal with their feelings would be different with each child and in each situation.</p> | <p>Positive guidance strategies are offered to fit the child and the situation. (CSG, p. 95)</p> |
| <p>Lesson 2, Calming Down Strong Feelings: Children will understand how to do belly breathing. Children will identify and apply the ways to calm down. (card 15)</p> | <p>Attachment and self-control: Children can learn to calm themselves by using relaxation techniques. When they are more in control of their expression of feelings, they are better able to connect with peers and adults.</p> | <p>Relaxation techniques are provided for the group as a whole and for individual children. (CSG, p. 81)</p> |
| <p>Lesson 3, More Ways to Manage Strong Feelings: Children will be able to understand more ways to manage strong feelings. Children will be able to recall an emotion-management strategy they already use. Children will name a grown-up to talk to about strong feelings. (cards 16–17)</p> | <p>Attachment, self-control, and initiative: Small-group activities help children develop many skills. They learn to follow instructions, share and take turns, try different strategies, cooperate with others, solve problems, make decisions, and trust adults and peers. Working directly with an adult in a small-group setting on feelings activities may help a child feel safer and better able to discuss strong feelings.</p> | <p>The teacher is encouraged to lead small-group games and discussion about feelings by making him or herself an “option” during free playtime. By letting children know that they are interested in hearing what the children are thinking and feeling, teachers are creating a safe environment for children to express themselves honestly. (CSG, p. 79)</p> |

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| <p>Lesson 4, Dealing with Waiting: When they have to wait, children will be able to apply ways to calm down and identify and apply coping skills. (card 18)</p> | <p>Self-control and initiative: Transition times are often challenging for children who lack strong protective factors. As children learn to delay gratification and cooperate with others while maintaining a respectful and safe learning environment, their protective factors and social interactions are strengthened as well.</p> | <p>Teachers are offered suggestions for how to involve the children in transition and waiting times to keep them actively engaged while they are also learning to delay gratification. (CSG, p. 71)</p> |
| <p>Lesson 5, Dealing with Not Getting What You Want: Children will be able to understand the meaning of the word <i>disappointed</i> and apply ways to calm down when they feel disappointed. (card 19)</p> | <p>Attachment and self-control: When a caring adult takes the time to get on a child’s level and really listen to what the child’s words and body language are saying, the child will come to experience a stronger sense of trust, knowing that the adult cares about his or her feelings. This bond with a caring adult may help the child express disappointment in a more appropriate way when the feeling arises again in the future.</p> | <p>Suggestions are offered for teachers on how to identify and empathize with a child’s point of view. (CSG, p. 113)</p> |
| <p>Lesson 6, Am I Angry? Children will be able to name physical signs of anger. Children will be able to understand why angry, hurtful behaviors are not okay. Children will be able to understand the meaning of the words <i>tense</i> and <i>relaxed</i>. (card 20)</p> | <p>Self-control: Children who display aggression often have come to use this strategy when they feel nothing else can help them meet their need. Learning a more appropriate way to express anger and frustration will help children feel more in control and feel better about themselves.</p> | <p>The <i>Classroom Strategies Guide</i> offers a six-step process to identify and work through aggression. Teachers will find useful information to help prevent aggression as well as how to help other children deal with it when it does occur. (CSG, p. 142–146)</p> |
| <p>Lesson 7, Dealing With Being Hurt: Children will be able to calm down when accidentally hurt. They will be able to say they are hurt and ask what happened. Children who hurt others accidentally will be able to apologize. (card 21)</p> | <p>Self-control and initiative: Children who are accidentally hurt will need regulatory skills to aid them in settling down and calmly figuring out what happened. When a child’s actions or words accidentally hurt another child, the child who caused the incident will be able to help smooth over the situation independently.</p> | <p>A checklist for developmentally appropriate guidance offers recommendations for helping children learn self-control and responsiveness to the needs of others. (CSG, p. 122)</p> |

Second Step Unit III: Problem Solving

Goal: To teach children a three-step problem-solving model. This model reflects current research about the processes that socially competent children use for dealing with social situations. The model is adapted to the developmental level of young children. Step 1 is “How do I feel?” Step 2 is “What is the problem?” And Step 3 is “What can I do?”

Socially competent children are able to:

1. Read a social situation (identify the problem)
2. Identify prosocial goals for interactions (staying friends, having fun together)
3. Generate possible solutions
4. Select a solution that best meets the social goal
5. Carry out the selected solution
6. Evaluate the outcome of the solution

Key elements: Problem-solving steps, prosocial behaviors, and skills for making and keeping friends

| <i>Second Step lesson overview</i> | DECA protective factors that will be strengthened through this <i>Second Step</i> lesson | Sample DECA strategy to help enhance this <i>Second Step</i> lesson |
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| <p>Lesson 1, Dealing with Losing Something: Children will be able to identify a problem in a given situation and generate solutions to the problem. Children will be able to predict the consequences of actions. (card 22)</p> | <p>Attachment and initiative: The teacher and the children should be equal partners in the problem-solving process. During problem-solving time, the teacher first listens to the child’s perspective and then offers his or her own ideas about what the child has suggested. This strategy helps children learn to use logic and reasoning to discuss and address social and emotional concerns. The one-on-one time with the teacher supports the building of a stronger relationship.</p> | <p>Problem-solving time is outlined in the <i>Classroom Strategies Guide</i>, along with a role-play of how this might work with an individual child. (CSG, p. 112)</p> |
| <p>Lesson 2, Dealing with Distractions: Children will be able to understand how to maintain attention and continue with an activity when there are distractions. Children will be able to apply the problem-solving steps. (card 23)</p> | <p>Self-control: Children can be encouraged to turn their body away from a child displaying distracting behavior or from a distracting event. They can then be encouraged to turn their attention back only when a more acceptable behavior is being displayed. The child or children presenting the distraction will be positively rewarded with the other child’s attention and learn that the more appropriate behavior is the one that gets them the attention they desire. This technique should not be suggested to a child when someone is hurting or about to hurt another child or him- or herself.</p> | <p>Ignoring inappropriate behavior is a strategy suggested for teachers, but it can easily be adapted into a lesson for helping children ignore certain challenging behaviors and distractions. (CSG, p. 111)</p> |

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| <p>Lesson 3, Interrupting Politely: Children will be able to recognize pauses in a conversation, demonstrate a polite interruption, and apply the problem-solving steps. (card 24)</p> | <p>Attachment, self-control, and initiative: Children are learning an important and difficult task—to balance their own needs with those of the group. They need lots of practice to learn how to negotiate, cooperate, listen to, respect, and get along with others.</p> | <p>Tips are provided for helping children learn skills and behaviors to play and learn with others. (CSG, p. 92)</p> |
| <p>Lesson 4, Fair Ways to Play: Children will be able to understand sharing, trading, and taking turns as fair solutions to two children wanting to play with the same thing. Children will apply the problem-solving steps. (card 25)</p> | <p>Attachment and initiative: Children have fun and gain a sense of belonging when they play and work together. They can enjoy doing things they couldn't do alone or work together to achieve a common goal.</p> | <p>Activities and experiences that encourage cooperation are listed. (CSG, p. 82)</p> |
| <p>Lesson 5, Dealing with Having Things Taken Away: Children will be able to understand when they need to calm down before using the problem-solving steps. Children will be able to understand and apply non-blaming “I” statements and apply the problem-solving steps. (card 26)</p> | <p>Attachment, self-control, and initiative: Dedicate sufficient time to teaching children problem-solving skills they can use now and in the future. Children gain confidence when they can learn to solve problems on their own.</p> | <p>A problem-solving process is outlined on page 85 of the <i>Classroom Strategies Guide</i>. The basic steps are in line with the basic steps identified in the <i>Second Step</i> curriculum: say what happened, define the problem, think of other solutions, agree on a solution, try the solution and think about how it worked, and try another solution if the first one didn't work. (CSG, p. 85)</p> |
| <p>Lesson 6, Dealing with Name-Calling: Children will be able to understand that name-calling that hurts someone's feelings is not okay. Children will be able to apply “I” statements and ignoring as effective coping strategies for name-calling that hurts feelings. Children can identify an adult to tell if they cannot stop the name-calling and apply the problem-solving steps. (cards 27–28)</p> | <p>Attachment and self-control: When children begin using inappropriate language, they usually do not know the literal meaning of the words they are saying until someone tells them, so they do not know that society considers certain words unacceptable. This information is best provided from a trusted adult in a caring, but firm, tone. The purpose of name-calling is often to hurt the other persons' feelings. The child who calls another a name needs to learn more appropriate ways to communicate feelings or express needs. The child being called the name needs to know how to speak up for him- or herself as well.</p> | <p>In the <i>Classroom Strategies Guide</i>, teachers can find useful suggestions for dealing with name-calling in the classroom. (CSG, p. 150–154)</p> |

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| <p>Lesson 7, Learning to Have Fun with Our Friends: Children will be able to understand that when people play in fair ways, both people have fun. Children will understand that others sometimes have different wants or likes. Children will apply the problem-solving steps. (cards 29–30)</p> | <p>Attachment, self-control, and initiative: Children learn to cooperate when using materials that are more fun when used by two or more people. During group play, children learn to make friends, handle frustration, and listen to and respect each other.</p> | <p>Providing materials that promote cooperation and group play will create more opportunities to observe children and help them learn the skills needed to “play fair with each other.” (CSG, p. 59)</p> |
| <p>Lesson 8, Joining In: Children will be able to understand and apply the joining-in steps. Children will understand that joining in takes persistence. Children will be able to predict consequences of actions. (card 31)</p> | <p>Attachment, self-control, and initiative: Initiating activities allow children to learn patience, handle frustrations, and sometimes even cope with rejection. Children gain a sense of self as separate from others by playing alone at times and inviting children to play at other times. Children use thinking and social skills to play and carry out ideas.</p> | <p>Tips are offered to help encourage children to initiate their own activities, alone or with others. (CSG, p. 81)</p> |
| <p>Lesson 9, Keeping Second Step Skills Going: Children will be able to name one concept or skill they learned in the <i>Second Step</i> lessons. (card 32)</p> | <p>Attachment, self-control, and initiative: When children can verbalize what they have “learned,” they are one step closer to internalizing that skill. Strong language skills are needed to play and get along with other children and adults.</p> | <p>Opportunities for language development and skill building are suggested. (CSG, p. 84)</p> |

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