

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

More children are ready to succeed in kindergarten with development of pre-academic (literacy and math) and social-emotional skills. Medical and dental screenings help children to be healthier and, therefore, more able to learn. The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) addresses this by serving the children in greatest need of prekindergarten education, health and nutrition interventions, and family support.

The Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) is a national assessment of characteristics in preschool children, specifically those traits thought to result in more positive behavioral and psychological outcomes for at-risk children. DECA includes measures of self-control, initiative, and attachment, as well as an overall indicator for social-emotional development (total protective factors). There is also a scale for behavioral concerns. Results are reported as "Concerns," "Typical," or "Strengths." Teachers use DECA results to develop individualized curriculum and guidance to support children's social and emotional development. The assessment is administered by parents and by teachers, after they observe children for at least four weeks in the fall, then again in the spring.

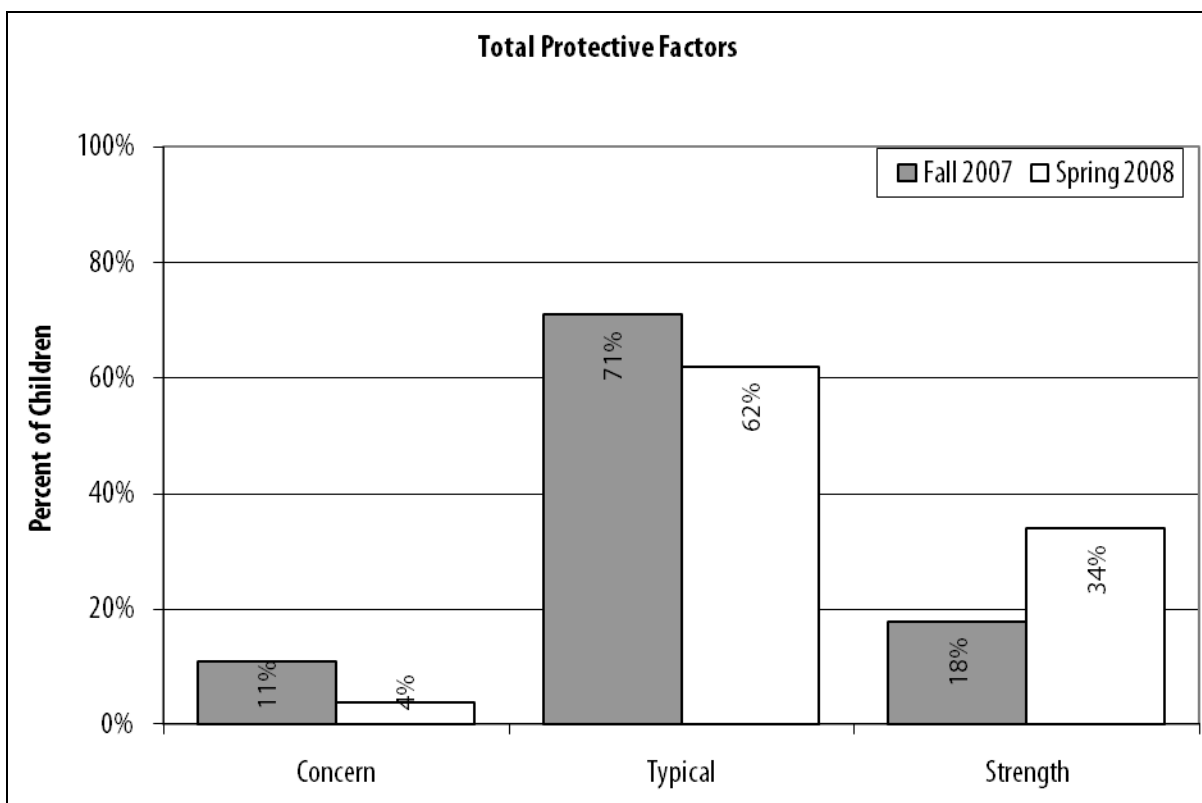
In 2007-08, DECA use was voluntary in ECEAP. The Department of Early Learning (DEL) collected DECA results for 70% of ECEAP children (4,850 children in fall 2007 and 4,962 in spring 2008). In 2008-09, DECA use is mandatory in ECEAP.

DATA:

Between fall 2007 and spring 2008, the number of children whose self-control was a serious concern was reduced from 8% of ECEAP children to 4%. The number of children for whom initiative was a strength increased from 16% to 32%. "Total Protective Factors", an overall indicator of the child's attachment, initiative, and self-control, was a serious concern for 11% of children and was reduced to 4%.

	Fall 2007			Spring 2008		
	Concern	Typical	Strength	Concern	Typical	Strength
Self Control	8%	67%	25%	4%	59%	37%
Initiative	12%	72%	16%	4%	63%	32%
Experiencing Attachment	12%	74%	14%	5%	69%	26%
Total Protective Factors	11%	71%	18%	4%	62%	34%

	Fall 2007	Spring 2008
Behavioral Concerns	11.9%	9.6%



DEFINITIONS:

The following definitions are from DECA:

Self-control is the ability to experience a range of feelings and express them using the words and actions that society considers appropriate. The skills associated with self-control allow children to get along with peers and adults and participate in an array of classroom routines, activities, and experiences. This closely correlates with three of the five readiness skills rated most important by Washington State kindergarten teachers in the 2005 OSPI survey. 94% of teachers rated peer interaction, following directions, and self-control/impulse control as “very” or “extremely” important.

Initiative describes a child’s ability to use independent thoughts and actions to meet his or her needs. In the preschool years, children are rapidly gaining new skills in all domains – physical, social, emotional, and cognitive. They are energetic and eager to think and act on their own. They demonstrate initiative by asking questions, making and carrying out plans, exploring, experimenting, and using creativity.

Attachment is a mutual, strong, and long-lasting relationship between a child and significant adults such as parents, family members, and teachers. When the sense of attachment is secure, both parties act in ways that enhance and strengthen the relationships. Securely attached children receive affection, comfort, protection, and guidance from their caregivers. They respond by showing their positive feelings for these important people in their lives.

The Total Protective Factors Scale gives an overall indication of the child’s strengths related to the resilience factors of attachment, initiative and self-control. This scale is the most reliable and valid overall indicator of protective factors within the DECA and is particularly useful in outcomes measurement and program evaluation.

The Behavioral Concerns Scale measures a wide variety of problem or challenging behaviors. The behaviors included on this scale are typical of children who have problems with aggression, withdrawal, attention, and extreme emotions. Some of the individual behaviors (e.g. temper tantrums) may be developmentally appropriate for some children at certain developmental

stages. Above average scores, however, are unusual and should trigger further assessment of possible problems and the development of a positive behavioral guidance plan.

SOURCES: Department of Early Learning
Devereux Early Childhood Assessment.

DISCUSSION:

ECEAP begins services with a new group of children each fall, with the goal of finding the children most in need of services. Student average fall developmental status (for incoming students) varies from year to year.