Connecting Curriculum, Courses and DECA

With 16 consecutive years of membership growth, DECA's programs continue to experience record levels of participation. However, nearly 80 percent of DECA's membership is comprised of students in 11th and 12th grades. Most other career and technical education programs and career and technical student organizations engage students earlier.

DECA has a tremendous impact on students' college and career choices. More than 70 percent of DECA members at the 2009 International Career Development Conference indicated that DECA has influenced their future career plans. Likewise, more than 65 percent indicated that DECA has influenced their future college plans.

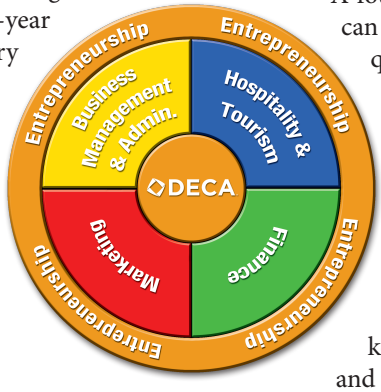
Students begin developing their personal plans of study – including high school, postsecondary and career decisions – as early as middle school. Certainly, DECA has a strong record of helping students discover successful futures, and DECA should be part of that process from the beginning.

Programs of Study

The Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act passed by Congress in 2006 requires the development and implementation of programs of study. Programs of study are a systemic method of delivering seamless, non-duplicative instruction from the secondary to postsecondary levels. According to the Act, programs of study should integrate academic and career and technical instruction, provide technical preparation in a career field and lead to technical skill proficiency, an industry-recognized credential, a certificate or a degree in a specific career field.

With the introduction of programs of study, DECA has adopted a new model that helps students with interests in the business field attain foundational knowledge and skills while they determine which career pathway and specialty best reflects their individual talents and interests.

DECA is working diligently to integrate its programs, competitive events and curriculum resources to assist in the development of a sequence of courses, starting as early as the ninth grade, for each career cluster. DECA's recently introduced Principles of Business Administration (PBA) Events, for example, are designed specifically for first-year members in introductory marketing and business courses. These events encourage members to explore career paths that best suit their interests and talents while gaining the experience of interacting with a business professional.



Making Connections Earlier

Imagine a program where you connect with ninth graders, mentor and guide them through all four years of their high school experience, and watch them flourish as a graduating senior.

Introduce DECA to ninth graders and use DECA's programs to help guide career exploration, leadership development and social intelligence. Excited about DECA's programs, these students participate in the PBA Events, thus exploring a career field and gaining important leadership skills through interactions with a corporate professional.

After your DECA members have experienced the thrill of competition, encourage them to continue their DECA experience and choose one of DECA's Team Decision Making Events, focusing on concepts relating to the entire career path of each cluster.

As students learn more about specific career paths in more specialized courses, they participate in DECA's more specialized competitive events such as the Individual Series Events and Marketing Representative Events their junior and senior years. As members embark on their postsecondary plans, they can continue to participate in DECA's college division.

The Impact on Your Local Program

A four-year secondary program can beneficially impact the quality and reputation of your DECA chapter. If you offer more courses, more DECA members can participate in your chapter. With a projected decline in student population, this diversification will help keep your course enrollment and DECA membership high.

DECA recognizes that state and local programs each have their own curriculum models. Therefore, some courses and competitive events may be offered at several levels. For example, a school with a strong entrepreneurship program may offer these courses and integrate these competitive events earlier.

DECA Membership Eligibility

DECA serves students in grades nine through twelve with interests in marketing, business management, finance, and hospitality and tourism career fields. DECA recognizes that state and local programs may have differing eligibility requirements. Check with your state association.

DECA

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DECA research findings courtesy of the
National Research Center for Colleges and University Admissions.

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Post-secondary	Specialized Courses and Training	Specialized Courses and Training	Specialized Courses and Training	Specialized Courses and Training
Grade 12	Entrepreneurship, Business Law	Accounting II	Travel and Tourism, Hotel and Lodging Management	Sports and Entertainment Marketing, Fashion Merchandising, Advertising
Grade 11		Accounting I		Advanced Marketing
Grade 10	Business Management	Introduction to Finance	Introduction to Hospitality	Introduction to Marketing
Grade 9	Principles of Business Administration	Principles of Business Administration	Principles of Business Administration	Principles of Business Administration
	BUSINESS MANAGEMENT	FINANCE	HOSPITALITY	MARKETING

At each level, DECA is an integral part of the experiential learning process. This model is an opportunity for your local program to provide a sequence of courses. Instructors and counselors should work closely with students and parents to develop a plan of study that best reflects each student's abilities, interests and talents.

Course Sequences

Course sequences can be formulated from the same curriculum framework that is the basis of the National Curriculum Standards and DECA's Comprehensive Competitive Events Framework. In this framework, students begin the sequence attaining knowledge and skills that are common across the four career clusters and then progress into more specialized career paths as their interests develop.

Tier 1: Business Administration

Students in this introductory course, such as Principles of Business Administration, learn foundational knowledge and skills that are common across the four career clusters.

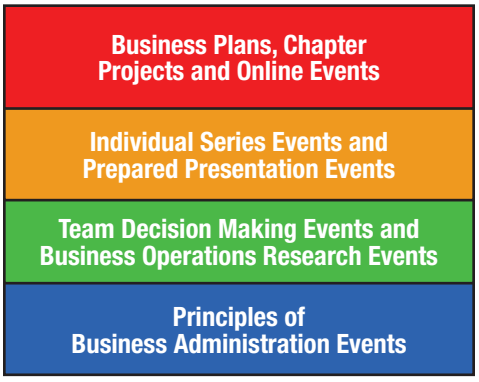
Tier 2: Career Cluster Core

In these courses, students learn knowledge and skills in instructional areas unique to all careers within one career cluster. For example, in a marketing course, instructional areas include channel management, marketing-information management, market planning, pricing, product/service management, promotion and selling – commonly referred to as the functions of marketing.

In the finance course, for example, content is divided into the areas of compliance, financial-information management, product/service management and risk management.

Tier 3: Pathways

These courses focus on knowledge and skills needed in careers grouped into broad-based occupational opportunities. Some pathway courses may be integrated into the high school curriculum, while others are better suited for post-secondary programs.



DECA's Comprehensive Competitive Events Framework places event models in levels that align with the Career Clusters curriculum framework.

For example, an advertising class would be comprised of knowledge and skills and performance indicators from the marketing communications pathway in the marketing cluster. Likewise, accounting courses would be offered at the high school level in the accounting pathway, while courses in the insurance pathway might be better suited for post-secondary education.

Tier 4: Specialties

Finally, the specialty level courses address knowledge and skills needed for each specific career within the pathway. For example, in the professional selling pathway, specialty careers may include pharmaceutical sales, real-estate sales and more. These courses would commonly be taken at the post-secondary level as a continuation of this model.

Implementation

1. Review course offerings.

Determine how your current course offerings align with the career clusters initiative. Look for enrollment trends, student interest and occupational outlook.

2. Expand your focus.

Study the career clusters initiative as many state career and technical education departments will require implementation of a program of study. If you've always taught marketing courses or accounting courses, examine the larger scope of the four career clusters to create a sequence of courses.

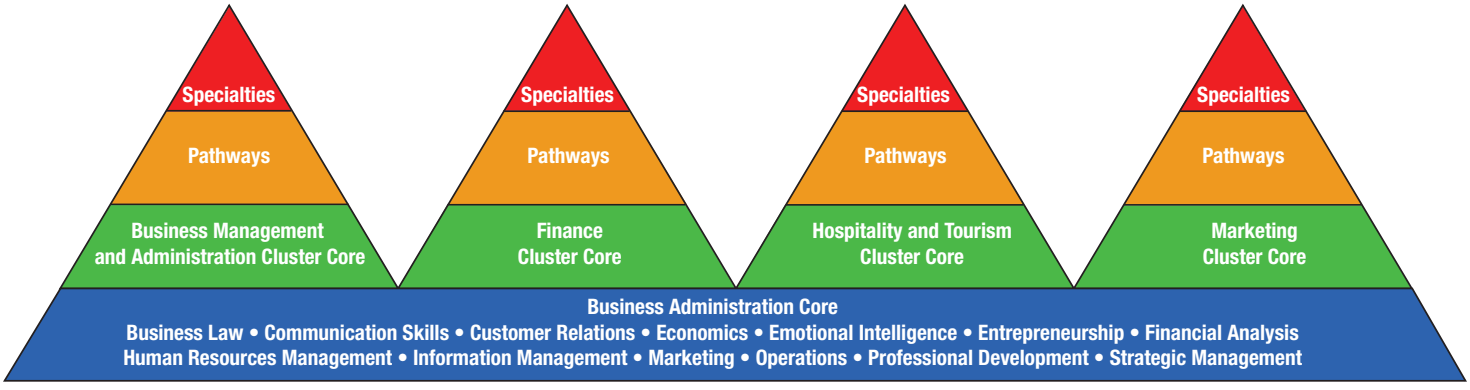
3. Explore collaboration opportunities.

Collaborate with all teachers who teach courses in the business administration model, and explore opportunities for partnership. For example, marketing students may be responsible for the product selection and promotional plan for your school-based enterprise, while accounting students may be responsible for managing accounts payable and creating balance sheets. Management students may be responsible for staffing and schedules.

4. Promote your program.

Don't let your visionary work go unnoticed. Show your administration how you are aligning your local program to meet state and national career and technical education standards.

Since many course decisions are made by students in the eighth grade, reach out to eighth grade teachers and students to promote DECA. Encourage them to enroll in a class during ninth grade and join DECA.



The curricular structure of the Comprehensive Competitive Events Framework starts at the Business Administration Core level, which serves as the foundation of knowledge and skills essential for all careers in the Business Management and Administration, Finance, Hospitality and Tourism, and Marketing Career Clusters. For a listing of Cluster Core Instructional Areas for each cluster, visit http://www.deca.org.

Advantages

Benefits to DECA Members

DECA members can explore a variety of career fields earlier and attain specialized knowledge and skills as their interests grow.

Members have more opportunities to experience DECA's benefits. They can begin competing and enhancing their skills earlier, making them more competitive in a global marketplace.

Members will notice that the content in their courses will align with DECA's competitive events, thus reinforcing the instructional process.

Benefits to Schools

This model helps local programs meet criteria set by the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act of 2006. This criteria includes developing programs of study, adopting industry-validated standards and providing a progression of non-duplicative instruction to help students gain technical skill attainment.

Implementation of this model can translate into a strong DECA program that improves student achievement for a large group of students.

Benefits to Instructors

Instructors will diversify their course offerings to meet fluctuating enrollment as graduation requirements increase and the number of students decreases. DECA advisors will have a larger impact on more students by reaching out to students at all grade-levels.

Career Pathways

Pathways are groupings of occupations within a career cluster that share common knowledge and skills. They assist educators in developing coordinated and non-duplicative sequences of courses that identify both secondary and postsecondary elements. Students begin learning foundational concepts, then those more specific to a career path, and finally those specific for an occupation.

Business Management and Administration Pathways

- Administrative Services
- Business Information Management
- Corporate/General Management
- Human Resources
- Operations Management

Hospitality and Tourism Pathways

- Lodging
- Recreation, Amusement and Attractions
- Restaurants and Food and Beverage Services
- Travel and Tourism

Finance Pathways

- Accounting
- Banking Services
- Business Finance
- Insurance
- Securities and Investments

Marketing Pathways

- Marketing Communications
- Marketing Management
- Marketing Research
- Merchandising
- Professional Selling

Expanding your target market builds a strong DECA program

Involving students as early as their freshman year in DECA can lead to a strong chapter with thriving membership, a solid and meaningful program of work and competitive events success. If you are unable to connect with freshmen or sophomores through your classes, consider an innovative pre-DECA program.

DECA Advisor Laurie Fraser at Lincoln East High School in Nebraska started DECA 9, a subsidiary of the school's larger DECA chapter to engage this target market and foreshadow larger opportunities.

"Our ninth graders weren't connecting," Fraser said. "They didn't have the knowledge about DECA, and they didn't know what classes were available."

Any student with an interest in the business or marketing field can join DECA 9. These members are exposed to the business and marketing courses offered at the high school as well as the DECA program. They also explore career pathways as they relate to their interests and talents.

DECA 9 members participate in many of the same activities as the upperclassmen — career exploration, social activities, competitive excellence training and community service. They even have the opportunity to compete as dues paying members at the state and national levels.

However, DECA 9 members also have opportunities designed specifically for them, helping ease the transition to high school. For example, her senior DECA members organized a career fair of 12 entrepreneurs, and the freshmen members were invited to attend. DECA 9 members also organize their own events, such as community service activities.

Since DECA 9 members typically cannot drive, they hold their meetings immediately after school for only 30 minutes.

The result of DECA 9 has been rewarding for both the members and the program.

"We found that we were able to identify leaders in that group (of ninth graders) who would remain officers as juniors and seniors," said Fraser.

Many of the DECA 9 members enroll in business and marketing classes – such as World of Business, Business Management, Marketing, Advanced Marketing, International Business and Entrepreneurship – during their high school career and experience the benefits of DECA.

DECA 9 members at Lincoln East H.S. in Nebraska conduct their own community service events such as partnering with the Capital Humane Society.

As a result, the chapter has strong membership from the DECA 9 audience and continuous loyalty to the DECA program once they are upperclassmen.

Strategies to implement a Pre-DECA Program

Goals:

- Achieve increased involvement and promotion of your DECA chapter throughout your school.
- Create a connection between DECA members and other students.
- Experience an increase in chapter membership and an easier recruitment process.
- Build membership with more experience and more understanding of DECA.

Target Market:

Reach students one-year prior to your membership eligibility requirements. For example, if students usually begin membership in DECA their junior year, recruit sophomores to participate in your Pre-DECA program.

Organization:

Your chapter has several options to provide leadership and organization for its Pre-DECA Program:

- Designate DECA chapter officers to work specifically with the Pre-DECA Program's organization, promotion, membership recruitment and activity planning.
- Create a committee of experienced DECA members to organize and implement the Pre-DECA Program.

Involving Your Pre-DECA Members:

Use these activities to jump-start your Pre-DECA program.

- Invite Pre-DECA members to assist DECA members with DECA events and fundraisers.
- Host Pre-DECA Program socials to familiarize program members with DECA members, advisors and activities. Incorporate marketing, leadership and networking activities into these socials.
- Hold contests for Pre-DECA members to create a catchy, powerful name for the program, t-shirt designs, etc.
- Host a practice competitive events session for Pre-DECA members. DECA members facilitate and judge practice competitive event role plays for the Pre-DECA Program members.

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