

DASC Grade Age Transition

— Why We Chose a Balanced Approach

Beginning with the Fall 2026 season, DASC will move from birth year groupings to **Grade Age** in alignment with U.S. Soccer. There were several ways we could have made this change, and after careful consideration, DASC chose a **Balanced Transition** model.

Our goal is simple: **meet national standards** while still protecting the **community, relationships, and development pathways** that make DASC special.

What Is the Balanced Transition?

Instead of dissolving all teams and starting over, or allowing a wide-open free-for-all, the

Balanced Transition:

- Implements **Grade Age** club-wide starting Fall 2026.
- Allows **current players to remain eligible for their existing team** (grandfathering), while still requiring tryouts for placement.
- Uses a **clear tryout process** with coach and independent evaluator scoring.
- Keeps the **Top 3 rule** for players trying out one grade up, to ensure fairness.

- Removes extra “Play Up” application forms and builds requests into the tryout process itself.

Why We Didn’t Choose a “Hard Switch”

Hard Switch: dissolve every team and rebuild strictly by Grade Age.

On paper, this is simple. In reality, it would:

- Break up many long-standing teams all at once.
- Disrupt friendships and team culture built over years.
- Feel sudden and harsh for players who are still developing confidence.

We felt this would cause **unnecessary disruption** and a negative experience for many families, especially younger players who are just finding their footing in travel soccer.

Why We Didn’t Choose a Wide-Open “Play Anywhere” Model

Open Switch: allow players to try out for their Grade Age and multiple older grades with few restrictions.

This might sound flexible, but it would likely:

- Create **confusion** over where each player “belongs.”
- Make it harder for coaches to form balanced rosters.
- Increase pressure on players to “play up” whether they are ready or not.
- Lead to more frustration and appeals after tryouts.

We felt this would create **chaos and uncertainty** rather than clarity.

Benefits of the Balanced Transition

By choosing a Balanced Transition, we are trying to bring together the best parts of all options. Key benefits include:

- **Stability for Players & Teams**
Many teams will move up together, and current players remain eligible for their existing team. This protects the relationships, trust, and team culture that families value.
- **Fair & Transparent Placements**
Players still earn their roster spots through **annual tryouts**. Independent evaluators and coaches both score players to reduce bias and make decisions more objective.
- **Development First**
Teams and placements are built around where players will *grow*, not just where they fit in one season. Some teams may stay in a lower Grade Age if that better supports the group’s development.
- **Alignment with National Standards**
DASC remains fully aligned with U.S. Soccer and EPYSA requirements, while still honoring our local community.
- **Clear Pathways & Expectations**
Players can see where they are eligible to play, which tryouts they need to attend, and what is required if they wish to try out for a higher grade.

What This Means for Your Family

We know that any change can feel uncertain, especially when it involves your child's team. Our commitment is to:

- Explain the process clearly and consistently.
- Support coaches as they navigate roster decisions.
- Provide honest, development-focused feedback to players.
- Keep long-term growth, joy in the game, and community at the center of our choices.