SCHOOL-BASED ENTERPRISE

ARIZONA DECA

CONTENTS

1. What Is a School-Based Enterprise? 2
2. Before You Open: Starting an SBE 4
3. Running Your SBE: Day-to-Day Operations 6
4. The 10 Certification Standards at a Glance 8
5. How to Break Down a Performance Indicator (KPI) 11
6. The Certification Process, Step by Step 14
7. Competing at ICDC: The SBE Academy 17
8. Appendix 20

1. What Is a School-Based Enterprise?

A School-Based Enterprise (SBE) is a real, ongoing, student-managed business operating inside a school — a store, snack bar, coffee cart, spirit-wear shop, or service business such as screen-printing or graphic design. Unlike a one-time fundraiser, an SBE runs continuously throughout the year as a hands-on learning laboratory. It gives students the chance to apply what they are learning in Marketing, Finance, Hospitality, or Management courses to a live operation with real money, real customers, and real consequences.



Food Operations vs. Retail Operations

Every SBE is classified into one of two categories, and that classification determines how you complete your certification project and which category you compete in at ICDC.

FOOD OPERATIONS

- Product mix is primarily food or beverage — prepared or assembled by students, or hot food brought in from off-site to sell.
- Food items make up the largest share of items sold and/or the largest share of gross sales.
- Typical examples: coffee shops, snack shops, convenience-style stores, cafes, lunch counters.

RETAIL OPERATIONS

- Product mix is primarily non-food merchandise — spirit wear, school supplies, gifts, etc.
- Non-food items or services make up the largest share of items sold and/or gross sales. Pre-packaged snacks may be part of the mix but are not the majority.
- May also specialize in a service, such as graphic design, screen printing, a student-run credit union, or consulting.

Why Run an SBE?

An SBE is one of the few DECA experiences where students aren't simulating a business — they're running one. Well-run SBEs deliver value at every level:

- Real financial literacy — budgeting, cash flow, break-even analysis, and profit margins learned by doing, not by worksheet.
- Career readiness — students practice customer service, vendor negotiation, inventory management, and leadership in a live setting.
- Funding for the chapter — SBE profit commonly funds DECA conference travel, membership dues, scholarships, and community outreach.
- Coverage of all ten National Curriculum Standards — Financial Analysis, Operations, Marketing-Information Management, Market Planning, Product/Service Management, Pricing, Distribution/Channel Management, Promotion, Selling, and Human Resources Management.
- 21st Century Skills — critical thinking, collaboration, communication, and creativity, developed through genuine responsibility rather than a classroom simulation.



2. Before You Open: Starting an SBE

Eight steps to take before your SBE ever rings up its first sale.

STEP 1 Decide: Food or Retail? — Look honestly at what you intend to sell and where the majority of your revenue will come from. This decision should be made first, since it shapes your vendor relationships, your health and safety obligations, and your eventual certification and competition category.

STEP 2 Get Buy-In and Approval — Meet with your administration (principal, and typically a vice principal over clubs and activities), your district's business services or student activities office, and — for food operations — your district's nutrition services department. Many strong SBEs are formally linked to a CTE Marketing, Management, or Hospitality elective, with a required orientation or "lab week" for every new student worker before they're turned loose on the floor.

STEP 3 Choose a Location — Prioritize visibility and foot traffic. Consider proximity to (or intentional distance from) the cafeteria, space for a line to form without blocking walkways, room for shelving, refrigeration, and a checkout counter, and whether outdoor seating or shade is feasible.

STEP 4 Build Your Staffing Model — A sustainable SBE typically has layered staffing: a DECA chapter advisor who oversees curriculum alignment and compliance; an adult store manager (if possible) who coaches day-to-day and signs off on paperwork; DECA officers — especially a finance-focused officer who leads budgeting; general members and CTE class students who rotate through training; and, optionally, a paid student intern who assists with closing and reporting.

STEP 5 Set Up Financial Systems — Open (or confirm) a school activity account at the district level for all SBE deposits. Select a point-of-sale (POS) system with secure logins, barcode scanning, and receipt printing. Build your first-year budget, projecting income (SBE resale revenue, co-fundraisers, membership dues) against expenditures (resale inventory/cost of goods, conference costs, community events, equipment). Decide how you'll track daily numbers — spreadsheet software, your POS reporting suite, and/or dedicated accounting software.

STEP 6 Choose Vendors & Your Opening Product Mix — Request quotes from district-approved distributors. If you are a food operation, confirm every product meets your district's Smart Snack nutrition standards for sale during the school day, and find out how many non-compliant "exemption" sale days your district allows each year for special promotions. Decide on your opening width (categories) and depth (variations within each category) of product.

STEP 7 Put Policies in Place Before Day One — Establish cash-handling procedures (opening counts, closing counts, dual sign-off, deposit paperwork), health and safety rules (food handler certification where applicable, fire/emergency protocols, equipment training), security measures (cameras, restricted stockroom access, periodic spot audits), and a simple, clearly stated return policy.

STEP 8 Set Strategic Goals for the Year — Write two or three measurable goals — for example, growing revenue by a set percentage, launching a new product line, or increasing the frequency of community outreach events. These goals will directly answer your certification manual's SBE Description page and Standard 1 (Financial Analysis) questions, so it is worth deciding them deliberately rather than after the fact.



3. Running Your SBE: Day-to-Day Operations

Once you're open, consistency is what turns a school store into a model SBE.

3.1 Opening & Closing Procedures

- Opening: count the starting cash drawer against recorded totals, log into the POS system, restock using FIFO (first in, first out), and do a final cleanliness and organization check before customers arrive.
- Closing: count sales, reconcile the POS report against cash and card totals, secure cash in a safe for pickup, log out of the POS system, shut down equipment, and complete a final cleanliness check.
- Submit a signed deposit sheet to your school's bookstore or business office daily, and keep a copy on file — DECA expects financial records to be archived for several years.

3.2 Financial Management & Record-Keeping

- Reconcile daily deposits against POS reports; keep signed copies in a binder or shared digital folder.
- Review your budget against actual performance at least quarterly, and adjust spending or ordering as needed.
- Draft next year's budget before the current year ends (many chapters do this every spring) and submit it to administration for approval.

3.3 Inventory & Vendor Management

- Receiving: verify every shipment against the purchase order and invoice, inspect for damage, log accepted items into your inventory system, and store using FIFO.
- Inventory counts: combine a perpetual system (real-time tracking through your POS) with a physical count on a regular cycle — quarterly counts tied to a CTE class project work well.
- Stock turnover: order fast-moving products in larger quantities and more frequently; reduce order size on slow movers, and be willing to discontinue and replace an underperforming product.
- Shrinkage control: use cameras, train staff on proper handling, log damaged or expired goods, and conduct periodic spot audits.

3.4 Marketing & Promotion

- Collect primary data (surveys, focus groups, register conversations, POS reports) and secondary data (research on other SBEs or competitors) to guide decisions.
- Maintain an active social media presence to announce new products, hours, and recognition (such as an employee or volunteer of the month).

- Use visual merchandising — clear signage, a rotating digital menu, and product placement that follows natural customer traffic flow — to highlight your best sellers.
- Track what's working with simple metrics: post views/likes, informal customer feedback forms, and sales data before/after a promotion.

3.5 Pricing

- Choose a pricing strategy — cost-plus pricing (marking products up a set percentage above cost) is common and simple for SBEs with limited on-campus competition.
- Understand your break-even point and markup percentage for key products, and revisit prices whenever vendor costs change.
- Consider psychological pricing touches, such as pricing everything in clean increments, to speed up transactions and reduce cashier error.

3.6 Selling & Customer Service

- Train workers to greet every customer, use suggestion selling (placing small, inexpensive impulse items near the register), and handle indecisive or unhappy customers with patience.
- Write down what a "typical transaction" looks like in your store so new workers have a clear script to follow.
- Keep your return/exchange policy short, fair, and consistently applied**.**

3.7 Human Resources

- Recruit through a linked CTE elective and DECA membership; require a short, structured training period for every new worker before they work independently.
- Motivate with recognition (an employee/volunteer of the month), transparency about where profits go, and periodic appreciation events.
- Evaluate performance using a mix of self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and manager feedback.

3.8 Special Events & Community Outreach

- Concessions at games and school events often run under different product rules than the school day (Smart Snack rules typically apply only during school hours), so plan a separate after-school menu and setup.
- Use recruitment events — 8th-grade visit days, incoming-freshman nights — to introduce your SBE to future students and their families.
- Consider joint fundraisers with other clubs, with a clear, pre-agreed revenue split.

4. The 10 Certification Standards at a Glance

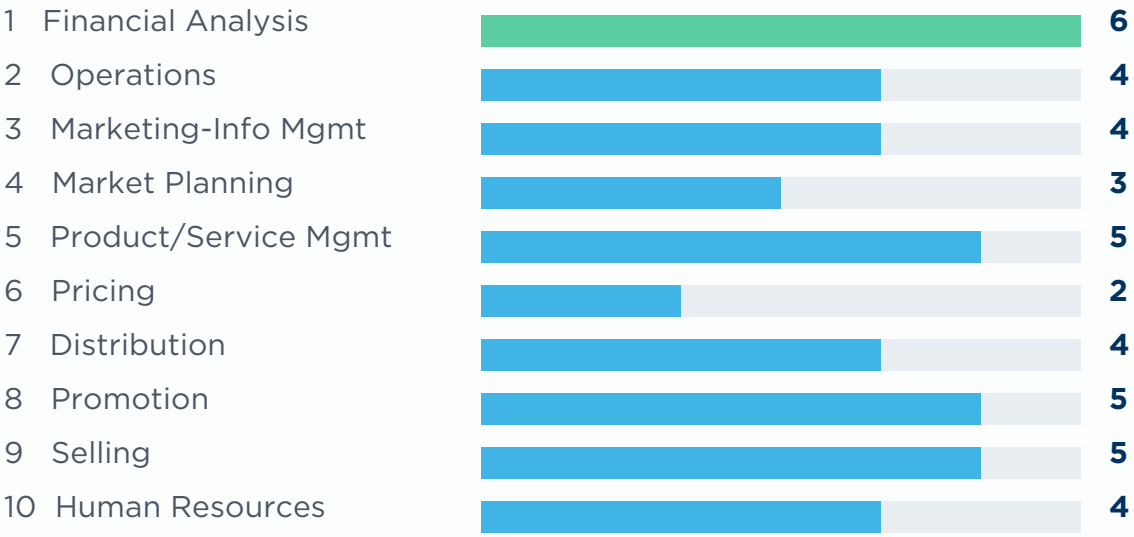
Certification is scored across ten National Curriculum Standards. Each has a set number of performance indicators (P.I.s), and your level depends on how many you document well.

- Financial Analysis (6 P.I.s): Bronze any 4, Silver any 5, Gold all 6.
- Operations (4 P.I.s): all 4 at every level.
- Marketing-Information Management (4 P.I.s): all 4 at every level.
- Market Planning (3 P.I.s): all 3 at every level.
- Product/Service Management (5 P.I.s): Bronze any 3, Silver any 4, Gold all 5.
- Pricing (2 P.I.s): all 2 at every level.
- Distribution/Channel Management (4 P.I.s): Bronze any 2, Silver any 3, Gold all 4.
- Promotion (5 P.I.s): Bronze any 3, Silver any 4, Gold all 5.
- Selling (5 P.I.s): Bronze any 3, Silver any 4, Gold all 5.
- Human Resources Management (4 P.I.s): all 4 at every level.

✦ Gold-Level Rule That Trips People Up

No matter how many performance indicators you complete, gold certification also requires that the SBE has been in operation for at least one full school year with students managing operations. A brand-new SBE cannot submit for gold in its first year, even with a perfect manual.

Performance indicators per standard (42 total)



Quick Reference: What Each Standard Covers

A quick reference for planning who writes which section.

Use this as a checklist while you plan who will write which section. Every performance indicator listed below has two to three required sub-questions in the official guidelines — always check the current-year guidelines for exact wording before you write your final answers.

Standard 1 — Financial Analysis

- Role of finance in business
- Need for financial information
- Nature of budgets
- Making responsible financial decisions
- Maintaining financial records
- Use of technology in financial management

Standard 2 — Operations

- Opening/closing the register or terminal
- Using equipment, tools, and machinery safely
- Health and safety regulations
- Routine security precautions

Standard 3 — Marketing-Information Management

- The need for marketing data
- Data monitored for marketing decisions
- Tracking trends
- Analyzing customer behavior

Standard 4 — Market Planning

- Developing a customer profile
- Conducting market analysis
- Linking performance measures to financial outcomes

Standard 5 — Product/Service Management

- Components of a retail image
- Choosing vendors
- Planning merchandise assortment
- Determining stock turnover
- Planning reductions/markdowns

Standard 6 — Pricing

- The nature and scope of the pricing function
- Factors affecting pricing decisions

Standard 7 — Distribution/Channel Management

- Customer service and distribution
- The receiving process
- Completing inventory counts
- Determining inventory shrinkage

Standard 8 — Promotion

- The nature of a promotional plan
- Visual merchandising
- Cross-merchandising techniques
- Planning special events
- Tracking marketing-communications activities

Standard 9 — Selling

- Determining customer/client needs
- Establishing a relationship with the customer
- Demonstrating suggestion selling
- Processing sales documentation
- Processing returns/exchanges

Standard 10 — Human Resources Management

- The nature of human resources management
- Fostering the right environment for employees
- Training staff
- Assessing employee performance

10	National Curriculum Standards scored
42	performance indicators across all standards
3	certification levels: bronze, silver, gold
4	levels on the judging scale for every indicator

5. How to Break Down a Performance Indicator (KPI)

5.1 What Is a Performance Indicator, Really?

Each of the 10 standards is broken down into performance indicators — the specific, measurable things your SBE must demonstrate. Think of each performance indicator as a mini key performance indicator (KPI): a discrete, gradable claim about how your business actually operates. Most performance indicators come with two or three required sub-questions, and all of them need an answer — partial answers are the single most common reason a strong SBE loses points. Judges score every indicator on the same four-point scale: Little/No Value, Below Expectations, Meets Expectations, and Exceeds Expectations.

5.2 The Five-Part Answer Framework

Apply this same structure to every performance indicator you write, in any standard. It works because it forces you to move from theory, to practice, to proof, to payoff.

1. DEFINE IT — Briefly explain the underlying business concept in your own words. This shows the judge you understand why the indicator matters, not just that you did something related to it.

2. DESCRIBE YOUR PRACTICE — Explain, step by step and in the present tense, exactly what your SBE does. Write it as a real operating process — not a general statement about what businesses in general do.

3. NAME THE STUDENTS — State who is responsible — by role or officer title, and which class or team — and what they specifically do. Judges are explicitly scoring for student ownership; an answer that reads as adult-run will lose points even if the process itself is excellent.

4. PROVE IT WITH EVIDENCE — Add real numbers: dollar figures, dates, product names, percentages, and quantities. “We track our sales” is generic. “We average $5.40 per transaction across roughly 883 weekly transactions” is proof.

5. CONNECT TO IMPACT — Close with the “so what”: the business outcome that resulted, and the skill or lesson students took away. This is what separates “Meets Expectations” from “Exceeds Expectations.”

5.3 Worked Example

Performance indicator: “Explain the significance of finance and how it can determine the ultimate success of the SBE” (Standard 1 — Financial Analysis).

1 — Define it: Sound financial management means allocating resources efficiently: budgeting for supplies, funding marketing, managing day-to-day cash flow, and using data to plan strategically.

2 — Describe the practice: The SBE uses financial data to make pricing, inventory, and resource-allocation decisions, and evaluates new products against financial projections before committing to them.

3 — Name the students: The chapter’s treasurer/financial officer maintains records that are reviewed by the school bookstore and the district business office; officers use this data during budget meetings.

4 — Prove it with evidence: The SBE generated $142,907.75 in one school year and $142,717.06 the next, and profits fund student travel to conferences and chapter scholarships.

5 — Connect to impact: Reinvested profit lets the SBE expand product lines, and students leave with real experience in budgeting, cash flow, and profit margins — skills directly transferable to future careers.

Second example — “Determine stock turnover” (Standard 5 — Product/Service Management).

1 — Define it: Stock turnover means keeping the shelf stocked with high-demand items while minimizing overstock of slower movers.

2 — Describe the practice: Students track weekly sales data and adjust order quantities so fast-selling items are reordered more often and in larger amounts, while slow movers are ordered in smaller quantities or discontinued.

3 — Name the students: The inventory team, trained by DECA officers and the advisor, uses the First-In, First-Out (FIFO) method so older stock always sells before newer stock.

4 — Prove it with evidence: A specific chip flavor is reordered every two weeks because it is a proven best seller, while a slow-moving trail-mix item was discontinued after several weeks of weak sales.

5 — Connect to impact: This reduces waste from expired product and keeps popular items in stock, while giving students real practice with data-driven purchasing decisions.

5.4 Common Mistakes That Lower Scores

- Answering only one of the two or three required sub-bullets and ignoring the rest.
- Writing in generic, textbook language with no specifics from your own store.
- Leaving students out of the answer entirely, so the process reads as adult-run.
- Using vague words (“a lot,” “often,” “many”) instead of real numbers.
- Never connecting the answer back to a business outcome or a student learning outcome.
- Copy-pasting the same paragraph across multiple performance indicators — reuse your data, but reframe the analysis for each indicator’s specific question.

5.5 A Fill-in-the-Blank Template

✦ Copy this into a working document for every performance indicator you write

“[Concept] matters to our SBE because ___. Specifically, our SBE handles this by ___. This is carried out primarily by ___ (officer/role/class), who ___. For example, [specific number, date, or product] shows ___. As a result, our SBE has been able to ___, and our student workers have learned ___.”

The Five-Part Answer Framework at a glance

1	Define it: explain the concept in your own words
2	Describe your practice: exactly what your SBE does
3	Name the students: who is responsible, and what they do
4	Prove it with evidence: real numbers, dates, and names
5	Connect to impact: the business and learning outcome

6. The Certification Process, Step by Step

6.1–6.2 Choose Your Level, Then Build the Manual

- Choose bronze, silver, or gold before you start writing. It sets how many performance indicators per standard you must document (Section 4). Gold also requires one full school year under student management.
- Title page: program name, target level, chapter name, advisor name and email, school address and phone, date, and Food or Retail Operations.
- SBE description page: one page covering target market, revenue, product mix, location, and strategic goals for the year.
- Table of contents: every standard and the page its documentation begins on.
- Body: each standard is a heading and each performance indicator a sub-heading. Add photos, graphs, and charts in the relevant sub-section, and include required attachments (like your budget or financial records).
- Bibliography: include one if you cited any secondary sources.

6.3 Formatting Checklist

Advisor submits online (no mailed entries). Body is 50 pages or fewer, major text is size 12, the footer shows chapter name, state, and page numbers, and an SBE photo is included.

Formatting at a glance

50	pages or fewer in the manual body
12	pt font size for major body text
1	online upload, submitted by your advisor

6.4 The Statement of Assurances

Your advisor electronically confirms six assurances. In plain language, your team certifies that:

- The entry is the work of current members of your chapter.
- No part of the entry has been submitted to the SBE Certification Program before.
- Any secondary research is credited through a bibliography, footnotes, or endnotes.
- All activities and research described are accurate depictions of your chapter's actual efforts.
- Everything described took place during the current school year (or the timeline in the current guidelines).
- DECA has the right to publish all or part of the entry, subject to appeal in extenuating circumstances.

6.5 Submission Logistics

Upload everything through DECA's online submission site, using the same advisor login as the DECA membership system. Submit one combined file or two (the manual and a separate SBE photo) in PDF, Word, or JPEG. Always confirm the current deadline and submission link on deca.org/sbe.

Submission at a glance

6	assurances your advisor confirms electronically
1	online submission site, using your DECA advisor login
3	accepted file types: PDF, Word, or JPEG

6.6 After You Submit

DECA Inc. reviews your documentation and emails advisors the certification level awarded.

- Bronze and silver certified SBEs receive a certificate and recognition at the association level.
- Gold certified SBEs receive a certificate and plaque; gold re-certified SBEs receive a certificate and medallion.
- Gold and gold re-certified SBEs may send up to two student managers to the SBE Academy at ICDC, with chartered association advisor approval.
- Judge evaluations become available on the submission website once results are released to advisors.

6.7 Staying Certified: Re-Certification

A gold certified SBE can stay at gold for up to five years total by completing the re-certification requirements for four years after initial gold certification. After four re-certifications, the SBE must complete the full original gold certification process again to keep the gold-level award.

Recognition by level

Bronze & silver	Certificate and association-level recognition
Gold	Certificate and plaque
Gold re-certified	Certificate and medallion
Gold & re-certified	Up to 2 managers at the ICDC SBE Academy

7. Competing at ICDC: The SBE Academy

Certification opens the door; the SBE Academy is where your team takes the story on stage.

7.1 Who Can Compete

- Only SBEs with gold certification or gold re-certification can attend the SBE Academy at the International Career Development Conference (ICDC).
- Attendance requires approval from your chartered association advisor.
- Participants cannot also compete in a separate Competitive Event or Emerging Leader Series academy that same year.
- Up to two student managers per gold certified SBE may attend, with one to two participants per entry.

7.2 Event Format

One 10-minute oral presentation to a judge, worth up to 100 points, entered in the category (Food or Retail Operations) your written project was certified in. Every participant must take part in presenting; judges expect shared delivery, not one student carrying the whole presentation.

7.3 The Rotating Topic

The topic changes every year and is always based on one of the ten certification standards. One recent cycle used Selling, which required participants to explain how their SBE:

- Determines customer/client needs.
- Establishes a relationship with the customer/client.
- Demonstrates suggestion selling.
- Processes sales documentation.
- Processes returns/exchanges.

Check Before You Prepare

Always confirm the current year's topic on deca.org/sbe before you begin. Your presentation must be built around whichever standard is selected for that competition cycle.

7.4 Presentation Rules

- Follow the dress code required for appearing before judges and on stage.
- Note cards referencing the project may be used during the presentation.
- Only visual aids you can hand-carry into the room are allowed (no wheeled carts or moving straps), and you set them up within the 10 minutes.
- No electrical power or internet is supplied, so generators are not allowed; sound is allowed only at a conversational volume.
- Flyers, brochures, pamphlets, and business cards may be handed to or left with the judge; items of monetary value may be handed over but not left behind.
- No food or drink in any capacity, even as product examples. Empty wrappers are fine, but never actual food or drink.

7.5 How Judges Score the Presentation

Judges complete a Presentation Evaluation Form covering eight criteria, for a maximum of 100 points. The five performance-indicator criteria are scored 0–15 each; the other three are scored as shown below.

Five performance indicators (5 × 15)	75
Visual aids that enhance the presentation	10
Overall impression of skill	10
Clear communication	5

Total possible score: 100 points



7.6 Tips for a Strong Presentation

- Apply the Five-Part Answer Framework from Section 5 live: define the concept, describe your practice, name the students involved, back it up with real numbers, and close with the impact.
- Rehearse against a timer. Setup counts against your 10 minutes, so practice carrying in and arranging visuals quickly.



- Make sure both participants have a genuine, active speaking role; uneven delivery is noticeable to judges.
- Bring a few hand-carried visuals with real data (a simple chart or a photo of your store) instead of a wall of text.
- Practice transitions between speakers so the presentation flows as one story, not two separate reports.

Before You Start Preparing

Topics, point values, and rules are set by DECA Inc. each year. Confirm them on deca.org/sbe before you begin.

7.7 Awards

Judges select the top preliminary presentations from each section within each category. Finalist teams are announced at the Achievement Awards Session and compete again in a final round. The top ten finalists receive red-white-blue ribboned medallions, and trophies go to first, second, and third place.

8. Appendix

8.1 Master Submission Checklist

- Confirmed Food Operations or Retail Operations classification.
- Selected target certification level (bronze, silver, or gold).
- If pursuing gold: confirmed at least one full school year of student-managed operation.
- Title page complete with all required fields.
- One-page SBE description drafted (target market, revenue, product mix, location, strategic goals).
- Table of contents lists every standard and its starting page.
- Every required performance indicator answered using the Five-Part Framework.
- Mandatory supporting documents included where required (e.g., budget copy, financial record copies).
- Report is 50 pages or fewer (excluding title page, summary, contents, and appendix).
- 12-pt font for major body text; chapter name, state, and page numbers in the footer.
- SBE photo included.
- Statement of Assurances reviewed with students before the advisor submits.
- Uploaded at sbe.decaregistration.com by the advisor before the current year's deadline.

8.2 Where to Find Current Official Information

www.deca.org/sbe has current-year guidelines, sample gold manuals, and re-certification requirements. sbe.decaregistration.com is the official submission site (advisor login only). Your chartered association advisor is the best source for state deadlines, ICDC approval, and local requirements.

8.3 Glossary

- SBE: School-Based Enterprise, a student-managed, ongoing business in a school setting.
- Performance Indicator / KPI: a specific, measurable claim about your operation that judges score directly.
- Food / Retail Operations: the two SBE categories, based on whether food or non-food items and services make up most sales.
- Smart Snack: USDA nutrition standards for food and drinks sold during the school day.
- FIFO: First-In, First-Out, an inventory method that sells older stock before newer stock.
- POS: Point-of-Sale system, the register or software that processes transactions and sales reports.
- Shrinkage: inventory loss from theft, damage, vendor error, or administrative mistakes.
- Cost-Plus Pricing: setting a price by adding a fixed markup percentage to cost.
- Break-even point: the sales volume where revenue equals the cost of acquiring the product.
- Cross-Merchandising: displaying complementary products together to encourage a larger purchase.
- Markup / ROI: markup is the amount added to cost; ROI measures profit relative to what was spent.
- Bronze / Silver / Gold: the three certification levels, based on how many performance indicators per standard are documented.
- ICDC: International Career Development Conference, where the SBE Academy is held.
- SBE Academy: the ICDC development and competition track for gold and gold re-certified SBEs.

✦ One Last Reminder

Point values, deadlines, and requirements are set by DECA Inc. each year and can change. Treat this guidebook as a framework, and check the current official guidelines for exact numbers before you submit.