



**THE STANDARD  
APPLICATION ONLINE:**

A One Size Fits All  
Application Solution

# WHAT IS THE SAO?

The Standard Application Online (SAO) is a free online service provided by SSATB to member schools, in which students submit their information, essays, transcripts, and recommendations just once, to apply to as many SSATB member schools as they like.

The SAO is not an enrollment management software solution, nor was it designed to be. It is a “plug and play” common application service that can be utilized by any school, regardless of the admission software and database used.



## Why should I use the SAO?

A common application solution is one that looks beyond state and provincial borders and positions schools within the larger context in which they operate—the global independent school market. A common application shared not just by schools in your area but by independent schools across the globe (akin to The Common Application at the college level) efficiently and effectively helps all schools increase their applicant pools and find new students!

It is proven that schools that adopted the SAO experienced an increase in applications; they have also received high marks from families for the system's ease of use.

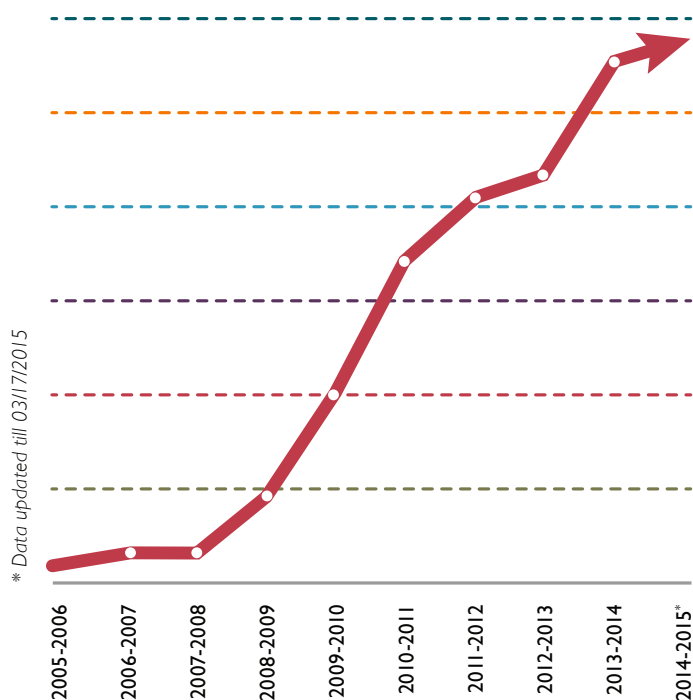
## A “One Size Fits All” Solution

The SAO is used by small schools (with correspondingly small budgets, that cannot afford to onboard a costly vendor-based online application solution) and large, high-volume schools who value the efficiency afforded by seamless data integration via the Application Programming Interface (API). Even regional groups of schools interested in making the application process less arduous for families have embraced the SAO.

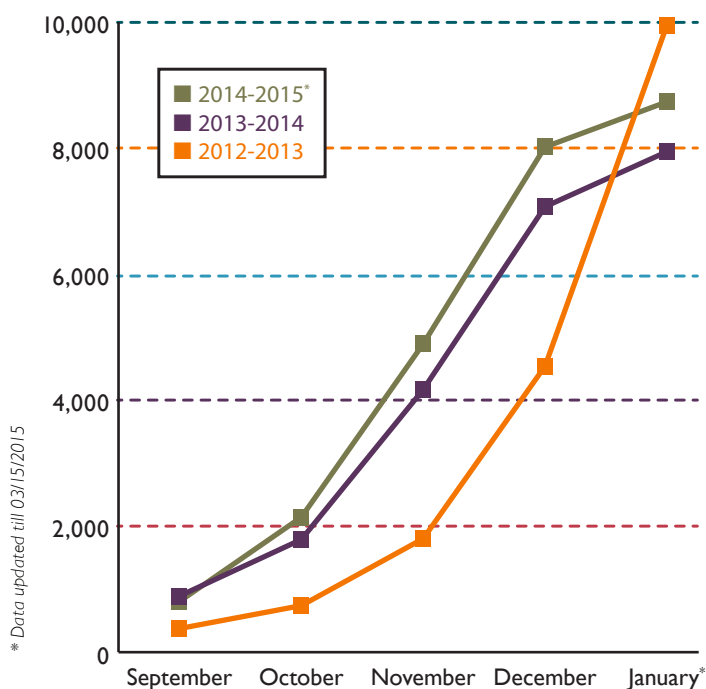
Boarding schools draw students from adjacent states and across the globe, and increasingly, day schools seek to attract international families and/or applicants transitioning to the region. With the use of SSATB's SAO, schools receive greater exposure while removing many barriers for families and generating the greatest benefit – increased applications and greater efficiency in processing applications!

# SAO USE IS ON THE RISE

## Growth - SAO Volumes



## Total Applications Submitted (by Month)



**Launched in 2005, the service has seen consistent growth year over year.**

The number of applications submitted to the SAO has grown an average of 27% year over year for the last five years. Already, more than 27,000 applications have been submitted by more than 7,300 applicants, as compared to 25,000-plus applications for the entire 2013-14 application year. Applicants are casting a wider net each year: applicants submitted an average of 3.5 applications this year versus 3.1 applications in 2013-2014.

Similar to last year, the vast majority (85%) of total applications submitted through the SAO service were to boarding schools and only 15% to day schools, but day schools actually comprise the majority of schools accepting the SAO (51%).

The majority of applications received for 2014-2015 were for 9th grades (60%), increasing 3% from last year. Introduced as a tool for PK – 5th grades in 2013, the SAO has seen small gains in use by students applying to the lower grades.

As reported last year, the SAO's new online system requires the applicant to pay for the application in order to start their work in the system. As a result, more users are submitting applications from September through December as opposed to just prior to the January deadlines. This allows admission offices to identify applicants earlier in the process and provides more opportunities to connect to them.

# WHAT THEY ARE SAYING ABOUT THE SAO

The SAO has served as a pathway to finding new students, simplifying application reading, increasing office process efficiency, and more. A key part of a school's enrollment toolbox, the SAO brings families back out in front of the application process.



## Timesaving and Easy



We've gained back significant hours in our weeks. Now, we can go right to our Member Access Portal (MAP) and see exactly what's coming in, what's finished, and what's still outstanding. We can check our numbers and download instantly. We can read applications remotely or at the same time as our colleagues. Most importantly, the SAO

has given us more time to spend connecting with students and families. We're an exclusive user of the SAO and saw a 70% increase in applications just through January!

*Peter Gilbert, Director of Admissions & Financial Aid,  
Salisbury School*



## Simple Solution for All Users



Using the SAO has been extremely helpful for both the applicants and for us at Blair. This application allows applicants (and recommenders) to select a

variety of schools to which they can send their data without having to recreate it. It also allows us a simple and easy way to upload applications and supporting documents. Furthermore, the technical support for both applicants and schools is superb. I am very impressed by the SAO and all of its capabilities.

*Peter G. Curran, Assistant Head of School  
for Enrollment and Communications,  
Blair Academy*



## Seamless Data Integration



For years I have dreamt of a paperless workflow, in which SSAT scores and writing samples, and all pieces of the application including recommendations,

land in our database automatically. Sunaina and the programmers at SSATB enabled Taft to achieve this dream. I can't say enough about the dedication of their team to make the API integrate seamlessly with our database, which has revolutionized our reading process.

*Peter A. Frew, Director of Admissions, The Taft School*



The successful implementation of an API will significantly reduce staff hours spent processing applications. With abundant data about individual applicants at

our disposal, it is critical that our marketing and recruitment processes focus on the use of this data instead of mundane data processing tasks that should be automated by databases.

*Tom Sheppard, Dean of Admission and Financial Aid, The Lawrenceville School*



## The Only Application You Need



Besides the benefits of real-time data, office efficiency, and database integration, we saw an increase of 25% in applications in our first year using the SAO. We

have happy families who are now asking us more questions about the school and less about the application. The SAO is the only application we accept, and 100% of our applicants use it.\*

*Julie Cucchi, Director of Admission and Financial Aid, Princeton Day School*

*PDS had a 25% increase in applications the first year!*

\*with the exception of New Jersey SEEDS Scholars and ABC candidates

# WHAT THEY ARE SAYING ABOUT THE SAO



## Highly Accessible, Widely Accepted



We strongly recommend the use of the SAO whenever possible to our 80 or so applicants to secondary school each year. It is the most widely accept-

ed and easily accessible of all common systems available to our students and their families. The students appreciate schools' ability to customize the application through the supplement and very much appreciate and utilize the online dashboard to track their application materials, teacher recommendations, and school documents. The SAO portal is the easiest portal to manage and doesn't require that families set up additional accounts to manage testing and applications. Simply, it is the best solution available to students and families accessing our independent schools.

*Francis M. Ryan, Assistant Headmaster,  
Rumsey Hall School*



**AVON OLD FARMS**  
SCHOOL

## Easy to Implement



Our transition to the SAO this year was seamless. Having used our own online application for the past several years, we were concerned about work

flow, content collection, and how file review would work. At the end of the day, we could not have been happier with the SAO. We were thrilled by the ease of integration into our system once the API was built, and many of our families, junior school, and educational consultant colleagues commented on how much they appreciated our implementation of the SAO. Given the success we found this year, we plan to use the SAO exclusively going forward.

*Brendon Welker, Dean for Enrollment  
and Institutional Advancement,  
Avon Old Farms School*



# SEAMLESS INTEGRATION WITH YOUR DATABASE

## What is an API?

An API, or Application Programming Interface, is a data bridge that allows systems to share information and data. SSATB offers data integration via a robust, gold-standard API that integrates application data directly into school databases. This service is provided free of charge to SSATB members.\* Once implemented, this integration is seamless and automatic; no other processing is involved.

## What database companies integrate with the SAO via the API?

As of May 2015, InResonance, Veracross, School Admin, Finalsity Apply, Proof Group, and Senior Systems\*\* have partnered with us to enhance their product offerings in this way for their client schools.

## What if I don't use one of these databases?

SAO data is delivered to schools in a standard, widely accepted industry format for exporting data: the .CSV file. These files are compatible with many database solutions once some initial data mapping is done. A school can map the fields in its database so that the data available for exporting through the MAP can be easily imported into its database or SIS – Student Information System. Database providers should be willing and able to support their clients in these efforts.

*\*The charge of data integration from a school's database vendor is not included.*

*\*\*Integration in progress*



VERACROSS<sup>®</sup> LLC  
SCHOOL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT



SchoolAdmin



Finalsity  
web solutions for schools

proof



SeniorSystems

Administrative Software for Independent Schools

## The SAO Badge

If your school is one of the more than 500 schools that accepts the SAO, say so by adding the SAO acceptance badge to your school's website and to all print publications. Let families know that you value applicants, not application forms. Schools that have placed the badge on their websites have seen an immediate increase in application volumes. Visit [www.admission.org/SAO](http://www.admission.org/SAO) to download the badge.



# WHY USE THE SAO?



**Free to SSATB member schools**



**20-minute application setup**



**Online recommendation forms**



**Customize with a school-specific supplement**



**Services all grade levels – PK- PG**



**Online application fee waiver tool**

On average, schools using the SAO experience a 20% increase in applications!



# THE SAO AS A SOLUTION

## Student Support Features

- Live and recorded webinars
- Step-by-step instructions (video and PDF)
- Full-time professional Customer Service Center available via phone, live chat, and email
- Applicant customization: Students determine school-by-school if they are applying for admission to a day or boarding program, applying for financial aid, and providing legacy information
- Access! Electronically receive application fee waivers granted by schools

## School Application Features

- Quick and easy application setup—get up and running in less than 20 minutes!
- Customize the application—easily add a school-specific supplement!
- Grade group customization for PK-PG—with appropriate forms and components in each grade level
- Flexibility in selecting application components (student essays, parent statements, recommendation forms)
- SAO badges to place on your website

## Admission Office Data Features

- Fully integrated system with real-time data managed through an Applications Workstation on your Member Access Portal (MAP)
- Easy integration of applications with your database through SSATB's robust, gold-standard API (Application Programming Interface) or with .CSV file download
- SSAT score delivery is integrated into the SAO file when the student indicates a school as a score recipient
- Built-in fee waiver tool to provide waivers to deserving students
- Easy accounting reconciliation – The SAO collects the fees! You receive the check! Check rosters easily accessible on the MAP

## Placement Director Tools

- Advisor Workstation for placement counselors
- Ability to track and manage applications on behalf of students and families
- Multiple methods for submitting teacher recommendation forms (online, PDF uploads, or mail to schools)
- Option to upload an advisor supplement letter with each student's application to an individual school

# WHO IS SUBMITTING THE SAO?

## Gender Breakdown of SAO Users 2014-15\*



**Female 43%**



**Male 57%**



**48%**

**of Applications are from Students inside the U.S.**

Thousands of families choose to use the SAO each year, citing its ease of use. More male students (57%) are currently using the SAO than females (43%). The vast majority come from a home where parents are married.

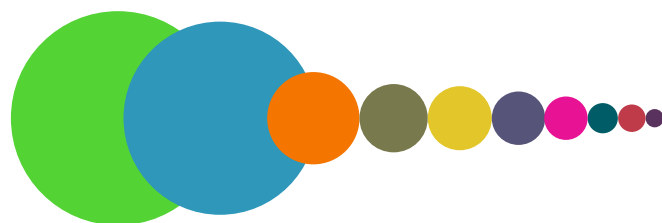
Similar to last year's trends, 34% of SAO applicants come from private/independent schools in the U.S. and Canada and 30% are from non-charter public schools within the U.S. and Canada.

Also in line with last year's numbers, applicants identifying themselves as white still remain the majority of SAO users (41%), followed by 35% of applicants identifying as Asian/Asian-Americans/Pacific Islanders.

Users from the U.S. (52% of the total number of users) contributed 48% of this year's application volume (down from 53% in 2013-2014). The use of the SAO continues to grow overseas, with 52% of SAO volume contributed by international applicants from 85 countries, of which 38% are from China.

Current School Type	% of Apps Submitted
American International School outside US and Canada	4%
Parochial School within US and Canada	4%
Private/Independent School within US and Canada	34%
Public Charter or Magnet School within US and Canada	2%
Public School within US and Canada	30%
School located outside US and Canada	22%
Homeschool/other	4%

## Unique Applicants by Ethnicity



- White 42%
- Asian, Asian American or Pacific Islander 35%
- Black or African American 8%
- Prefer not to respond 4%
- Multi-racial 4%
- Other Hispanic, Latino or Latin American 3%
- Others 2%
- Mexican or Mexican American 1%
- Puerto Rican <1%
- American Indian or Alaskan Native 1%

\*Data updated till 03/17/2015

## Top 10 Applicant Countries of Origin



United States



Korea (South)



Canada



China



Hong Kong



Vietnam



Taiwan



Thailand



Korea (Republic Of)



Japan

## Native English Speakers



# SUPPORT

## Real-Time Assistance

SSATB has a full-time, in-house professional Customer Service and Support Center that assists member schools and families (and all users of our systems/services).

### Members:

609-683-5558

[members@ssat.org](mailto:members@ssat.org)

[www.admission.org/SAO](http://www.admission.org/SAO)

### Families:

609-683-4440

[apply@ssat.org](mailto:apply@ssat.org)

[www.ssat.org/SAO](http://www.ssat.org/SAO)

## Free Webinars

SSATB also provides our member schools and families with free webinars on the SAO throughout the year. The recorded versions of the webinars, along with numerous training materials, are posted on [ssat.org](http://ssat.org) for families and [admission.org](http://admission.org) for our member schools.

## Training

SSATB employs a team of Outreach Directors to support our member schools across the globe. Each has a wealth of experience in independent school admission and is trained to provide the information you need to take advantage of the full suite of SSATB's services, including the SAO. Your Outreach Director will gladly schedule individual school trainings or group trainings (web and/or in person).

## SSATB Support Team



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