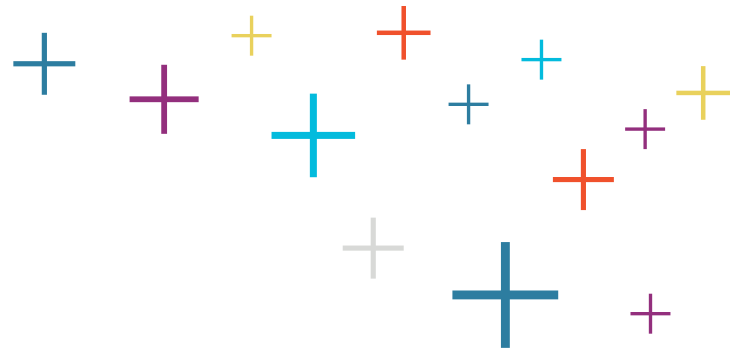The
Enrollment
Management
Association

Recruitment
and Retention
Tools

The Standard Application:

A Recruitment Solution
for Associations

About the Standard Application Online (SAO)

When the school application process is confusing, we create barriers to educational opportunity. Simplifying the application process allows enrollment leaders to focus on making the right match between school and applicant.

The Enrollment Management Association created the Standard Application Online to ease the application process for students and schools. It allows families to use a single website to submit applications to a variety of independent schools that align with their interests, while schools can collect all information (including biographic information, teacher recommendations, and transcripts) online, with the opportunity to customize the application with their own supplement.

Introduced first generation SAO in 2005

SAO 100% online by 2014

More than 300 schools now accept the SAO

Since launch, more than 200,000 applications to independent schools around the world were submitted using the SAO

About The Enrollment Management Association

The Enrollment Management Association (EMA) is a nonprofit membership organization governed by independent school leaders (school heads, admission professionals, CFOs, and representatives from access organizations). We are dedicated to fulfilling the organization's mission: To provide unparalleled leadership and service in meeting the admission assessment and enrollment needs of schools, students, and families.

At The Enrollment Management Association, we believe that the admission practices of the past will not sustain the independent schools of the future. Every day, we serve enrollment leaders, increasing their success through the best science, research, and training. Because when great schools enroll great students, everything is possible.

Here to Serve

Founded in 1957 as SSATB, today EMA serves the enrollment services needs of more than 1,000 independent schools in the United States, Canada, and worldwide. EMA acts as a partner and advocate, working with our members to achieve their professional best while advancing their institutions.
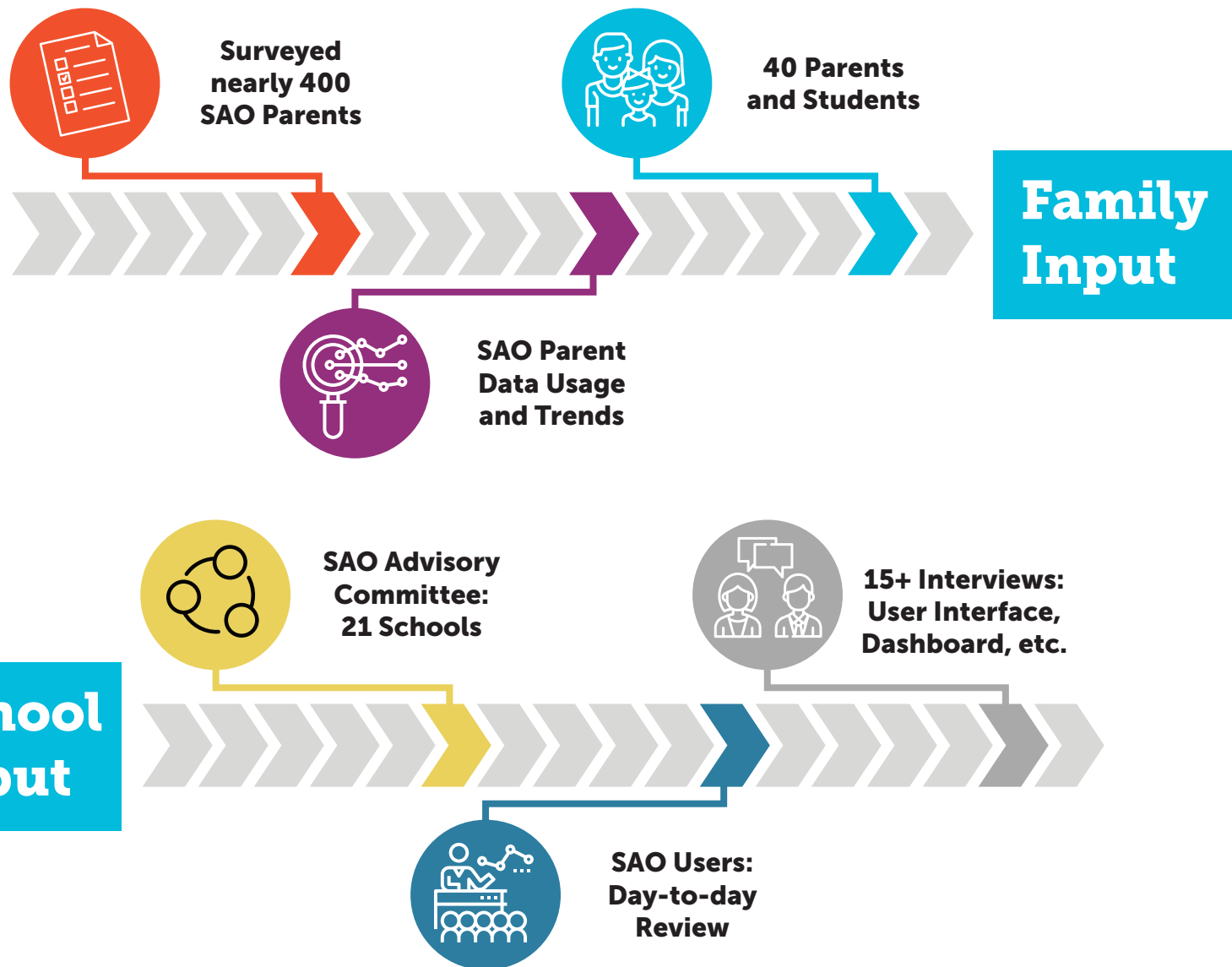
We design our resources and services to offer enrollment leaders and schools an integrated toolbox to increase their enrollment success. Through these smart and strategic approaches, we help enrollment and admission leaders earn and keep a seat at the leadership table, while educating heads, business officers, and other school leaders on the role of strategic enrollment management in the success of our schools.

Our flagship services include:

+ The Secondary School Admission Test (SSAT), used by member schools to help make admission decisions and administered to more than 80,000 students each academic year

+ The Standard Application Online (SAO), a common application platform that addressed the creation, collection, and delivery mechanism for over 41,000 applications in the 2016-2017 admission season and more than 200,000 applications since its launch

+ The newly-launched Character Skills Snapshot that measures a child's character skill development to complement more traditional cognitive assessments. The Snapshot gives admission teams richer holistic information and illuminates areas where their schools can help children grow, thrive, and shine.

Developed for and by SAO Users

The SAO was developed with both schools and families in mind. Our in-house dedicated SAO product team undertook extensive surveying of families who have used the SAO. Data analysis of their usage was completed to design user improvements. In addition, families and admission directors from a variety of schools participated in user testing sessions to determine features, layout, and an enjoyable user experience. Finally, EMA developed an SAO advisory committee made up of independent school admission directors to provide input, direction, and guidance on the SAO's development.

Surveyed nearly 400 SAO Parents

40 Parents and Students

Family Input

SAO Parent Data Usage and Trends

SAO Advisory Committee: 21 Schools

15+ Interviews: User Interface, Dashboard, etc.

School Input

SAO Users: Day-to-day Review

Association Members and the SAO

The SAO provides member schools of associations the opportunity to streamline the admission application process and provide families with an exceptional application experience. Our cloud-based SAO solution operates in real time and allows users (schools and family) to access information anywhere they have an internet connection. *While the SAO is not an enrollment management software solution, it is a "plug and play" common application service that can be utilized by any school—regardless of the admission software and database used.*
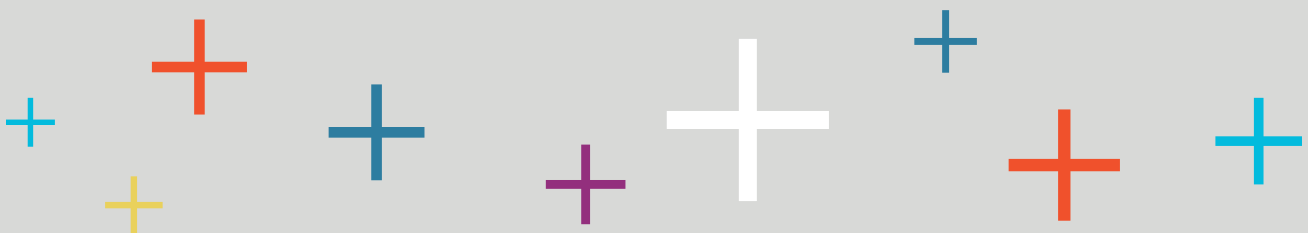
A Solution for All Association Members

While traditionally a free benefit for all EMA members, schools that are members of a participating association are eligible to receive a free SAO affiliate membership if they are not members of EMA.

Flexibility

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 that value the efficiency afforded by online delivery.

Association/consortium members can utilize the SAO immediately, given its flexibility and design, to accept applications for grade PK-PG. Even those schools that require unique applicant information take advantage of the SAO by utilizing its supplemental form functionality.
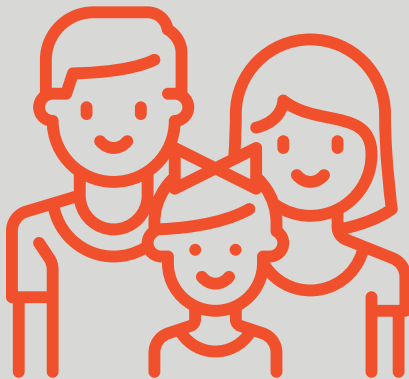
Increased Applications

Schools that adopt the SAO experience application increases, some as high as 20%. This number is even higher for schools that use the SAO exclusively.

The New Jersey Association of Independent Schools (NJAIS) and the Independent Schools of St. Louis (ISSL) utilize the SAO as their regional common application platform. Schools in both associations experienced an increase in applications and received high marks from families for the SAO's ease of use.

Family and
SAO User Support

EMA operates a full-time customer service and support center to work with EMA member schools and families. We also take on the responsibility of providing training and instructions for EMA member school users, placement directors, access organizations, and families.
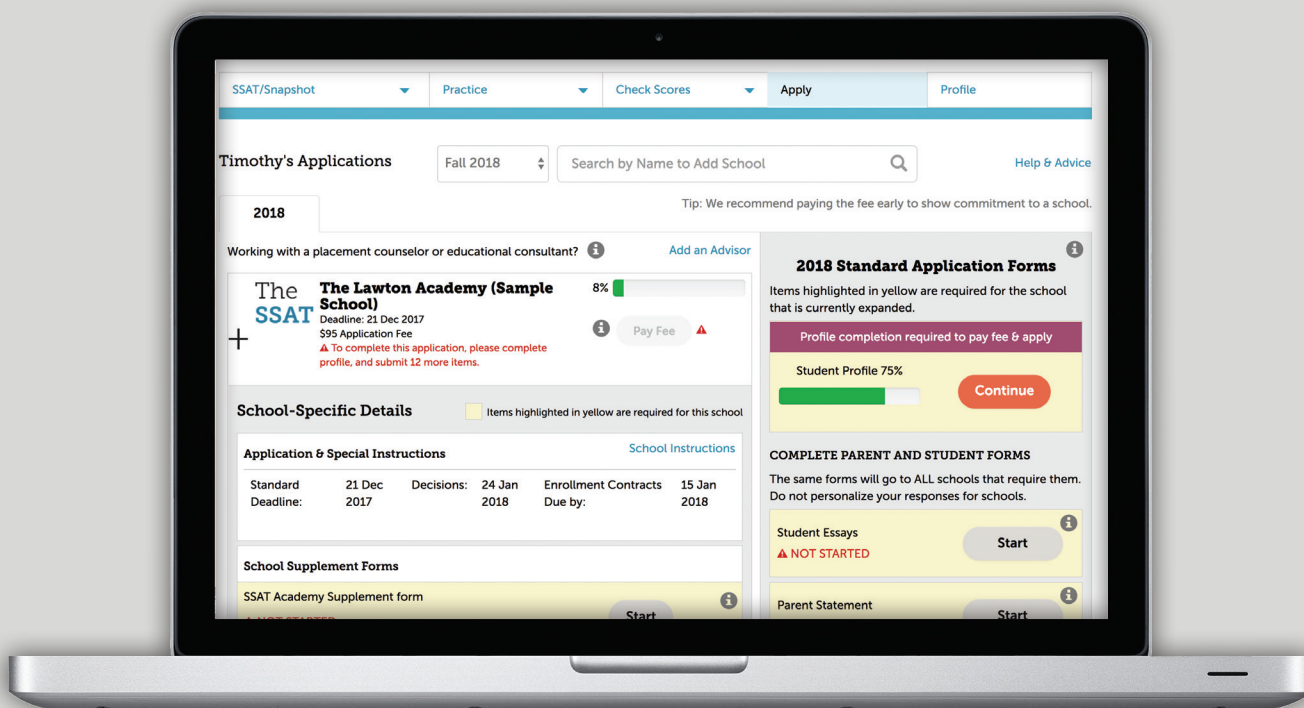
An Easy-to-Use Application for Families

Our cloud-based SAO solution operates in real time and allows users (schools and families) to access information anywhere they have an internet connection. Families can submit their information, essays, transcripts, and recommendations just once, online, to apply to as many schools that accept it as they like. Families manage their applications via a web-based Student Access Portal (SAP), which allows them to easily track, manage, and submit application pieces. Nearly 41,000 applications were submitted via the SAO last year, with 1/3 of the applications coming from international families.

Family Fees

As is standard with all schools accepting the SAO, EMA charges families a processing fee of $6.00 per school application to cover administrative costs. Schools receive their listed full application fee. For example, if a school has a $50.00 application fee, a family will be charged $56.00. The school will receive $50.00 for this application.
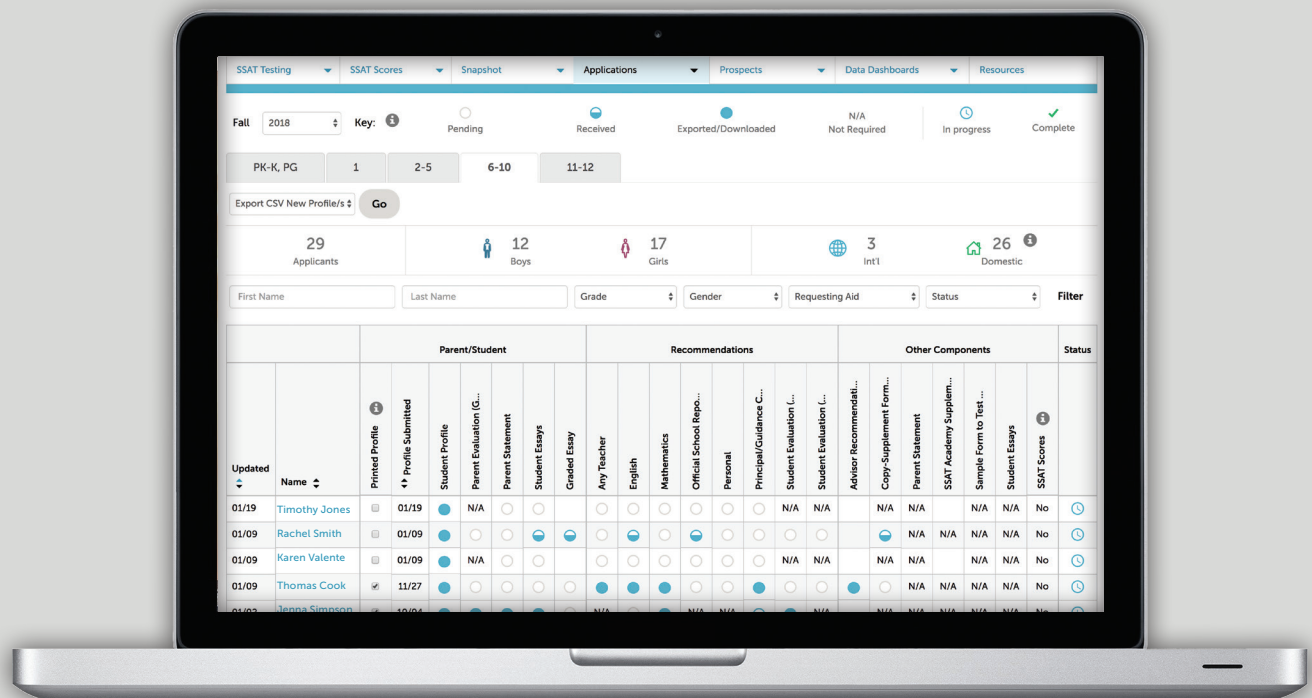

SAO Family View

Schools—Easy Setup and Applications at Your Fingertips

SAO setup takes less than 15 minutes per application. Applications are delivered electronically to schools (in real time) via our web-based Member Access Portal (MAP). Application data can be exported (biographic data fields only) and/or individual application components can be printed via PDF. The SAO's partnership with database vendors allows for seamless data integration with schools' systems. In addition, multiple school users can be logged in at the same time, and a user-friendly tracking system allows users to see what application pieces are complete, incomplete, and new.

School Dashboards

Dashboards offer easy and quick views and data points such as the number of applications received to date and comparison statistics on volume—year-over-year and month-over-month. The filters at the top allow users to toggle between grades, residential status and other elements to view real time data for quick views of program status, enrollment trends, or even to report out.

SAO School View

Seamless Data Integration

Most schools work with providers to develop a single source for the data systems needed on campus, from student records to homework and notifications. Collecting data from the Standard Application Online (SAO) and moving it into these systems has proven challenging for many admission offices in the past.

We knew it was essential to collaborate in order to allow our members to take full advantage of this powerful service. In 2013, taking the lead on feedback provided by member school users of the SAO, we partnered with the industry's foremost system providers to venture into the API (Application Programming Interface) economy and develop a robust, gold-standard API—a customer interface for technology products that allows software components to communicate. This data bridge allows admission offices to seamlessly integrate information and data between unique school databases and the SAO.

These leading enrollment management solutions offer integrations between their products and the SAO, eliminating the tedious work of data entry and saving countless hours for school admission teams.

As a platform that integrates with multiple vendors, the SAO allows schools to enjoy a seamless common application experience with any of our existing partners.

Our team is constantly working with other solutions in the marketplace to expand integration opportunities to allow for more schools to seamlessly integrate with the SAO.

Don't see your system provider? EMA is willing to partner with any vendor to provide a seamless API experience. Start the conversation today!

Our Partners

FinalsiteApply

inRESONANCE

blackbaud™
power your passion

proof
smart software, happy schools

SchoolAdmin

SeniorSystems
Administrative Software for Independent Schools

VERACROSS® LLC
SCHOOL INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

"The data and files now transfer into our database automatically, saving us a tremendous amount of time, giving us more information than we could enter manually, and making paper files obsolete (finally). The entire application, with recommendations and score reports, is there with all of our existing data and is accessible from anywhere for file reading, notes, and follow-up. The SAO was already preferred by many of our applicants, and with the integration, it instantly became our preferred application! This is an example of technology working as it should: saving time and effort for everyone involved."

- Bethanne Stish, Admission Systems Manager, Madeira School (VA)

Benefits of Membership for Association Schools

Affiliate Membership

In an effort to make the SAO more accessible, we created an SAO Affiliate Member status for association schools that are not EMA members, so that they might realize the benefit of a common application. This membership level **comes at no cost to schools** because our intent is to support the growth of independent school enrollment. The chart below indicates the different membership benefits between SAO Affiliate and full EMA members.
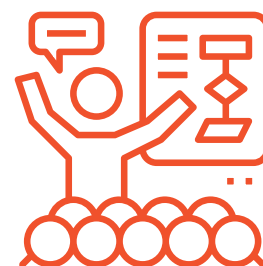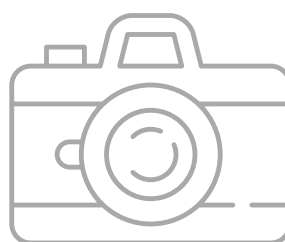
Full EMA Membership

The SAO Affiliate Member can be the first step in realizing the value of full EMA membership. EMA introduces schools and practitioners to a worldwide network of professionals who are embracing the holistic integration of admission, retention initiatives, marketing and messaging, financial aid principles, mission, and more. Our members know that by deploying a more comprehensive strategy for school enrollment management, the entire independent school community can flourish.

Our membership base—**the largest admission and enrollment facing among all independent school organizations**—means that our staff experts have a comprehensive view, and are on the leading edge when it comes to recommending innovative new tools and services to address what's next. No matter what kind of challenges or opportunities your school faces, our team will meet you where you are and help to create an action plan to increase your success.

Membership fees are based on enrollment size and range from $500 - $825 per school per year.

Reference the charts on the following pages to see how membership will benefit your school!

Membership Benefit Comparison

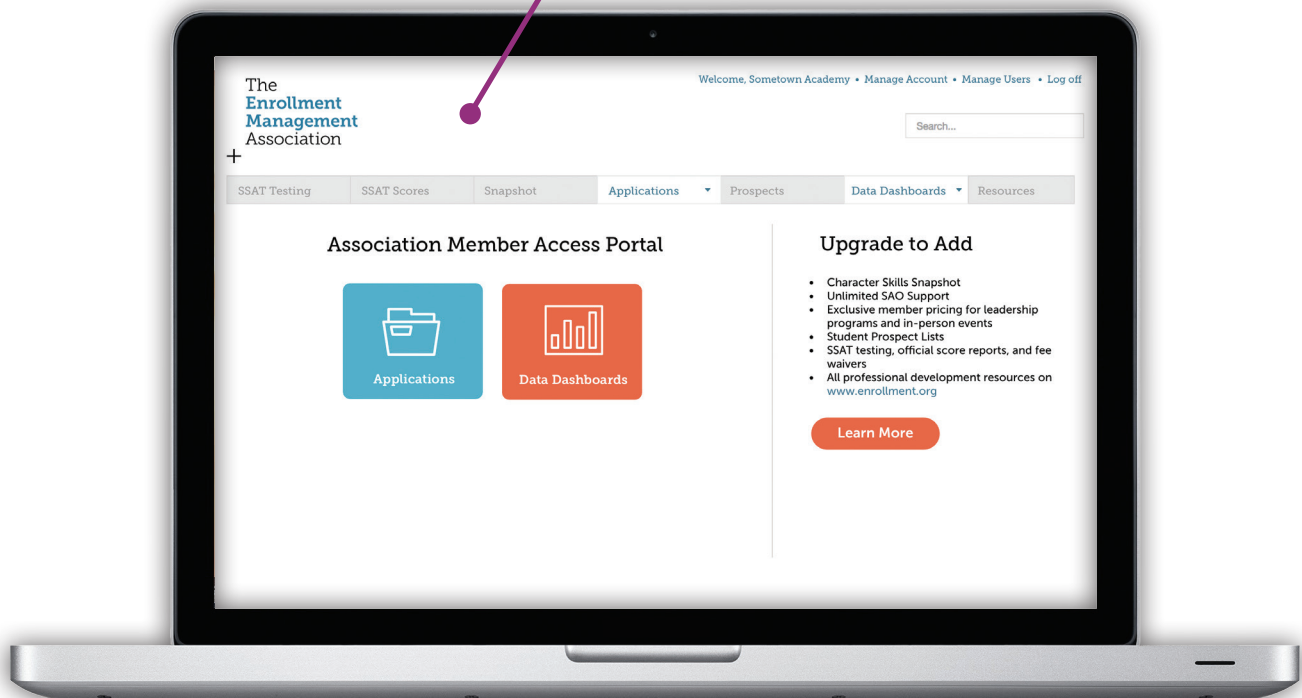| Service Benefits	Full EMA Membership	Affiliate Membership
Full use of Standard Application Online (SAO) and all features with unlimited family support	✓	✓
Use of Member Access Portal (MAP) and Member Data Dashboards with Applicant Comparison Data	✓	No
Online training materials for SAO	✓	✓
Co-branded linking experiences to member school's SAO from related Association websites	✓	✓
Member identified and included in school search on ssat.org	✓	✓
API access to SAO	✓	Data vendor may charge fees
Personalized training for SAO provided by EMA	✓	No
Regional training for SAO Affiliate members provided by EMA	✓	No, but training will be available through regional organization
SSAT use with unlimited family support and score reports	✓	No
Early access to EMA research including enrollment trends and reports, and right to contribute to or be featured in research	✓	Select online access only for agreement year, limited access for later research
Subscription to *The Yield* publication printed and online	✓ Contribute and have school/ personnel featured	No
Character Skills Snapshot (CSS) use with unlimited family support and results reports	✓	No

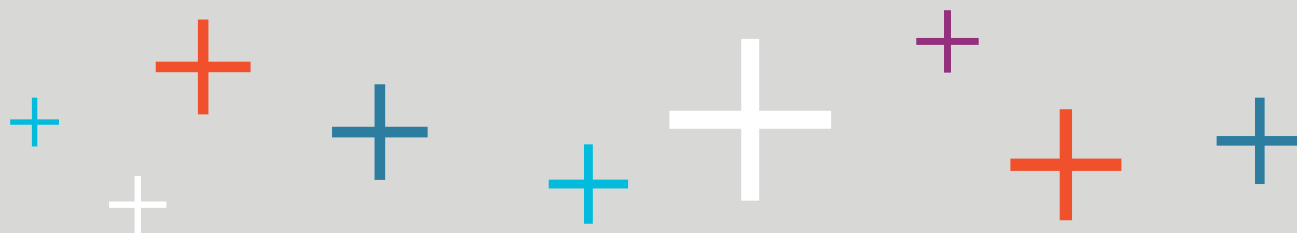| Service Benefits	Full EMA Membership	Affiliate Membership
Benchmark assessment use for SSAT and CSS	✓	Additional Fee
Family inquiry form on ssat.org	✓	No
Access to open seat listing as contributor and to identify prospective applicants	✓	No
Branded linking experience on EMA websites for CSS and SSAT	✓	For SAO only
Admission Leadership Council Regional Seminar Series	✓	✓ Some content may only be offered to Premium Members
Right to purchase Student Prospect Lists	✓	Additional Fee
Annual EMA conference at discounted member rate	✓	At non-member rate
EMA Mentorship Program	✓	No
Discounted member rate for professional development events, seminars and workshops, including Admission Training Institute, Admission Directors Institute and Future Leaders program	✓	At non-member rate
Certificate in Enrollment Management Leadership through USC, with access to up to 10 $5,000 scholarships	✓ Members are eligible for 10 $5,000 scholarships	Non-members can apply but are not eligible for scholarships
Shared Candidate Reports—indicating other schools that are receiving SSAT score reports from your score reporters	✓	No
Applicant Comparison Data	✓	No

Benefits to Associations Using the SAO

Association/consortia serve at the core of this relationship, so access to the most up-to-date information is critical for the partnership's success. EMA will provide association the following:

+ First year: Monthly activity report detailing local test and application volume (delivered via email)

+ Access to association-specific dashboards and new features as they become available

+ EMA will provide "train the trainer" model and marketing materials/campaign support to the HAIS membership team in an effort to support SAO adoption and deployment

Your Association's logo here

The
Enrollment
Management
Association

Welcome, Sometown Academy • Manage Account • Manage Users • Log off

Search...

| SSAT Testing | SSAT Scores | Snapshot | Applications ▾ | Prospects | Data Dashboards ▾ | Resources |

Association Member Access Portal

Applications

Data Dashboards

Upgrade to Add

- Character Skills Snapshot
- Unlimited SAO Support
- Exclusive member pricing for leadership programs and in-person events
- Student Prospect Lists
- SSAT testing, official score reports, and fee waivers
- All professional development resources on www.enrollment.org

Learn More

SAO Frequently Asked Questions

How long does it take a school to set up the SAO?

Most schools take about 15 minutes to set up their SAO. This may take a little longer if schools have multiple supplements or chooses to set up a variety of applications, perhaps by grade level or for international students only.

How can schools customize their SAO?

Schools have the ability to create school-specific supplements. Schools can use supplements to request additional information that is not collected by the SAO but which may be important to an individual school's admission process. Schools also have the ability to create a unique supplement form on a grade-by-grade basis.

Does the SAO operate in real time?

The SAO system operates in real time—meaning both the member and student portals are updated the moment application components are submitted. For example, the moment a recommender submits a recommendation form, it is available for viewing/printing by the school on their MAP. Students, as well, can instantly see that the form was submitted (though they cannot view the form). While the system operates in real time, it does require that both family and school users access it via their secure portals to manage their applications. Schools are encouraged to view and access the system as often as necessary during busy admission times to track and manage incoming and existing applications.

How are families using the SAO supported by EMA?

Families are the most important part of the SAO process. EMA provides extensive service and support to families using the SAO to apply to our schools. This includes:

+ Live and recorded webinars

+ Step-by-step instructions (video and PDF)

+ Full-time professional Customer Service Center available via phone, live chat, & 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

+ Electronically receive application fee waivers granted by schools

How are application fees determined and collected for each school?

Each school indicates its domestic and international application fees when it sets up its SAO. As the SAO is accessed and completed online by students, the application fee is collected at the time of application submission via the portal. EMA charges the student/family an administrative fee of $6 per application submitted. However, EMA waives this fee for any student receiving an application fee waiver from a school.

How and when are application fee waivers administered?

Application fee waivers can be issued, tracked, and managed easily via the Member Access Portal (MAP). The decision to issue an application fee waiver rests solely with the school. The SAO provides tools to the school to issue a single fee waiver to a student or to create a batch of application fee waivers for students and families. Schools are allowed an unlimited number of application fee waivers, as they represent the waiving of their own fee.

When and how will schools receive the application fees collected by the SAO?

EMA distributes application fee checks to schools four times per year with an accompanying student roster for easy reconciliation. Schools receive 100 % of their established application fee.

Are there tools for placement counselors?

The SAO has a built-in advisor workstation made for placement counselors. The workstation allows counselors to track and manage applications on behalf of students and families. With intuitive dashboards and workflows, the workstation offers a full look at the students' applications before they are sent to schools. Features include:

+ Ability to preview most recently updated student profiles

+ View draft versions of recommendation forms, essays, and parent statements

+ Download submitted forms as PDFs

+ Add your advisor recommendation to each school application, or just upload ONE for all!

+ Track the SSAT scores that are released to schools

+ Preview online supplement forms to see school-specific requirements

+ Upload, preview, remove, save in draft, and submit recommendations for your advisees

+ Access to fillable PDF recommendation forms

+ Access to score and application archive for easy data analysis

Does the SAO integrate with other services?

Yes! The SAO currently has integration with Solutions by SSS for financial aid review. Additional partnerships and integrations are in discussion.

How do schools protect their data and student data with the SAO?

The SAO platform collects and reports personal and sensitive data about families and students applying to schools. We take our responsibility to protect the confidential nature of this data seriously. In order to ensure data is properly protected, we regularly audit our legal compliance with respect to privacy and confidentiality, and we employ a number of active and passive measures to ensure our systems are protected against intrusion and other security breaches.

The data relationship between EMA and member schools is protected by a member services agreement, which all members electronically sign. The data relationship between EMA and students/families is protected by a parent agreement, which all parents electronically sign. Both agreements are in compliance with current industry best practice and are reviewed on a yearly basis.

EMA collects and transmits personally identifiable parent and student information, including credit card numbers, using strong SSL encryption. This data is stored in our systems in encrypted format using strong encryption techniques. At no time are social security numbers collected or stored in any of our service transactions. Our networks and services are actively scanned for vulnerabilities and intrusion detection, and all access to back-end systems is monitored and logged.

End user access to our Family and Member Portals are secured via username and passwords. Passwords are stored in one-way encrypted format and cannot be recovered. Instead, we provide tools for end users to reset their password in the case they are lost.

Regarding the security of the teacher recommendations, families and students assign teacher recommendation forms online. During this process the family must electronically sign a waiver relinquishing their right to view and access the confidential teacher recommendation forms. These confidential teacher recommendations are provided only to schools where the student applies and by which the form is required.

While the SAO is a common application format, it allows for schools to choose from the common application components to create their own school-specific SAO requirements. For example, a school may choose not to require an English teacher recommendation, only a math teacher recommendation. The components not required are not delivered to the school, even though they may be available on the student's SAO account/file for application to another school. The school only has access to their own applicants and does not see to which other schools a student has applied.

SAO User References

Association Users

Carole J. Everett
Executive Director
201-654-6528
ceverett@njais.org

Jamie Driver
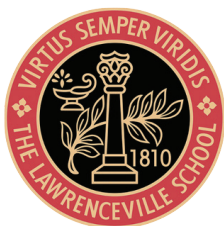Executive Director
314-567-9229
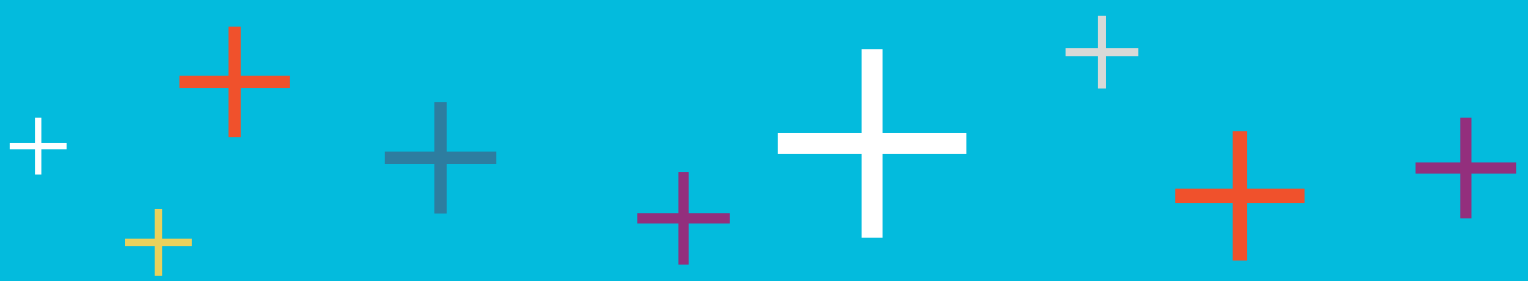jdriver@micds.org

School Users

Josh Clark
Director of External Relations/Admissions
808-885-7321
jclark@hpa.edu

Kila McCann
Director of Admission and Financial Aid
(719) 391-5297
kmccann@fvs.edu

Tom Sheppard
Dean of Enrollment Management
609-895-2030
tsheppard@lawrenceville.org

SAO Success:
ISSL Schools Adopt the SAO (Again!)

The Independent Schools of St. Louis

The Independent Schools of St. Louis (ISSL), early adopters of the SAO, decided a few years ago to pursue other application options. Yet, after a less than satisfactory experience, ISSL looked anew at the SAO.

"We always saw a value in a common application," said Jamie Driver, Executive Director, Independent Schools of St. Louis (ISSL). "And when our consortium started the review process, we quickly saw that the SAO had become a one-stop shop for families—using just one login to register for the test and apply to one of our schools. The combination eliminates barriers, and is clearly the best tool for tracking the status of an application. This helps anxious families feel in control and lessens some of their anxiety, while removing the burden of family calls so many admission offices receive day after day. We have to put families first in this process, and the SAO does just that."

Independent Schools of St. Louis

From a school perspective, Driver explained that the ISSL group was impressed by the evolution of the SAO, noting that many of the recommendations presented by ISSL schools had been implemented over the years, improving the product tenfold. Seeing that so many of ISSL's suggestions had been implemented has made the transition easy," she explained.

ISSL schools were concerned about maintaining the identity of the application specific to each school, but Driver explained that the SAO put the consortium at ease. "Some schools may worry that with a standard application there is no way to set your school apart from the others, yet the SAO allows supplements that quickly allow schools to maintain and address their identity and culture in the application process with just the upload of a PDF. It was a great selling point for our schools."

Driver explains that the decision is about more than just the SAO. "From the association side, The Enrollment Management Association is at the forefront of trends that affect every one of our schools. It's so important to our schools and membership to have the robust professional development support from The Association to help reach our career goals, to have the test to support student assessment, and to access data from all the services to help us make our informed decisions. The SAO is just part of the full package that The Association can offer, and we're thrilled to get our schools using this fantastic product.

Jamie Driver, Executive Director, Independent Schools of St. Louis (ISSL)

SAO Success:
Paper-based Reading System, Seamless Process

Tabor Academy

Tabor still utilizes a paper-based reading system, though we accept the SAO exclusively. Although we have to print the applications, the SAO has made the collection process much easier. The Enrollment Management Association has done a tremendous job in making the process smoother each year. It was always very good; now it is excellent! The process is very user-friendly and intuitive. I know that The Association worked hard on that, and it is much appreciated.

Nita Howland, Administrative Assistant, Admissions, Tabor Academy (MA)

"The process is very user-friendly and intuitive. I know that The Association worked hard on that, and it is much appreciated."

SAO Success:
Making Applying Easier

Mercersburg Academy

Mercersburg has accepted the SAO application for over 10 years as an option for students applying to multiple schools, but we chose to use the SAO exclusively this past year. Our primary reason for this was that we wanted the process to be more streamlined for families who were already completing the SAO for other schools. We didn't want families to feel they needed to submit our Mercersburg online application in order to appear as a "better" candidate to our school. We also hoped the online application status and application support through The Enrollment Management Association would alleviate some of the demand on human resources internally.

Once we adopted the SAO exclusively, the admission staff noticed a significant decrease in calls from families with questions and issues. My favorite feature about the SAO is the real-time updates and online application status designations for families. The application process seemed more streamlined, and we think families benefited by having just one place and one login for accessing and submitting all of their information (i.e. testing, recs, and application materials).

100% of our applicants used the SAO, and we definitely saw a slight increase in our overall application numbers. Although we moved to a fully digitized approach three years ago, using the SAO certainly further reduced our need to print as much and lessened the amount of paper documents families submitted directly to us. We manage our applications though the API automated process. This has worked very well for our office this year.

We are strong supporters for the use of a common application such as the SAO. We chose to use it exclusively not because we hoped to see a drastic increase in our applicant pool, but instead because we believe it is important to make the process of applying to all of our schools less daunting and laborious for prospective families, particularly with the knowledge that students are now applying to more schools than ever. Our use of a short supplement still allows us to remain distinct, as well as to collect Mercersburg-specific information from our applicants.

Quentin McDowell, Senior Associate Director of Admission & Financial Aid, Mercersburg Academy (PA)

SAO Success:
Streamlined Data Input, Less Chance for Error

Stevenson School

Although we continue to use our paper and proprietary online applications, we accept the SAO as well, to make it more convenient for candidates to apply to our school, and apply concurrently to multiple schools. We found that the SAO has increased our volume of applications. Using the SAO has helped us manage a significant increase in the number of common applications we receive. It is a very helpful tool for storing, downloading, and referring to these applications during the peak of admission season.

Additionally, the new SAO interface through the inRESONANCE PWS system allows us to easily and cleanly input SAO data into our Filemaker database with minimal time-intensive manual data entry, thus reducing potential for input errors. It's a simple process - we refer to our member access portal as a data storage resource, and we print the applications from the website. Then we use the inRESONANCE PWS function to input SAO data directly into our Filemaker database.

Our families really appreciate the convenience of using the SAO to streamline the method and timing for schools to receive their applications, and to be able to check on the release and processing time of their application materials.

Melissa Schuette,
Associate Director of Admission,
Stevenson School (CA)

STEVENSON
SCHOOL

SAO Success:
Paperless Office, Pleased Families

Solebury School

Solebury School has always accepted the SAO, so the change for us was really to use it exclusively and abandon our own application. The main reason was for efficiency and a goal of being a paperless office—I was sick of being inundated with paper. Even though the applications and recs came through our system, some people still printed them out and gave them to teachers (or teachers printed them out) so a lot of things still came to us via mail, or fax, or email. I became convinced that the value of the school-specific questions on our application and recommendations was minimal at best, and possibly nonexistent. Once this was clear to me, there was no question about going exclusively to the SAO. I wanted it to streamline our process, to make my office run smoother, and provide better service to families.

The SAO has allowed us to become a paperless office. I love being able to just download one PDF and have it be the entire file that I then share with the committee—it's easy for us in terms of file management and is easier for them to read. Additionally, rather than trying to make sure we have everything, scanning in parts of a file that came in via the mail, etc., we can focus our energies on following up with families and building our relationship with them. The SAO has eliminated duplication of materials in a file, and the occasional mishap that used to occur when a recommendation or a report card went missing, etc.

The feedback from families has been consistently positive. To be able to say to them, "I value your time and your teachers' time, and so we use this common application so that you can focus on continuing to do well in school and not filling out different applications" feels really good to me. The SAO family interface is intuitive and easy to use.

The biggest SAO savings for me are somewhat incalculable, but I know they are significant. We've saved reams of paper—I honestly don't even know how much, but it's a big number! And we've saved tons of time—probably 5-10 hours a week at our busiest points.

Scott Eckstein, Director of Admission, Solebury School (PA)

Solebury
School
1925

The
Enrollment
Management
Association

+

The SAO

Applying Made Easy

Contact our Membership Team to see how the SAO can help your association.

member@enrollment.org • 609-683-4440

enrollment.org/sao