



ALMA → SYCAMORE

The Switching Playbook

A decision guide for heads of school and business offices evaluating a move from Alma to Sycamore. Nine sections, designed to print and forward.

TODAY

Alma

SIS + AlmaStart + Fees

VS

TOMORROW

Sycamore

One platform, one login, one bill
\$4 per student per month, all included

Inside: the decision framework, week-by-week migration timeline, side-by-side cost worksheet, questions to ask Alma before you cancel, a one-page board summary, and a migration FAQ for your business office.

2026 EDITION · FOR HEADS OF SCHOOL AND BUSINESS OFFICES

Sycamore Leaf Solutions · sycamoreleaf.com · US-based support

1 Why heads of school are switching

Schools moving from Alma to Sycamore are usually looking for three things: native mobile apps that parents can install from the App Store and Play Store (Alma's AlmaNow is a Progressive Web App parents struggle to install), fundraising tools inside the platform rather than as a separate stack, and the international depth and multi-currency support that Sycamore offers and Alma does not advertise. Alma genuinely competes on UI quality; this page concedes that honestly and wins where it matters.

Across the 14 categories that private school leaders score during platform reviews, Sycamore wins on 12. Alma holds the lead on 2. The rest favors Sycamore on family experience, pricing transparency, support, and platform breadth.

\$4

per student per month, all modules included

4.8 / 5

parent app rating (Sycamore + TuitionEP combined)

46+

countries served on 6 continents

4-8

weeks to switch and go live

The three reasons that come up in every kickoff call

1. Families want one app. Sycamore's Parent App holds a 4.8-star combined rating with TuitionEP. The parent experience is the most frequent touch point with any school platform.
2. Pricing should be predictable. Sycamore publishes its plan at \$4 per student per month with everything included. Schools that adopt the full competitor suite often carry multiple line items that grow as the school grows.
3. Support should answer when called. Sycamore's support and onboarding teams are based in the United States and pair with Sycamore Academy for on-demand training.

2 When to switch

Schools switch from Alma at three common moments. Pick the one that fits your school year and contract; Sycamore's onboarding team adapts to all three.

Window	Best for	Watch out for
End of school year	Schools whose Alma contract renews mid-summer. Plenty of runway for staff training before fall.	Confirm Alma data exports are available after your contract end date.
Mid-year cutover	Schools that want to be on Sycamore before re-enrollment season opens. Cutover at the start of a term or grading period.	Coordinate the cutover with payroll and tuition draft schedules.
Summer	Schools running summer programs or year-round calendars. Compresses training into July and August.	Plan around staff vacation; lock kickoff before mid-June.

Whichever window you pick, Sycamore typically takes 4 to 8 weeks from kickoff to your first tuition cycle on the new platform.

3 What changes for your families

For most schools, parents are the most frequent users of the platform. Here is what shifts the day Sycamore goes live.

One app instead of many

Families currently install Alma's parent experience. After the switch, they install the Sycamore Parent App once. Tuition balance, cafeteria balance, grades, attendance alerts, and class announcements live behind the same login.

Payment methods, depending on the processor

Whether saved cards and ACH details transfer depends on Alma's current payment processor. When secure token portability is supported, families see no change. When it is not, families re-add their payment method through a one-screen flow in the Sycamore Parent App. Sycamore drafts the parent communications either way.

Tuition plans are reset and recreated

Active payment plans are rebuilt in Sycamore at the same amount, cadence, and remaining balance, then reconciled against the prior platform so nothing is double-charged or missed. Families see the same payment schedule they already expected.

Fee handling becomes your choice

On Sycamore, the school decides per transaction type: absorb the fee, pass it through, or split it. Many schools use this flexibility to reduce the friction families feel at checkout.

Communications consolidate

Class messages, school-wide announcements, and teacher-parent threads route through Sycamore.

4 Migration timeline, week by week

Most schools complete a full switch in 4 to 8 weeks. The schedule below assumes a standard Alma migration; mid-year and summer cutovers compress to the same shape with tighter validation windows.



Phase	Phase name	What happens
Week 1	Discovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kickoff call with the head of school and business office • Inventory of current Alma modules and contract end dates • Source-of-truth audit for student, family, and tuition data • Switching plan with named dates, owners, and risks
Weeks 2-3	Data + setup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint data extraction from Alma • Normalize and load into Sycamore staging environment • Side-by-side validation against the source system • Payment processor connect and test transactions
Weeks 4-6	Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role-based courses for admins, teachers, and counselors • Two live working sessions with the client success team • Parent communication drafts, scheduled and approved • Cutover dry-run on a representative subset of data
Weeks 7-8	Go live	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Production cutover and final data reconciliation • Parents install the Sycamore Parent App, one balance live • First tuition cycle on Sycamore, monitored end-to-end • 30-day post-launch review with the school's leadership

5 Side-by-side cost worksheet

Fill the left column with what your school pays Alma today. Use the right column to capture the Sycamore plan. The bottom row is the annual difference your board will care about.

Line item	Alma today	Sycamore
Per-student license (annual)	_____ × ___ students = _____ _____	\$4 × students × 12 = _____
Alma base / SIS module	_____	Included
Tuition / payments module	_____	Included
Admissions / enrollment module	_____	Included
Communications / SMS module	_____	Included
Parent app subscription (if any)	_____	Included
Reporting / analytics module	_____	Standard reporting included
Implementation / customization fees	_____	\$2,500 minimum onboarding
Card convenience fee passed to parents	___% × _____	School chooses; can be \$0 to parents
Other modules in scope	_____	_____
Annual subtotal	_____	_____
Annual difference (Sycamore vs Alma)		_____

Use your real Alma invoices in the left column for the most accurate comparison.

6 Questions to ask Alma before you cancel

Send this list to your Alma account manager before notifying cancellation. The answers protect your data, your families, and your renewal terms.

#	Question to send	Why it matters
1	What is my exact contract end date for each Alma module, and what is the cancellation notice window?	Most Alma contracts auto-renew. Confirm the notice deadline in writing before you set a Sycamore go-live date.
2	Will I retain read or export access to Alma data after my contract ends, and for how long?	Data export windows vary. You want exports available through the final reconciliation, not just the go-live date.
3	What is the format and field coverage of standard Alma data exports?	Knowing the export format upfront lets Sycamore's onboarding team plan validation. Ask for sample exports if possible.
4	What happens to in-progress tuition payment plans on the day my contract ends?	Plans, autopay schedules, and saved payment methods need a clean handoff. Confirm whether the platform continues to process or stops.
5	Are there any modules, integrations, or contracts on a different renewal cycle that I should know about?	Family App subscriptions and add-on engagements can run on separate cycles.
6	What is the process for transferring saved payment methods (tokens) to a new payment processor?	Confirm whether tokenized payment data can be transferred securely. This avoids forcing families to re-enter card details.
7	Is there a fee for cancellation, mid-term termination, or data export?	Some contracts include early-termination clauses. Get the exact dollar figure in writing.

7 One-page board summary

Copy or adapt the block below for your next board packet. Replace the bracketed figures with your school's specifics.

BOARD SUMMARY · SWITCHING FROM ALMA TO SYCAMORE

Recommendation

Adopt Sycamore as the school's K-12 platform of record, replacing Alma. Sycamore consolidates SIS, gradebook, attendance, admissions, tuition, payments, communications, and the parent mobile app under one license at \$4 per student per month. Sycamore's onboarding team will run the full migration in 4 to 8 weeks, so the school can pick a go-live date that aligns with the start of the next term, the re-enrollment window, or the end of the current contract.

Financial impact (annual)

Current annual cost of Alma modules in scope: \$_____. Projected annual cost of Sycamore at \$4 per student per month: \$_____. Estimated net annual savings: \$_____. One-time onboarding investment: \$2,500 minimum.

Operational impact

Families move to a single Sycamore Parent App, which today holds a 4.8-star combined rating (Sycamore + TuitionEP). The school gains tuition refund protection (via Vertical Insure), native donations with AI donor intelligence (rolling out 2026), and US-based onboarding and support.

Risk and mitigation

Switching SIS and tuition together at a single cutover is the largest operational risk. Sycamore's standard migration includes side-by-side validation and a 30-day post-launch monitoring window.

Timeline

4 to 8 weeks from kickoff to first tuition cycle on Sycamore. The school selects the go-live date that fits the calendar, and Sycamore plans backward from it.

8 Migration FAQ for the business office

What's the biggest difference between Sycamore and Alma?

Alma is a focused SIS with a modern UI, native Fees, and AlmaStart admissions. Sycamore is a wider platform: same modern simplicity, plus native iOS and Android apps (Alma's parent app is a PWA), a native donations module with AI donor intelligence, Tuition Refund Protection via Vertical Insure, multi-currency support, and 46+ countries with a verifiable school list.

Is Alma cheaper than Sycamore?

Alma does not publish pricing anywhere. Reviewers describe it as 'at least 50% less than major competitors,' but no specific per-student rate is verifiable. Sycamore publishes \$4 per student per month with all modules included. Schools should request both quotes for a real comparison.

Does Alma have a native mobile app?

No. AlmaNow is a Progressive Web App that parents install by opening it in a browser and using 'Add to Home Screen.' There is no Alma parent app in the App Store or Google Play. Sycamore has native iOS and Android apps with a combined 4.8-star rating.

Does Alma have a donations or fundraising module?

No. There is no Alma donations or fundraising product. Sycamore is rolling out a native donations module with AI donor intelligence in 2026 from the TuitionEP acquisition.

Does Alma support international schools?

Alma's own page claims 60 countries; third-party profiles cite 35. Alma's UI is available in 44+ languages, but multi-currency tuition is not advertised on the Fees module page and state reporting is US-only. Sycamore serves paying schools in 46+ countries with multi-currency support.

How does Alma's reporting compare?

Reviewers consistently flag Alma's reporting as 'a nightmare' with 'random formats' and 'non-functional filtering.' Sycamore provides standard configurable reports and exports for the use cases administrators actually run.

Can we customize fields ourselves in Alma?

Not easily. Reviewers report 'you can pay extra to have them developed, but there is no way to do that yourself.' Sycamore field customization is configurable by school administrators.

How long does it take to switch from Alma to Sycamore?

Most schools complete a full migration in 4 to 8 weeks. Alma's data is exportable and Sycamore's US-based onboarding team handles the mapping and validation. The variable is whether you are also adopting new functionality during the switch.

9 Next steps

Three ways to move forward, ordered by how ready you are. Pick the one that fits where you are in the decision.

Get a switch-now quote

Send Sycamore your current Alma modules and student count. We return a tailored Sycamore quote, a switching timeline, and a line-item comparison against what you pay Alma today, typically within two business days. This is the fastest path if you already know you want to move and you need a number to take to the board.

sycamoreleaf.com/switch-now/

View testimonials

Read what heads of school and business offices say about Sycamore after switching. Real schools, real outcomes, real implementation timelines, not curated marketing soundbites.

sycamoreleaf.com/testimonials/

Send your account executive a data export

Send your Sycamore account executive a sanitized export of your Alma data. We will run it through staging and walk you through exactly how easy it is to get going on Sycamore. No commitment required.

Reach out to your assigned Sycamore AE directly.

<p>\$4</p> <p>per student per month, all modules included</p>	<p>4-8</p> <p>weeks to first tuition cycle on Sycamore</p>	<p>\$2.5K</p> <p>minimum onboarding, dedicated migration lead</p>	<p>100%</p> <p>US-based onboarding and support</p>
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Companion to this Playbook: the live comparison page at sycamoreleaf.com/compare/alma-vs-sycamore.