SYCAMORE

K-12 platform comparison, at a glance

Nine platforms scored across the fourteen categories school leaders raise most. Every category a competitor wins is named.

	SYCAMORE	FACTS	Blackbaud K-12	Veracross	Gradelink	Alma	SchoolCues	ClassReach	FastDirect	Excel / Sheets
Score, of 14 categories	14	13	12	10	9	9	11	10	11	12
Headline price	$4 / student / month, published, every module included	Custom quote; $5 to $6 per student per month industry-reported	Custom quote; no public per-student rate	Custom quote; $500/mo starter cited by Capterra	Custom quote; stopped publishing prices in 2026	Custom quote; no public per-student rate	$75 / month flat at entry tier	$175 to $1,320 / month flat tiers	$15 / student / year, $1,500 annual minimum	Included in Microsoft 365 or Google Workspace
Modules bundled?	All in one license. SIS, gradebook, admissions, tuition, parent app, comms, donations	Modular. SIS only in base; tuition, aid, enrollment, Family App quoted separately	Eight separately named products	Per-module quote; 2FA reportedly extra	Base SIS; admissions and SMS are paid add-ons	SIS + Fees + AlmaStart admissions	All-in-one for very small schools	SIS + LMS + forms + tuition	All-in-one PK-8; SMS unbundled Jan 2026	Not applicable
Processing rates	Card 3.9% + $0.30. ACH 1.8%, banking portion capped at $5. No monthly fee	Card 2.95% headline; ACH typically free to parents	Card 3.12%; ACH 1% + $0.30, capped $2.50	Bundled into Tuition Management; not published	Card about 2.85% to families; ACH rate not public	Stripe standard rates	Not publicly disclosed	Stripe rates, applied as-is	Card 3%, ACH $1 flat, plus monthly Pace fees	Handled outside the spreadsheet
Who pays the fee?	School's choice, four ways: absorb, split, direct pay, or mix by method (school covers ACH, families cover cards)	Card surcharge to parents by default; no split or mix option	Set in the contract; no split or mix option	Not published	Fixed: cards to families, ACH absorbed	No published option to split or mix	Not published	No published option to split or mix	Fixed by the Pace merchant account	Not applicable
Parent app rating	4.4/5 and 4.9/5 across the Sycamore and TuitionEP apps	3.1/5 Family App, plus $4.99 / family / year	Low public review volume on both apps	1.4/5 NAM iOS app, 17 ratings	4.9/5 iOS on 15K ratings	No app-store rating; AlmaNow is a web app	3.6/5 Google Play	3.0/5 Google Play; iOS push still in development	4.6/5 iOS, 394 ratings	No family-facing app
Contract terms	18-month minimum. Longer terms lock the rate. No multi-year auto-renew	Annual, custom terms per module	3 years, auto-renewing, 45-day notice	Annual, custom terms per module	Month to month	Not published; PE-backed since 2022	Not published	Not published; flat monthly	No published minimum	None
Training included?	Sycamore Academy included. 108 courses, 1,724 lessons	Professional Learning sold as a service	Tied to premium support tiers	Account-manager model plus paid Professional Learning	Live training and named reps; no on-demand library	AlmaStart Navigator plus live training	Reviewers cite training as the weak spot	Reviewers cite limited tutorials	Informal; no published curriculum	None
Donations built in?	Native, with AI donor intelligence rolling out 2026	No native donations product	Raiser's Edge NXT, the category leader	Strong native Development module	Drop-down tag on incoming money	No donations module	Donation forms, incl. Zakat and Sadaqah	No donations module	No donations module	Tracked in a separate sheet
International reach	Over 40 countries, multi-currency	US, ANZ, Europe, intl. school networks	100+ countries as a company; UK K-12 led by iSAMS	30+ countries, skewed American intl. schools	Unspecified; EN/ES/ZH only, US Pacific hours	Claims 60; third parties cite 35	Effectively US-only	"A few internationally"	US-only	Manual in any country
Time to go live	4 to 8 weeks, guided migration	Variable; module-by-module rollouts common	Months; $10K to $100K+ implementation cited	3 to 6 months, self-paced	Setup is time-intensive per reviewers	Variable; no published timeline	Markets 3 days; own guide says 2 to 4 months	No published timeline	No published timeline	Not applicable
Where they beat us	We publish these rather than pretend we sweep.	Default card rate (2.95%) and Sage Intacct GL integration	Raiser's Edge NXT depth; single-vendor enterprise scale	Axiom query power, Development module, account-manager support	Parent app rating, CS score 4.9/5, month-to-month terms	Genuinely modern SIS interface; 4.7/5 support	$75/mo floor for micro-schools; Zakat and Sadaqah support	Flat-tier predictability; configurable forms engine	Lowest base price; support reputation; no contract minimum	Cheapest on the software line
Best fit for	Schools wanting one platform, one published price, and room to grow	Schools already deep in the Nelnet ecosystem	Very large institutions with dedicated advancement teams	Schools with a database administrator on staff	Small schools needing base SIS at the lowest tier	Schools buying primarily on interface quality	Faith-based micro-schools under 50 students	Classical Christian and Catholic classical microschools	PK-8 parochial schools staying under 100 students	Schools under about 25 students

How to read this. Scores reflect the fourteen evaluation categories used on each full comparison page at sycamoreleaf.com/compare. Competitor pricing and product details come from each vendor's own published materials and public review platforms, verified November 2026; vendors change packaging without notice, so confirm current terms directly. Sycamore fees shown are the Stripe transaction fee plus Sycamore's 1% convenience fee; the school chooses whether it absorbs them, families pay direct, the two split them, or the school covers ACH while families cover cards. Contract terms start at an 18-month minimum with longer terms locking the per-student rate. Competitor names and products are trademarks of their respective owners.

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