

An Insider's View into Sterne's Admissions Process

Nearly all independent schools in the Bay Area are part of the Bay Area Admissions Directors consortium (BADA), and Sterne is no exception. Being part of this group means that we agree to follow best practices when it comes to adhering to common application deadlines, confidential teacher and Principal recommendations, and recruitment practices, among other things.

This aside, we really pride ourselves in having created a mission-aligned Admissions process that “starts with strengths” and treats students and their families as individuals with unique experiences and needs. This starts with getting to know your family – the educational goals, hopes and aspirations you hold for your child or teenager, their past and present learning, interests and passions, and their learning profile. That’s a lot, so let’s unpack each of those categories.

One of the earliest steps in our Admissions process is the parent/guardian interview with our Director of Admissions, Alia Long. Alia has been doing this a long time (pun completely intended) and has met with hundreds if not thousands of parents over the years. And, when it comes to Sterne families, there are some common threads: often, our students have extraordinary abilities and areas of their learning that are quite developed, yet they may struggle in other academic areas. Students may be diagnosed with dyslexia (Specific Learning Disorder in reading and/or writing), ADHD, auditory processing disorder, anxiety, or a combination of these things. Other students may not have a formal diagnosis, but they and their families know they benefit from small class sizes and teacher mentorship.

It’s also common for families to come to the Admissions interview with a lot of questions about how Sterne works. (If you’ve been perusing our website or reading this blog, you already know that Sterne takes an integrated approach to learning support and applies a universal design for learning framework to our curriculum design.) Please ask questions! We view ourselves as a community resource, rich with information about how to support students with dyslexia, ADHD, anxiety, and/or processing challenges.

We do not require testing for admission; however, we do recognize that many families have 504 plans or IEPs from their public schools, and/or possess full battery academic or neuropsychological testing from private clinicians. (The latter includes testing such as the Woodcock-Johnson, WIAT and a lot of other acronyms.) These tests offer incredible insight into your child or teens' areas of strength and challenge, and a whole team of experts here at Sterne (read through these tests thoroughly both during the Admissions process and afterwards.) Information gathered from IEPs and other tests eventually become part of what we call "Student Profile Summaries" – a working document for each student that provides faculty with essential information about student strengths, challenges, interests, and helpful teaching tips.

A final (and perhaps most influential part of the Admissions process at Sterne) is the student shadow day. At some schools, prospective students are required to visit the school with a large group of other prospects. This can be an intimidating if not overwhelming experience. Our goal is for every student visitor to truly see themselves here at Sterne – to feel known and understood. Every shadow visitor at Sterne is paired with a host student who stays with them for the whole day. Visitor schedules include an elective of their choice in addition to core academic classes that meet their level of learning. High school students will engage in a short interview with a faculty member, and lower/middle school students work with our Admissions team to complete a short intake assessment to determine reading and math levels. We've witnessed plenty of students who leave our school saying, "This is where I want to be!" Knowing that students and their families have found their home is perhaps the most rewarding part of the Admissions process.

If you are interested in Sterne School, please go to <https://www.sterneschool.org/admissions/process> to begin the Admissions process.

TO-DO LIST

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