ASK THE EXPERT

ALICIA PERLA

SACRAMENTO COUNTRY DAY SCHOOL

Sacramento Country Day School is the region's #1 independent school providing an enriched, academically challenging environment for students pre-kindergarten through high school. Director of College Counseling Alicia Perla provides unparalleled college counseling that promotes each student's interests, strengths, aspirations and goals.

What sets Country Day's college counseling program apart from others in Sacramento?
With small class sizes, I'm able to know students very well by the time they apply to college. I meet one-on-one and in college counseling classes, throughout the junior and senior years, educating students about colleges, helping compile college lists, reading applications and essays, and writing personalized recommendation letters, among other things. I want students to have multiple options they are excited about when it comes time to choose a college. With close guidance, one hundred percent of our graduates who apply are accepted to four-year institutions of higher learning.

saccds.org | 916-481-8811
2636 Latham Dr. Sacramento

Beyond getting into great colleges, how does your program help students discover the right fit and path for their future?
While the "formal" college counseling program begins in junior year, the "informal" program begins when students start high school. I regularly meet with students at every grade level, helping them choose classes, connecting them with students and groups on campus based on their interests, and suggesting extracurricular activities that would help them further explore those interests.

What advice would you give families just beginning to think about the college process?
Most colleges look at students holistically, so it is important for students to think about their high school education holistically. While academic performance is important, it is not the only factor. Students should be exploring different areas of interest, developing creativity and interpersonal skills, and highlighting what matters to them. They should be seeking opportunities to grow into a valuable community member, not just an excellent student.

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