

**Boston Public Schools
Parent and Guardian Experience
@Harvard Kennedy School
Spring 2018**



Who We Are



Chris Kuang

*Tech
Non-Profit
Co-Founder*

Ayna Agarwal

*Tech
Start-Ups*

John La Rue

Speechwriter

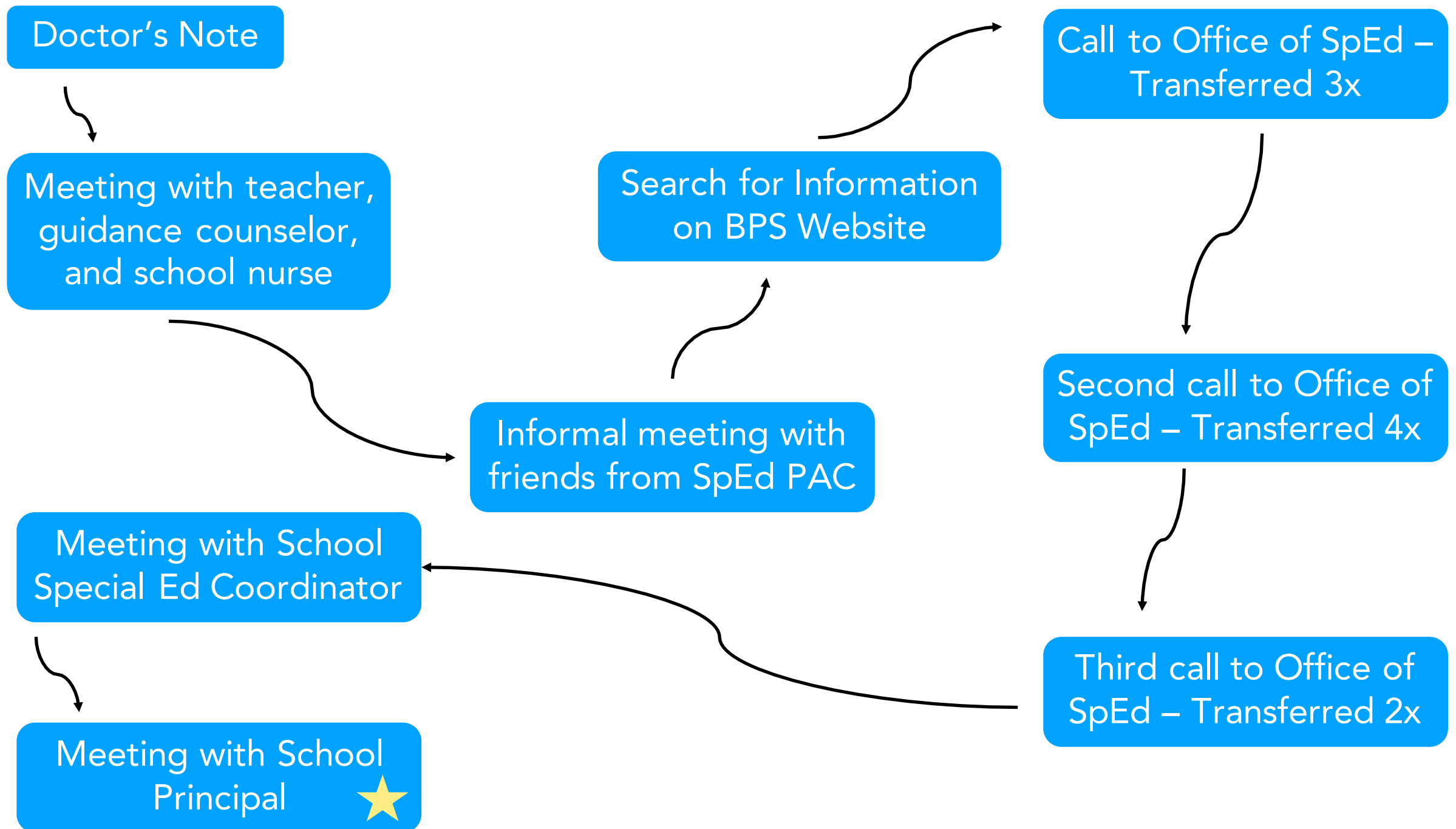
Molly Thomas

*Education
Researcher*

Ben McGuire

*Education
Researcher*

Meet Christine



"It costs everyone so much more time and effort."
"It should be online. I never would have called them."

Empathy-building



25

parent and
guardian
interviews



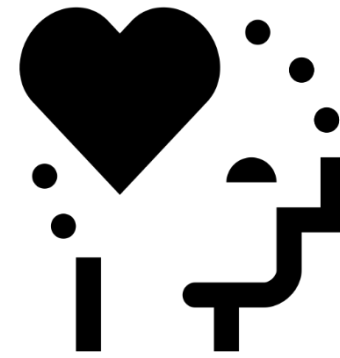
20

stakeholder
interviews



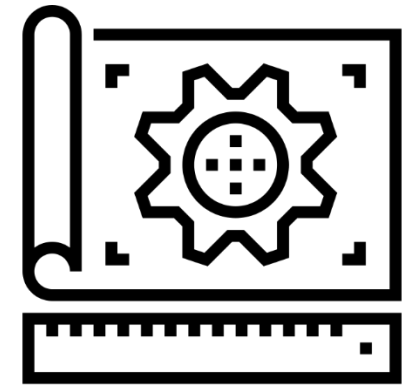
6

case studies



3

empathy-
building
exercises



12

field tests

Parents and
families struggle
to navigate the
Boston public
school system



Improving Customer Service for BPS Parents Matters



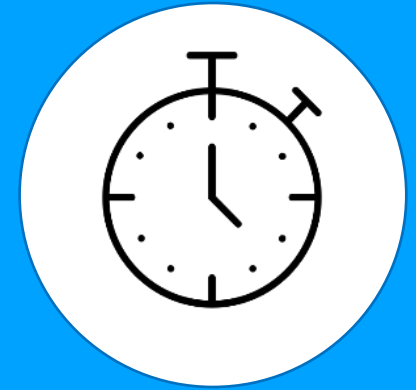
**Puts Focus
Back on
Academics**



**Builds Trust
with Parents
and Families**



**Promotes
Equity across
the District**



**Saves BPS
Staff Time for
Bigger Issues**

- **The Challenge**
- **Paths Forward**
- **Recommendations**

The Family Navigation Challenge

Parents and families struggle to navigate...



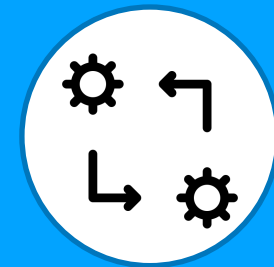
Information

Missing key information about BPS services and resources



People

Don't know who to ask or who can help when issues aren't resolved at school



Process

No transparency into how BPS works or how their issues are addressed

“What do I need to do?”



Information

- Not sure what tools are available
- **Inconsistent experience and information**



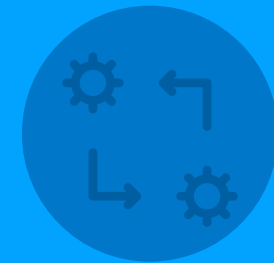
- Self-service exists but is unused
- **Wasting family and staff time** on duplicative questions



People

- Knowledge stays with local experts
- If school staff don't know, parents don't know who can help

- Navigational equity challenges
- Multiple transfers; long waits and times to resolution



Process

- No systematic tracking of family issues over time
- No way to intervene or fix blockages

- Routines become nerve-wracking
- Small blocks aren't addressed in a timely fashion

“Who can help?”



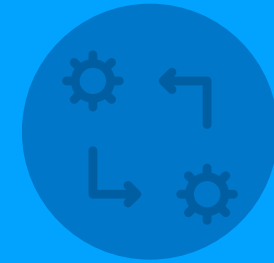
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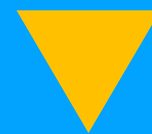
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- If school staff don't know, **parents don't know who can help**



Process

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- **Wasting family and staff time on duplicative questions**

- **Navigational equity challenges**
- Multiple transfers; **long waits and times to resolution**

- Routines become nerve-wracking
- Small blocks aren't addressed in a timely fashion

"How does it work?"



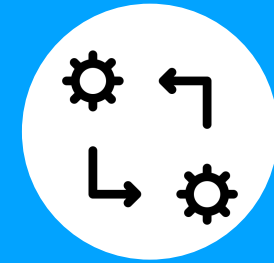
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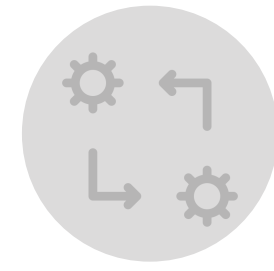
Possible Paths Forward



Information



People



Process

External

- **Standardize and streamline** web experience
- Audit family-facing resources to **minimize jargon**

- Clearly identify parent-facing experts for routine challenges
- Work with school staff to coordinate effective hand-offs

- Assign tracking numbers to major district processes
- Provide transparent data on progress of requests

Internal

- Unify approaches to shared problems
- Consolidate and **democratize access to answers** for common questions

- Designate cross-department experts on family pain points
- Share data and best practices on what works

- Measure and maintain customer interaction information
- Bring process review into performance management

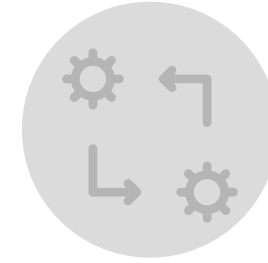
Possible Paths Forward



Information



People



Process

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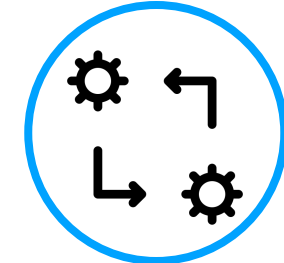
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People



Process

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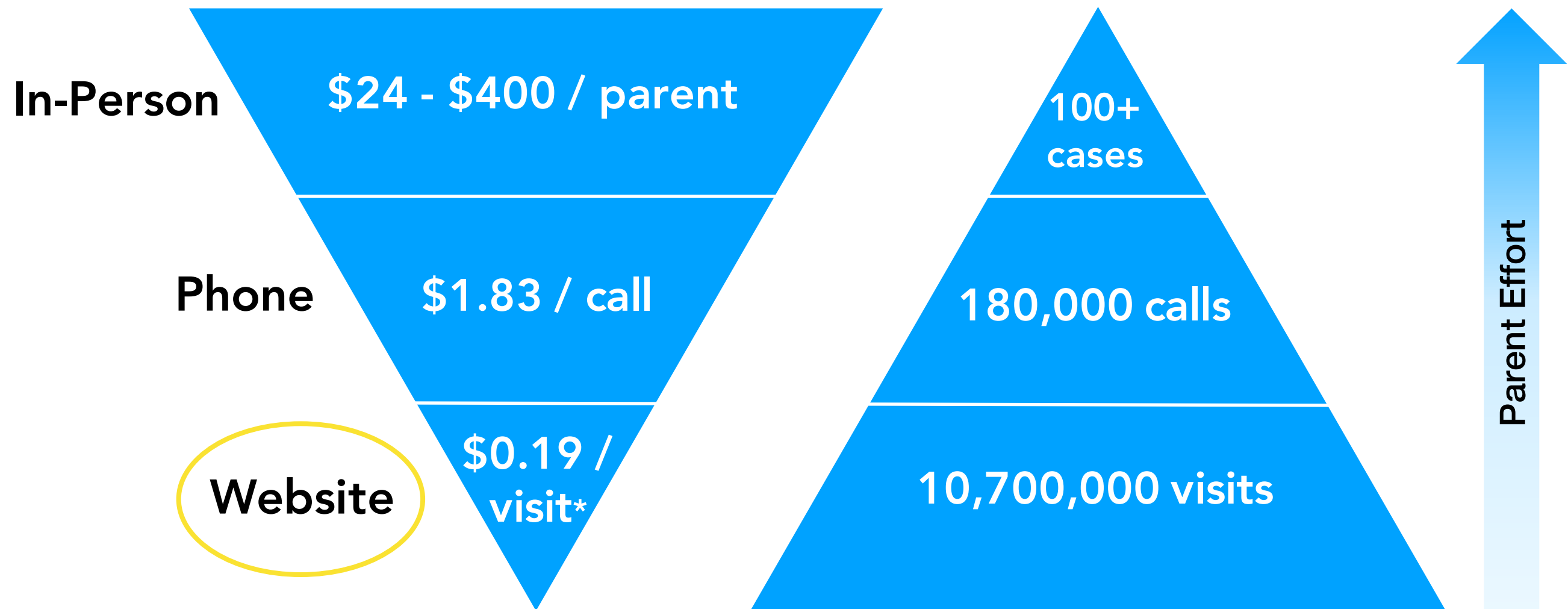
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- Bring **process review** into performance management

Customer Service: Tiers of Support

Cost Per Parent Served Parents Served Per Year



*No marginal costs, negligible ongoing costs after Year 1

*A well designed website is the **least costly** for BPS, **most accessible**, and requires the **least amount of effort** for parents*

Prototyping: The Family Web Experience



Information

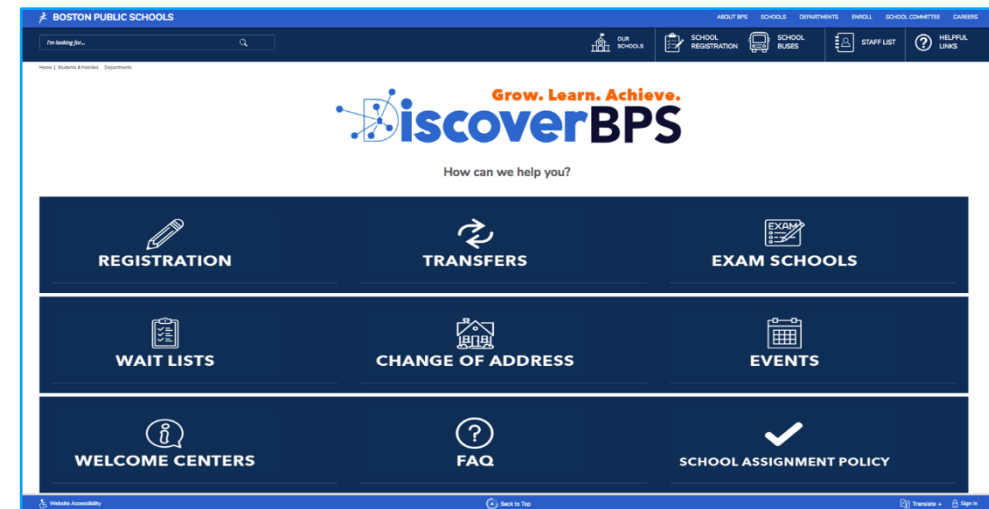
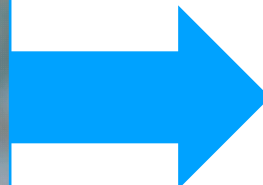
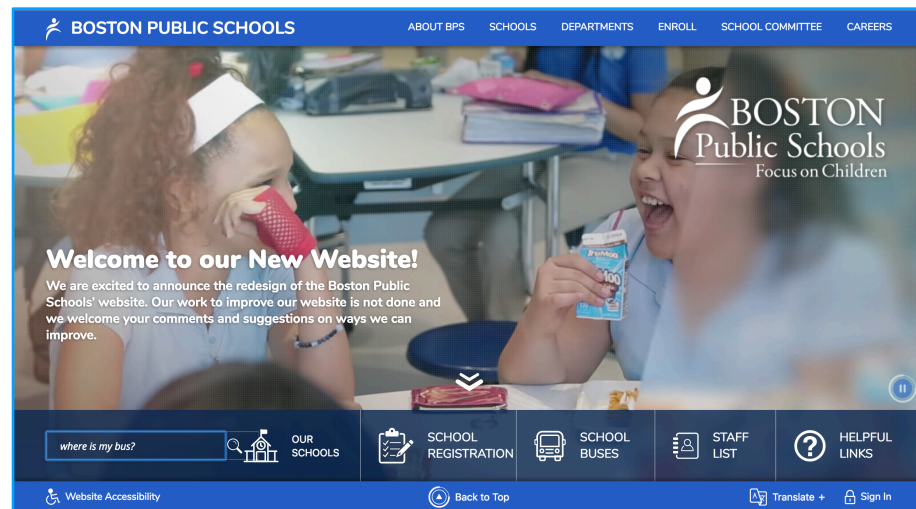
- The website has the information families need to participate in BPS processes
- But sometimes, **confusing design and technical language** stymie progress
- *How might BPS maintain momentum in their redesign process to maximize value for parents and families?*

Improving user experience on the BPS website can

- ✓ provide value for students and families
- ✓ save time by enabling self-service
- ✓ rebuild trust with constituents
- ✓ generate buy-in for future reform
- ✓ build on existing investment and work

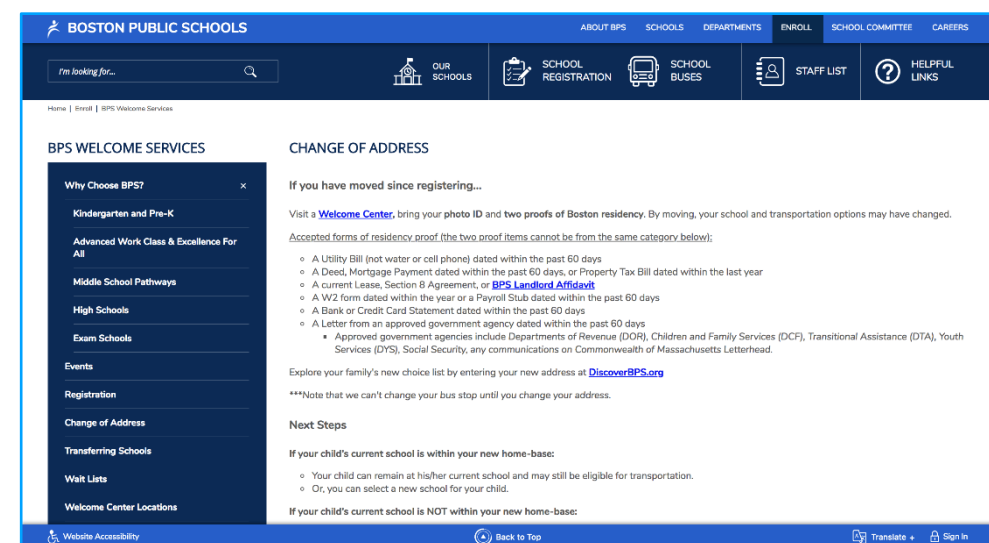
Navigation: Current Website

Case Study: Change of Address for Registration



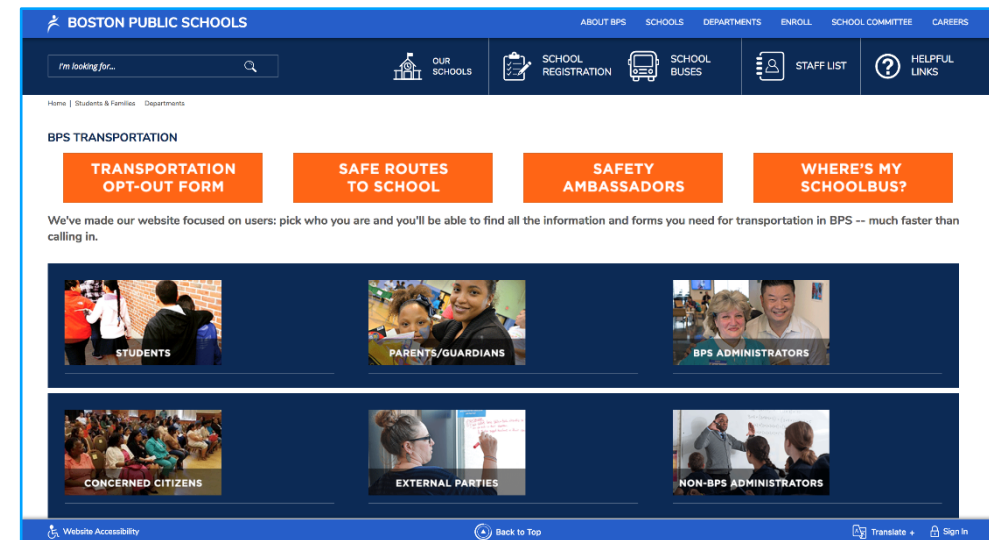
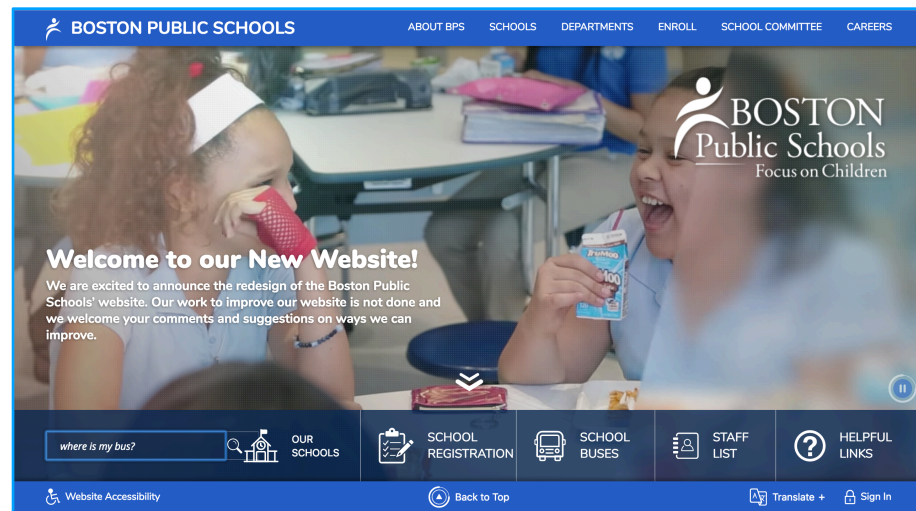
Parent and Family Feedback:

- Discover BPS page intuitively lists things that parents and families want to do on the website
- "That was easy!"
- "I love the boxes"
- Navigation is simple, but some landing pages are still too dense



Navigation: Current Website

Case Study: Change of Bus Stop for Transportation



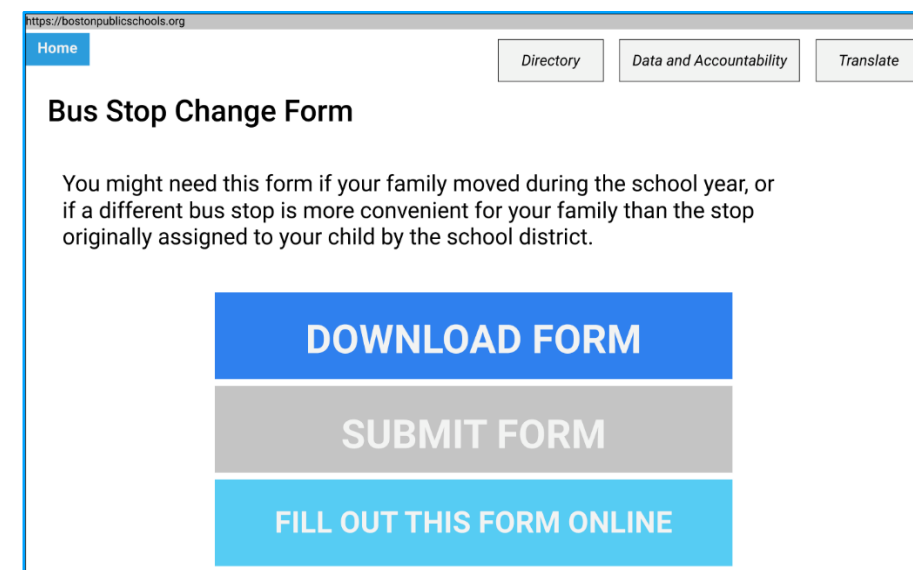
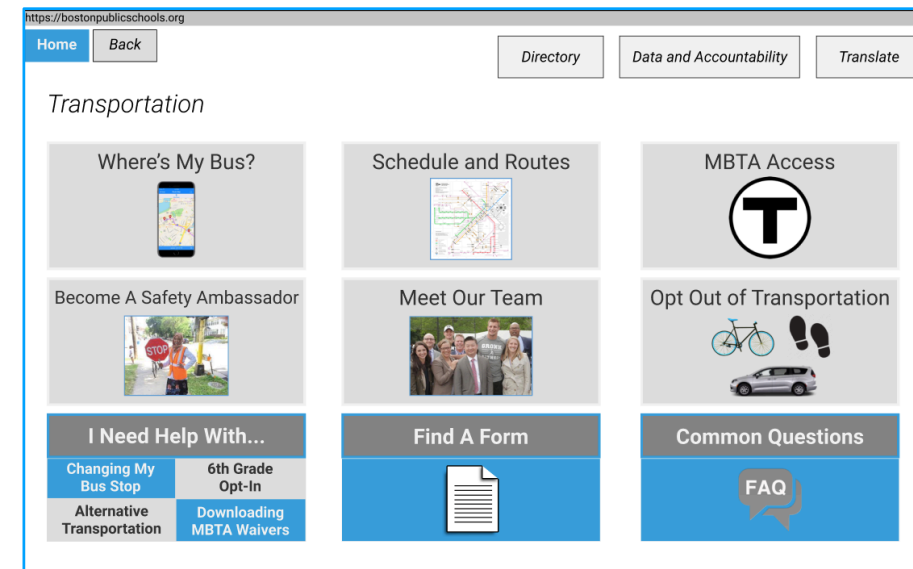
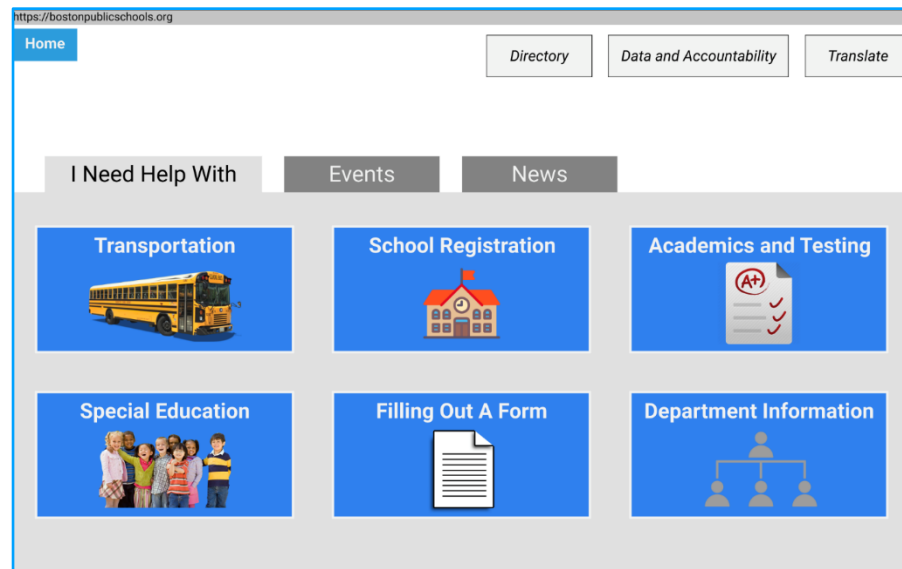
Parent and Family Feedback:

- Users not sure where to go – some click on “Parents/Guardians” but many give up entirely
- “I don’t get it – how are the pages different?”
- “At this point I’d probably just call and ask what to do”



Our Prototyping Process

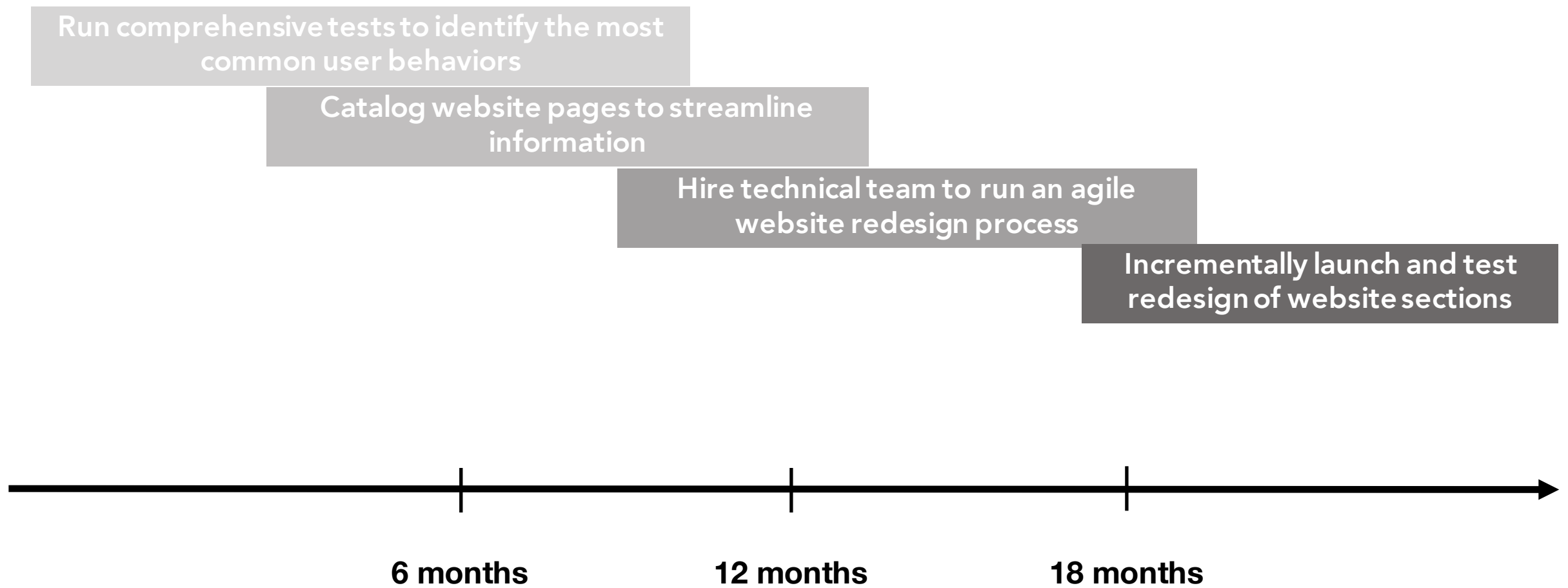
Orienting Key Information to How Families Search



Parent and Family Feedback:

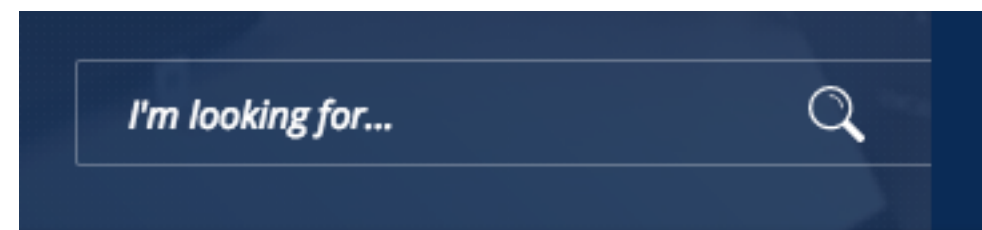
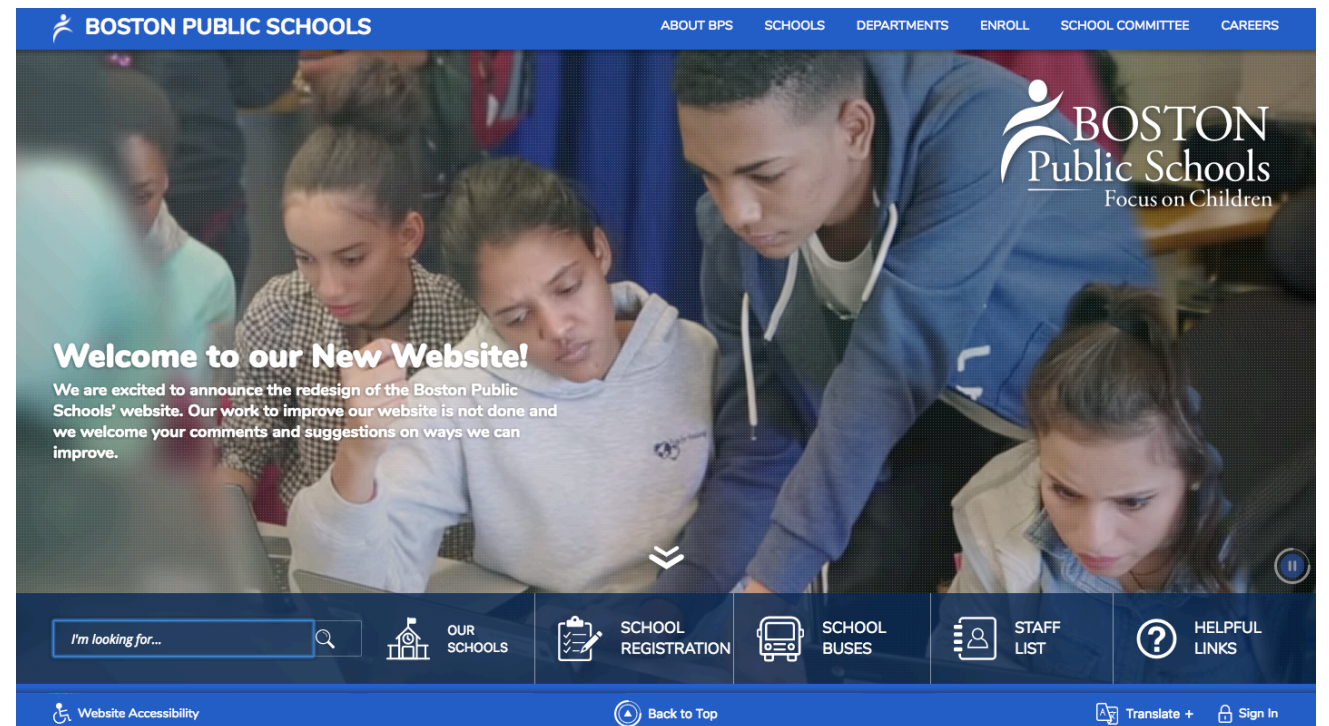
- "I like how simple and fast it is"
- "Having the pictures made it a lot easier for me to figure out where to go on the page"
- "This is something I would probably use again"

Implementation



Quick Wins

- Video on home page
- Search with enter key
- Substitute bus tracking
- Website analytics



So what?

- ✓ Builds a community — parents and families often have a long and emotional relationship with their child's education
- ✓ Promotes equity of access to education
- ✓ Enables efficiency, and allows BPS to return their focus to academics

Thank you

Professor Nick Sinai
Carolyn MacNeil
John Hanlon
Avi Sethi
Augusta Meill
Alex Lawrence
Jaclyn Youngblood
Many BPS parents and guardians
BPS School Leaders
Office of Transportation
Office of Equity
Office of Engagement
Office of Technology

Questions?

Appendix



Appendix I: Methods

25 parent and guardian interviews

Street intercepts, school visits, and snowball sampling uncovered real experiences of frustration with customer service.

20 stakeholder interviews

Shadowing BPS employees, Boston officials, and data analysis, we learned about customer service across the ecosystem.

6 best practices research

Studying best practices in the private sector, peer districts, and government revealed potential best practices and challenges.

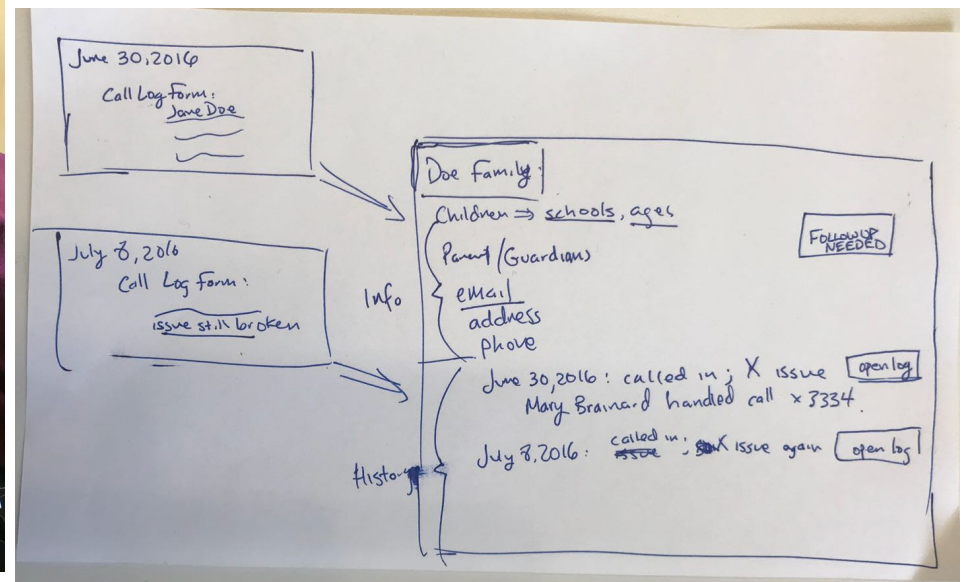
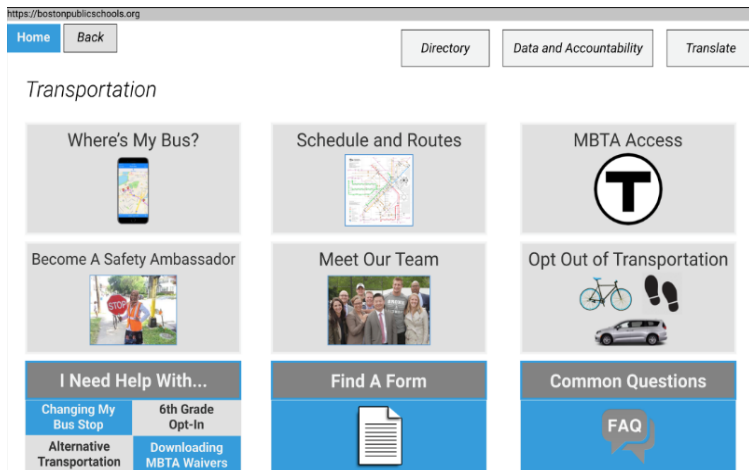
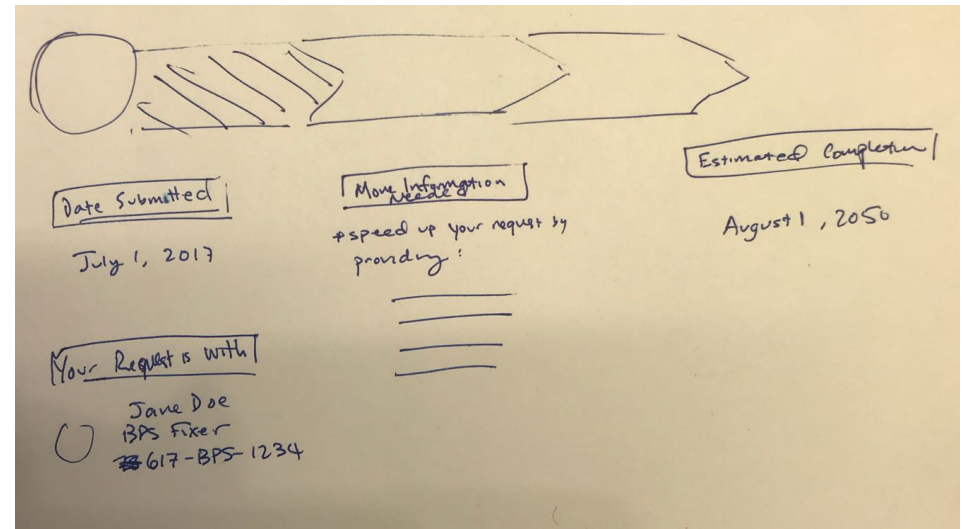
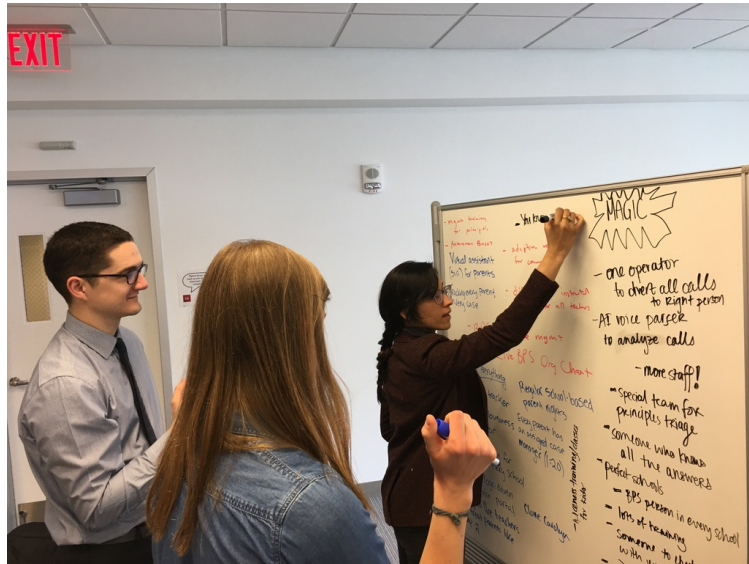
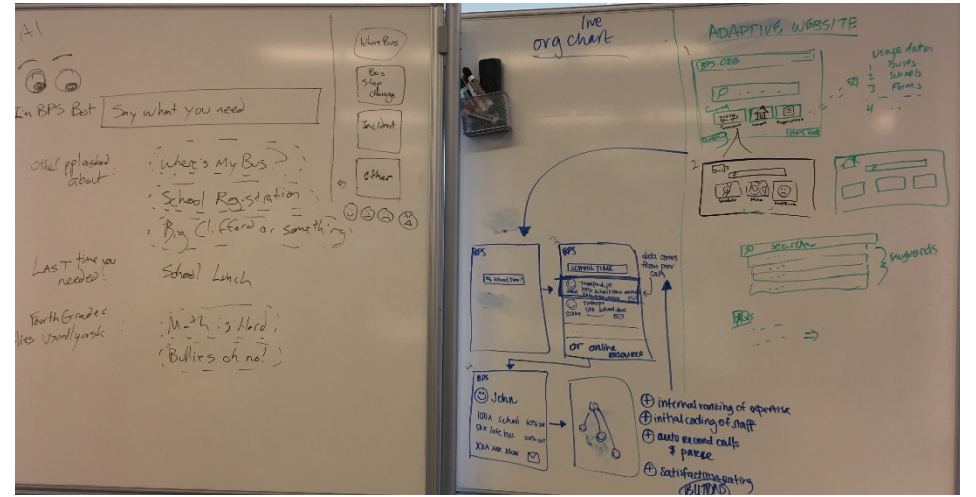
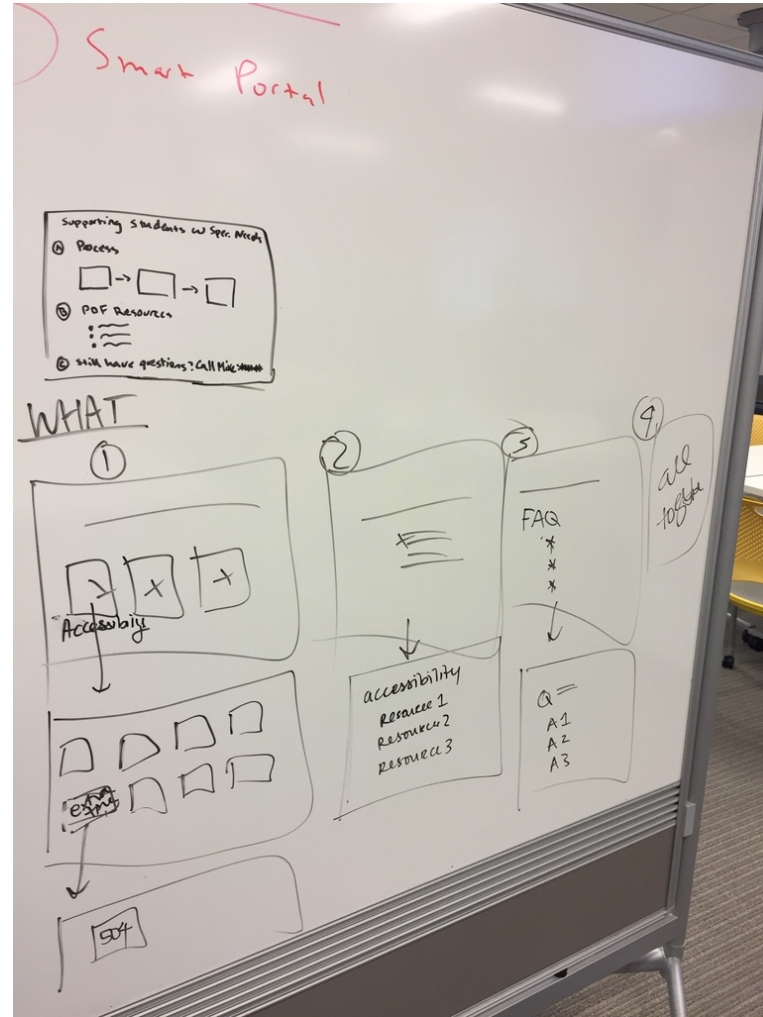
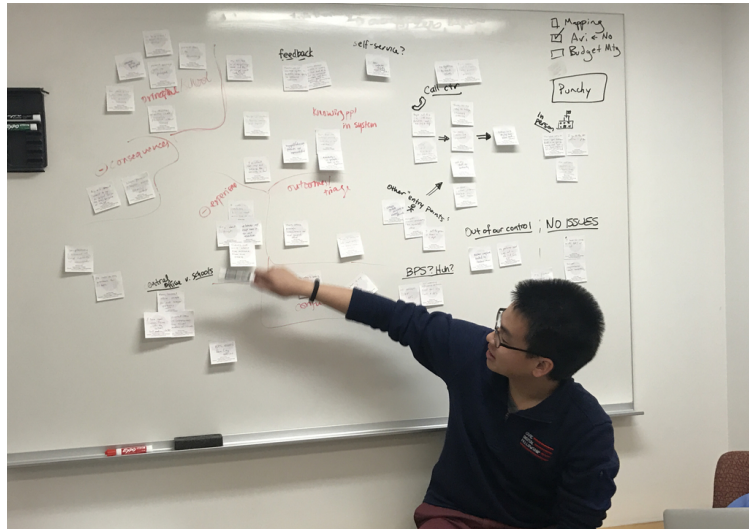
3 empathy building exercises

Role-playing as new parents showed us how hard it is to find answers or simply contact information for people who can solve common problems.

12 prototype field tests

Testing a version of our prototype with parents and guardians allowed us to understand the effects of certain design decisions.

Appendix II: Design Process



Appendix III: Insights from Parent/Guardian Interviews

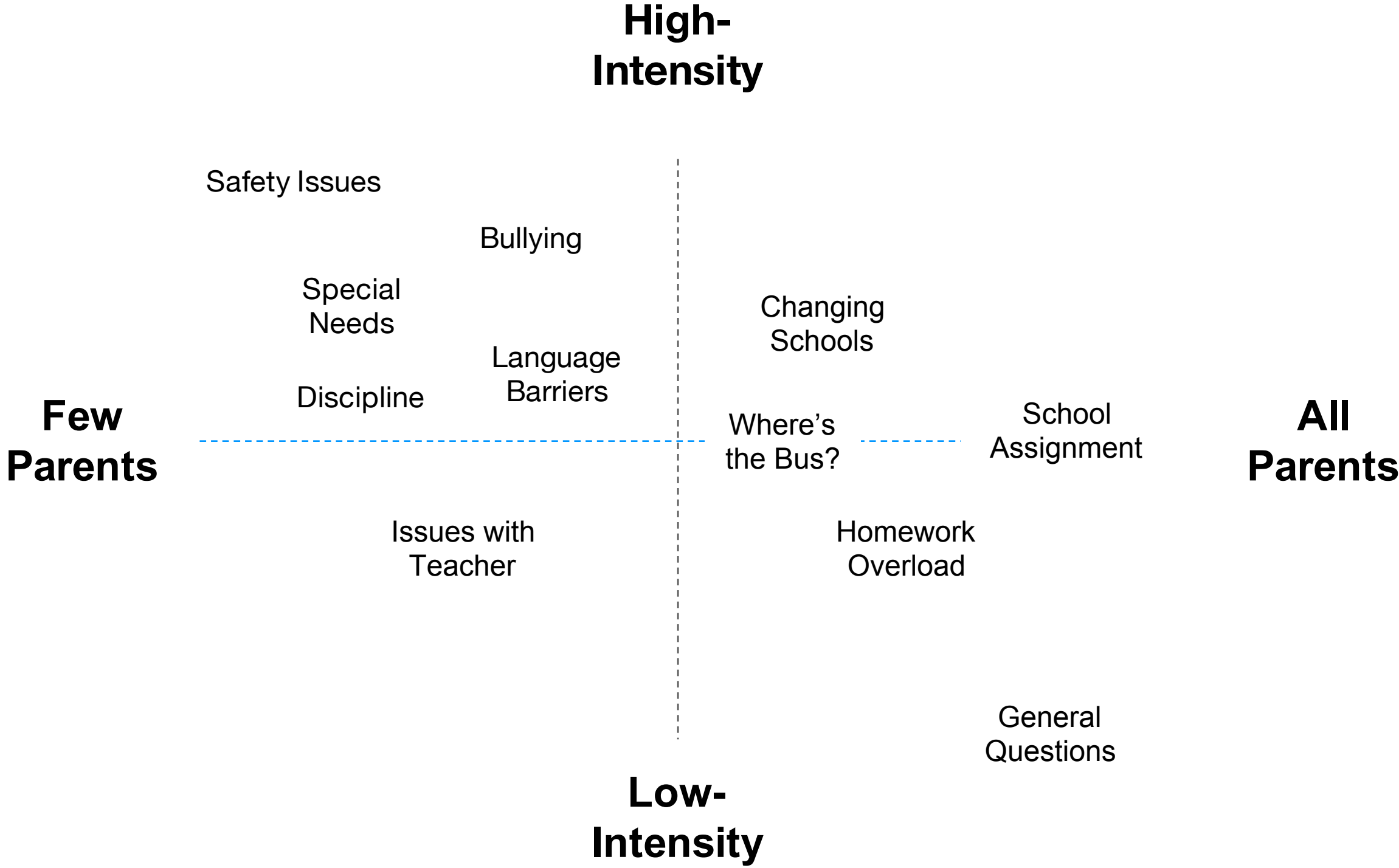


1. **Central office is not the first stop.** Parents go to teachers or principals first.
2. Parents are **emotionally invested in both** process and outcome.
3. Identifying who to contact is extremely confusing.
4. **Information is not shared** across departments.
5. Customer service representatives are **too busy firefighting** to think about proactive solutions.

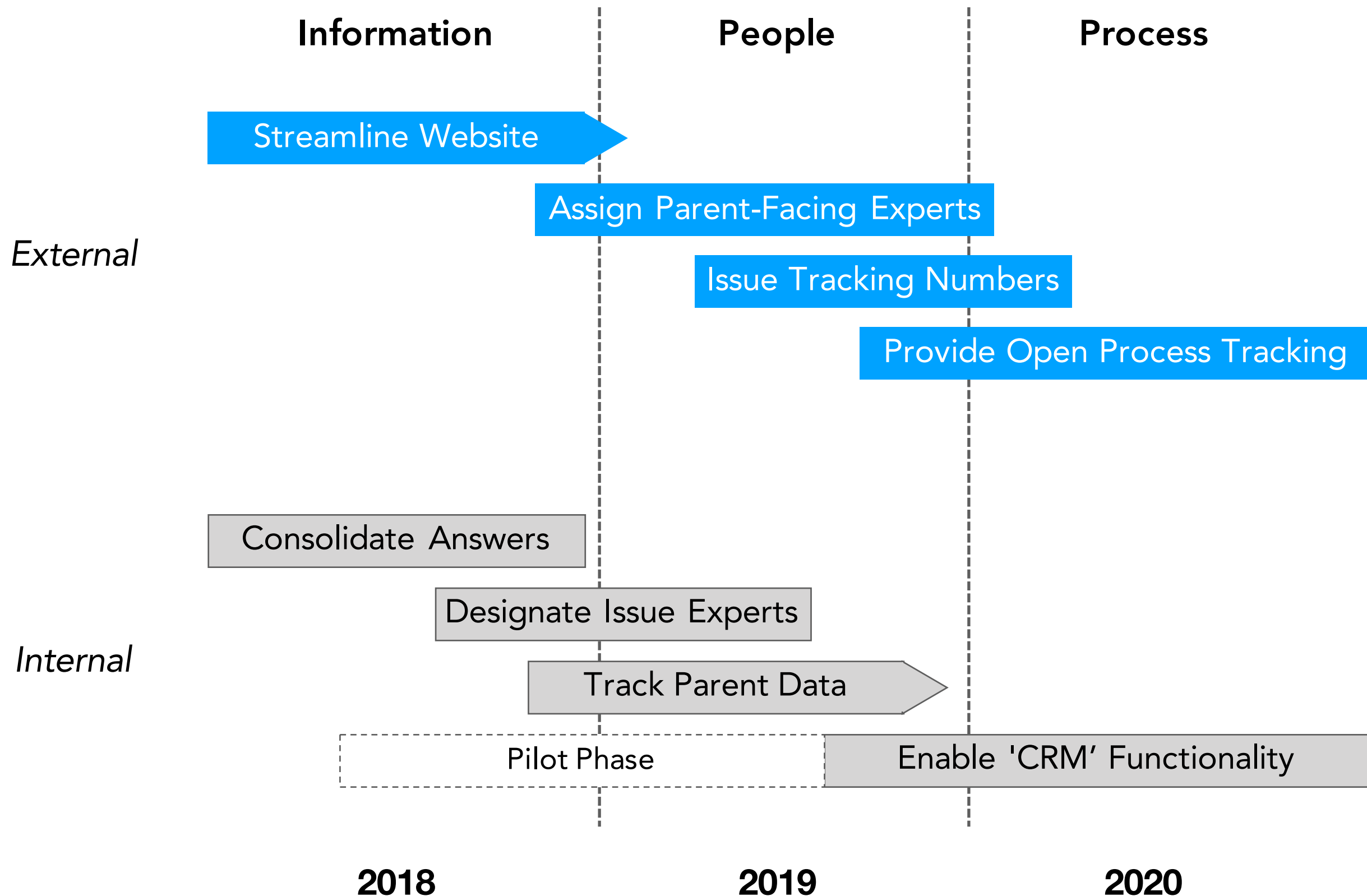


Appendix IV: Common Family Concerns

BPS family concerns vary in intensity and scale



Appendix V: A Long-Term Vision for BPS Customer Service



Appendix VI: The BPS Customer Service Data Challenge

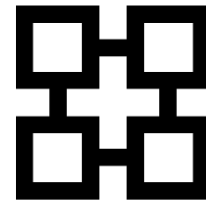


Not Collecting All the Data We Need to Improve Performance

Missing customer satisfaction measures

No tracking of parent issues over time

Issues rarely tied to responsible staff

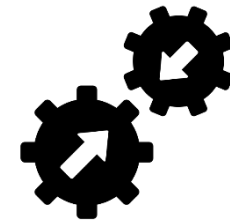


Sources and Methods Are Decentralized

No shared data definitions or processes

Issue recording and reporting protocols vary

Struggling to articulate common priorities



Tough to Access or Integrate Data across Siloes

Departments feel they 'own' their data

No incentive to share key information

Impossible to match across datasets

Appendix VII: Additional Prototype

A Parent/Guardian-Facing Process Tracker

Object-Oriented Resources

https://bostonpublicschools.org

Home

What Kind of Form Are You Looking For?

Transportation

School Registration

Special Education

Athletic Activities

Student Transcripts

Employment

I'm Registering My Student for the First Time

We Are Transferring to a New School

My Student Is Returning to the District

How Are We Serving You Today? Take our anonymous customer satisfaction survey to let us know how we can improve!

Tracker

Independently Initiate Process

https://bostonpublicschools.org

Home

School Transfer Form 115A

Use this form to officially apply for a transfer between Boston Public Schools for the current academic year. If you have questions about the information required to complete this form, please ask your child's current school leadership or reach out to our BPS Help Desk at 555-555-5555 or via email at bps@bps.org.

I've already filled out the form.

Great!

Upload A File

I Want to Mail It In

I don't have the form yet.

That's OK!

Download A PDF

Download A Word Document

Send A Copy to My Home

Send A Copy to My School

How Are We Serving You Today? Take our anonymous customer satisfaction survey to let us know how we can improve!

Tracker

Current Problem: Parents struggling to find and differentiate department-oriented information

Solution: Organize commonly-used forms in central, public-facing location defined by activity

Current Problem: Need to physically wait in often-crowded offices to kick off important processes

Solution: Give parents/guardians ability to upload and send key forms digitally

Appendix VII: Additional Prototype

A Parent/Guardian-Facing Process Tracker

Universal Tracking Number

https://bostonpublicschools.org

Home

Your School Transfer Form 115A

Thanks for completing a School Transfer Form 115A application! We hope that your experience working with Boston Public Schools so far has been great.

Your 115A Tracking Number is 5555-5555-5555

You can return to this page <https://bostonpublicschools.org/trackmystatus> at any time to see the status of your application and any required action steps.

Take Me To My Tracker

How Are We Serving You Today? Take our anonymous customer satisfaction survey to let us know how we can improve!

Tracker

Incremental Evidence of Progress

https://bostonpublicschools.org

Home

Track My Status – 5555-5555-5555

Use the tracker below to see where your form is in the Boston Public Schools process.

If you have any questions about your current status or want to contact a representative of BPS, don't hesitate to call us at 555-555-5555 or email at bps@bps.org.

Application Received Application Confirmed Transfer Validated Current School Confirmation New School Confirmation Transfer Finalized

Your application for a School Transfer Form 115A was received by uploaded file on July 2, 2018.

How Are We Serving You Today? Take our anonymous customer satisfaction survey to let us know how we can improve!

Tracker

Current Problem: Once a process begins, no way to identify current state without physically finding forms

Solution: Assign 311-style tracking numbers to important processes (e.g., registration)

Current Problem: District processes very opaque, especially for new parents in the district

Solution: Visual map of where things stand helps communicate process scope and current state

Appendix VII: Additional Prototype

A Parent/Guardian-Facing Process Tracker

Red Flag for Intervention

https://bostonpublicschools.org

Home

Track My Status – 5555-5555-5555

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Application Received	Application Confirmed	Transfer Validated	Current School Confirmation	New School Confirmation	Transfer Finalized
Your application for a School Transfer Form 115A was received by uploaded file on July 2, 2018.	Your application for a School Transfer Form 115A was confirmed by Boston Public Schools on July 8, 2018.	Welcome Services validated that your transfer met all necessary requirements on July 20, 2018.	Boston Latin Academy confirmed your transfer request on August 1, 2018.	Nifty New School did not have enough information to complete your transfer application. Please Call 555-555-5555 at your earliest convenience to continue your application.	

How Are We Serving You Today? Take our anonymous customer satisfaction survey to let us know how we can improve!

Tracker

Clear Resolution Signal

https://bostonpublicschools.org

Home

Track My Status – 5555-5555-5555

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Application Received	Application Confirmed	Transfer Validated	Current School Confirmation	New School Confirmation	Transfer Finalized
Your application for a School Transfer Form 115A was received by uploaded file on July 2, 2018.	Your application for a School Transfer Form 115A was confirmed by Boston Public Schools on July 8, 2018.	Welcome Services validated that your transfer met all necessary requirements on July 20, 2018.	Boston Latin Academy confirmed your transfer request on August 1, 2018.	Nifty New School confirmed your transfer request on August 15, 2018.	Congratulations! Your student is confirmed to attend Nifty New School in the 2019-2020 school year.

How Are We Serving You Today? Take our anonymous customer satisfaction survey to let us know how we can improve!

Tracker

Current Problem: If issues arise with the process, parents don't know and thus can't move to fix things

Solution: Flag problems directly and provide clear point of contact for remediation

Current Problem: Sometimes hard to know when things are truly complete (or when follow-up needed)


Solution: Automated communication based on resolution of issue tracking number

Appendix VIII: Private Sector Case Study



calendly

○ ○ ○


Jane Doe

● **One-on-One Meeting** Times are in [Eastern Time - US & Canada](#) ▾

Select a Day

—TODAY—

< **Thu**
Oct 1

Fri
Oct 2

Mon
Oct 5

Tue
Oct 6

Wed
Oct 7

Thu
Oct 8

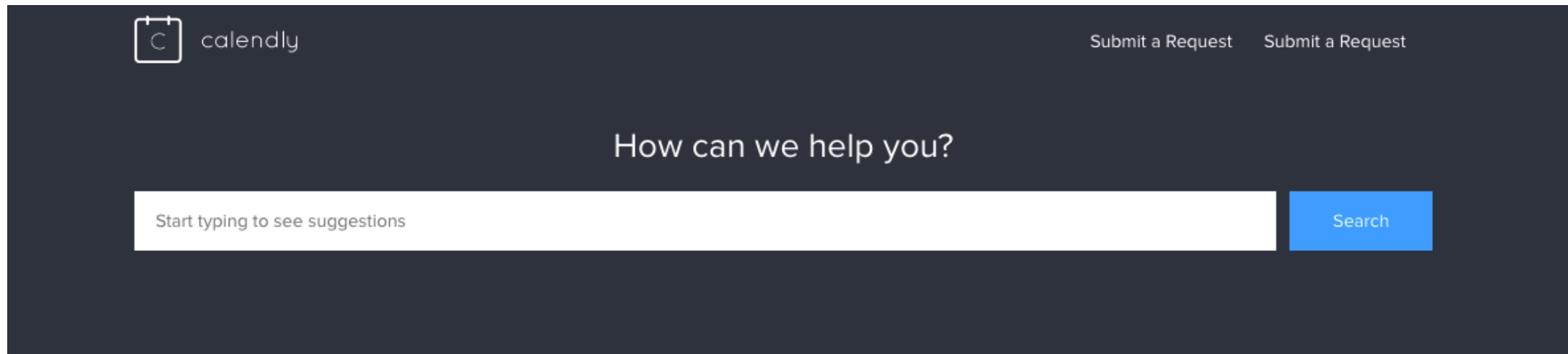
Fri
Oct 9

>

----- THIS WEEK ----- | ----- NEXT WEEK -----

[After Oct 9](#) ▶

Appendix VIII: Private Sector Case Study



Getting Started

[See articles...](#)



Availability & Calendar Connection

[See articles...](#)



Customize Your Event Types

[See articles...](#)



Embed Options

[See articles...](#)



Using Calendly with Your Team

[See articles...](#)



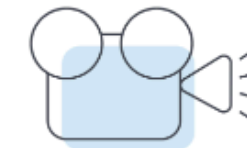
Integrations

[See articles...](#)



Account Management and Advanced Options

[See articles...](#)



Video Tutorials

[See articles...](#)



Ideas

Appendix VIII: Private Sector Case Study

Calendly's customer service solves...



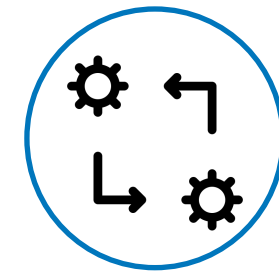
Information

Self-service
"Knowledge Base"
serves as dual-facing
internal and external
tool; compilation of
non-intuitive "nuggets
of knowledge"



People

Collaborative work
environment and
"teach it back"
de-escalation minimizes
tribal knowledge



Process

Analyzing support
tickets informs
additions and
changes to self-
service tools

Appendix IX: Customer Service Cost Estimates

Cost of Phone Call with Clerical Staff	
Salary (Annual)	\$38,000
Salary (Hourly)	\$18
Time to Resolution (Hours)	0.1
Cost / Resolution	\$1.83
Calls / Year	180,000
Total Cost / Year	\$328,846

Cost of Web Redesign	
Salary (Technical Consultant)	\$10,000
Salary (Design Consultant)	\$5,000
Salary (Content Manager)	\$85,000
Number of Site Visits / Year	10,700,000
Total Year 1 Cost of Web Redesign	\$100,000

Cost Savings	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Reduction in Calls	5%	10%	20%	20%
Cost Savings	\$16,442	\$32,885	\$65,769	\$65,769
Cost of Redesign	(\$100,000)	0	0	0
Net Savings	(\$83,558)	(\$50,673)	\$15,096	\$80,865