CODE FOR DC'S OPEN SCHOOLS APP TAKES A STEP TOWARD HELPING DC FAMILIES WITH SCHOOL CHOICE

Washington, DC public school parents face an array of complex education choices, but need better information to decide what's best for their kids. Open Schools (http://edu.codefordc.org/) is a web application developed by Code for DC, the local chapter of the Code for America Brigade. Open Schools will make comparing school demographic and performance data simpler, empowering parents to make better choices.

Using simple pick lists and visual navigation, parents can find out which schools children from their neighborhood attend. Alternatively, they can choose a school and see which neighborhoods the students who attend come from.

Open Schools is a project developed by a team of volunteers, in collaboration with the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). The data visualized on Open Schools, along with much more, is downloadable from http://opendatadc.org/.

"*We wanted to make it something that parents would just instinctively know how to use*," said designer Jennifer Cheng.

"*We started research and design for this tool in Fall 2102*," said project leader, Harlan Harris. "*When OSSE released new data this Spring, allowing us to show how students commute to school across the city, that gave us the ability to start to build something immediately interesting and useful to parents*."

The team will continue to add school-level and neighborhood information that will help education stakeholders answer other important questions. How effective are schools over time? Where do children go when they transition from one school to the next? What strengths do schools have, aside from test scores, such as particularly good music or arts or sports programs? And more!