

PROSPECTIVE PARENTS

Mental Models Explained

Mental models are developed by interviewing a small set of users within a particular target audience, and asking them questions related to common tasks they perform related to an overall process (like working at Tech, or selecting a college). We extract discrete tasks and organize them to make a mental model.

Goals/Categories

Across the top of the chart, you will see a designation of the broad goal or category for the tasks underneath it.

Task Groups

The grey boxes are groups that pull several related tasks together.

Tasks

The individual boxes within a task group box are specific tasks that make up that overall task group.

Colors indicate frequency

This task appeared multiple times in interviews.

This task appeared MANY times in interviews.

This is a very subjective process, it is not intended to be scientific research. It is intended as a DESIGN TOOL so that we can make smarter decisions about site architecture, content and layout.

Help/guide our child through process

Agree on Criteria

Decide our criteria

Help child decide criteria important to him/her

Identify his/her interests

Come up with criteria we have in common

Discuss with child after research

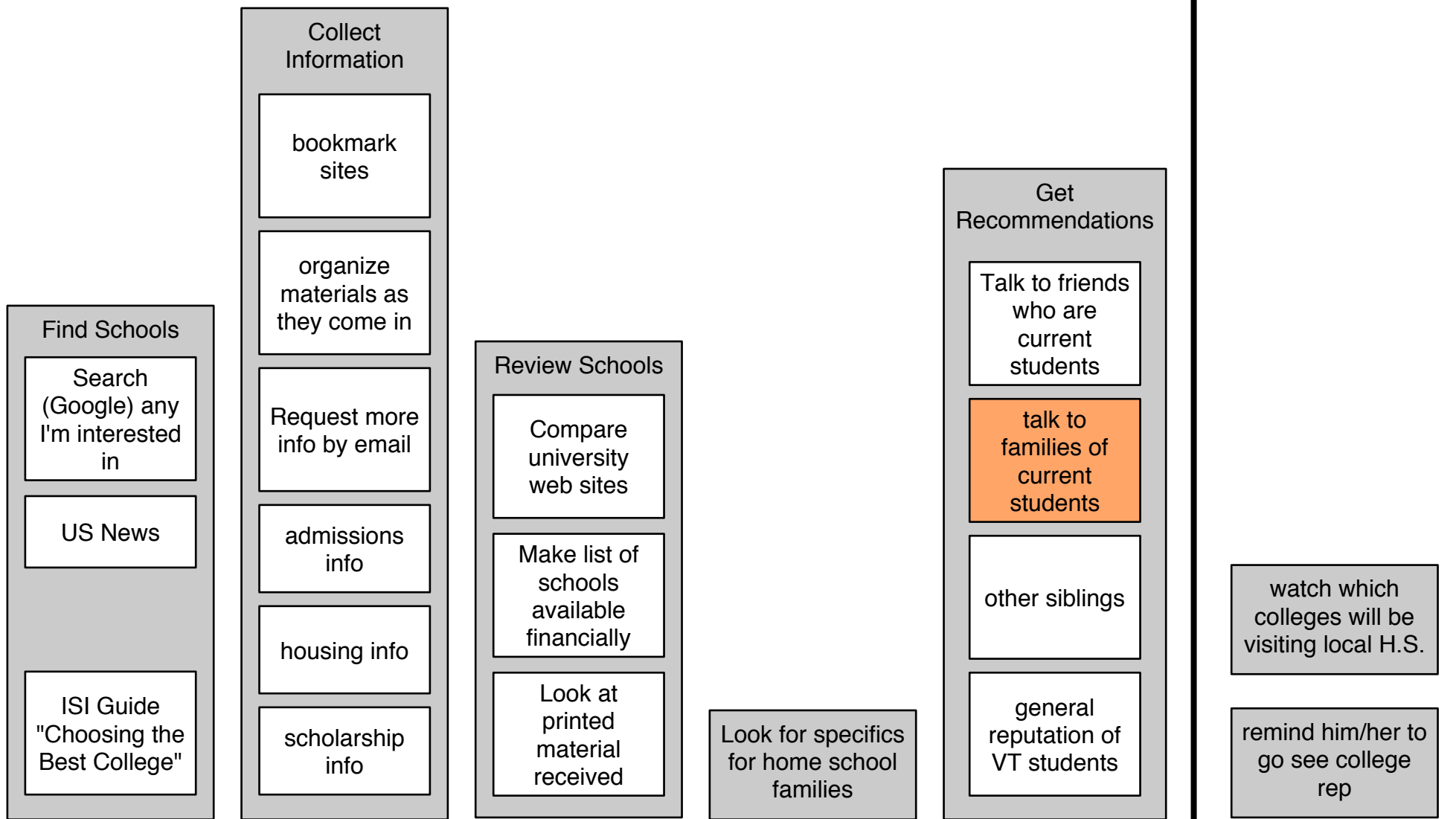
discuss the univ. websites they have seen

discuss what schools are good for specific academic interests

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Be ready to talk when
he/she is (Research)

Encourage child to
talk w/ college rep



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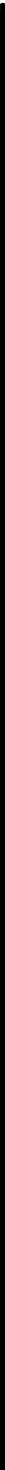
Plan High School

Take Tests

ask for academic info - what does he need to be ready?

plan H.S. curriculum w/goal of which school to attend

verify all minimum requirements met



Set goal for desired school

See what SAT score needs to be

Take SATs

decide which SAT to take

repeat SATs



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Evaluate School

Opportunity to grow socially?

What is student body like?

diversity (ethnic)

male/female ratio

proportion on-campus/off-campus

Take care of my baby!

School is safe & secure

Make sure he will eat properly

Environment conducive to study?

look into honors dorm housing

Intellectual Diversity/Values

Is school not hostile to our family's values?

look at clubs to see political climate, diverse environment for ideas

Religious/Spiritual Life

look for particular religious groups on campus

locate roommate through religious group

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for Athletes

- info on athletics program
- look for coaches
- will coaches help him reach the next level?
- get in touch w/coaches
- look for athletic facilities
- look for housing for athletes

General sports

- find game schedules
- VT sports reputation

Size of school?

- right size for him?
- big enough, but not get lost in the crowd

Look at Academics

- Look for something that will "grab" him academically
- search the courses of study
- look for a specific interest (like engineering)
- look for curriculum catalog
- look for courses - how they blend his interests

Opportunity to succeed after graduation

- Good counselors that can help with grad school/ career?

- staff and faculty have close relationship with students?

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Evaluate Location

Place where he
can excel

Distance from
home
not TOO
close to home

ways to get
home?
Bus service to
NOVA

Nice place for us
to visit

Size/Feel of
Town

Churches in area

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Evaluate Cost

Directions to VT

Connection between school and town
Does Blacksburg support VT well?

Look at cost/
tuition

get more information about merit scholarships
apply for scholarships
receive notification of scholarship status
interview with scholarship schools

Financial Aid
Apply for financial aid
Receive financial aid offers

Evaluate financial assistance

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Assess Interest

News

Military

Transferring to VT

Assess school's interest from overall interaction with school

"I like a school that is just as interested in you as your are in them."

read school news

looking for requirements for the Army tuition program

look for transfer student process

seeking pre-admission as a transfer

want most credits for transferred work

has similar program our son has begun elsewhere?

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Visit

Apply

Visit the colleges
to decide where
to apply

Discuss after visit

Help/guide
through
application
process

Decide how
many we
need to apply
to

groundwork/
prepare for
application
process

keep up-to-
date on what
is needed

check in on
application
status to
make sure it's
done

remind child
(verbally)

Apply

seeking a
pre-
application

request
application
materials
from web site

apply to many
diff't schools

receive
response
from school