

Case Study

Garland ISD Reduces Application Processing Time by 80% While Improving The Family Experience

From simplifying backend operations to empowering families with transparent information, Garland ISD's story is a compelling example of how the right technology can fuel equity, efficiency, and engagement.

About Garland ISD

Location: Garland, Rowlett, and Sachse, Texas

Enrollment: 50,844 students across 68 campuses



Garland Independent School District has long been committed to providing families with meaningful school options — and the information families need to make the best decisions for their children. As the district looked toward the future, leaders recognized an opportunity to make their school choice process even more accessible, intuitive, and efficient for both families and staff.

By partnering with Avela, Garland ISD streamlined application processing from about an hour down to just 12–15 minutes per family, all while maintaining high standards for service and transparency. The result: a more seamless experience for families and more time for staff to focus on what matters most — supporting students.

The Challenge

As one of Texas's largest and most innovative districts, Garland ISD serves more than 50,000 students across 68 campuses in Garland, Rowlett, and Sachse. The district is proud to offer universal school choice, giving every family the opportunity to apply to magnet and non-magnet programs that match their needs and aspirations.

Historically, Garland ISD managed its application process through its Student Information System (SIS), Skyward. While Skyward served many core functions, it wasn't optimized for choice-based workflows. This forced the district to manage magnet and non-magnet processes on separate timelines and platforms — creating a fragmented, confusing experience for families.

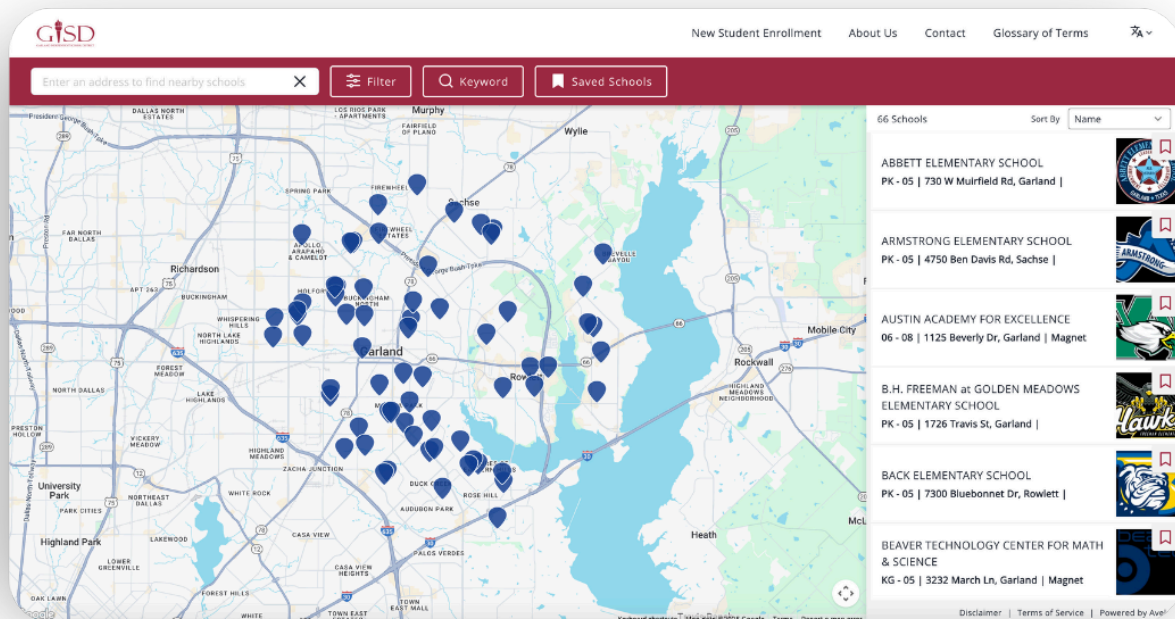
Parents were often left navigating different deadlines, disjointed communications, and unclear next steps. District leaders worried this complexity could discourage participation or even result in lost enrollments to neighboring districts. Meanwhile, administrators faced a labor-intensive process: collecting documents, reviewing applications, tracking offers, and managing waitlists often required hours of manual work, even with robust internal systems in place.

District leaders knew that simplifying the process could have significant benefits for both families and staff. With that goal in mind Garland ISD set out to find a dedicated solution that could support their vision for equitable access and operational excellence.

The Solution

Following a comprehensive evaluation — including valuable feedback from families — Garland ISD selected Avela as its application and school choice platform because of its ease of use for families, interactive school finder, and ability to handle multiple programs in a “single best offer” process. Avela’s modern, user-friendly system allowed the district to unify and elevate the entire process for both families and staff.

With Avela Explore, Garland families gained a centralized, interactive tool to compare schools, view program offerings, and even check transportation eligibility based on their home address. What was previously a fragmented system of campus links and external sites became a single, intuitive experience — accessible across languages and devices.



Garland ISD's school finder in Avela Explore

The Solution (Continued)

In tandem, Avela Apply delivered a clear, guided application flow. Families could complete and submit applications, upload documents, and track their progress with ease. Automated notifications helped ensure parents stayed informed at every step — minimizing confusion and reducing the need for follow-up calls or emails.

On the administrative side, Avela dramatically reduced manual tasks. Staff could now download multiple applications with one click, instead of needing to download family information individually and piece together materials from multiple systems. Offer management and waitlist tracking – once laborious and time-sensitive – became automated through Avela’s platform.

One of the most impactful upgrades was Avela’s support for Garland’s “single best offer” model, which unified the application timeline across magnet and non-magnet schools. Previously, families navigated separate deadlines, testing windows, and offer notifications — often making decisions without knowing what other options might still be available. With Avela, families received a single, best offer that reflected all program choices, giving them more time, clarity, and confidence to make the right decision. For staff, this simplified operations and significantly reduced the time spent on manual outreach and offer management.



*“With Avela, parents don’t have to upload documents separately to apply for multiple programs. They apply once with Avela, and we’re able to process all of the choices at the same time, whether magnet or traditional campuses. This saved everyone involved a lot of time.” – **Babetta Hemphill, Executive Director of Student Services and Choice***

The Results

- Application processing time dropped by **over 80%** — from about an hour per family to just 12–15 minutes.
- **Automated tools** reduced staff workload and errors while facilitating communication with families.
- A **unified application timeline** improved the family experience and reduced administrative burden.
- A clearer, more intuitive family experience **empowered parents** to make confident, informed choices
- Participation in the school choice process **increased from 4520** last spring **to 8002 students this year.**
- **95.48%** of the students who made a choice received 1 of their 6 choices.

Since implementing Avela, Garland ISD has transformed its application experience, achieving remarkable gains in both operational efficiency and family satisfaction. Application processing time has dropped by more than 80%, from up to 90 minutes per family to just 12 to 15 minutes. This dramatic increase in efficiency has enabled the district to serve more families and expand appointment availability at enrollment centers, all while easing the administrative burden on staff.

Automation of key tasks — including waitlist management, offer notifications, and document handling — has streamlined workflows, reduced the potential for errors, and increased clarity throughout the process. Parents now receive timely updates about their application status and can respond to offers quickly and easily, eliminating the need for repeated follow-up from district staff.

Since implementing Avela to support the application and choice processes, Garland has seen almost twice as many students participating in school choice. With all of their options in one place (Avela Explore), many more parents applied to early college high school and P-Tech programs, resulting in magnet programs being full at every campus.

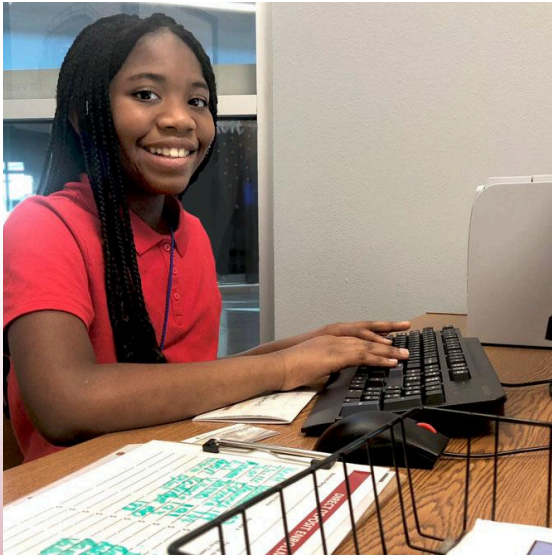
The Results (Continued)

Just as important, families now report a smoother, more empowering experience. With Avela's unified platform and support for a single best offer, families are no longer navigating multiple timelines or uncertain outcomes. They have more time to consider their options, ask questions, and make informed decisions. The Explore tool has been especially impactful in helping families better understand available programs, transportation options, and eligibility — all in one accessible, user-friendly place.

For Garland ISD, this transformation wasn't just about implementing new technology — it was about honoring their commitment to continuous improvement and doing everything possible to support students and families.

With Avela, the district has not only modernized its systems — it has made school choice easier, clearer, and more equitable for every family it serves.

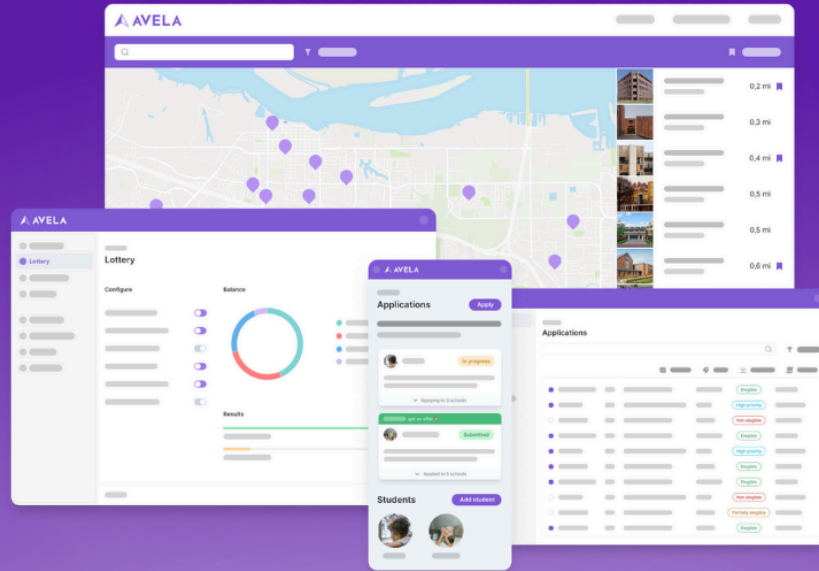




Conclusion

Garland ISD's partnership with Avela showcases what's possible when a district pairs visionary leadership with the right technology. By simplifying and streamlining applications and school choice, the district not only saved time — it built stronger relationships with families and set a new standard for operational excellence.

If your district is exploring ways to modernize its application and enrollment processes, reduce administrative strain, and deliver a better experience for families, Avela can help.



About Avela

Avela is an education technology company that offers a suite of application and enrollment solutions for education providers. The tools empower administrators to drive enrollment, streamline operations, and promote equity using research-proven approaches, while transforming the way families interact with educational institutions.

**Ready to streamline your enrollment process
and improve the family experience?**

Contact us today →