Education Specifications
Learning is Safe and Secure

Foster a Community that Cares

Fostering a safe and secure learning environment requires new thinking about the relationship between school and the public at large. Without being actively involved with a school, it is difficult for community members to understand what happens within and, therefore, are unable to make a personal connection. Without personal connection, public support is difficult. Only by welcoming the community into our schools and making the inner-workings transparent will community support become possible. We must identify ways in which the school may serve the community and vice-versa.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

In order to provide a secure campus while maintaining a welcoming atmosphere, design professionals can draw on the passive principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) which focus on three areas: Surveillance, Access Control, and Territorial Reinforcement.

Surveillance

Visibility and transparency are key to achieving passive surveillance in and around the campus. Design of the building and landscape should consider the "See and Be Seen…and Heard" philosophy.

Access Control

The campus should have limited points of entry and the design should force visitors to the main entry where they are checked in before being granted access to the campus.

Territorial Reinforcement

Campus boundaries should be clearly defined, conveying a sense of importance and an expectation for respectful behavior. Maintenance is an important aspect as a campus with poor maintenance conveys a lack of care and respect, which invites graffiti and other more serious damage.

Address the Four Zones of Security

Develop safety and security strategies that strengthen and bolster each of the school's four zones.

Zone 1: Up to the Curb

For example, consider the zone from the neighborhood to the curb. In order to develop strategies appropriate to this zone, you must first understand traffic patterns, access points and safe walking routes. While adequate emergency access and site egress are mandatory requirements, alternative routes are equally important. Secondary access routes are critical during bottlenecks. Design for worst-case scenarios, such as an emergency event during school pick-up. Know the Safe Routes to School. If they don't yet exist, propose developing them. Your design must respond to the broader context and patterns of use.

Invite local police and fire departments to participate in the safety discussion. They know the neighborhood and are a great resource for developing site access strategies.

Zone 2: Curb to the Building

Site perimeter security includes landscaping, lighting, walks, service areas, parking, public zones, private zones, student use areas, busing, signage, cameras, out buildings, overhangs and covered areas.

Zone 3: Building Exterior

Building perimeter security includes doors, windows, signage, hardware, security entry devices, cameras, roof access, vandalism potentials, line of sight, and lighting.

Zone 4 Building Interior

Building interior security includes vestibules, hardware, transparency, sightlines, areas of refuge, classroom layout, vertical circulation, hard and soft zoning, cameras, security entry devices, PA and phone systems, restroom configurations and placement.

Transparency and Security

Transparency is an important part of providing a positive learning environment and promoting community use. It is also a strategy for security. Transparency makes it easy to identify threats early, thereby increasing available time for closing blinds, locking doors, using emergency communications, moving children to an area of refuge, or fleeing through a secondary exit. Removing windows limits an offender's ability to see in, yet it also limits a teacher's ability to see out; a teacher may not know an offender is present until it is too late.

As classrooms become more transparent, areas of refuge must be rethought. If the learning suite is protected from other areas by a security door, then it becomes an area of refuge.