

Understanding CPTED

Crime prevention through
environmental design

By April Dalton-Noblitt, Allegion
September, 2012

Designing school facilities with security and safety in mind has become a top priority for architects, designers, contractors, as well as school administrators and safety officers. Changes to the physical structure of a school can help lessen the risk of violence, crime and other safety threats.

Today, statistics indicate that most schools deal with bullying, custody battles, drug dealing, gang activity, theft or extreme weather. A small percentage of schools also may encounter more violent situations from gun threats and shootings. To mitigate these types of problems, schools administrators are investigating how architectural designs can effectively prevent violence and crime on school property.

Known as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), the approach considers physical and psychological aspects to reduce opportunities for crime to occur. Criminologist C. Ray Jeffrey coined the phrase, "crime prevention through environmental design," in 1971. He believed "proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime and an improvement in the quality of life."

Recently, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) also began studies of the use of environmental design to prevent school violence. The center recognized that modifying the environment to prevent disease and injury has led to such safety improvements as seat belts and airbags in vehicles that save lives, and sidewalks and community parks that have increased physical activity while helping to reduce obesity.

The CDC is developing guidelines based on CPTED that may help schools to reduce crime opportunities and promote positive social behavior in their facilities.

Here are five principles that can be applied to school violence prevention in a variety of ways:

- Natural surveillance refers to the placement of physical features that maximize visibility. Example: The strategic use of windows that look out on a school entrance so students can see into the school and know that others can see them

- Access management involves guiding people by using signs, well-marked entrances and exits and landscaping. It may also include limiting access to certain areas by using real or symbolic barriers. Example: Landscaping that reduces access to unsupervised locations on the school grounds
- Territoriality is defined by a clear delineation of space, expressions of pride or ownership, and the creation of a welcoming environment. Example: Motivational signs, displays of student art, and the use of school colors to create warmth and express pride
- Physical maintenance includes repair and general upkeep of space. Example: Removing graffiti in restrooms in a timely manner and making the necessary repairs to restrooms, light fixtures and stairways to maintain safety and comfort
- Order maintenance involves attending to minor unacceptable acts and providing measures that clearly state acceptable behavior. Example: Maintaining an obvious adult presence during all times as students transition from one location to another

Older educational facilities were not designed using CPTED principles. However, environmental design principles can be incorporated into maintenance and upgrades at relatively low costs. Simple changes that encourage positive student behavior include moving a desk closer to a window to enhance monitoring of visitors to the building or displaying posters that describe school security rules.

Other CPTED principles include:

- Provide clear border definition of controlled space
- Provide clearly marked transitional zones
- Relocate gathering areas
- Place unsafe activities in safe locations
- Designate the use of space to provide natural barriers
- Improve the scheduling of space
- Redesign or revamp space to increase the perception of natural surveillance

The principles of CPTED can potentially benefit schools by fostering a sense of physical and social order. The effective use of these design principles can help manage access to all school areas, maximize the presence of authority figures and minimize opportunities for out-of-sight activities.

Learn more about CPTED

For more information about ways to use door hardware and security technologies to support your efforts in CPTED, please contact a professional security consultant in your area by calling **888.758.9823** or fill out the **Contact Us** form on our website at allegion.com.

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