PROTECTIVE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTS THAT REDUCE BULLYING



storage areas helps children to keep their school clean

and tidy.

Architect: Brown Falconer

natural access.

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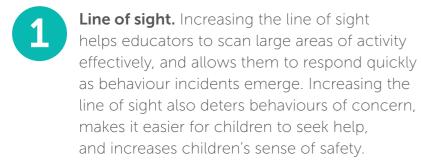
What are protective physical environments?

Protective physical environments are settings that have been designed to reduce unsafe behaviours, and increase positive behaviours.

Protective physical environments can improve children's wellbeing. Children in school environments that have protective design features have reported:

- increased feelings of safety
- lower incidents of bullying
- lower incidents of missing school due to concerns about safety.

Protective physical environments incorporate three key design elements:



- Natural access is about who can and cannot come into certain spaces. Signage, hard barriers (fences, walls, paths) and soft barriers (plants, seating, equipment) can provide cues to children and young people about who can be in the space, how to move through the space, and the kinds of behaviours / activities that can occur in the space.
- Ownership and identity. The use of school colours and logos, art work and signage can help identify the school community. The use of murals, flags, plants and equipment can help demonstrate school values about inclusion and respect.

Using data to create protective physical environments

Schools can draw from rich sources of data to inform decisions about protective physical environments. Sources of data include:

- surveys of students, families, and staff
- school behaviour data (including office referrals)
- Wellbeing and Engagement Collection survey results
- audits of injury reports, critical incident reports and risk assessments
- Mapping where unsafe behaviours occur on school grounds.

Use data to help your school answer these questions:

- Where do bullying incidents occur?
 Consider hallways, playground, toilets.
- When do bullying incidents occur?
 e.g. transitions between classes, lunch breaks, just before / after the school bell.
- Which areas of the school are hardest for staff on duty to supervise?
- Where do students say they feel most safe / unsafe?

Effective design:



Corridors and Hallways

- Brighten dark corridors and hallways through the use of lights and natural daylight.
- Use sensor lighting to make motion more visible, especially in low-traffic areas.
- Improve visibility by using mirrors so that children can see themselves and see around blind spots.
- Avoid placing storage lockers and cupboards in areas that children need to move through regularly or in areas with limited line of sight.



Playgrounds

 Reduce social congestion by scheduling different times for different groups to use the play equipment

- Increase visibility by removing posters / artwork from windows that look onto the playgrounds / yard areas.
- The use of positive signage "Chill out zones" and "Quiet corners" and "Social hubs" provide a positive way of telling children what activities should be performed in an area.
- Provide sports and play equipment in small groupings to increase pro-social behaviours.



Yard areas

- Reduce large, undefined areas through line markings (including line markings for games).
- Increase seating in groups to encourage social interactions.
- Encourage natural performances through the addition of raised platforms / stages.
- Add interactive features in landscaping to increase nature play.
- Increase the visibility of staff on duty through the use of fluorescent vests or a distinctive item.



Walls and exteriors

- Use murals and student artworks to showcase school values and identity.
- Use flags, artwork, nature gardens and design features that show cultures and local histories that are important to the school community.
- Encourage creativity by having interactive artworks that children can continue to add to. Consider using chalk, paper, fabric and non-permanent materials.



Bathrooms

- Remove doors from handwashing areas or place wash basins outside the bathrooms to improve visibility and reduce lingering.
- Increase privacy and reduce intrusiveness by extending the length of toilet cubicle doors.
- Remove graffiti to discourage vandalism and encourage maintenance of the bathrooms.