

FACILITIES FOR 21ST CENTURY LEARNING

Implications for 21st Century Learning

Safety and Security

There is a high level of interest in maintaining an inviting and non-institutional environment while simultaneously providing a safe environment for students, staff, and the community who use the facility and adjacent support services. The organization of a building can have a major impact on student behavior and safety. Building security can be addressed in an active or a passive manner: active security is based on security systems; passive security is based on program design, building layout, and community participation. Schools should be based on passive concepts with applied active concepts where necessary.

If designers focus on the symptoms of the safety problem, they tend to focus on the active security procedures that can be implemented. If designers focus on the cause of the problem, they are likely to address most issues through passive or program and building layout solutions.

The problems and their causes are multi-dimensional: some issues can be more easily addressed in design than others. Causes can include, family problems, lack of sense of belonging, lack of identity, lack of communication, lack of accountability, lack of student/ teacher relationships, and criminal activities by outsiders.

The greatest number of discipline problems in a school occur when students switch classes and travel from one end of the building to the other. Reducing

movement by having students spend the majority of their day in one section of the building should result in fewer discipline problems. Block scheduling, sometimes used in middle schools, is one approach that helps reduce pedestrian traffic within the building.

Organizing a building into general learning settings may reduce behavior problems:

- Teacher preparation areas place adults in closer and more direct contact with students.
- Students spend the majority of their day in the neighborhood and commons which promotes a greater sense of belonging and identity.
- School pride becomes more apparent.

The glass wall into the administration reception/ waiting area in the pictures to the right provides good visibility of the main entrance. It serves a dual purpose of being inviting and welcoming to visitors while allowing administrative staff to monitor access during school hours. Way-finding is crucial to a successful school facility. The front entrance and reception area should be immediately obvious to anyone approaching and entering the building. Similarly, glass can provide security and visibility if the right materials are used.



Photo: Brad Noblitt

► *David H. Hickman High School, Hoener Associates, Architects, Columbia, MO*



► *Crosswinds Middle School, Cuningham Group Architecture, St Paul, MN*