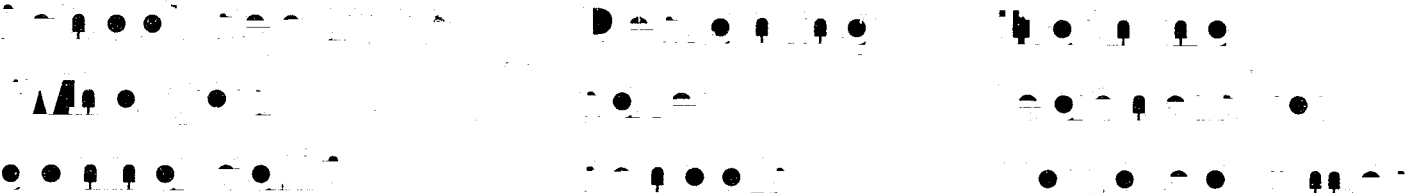




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About the cover:

Police and school security officers have become an integral part of many schools. Here Chicago policeman Howard Kilroy is surrounded by children outside Kosciuszko Elementary School. Photo copyright © 1989, the Times Mirror Company.

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BY TIMOTHY D. CROWE

*School safety can be enhanced
by integrating crime-prevention approaches
into building and site design.*

Designing safer schools

Schools have come a long way since the old one-room schoolhouse. Well before the turn of the century, school buildings began to be constructed to house large student populations. Classrooms were supplemented with offices, auditoriums, gymnasiums, cafeterias and athletic fields. The school building concept has evolved into a complex operation that must support a multiplicity of functions. Some schools now house programs ranging from preschool through the 12th grade to adult education and vocational programs.

Today, school design may be assessed through a new perspective. This new approach incorporates an understanding of how the constructed environment affects behavior. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) is being used successfully in schools and communities to improve the management of human space. This article examines contemporary trends in school design and their effect on behavior.

Changes in environmental design

Within the last 30 years, school design has undergone three major evolutionary changes from a CPTED standpoint —

Timothy D. Crowe is a consultant on Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design and formerly was director of the National Crime Prevention Institute at the University of Louisville in Kentucky.

traditional, department style and open classroom. These models have reflected changing philosophies of design that were influenced by environmental concerns, social changes and attempts to radically reorient approaches to educational administration.

Each school design directly affected the behavior patterns of its users — students and teachers alike. *Traditional* design emphasized the classroom. One-teacher, one-classroom models allowed schools to telescope from the one-room schoolhouse to fairly large structures by adding classrooms as the student population grew. Everyone had their assigned space — teachers in classrooms and school administrators in offices — which helped to define territories for both students and teachers.

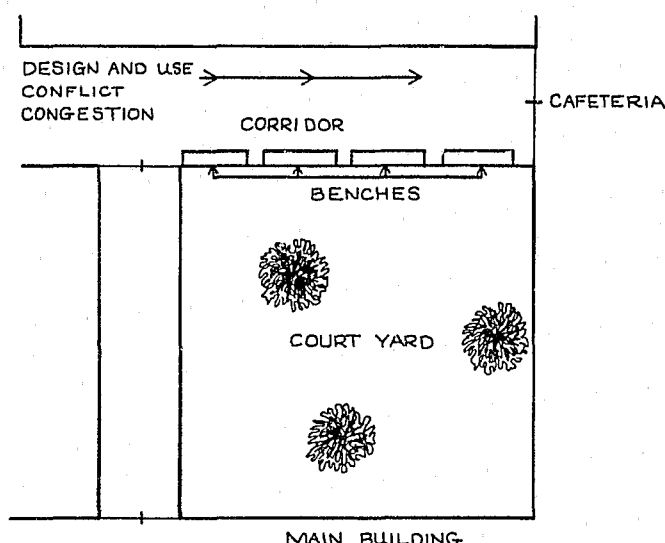
Schools built in the '50s and '60s evolved around a modern idea of *departments*. A natural outgrowth of modern management was to organize schools around disciplines or departments. Teachers were oriented as teams identified with a single discipline and a leader. Similar disciplines were enclaved physically in self-contained units with offices and classrooms. Many classrooms became multipurpose rooms in that they were no longer the domain of an individual teacher. Scheduling a classroom for constant use by a number of teachers seemed more efficient. While this design produced a somewhat more collegial at-

mosphere for faculty, it shifted the personal domain of many teachers from the classroom to an office. The classroom lost its personal markings and its identity with an individual.

The *open-classroom* concept radically altered school designs of the 1970s. The old one-room schoolhouse was resurrected in a new form. Walls, which were perceived as barriers to effective communication and supervision, were eliminated so that one massive classroom could contain a number of groups. Teachers were granted personal space in large "bullpens" that were isolated from students. The exteriors of these schools were "fortified" in the interest of energy conservation and security. Windows were replaced with artificial illumination, thereby eliminating any view of the neighborhood. These "blockhouses" literally turned their backs and withdrew from the neighborhood. Some schools already had lost their neighborhood identity and sense of territorial concern as an unintended byproduct of the advent of busing to achieve racial equality.

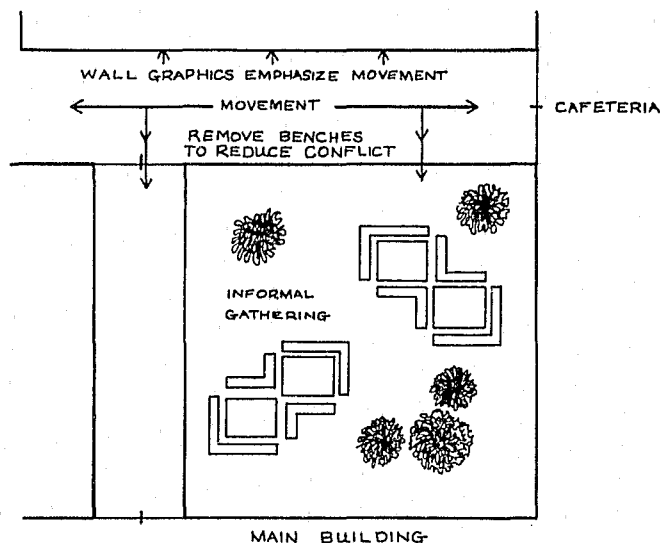
Today's school planners and architects are returning to traditional values of school design, believing that they work better. Large, undifferentiated school campuses — as well as other environments such as offices and industrial spaces — have become unmanageable. Designers are working toward a general objective of personalizing space to give

Courtyards and Corridors



Poor Design and Use

1. Many site planners or users of space fail to adequately define the intended purpose and uses of courtyards.
2. Corridor and courtyard confusion is exacerbated by placing benches and other furnishings along corridors.
3. Corridor and courtyard conflict often leads to congestion, noise and personal conflict.
4. Groups of students or others often will colonize, or pre-empt, spaces, which creates further conflict and fear.
5. Normal users will avoid these areas. Abnormal users feel safer and at low risk of detection of intervention.



Good Design and Use

1. The intended purpose and use of courtyards and adjoining corridors are clearly defined in policy and in physical design.
2. Furnishings for courtyards that are intended for gathering behavior may be designed to break up group size or to provide only minimal comfort to shorten the staying time.
3. Portable rather than permanent amenities may be more effective, depending on intended use patterns. Accordingly, physical support is provided only when the specific behavior is desired.
4. Normal users will feel safer moving through these areas, while abnormal users will find it difficult to pre-empt these spaces.

create confusion and decrease natural surveillance by making an unclear definition of transitional zones.

- Isolation of both book and physical education lockers into cluster areas eliminates the natural surveillance that comes from frequent use. These isolated areas may be avoided by *normal users* — those individuals who belong there. *Abnormal users* — individuals who should not or are not desired to be in that space — perceive such isolated areas as a “green light” for improper use.

Corridors are the main areas in schools where the least amount of control exists. People legitimately are “coming and going” with a potentially wide range of excuses for their behavior. Some of the environmental causes of problems include:

- The design and use plans of many corridors present “blind spots” that

attract abnormal users. Normal users avoid these spaces, thus reinforcing the territorial control exercised by undesired users.

- Class scheduling promotes confusion and congestion in some areas. Other areas are isolated by poor scheduling practices that do not optimize the effective use of space. Many schools plan for the allocation of space based on personalities, or by precedence in use of space. This results in lowered productivity and in greater losses.

Restrooms generally are placed at the end of hallways or in isolated locations. Architects often justify this practice because no one really cares about the location of restrooms. Some environmental causes of restroom security problems include:

- The location of restrooms is generally “down the hall” and away from the building’s natural circulation plan.

This presents a perception of distance and isolation which says that this area is “unsafe.”

- Double-door entry systems for student restrooms create the perception and reality of isolation by design. One door secludes a separate transition space from another door. An individual is inside the “door-swing” of the second door before he “knows what he has gotten into.” Many students feel unsafe in these restroom areas and will avoid going there. An atmosphere where abnormal users feel free to conduct improper activities often is created.

Classrooms are a school’s most used areas. Code of conduct violations occur in classrooms, and thefts and vandalism occur when classrooms are vacant. The greatest loss in classrooms occurs during lunch periods when many activities are going on and people are moving around.

Some of the environmental causes of classroom problems include:

- Multipurpose classroom use reduces territorial concern for the physical space. Teachers and students do not identify the space with signs or personal "turf identifiers."
- Many classrooms are isolated from hallways by continuous walls that separate the controlled space of a classroom from the uncontrolled and "un-owned" general space of corridors or hallways. This reduces the control over space that may be exhibited by normal users and increases the control of abnormal users.

CPTED Concepts

CPTED is based upon the theory that "the proper *design* and effective *use* of the built environment can reduce the incidence and fear of crime, and make an improvement in the quality of life."

This definition seems to be a "mouthful." Basically, it says that the better we manage our human and physical resources, the greater our profits and the lower our losses.

In a residential neighborhood, profit translates to the protection of property values and improved quality of life. In a business neighborhood, profit translates to the "bottom-line" of economic growth and attractiveness. The underlying objective of CPTED is to help school administrators attain their primary goal of student achievement and a positive environment with the added byproduct of improved security and loss prevention. The CPTED planner must ask questions such as: "What are you trying to accomplish?" and "How can we help you do it better?" A successful application of these concepts follows this order of priorities:

1. How the *design* and *use* of physical space
2. affects human *decisions* and *behavior*, leading to
3. improved *productivity* and *profit*, with
4. the byproduct of *loss prevention* and *reduction*.

A common mistake made by persons who attempt to use CPTED concepts is to apply these principles solely for security reasons. It does not take them long to find that no one is interested in listening to them, particularly school administrators who justifiably have to concern themselves with managing educational functions. CPTED is a small part of the total set of concepts involved in loss prevention and asset protection. But it is an important concept for the school community because it emphasizes the integration of security concepts into what has to be done anyway, before additional funds are expended on guards or security devices.

CPTED strategies

Numerous opportunities are available for environmental concepts to contribute to the productive management of schools. For example, one way in which CPTED principles can be applied is to provide clearly marked transitional zones that indicate movement from public to semi-public to private space. Multiple access points increase the perception that the school parking area is public and provides many escape routes for potential offenders. The use of barricades to close off unnecessary entrances during low use times controls access and reinforces the perception that the parking area is private.

Another key CPTED strategy is to relocate gathering areas to locations with natural surveillance and access control or to locations away from the view of would-be offenders. By designating formal gathering areas, informal areas become off-limits. Anyone observed in spaces that are not designated as formal gathering areas automatically will be subject to scrutiny. Abnormal users will feel at greater risk and will have few excuses for being in the wrong places. As a result, teachers and administrators assume greater challenging powers through clear spatial definition.

Make sure that assigned spaces are designated and used for the type of activities and behavior expected. This can

be achieved by placing safe activities in unsafe locations or placing unsafe activities in safe locations. This will enhance the natural surveillance of these activities by increasing the perception of safety for normal users and risk for offenders.

For example, student parking is an unsafe activity that often is located on the periphery of the campus with few opportunities for natural surveillance. Driver education is a safe activity, monitored by responsible teachers and students. Switching the location of driver education with student parking provides a natural opportunity to put a safe activity in an unsafe location and an unsafe activity in a safe location. The new location for student parking might be in the direct line of sight from office windows.

Improve scheduling of space to allow for the most effective use. For instance, at lunchtime, conflict often occurs as groups attempt to go to the cafeteria while others attempt to return to class. It takes longer to get groups through the lunch line because of this congestion. In many school systems, classroom and locker thefts occur during this period. Separating the cafeteria entrance and exit by space can help to define movement in and out of the area. Each group will arrive faster and with fewer stragglers. Abnormal users of space also will feel at greater risk of detection.

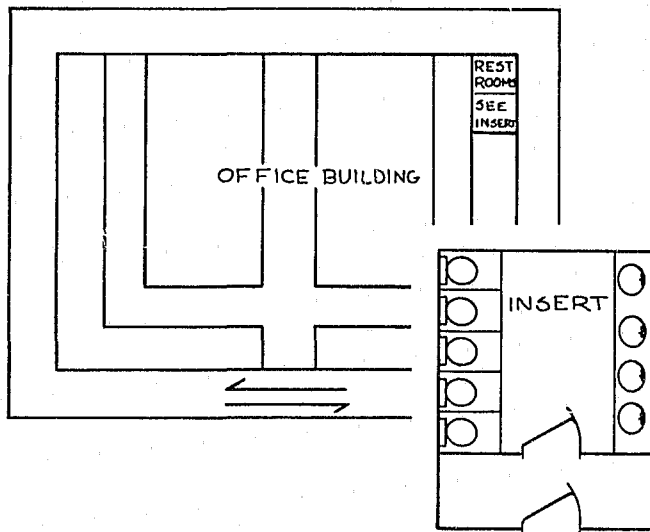
Other strategies include:

- Overcome distance and isolation through more efficient communication and design.
- Redesignate the use of space to provide natural barriers for conflicting activities.
- Provide clear borders for controlled space.
- Redesign or revamp space to increase the perception or reality of natural surveillance.

Overlooking the obvious

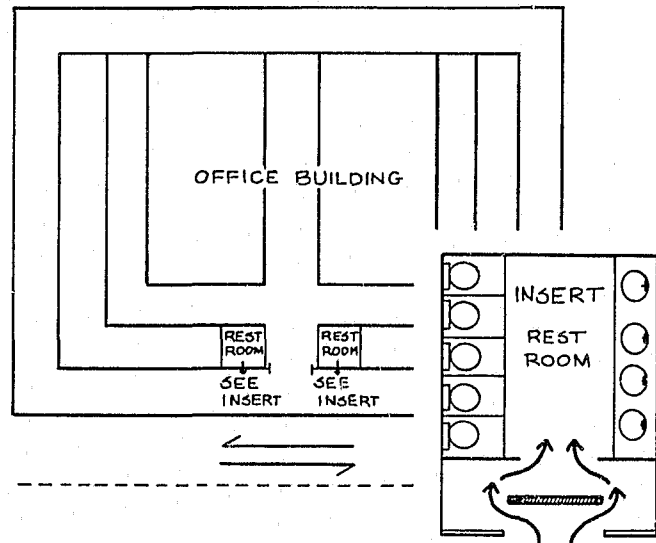
The human tendency to overlook obvious solutions to problems is pointed out in cliches such as: "If it had been a snake,

Restroom Location and Entrance Design



Poor Design and Use

1. Restrooms traditionally are isolated by location, both as a cultural sensitivity and for economic reasons.
2. Public restrooms are common sites for illegal and illicit activity.
3. Many children are afraid to use the restroom at school.
4. Isolated locations and double-door entry systems present unsafe cues to normal users and safe cues to abnormal users.
5. Double-door entry systems produce a warning sound and transitional time that is an advantage to abnormal users.
6. A normal user or guard must move inside the second door swing to figure out what is going on in a restroom.



Good Design and Use

1. Restrooms should be located in the most convenient and accessible location to increase use, which increases the perception of safety.
2. A maze type of entry system, or doors placed in a locked open position, will increase convenience and safety.
3. Normal users may determine who is in the restroom by glancing around the privacy screen or wall.
4. Abnormal users will feel at greater risk of detection.
5. Convenience and safety should contribute to the objectives of the space.

it would have bit me!" CPTED concepts help us to look at the environment in a different light and to take advantage of solutions that often are inherent in what we already are doing. Here is a somewhat far-fetched, but true, example told by a school principal:

During the early '80s, the rock group KISS was popular. Young ladies at the school began to smear red lipstick on their lips and leave their lip imprint on restroom mirrors, much like the red lipstick imprint printed on the front of the Kiss album. When a janitor complained, the principal said, "Don't worry. It's a fad and will go away."

But it didn't. Soon the kiss imprints were on the walls and doors, despite repeated warnings. While walking down the hallway, some young men would feel pressure on their shoulder or back and find they had been given a big red kiss.

Morale among teachers suffered. It was open warfare with the girls against the boys and teachers. Then a woman who had worked for 30 years as a janitor knocked on the principal's door and said she had an answer. She explained it, and the principal agreed it was worth a try.

What was the solution? The next morning she arrived in the girls' restrooms with a bucket. She made a point of filling the bucket with water from the toilets and used that water to clean the bathroom mirrors, doors and walls. She was seen doing this all day, using toilet water to wipe off the kiss imprints.

The problem ceased.

It's an extreme example, but it shows how the use of physical space and the environment has a direct impact on the perceptions of people, and thus on security.

Making schools safer

At first, CPTED may appear to be the proverbial "two thousand pound marshmallow" — you think it is going to be good, but you don't know where to start chewing. When explained simply, experience has shown that most school administrators have an inherent understanding of these basic concepts. It is perhaps the most important tool school officials can use in assuring the future delivery of the educational process.

CPTED is a powerful concept that may be used to improve the productive use of school space. Code of conduct violations can be reduced, and environmental design may be used to improve the ability of school administrators to operate safe and secure schools. The potential value to the school and community is worth the time and effort it takes to implement crime reduction through environmental design. □