

School Fencing Recommendations

Fences, as defined in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s K-12 School Security Survey, “are barriers enclosing or bordering a school that are used to prevent entrance, contain people to particular areas, or mark a boundary”.¹

Benefits

According to Hanover Research’s findings on School Fencing, there are several benefits to schools having proper fencing.² One of these benefits is ease of

surveillance. If there is a well-defined perimeter, school faculty and law enforcement can easily identify where the public is allowed and where they are not. This allows an unauthorized person to be identified sooner, potentially stopping a threat before it turns into a tragedy. Fencing also acts as a visual deterrent. Simply seeing a barrier on the school grounds could stop an unauthorized person from entering. Finally, proper fencing can funnel visitors into desired, controlled entrances. This increases the general security of the school because it forces visitors into an area where they will be met immediately by school faculty. This ensures that the school can control access onto school grounds. Fences can also protect students, specifically young children, from accidents. They can stop a child from walking out into traffic or potentially stop a car from hitting children on the school grounds.

Considerations

Fencing should be properly maintained.² A damaged fence will not prevent unauthorized access to the school or school grounds. In addition, broken and damaged



fencing easily becomes a target for vandalism and graffiti. The presence of this vandalism and graffiti can “diminish the respect accorded to school property”.² Consider choosing a style of fencing or barrier that enhances security. Fencing should preserve the ability for natural surveillance. A solid fence or concrete wall may be secure, but it removes the ability for natural surveillance both into and out of the school grounds.²

Fencing fits in to the methodology of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design, also known as CPTED.² CPTED is “a multi-disciplinary approach to deterring criminal behavior through the built-in, social, and administrative environment”.³ CPTED incorporates aspects such as fencing, bushes and walls to help deter any kind of criminal behavior. Visual barriers around the perimeter of a school such as bushes and trees should be trimmed down so that security personnel and cameras can observe as much of the school property as possible. Increased surveillance alone can deter crime because of the higher chance of being caught.

The style and amount of fencing needed depends greatly on factors such as; the layout of the school, the location of the school, and the location of the playground.² It is important to take all of these factors in to consideration when putting up fencing or barriers around school property.

It is recommended that all schools meet with their local Police and Fire Departments when making decisions about physical security. This can ensure that all physical security changes adhere to fire codes, ADA requirements and do not impair the ability of emergency services to respond to an incident.

References

- 1 - Department of Homeland Security (DHS). K-12 School Security Survey (Rep.). (2018). Department of Homeland Security. Retrieved June, 2019.
- 2 - Hanover Research. School Fencing: Benefits and Disadvantages (Rep.). (2013, November). Hanover Research. Retrieved June, 2019 from <http://www.wssca.org/Resources/Documents/School%20Fencing-%20Benefits%20and%20Disadvantages.pdf>
- 3 - Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory (JHUAPL). A Comprehensive Report on School Safety Technology (Rep.). (2016). Laurel, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory. Retrieved June, 2019, from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/250274.pdf>



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