Communication & Social Interaction

Re-Considering the Unity of Health and Environment
A Residential Facility for Students of Hazelwood School, Glasgow, Scotland

Communication Issues in Students with Deaf-blindness

A child's environment can be extremely influential in shaping a child's view of the world around him/her. Communication with peers, family, friends and others can be one way that a surrounding environment teaches a child. However, communication is one of the many challenges faced by those who are either deaf, blind, or both. They have limited access to social cues, observation and imitation of communication behaviors and patterns. This can lead deaf-blind children to become more at risk for "learned helplessness." These children have the same basic need for companionship and emotional support as other children, and these are best met through the facilitation of peer interaction in the design for a residential facility.

Privacy and Interaction on an Individual Level

To promote a more private, one-on-one interaction among two students, each individual room can share a bathroom space with one other individual room. A small shared space like this allows the students to use the space together, but have their own private sinks. The layout also separates the private space, the shower and toilet, from the sink space to allow the students their privacy while still encouraging interaction in a shared sink room.

Social Interaction Between an Intimate Group

The goal of the shared space, or "family room," is to promote a more intimate setting for social interaction among a group of around 4 students who live in a "cluster." The ideal location for the family room would allow for easy access to and from the rooms of the residents in the cluster, as well as a separate entrance for other residents in the facility. The theme would also allow access to the outside from the family room, but not encroach upon the privacy of the individual outside spaces.

Social Interaction Between All Users

The goal of the design are to make the shared space easily accessible from all the individual resident rooms with a separate ease of access for visitors and faculty. Another goal is to have the shared space be directly connected to outdoor space that can be used by residents, visitors and other community activities. Motif A shows a linear scheme that could be used when considering above themes 1 and 2, and motif B could be used when considering above themes 3 and 4.

Designing Places for Socializing

Places for more people to gather

In larger spaces where more residents may gather, you need to design seating and spaces that accommodate many different needs, such as wheelchairs. You also want to consider spaces that will be fun and appealing to the residents to encourage interaction.

Moveable "Fun" Furniture

Fun furniture can be set up for the use of just one, or many people, it helps to encourage use and can help promote the use of the space as well so that more residents will be in contact with one another.

Small and More Intimate Spaces

Smaller spaces need to be more intimate and need to allow for some privacy, as well as the needs for around 3 or 4 people to encourage a more intimate interaction.