

Excerpt from: A Guide to Creating and Sustaining Safe & Welcoming Public Spaces

Introduction

Schools across the nation have reported that public spaces (such as hallways, cafeterias, bathrooms, stairwells, school entry and exit areas) feel chaotic, unsafe, and/or dangerous, significantly affecting the culture and climate in school. Many schools are taking steps to create public spaces that feel welcoming, safe, and orderly, and promote good character and conduct. **Safe & Welcoming Public Spaces (SWPS)** is a school-wide program, which results in supportive relationships among students and adults and a feeling of safety in all out-of-classroom spaces.

Goals For Staff	Goals For Students
Build commitment and necessary skills to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Promote the wellbeing of each and every student● Decrease low-impact behaviors and aggressive, threatening, and violent behavior in public spaces	Increase ability to become more: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Self-Aware● Self-managed● Socially Efficacious● Responsible in their decision making in public spaces

1.1 What does the Safe & Welcoming Public Spaces program do?

The Safe & Welcoming Public Spaces program:

- ✓ Establishes a school environment where staff, students, and their families feel safe and cared for while navigating public spaces.
- ✓ Equips all staff with the mindsets and skills they need to promote good behavior, prevent potential misbehaviors, and productively respond to a range of disciplinary infractions that show up in public spaces.
- ✓ Combines consistent, respectful, and firm disciplinary responses with strategies that aim to keep students in their learning environment and provide them with the supports they need.

1.2 Who will implement Safe & Welcoming Public Spaces?

Safe & Welcoming Public Spaces requires the collective responsibility, collaboration, and involvement of the entire staff. **You and your colleagues will contribute to the success of Safe & Welcoming Public Spaces.** You will be trained in practices to promote positive behaviors, prevent misbehavior in public spaces, and be prepared to intervene effectively with low- and high-impact behaviors that show up in the hallways, cafeterias, and other out-of-classroom spaces.

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All staff are involved in the program
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Administration and deans● Safety agents● School aides● Teachers and paraprofessionals● Student support staff (social workers, psychologists, counselors, youth development specialists, restorative justice staff)

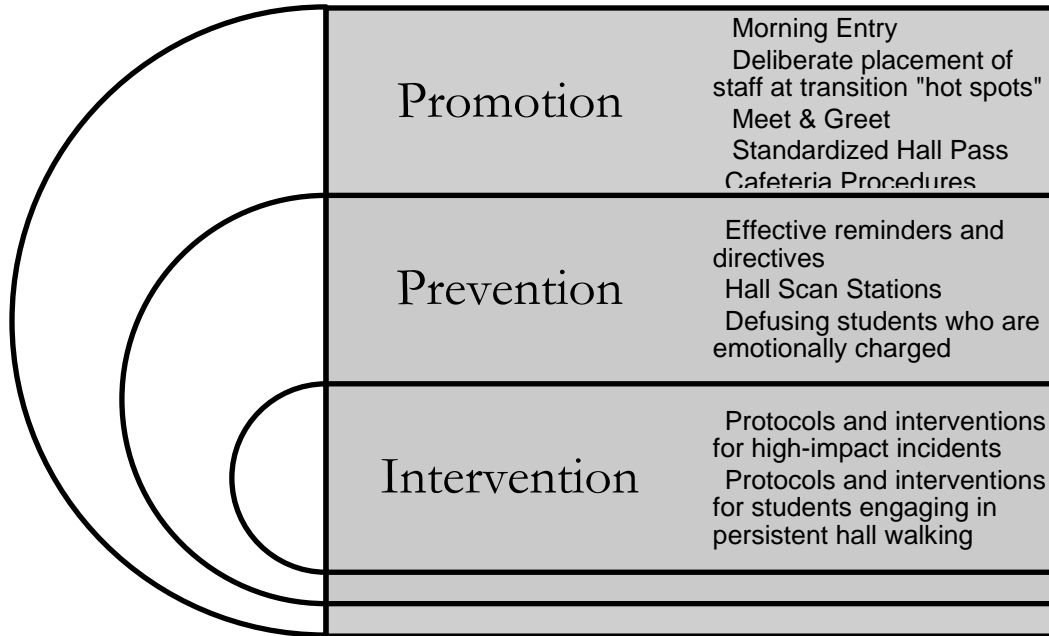
Note: While custodians do not participate in Safe & Welcoming Public Space trainings, these staff members offer a critical perspective on ways that a safe, orderly, and welcoming environment is created. As a result, we conduct sensing interviews at the beginning of the study and engage in informal check-ins with custodians over the course of the program.

Although the front office staff are not observed as part of the regular walk-throughs, check-ins are conducted at key points throughout the study, in which these staff self-assess implementation of the identified strategies.

1.3 What strategies will be implemented in Safe & Welcoming Public Spaces?

You and your colleagues will learn specific strategies that will help you create and sustain Safe & Welcoming Public Spaces.

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1.4 What benefits will Safe & Welcoming Public Spaces have for your school?

As a result of the collective efforts of your colleagues and you consistently implementing Safe & Welcoming Public Spaces, there will be a(n):

- ↑ **Increase** in the staff's effectiveness and skillfulness to apply the strategies
- ↑ **Increase** in the sense of safety in public spaces for students, staff, and families
- ↑ **Increase** in students' capacity to make informed decisions, get back on track, and become more self-disciplined and self-managed in public spaces
- ↓ **Decrease** in the likelihood of students refusing to follow a directive or walking away from an adult
- ↓ **Decrease** in the number of suspensions as a result of public space incidents
- ↓ **Decrease** in the number of public space incidents

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1.5 What Investment will you have to make?

School leaders will need to identify a School Climate-Discipline Team (SCDT) that is responsible for coordinating and supporting the efforts of staff members to create Safe & Welcoming Public Spaces.

The School Climate-Discipline Team will need to:

- Communicate and collaborate systematically with staff about the program, which includes a collective understanding of the public space problem and the comprehensive program that will help improve the safety conditions in public spaces.
- Allocate and schedule strategic professional learning sessions to build understanding, commitment, and skillfulness of all staff to successfully implement Safe & Welcoming Public Spaces.
- Collect data systematically to share with the staff to celebrate the progress being made and identify areas of the program that would benefit from targeted professional learning to support continued progress and effort.

1.6 Who created Safe & Welcoming Public Spaces?

Engaging Schools, a non-profit organization, developed Safe & Welcoming Public Spaces to support schools and districts in creating public spaces that are safe and supportive for students, staff, and families. Engaging Schools collaborates with middle and high school staff members to create school communities where each and every student develops the skills and mindsets needed to succeed and make positive contributions in school, work, and life. Engaging Schools was founded in 1982 and has been partnering with schools for 40 years.

1.7 Overview of Safe & Welcoming Public Spaces

The following chart outlines the steps that your school will take in order to implement Safe & Welcoming Public Spaces. The groups responsible for coordinating and/or participating in each step are indicated by a checkmark in the corresponding column.

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Activity	School Climate-Discipline Team	Administration	Staff
Identify a School Climate-Discipline Team		✓	✓
Explore current data infrastructure	✓	✓	
Clarify school rules	✓	✓	✓
Coordinate a baseline walkthrough of the public space	✓	✓	
Analyze and summarize relevant public space data	✓		
Use the data to define the problem and discuss the school-wide intervention	✓		
Organize and facilitate a call-to-action meeting with staff to discuss the data and intervention	✓	✓	✓
Create a work plan and implementation timeline	✓		
Create a standardized, unique communication template	✓		
Create an up-to-date and accurate email contact list	✓		
Communicate with families, adult allies, students, and external partners	✓		
Participate in trainings facilitated by Engaging Schools	✓	✓	✓
Participate in launch-and-practice week	✓	✓	✓
Schedule and implement systematic walkthroughs to collect data	✓		
Use data to identify successes and challenges	✓		
Share monthly data update	✓	✓	✓
Receive real-time coaching for continuous improvement	✓	✓	✓