

Signs, Gates and Fences

Signs, gates and fences help direct people through a site, provide information and define boundaries. Signs are also a great way to build support and recognition for your project and to recognize and thank all those who contributed to your project.

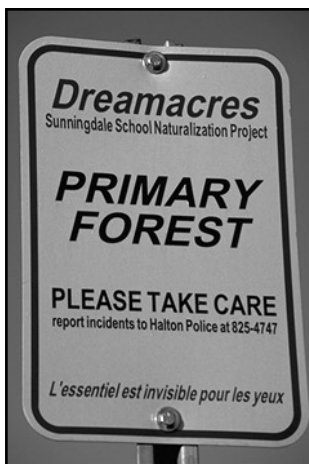


Design details

1 Signs

Practical Tips for Using Signs on Your School Grounds

- Consider what the sign is trying to achieve when designing it.
- Use interpretive signs to educate people about the plants and wildlife they will experience in your naturalized garden.
- Provide signs at the entrance to a special place and at decision points along the pathway.



Sunningdale Public School

- Include signs to deter vandalism in a planted area.
- Use signs to label trees, shrubs and wildflowers in your garden. Using trail-marking tape, print the common and botanical name on the tape and tie it to a tree branch for a quick and simple sign that can be easily replaced. Or, attach aluminum nameplate signs to an aluminum stake that can be attached to a brick buried around wildflowers to ensure the nameplate cannot be pulled out of the ground.



Edmiston Heights Public School

- Use home made or professionally created signs depending on your budget and project goals.
- Include, where appropriate, signs that engage students. Some examples include signs with hands and dials, "you are here" markers, signs that present different options to follow along a trail or signs that can be changed seasonally with different activities for children to participate in.
- Create and put up signs at the start of your project so people can see and read about all the great work you will be doing.
- Don't limit yourself to just words on the sign — pictures are really worth a thousand words!

Locating Your Signs

- Place signs within easy range of vision and reach. People should be able to approach within 7.5 centimetres (three inches) of signs.
- Place signs at entrance points, nodal points or intersections along your walkway.
- Place signs so that they are unobstructed by vegetation or built features.
- Place signs where they cannot be walked or run into or knocked over.
- Place signs at a comfortable height for students to read or touch. The standard mounting height for students is 120 centimetres (48 inches) or lower depending on their age. The standard height for adults is 150 centimetres (60 inches). Decide on a height and make sure you are consistent throughout the site so people become accustomed to where to look for signs. Check with your school board to see if there are any height codes for outdoor signs.

Vandalism of Signs

Unfortunately, signs tend to be one of the most targeted features for vandalism. They can be broken, painted on and even removed from the site. Here are some measures you can take to try and prevent your sign from being vandalized.

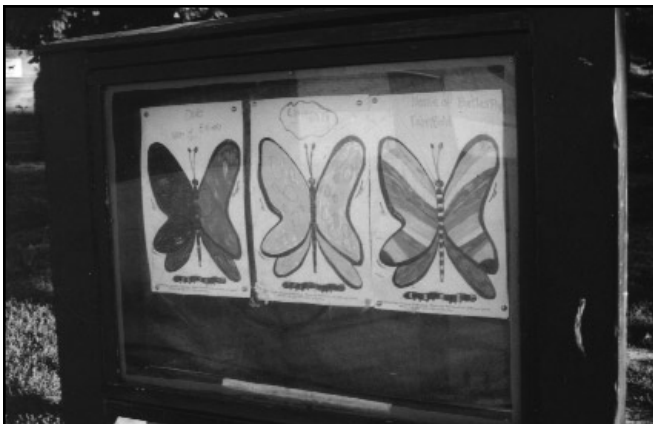
- 1) Have students build and paint the signs for your project using plywood or found materials. This builds a sense of ownership and responsibility, reducing the chances of vandalism. In the event that vandalism still occurs, the signs can be replaced with minimal cost, team spirit and hard work.*
- 2) Have durable signs professionally made on thick wood that cannot be broken. These signs will need to be firmly secured in the ground with concrete.*
- 3) Create sign boards with Plexiglas covers so either the signs or the Plexiglas can be replaced should there be damage.*



Broadacres Junior School

Making Your Sign Readable

- Use light coloured letters or symbols on a dark background for maximum readability. Use bright, noticeable colours with a matte, non-glare finish.
- Use Arabic numerals and standard sans serif typefaces.



Ossington Old Orchard Public School

- Make letters 7.5 centimetres (three inches) in height. Increase this size if your sign needs to be read from a distance.
- Make letters with stencils so they are consistent and legible.
- Include raised letters on signs to make them accessible to all children. The standard for raised letters is 1/32 inch.
- Include the predominant languages on your sign that reflect the different cultures at your school.
- Use pictograms along with text on your sign. Make sure the pictures are simple and clear. Placing pictures in a border makes them easier to read. Typically, the border should be 15 by 15 centimetres (six by six inches).

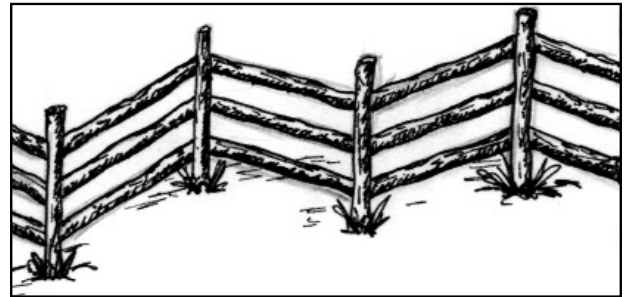
2 Gates and Fences

Tips for Designing Gates and Fences

Anderson Collegiate Vocational Institute



- ✦ Use gates to create a special entrance into play or garden settings.
- ✦ Fences can provide boundaries for play or garden settings and to define and create intimate social corners.
- ✦ Use temporary fencing to protect new plants, or permanent fencing to protect trees and shrubs that could be damaged by children running.
- ✦ Include colours, varied textures, peepholes, murals and mosaics to make gates and fences attractive play settings.
- ✦ Place rails at chest height for children. This provides a comfortable area for leaning or sitting.
- ✦ Modify the fence line and height to make it more interesting. Include nooks, perches and hang-outs by zig-zagging the fence line.
- ✦ Include signs with your fenced area to inform people of the importance of that space.



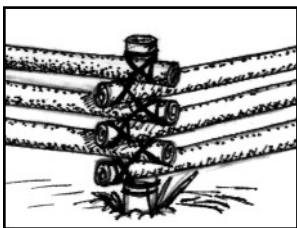
Types of Fencing

a) Vinyl-coated mesh or chain-link fencing

This type of fencing is effective to surround children's play areas, especially younger children, where clearly defined boundaries are needed. Vines can be planted that will climb the fence, adding interest to the area.

b) Wood fencing

If your school has the budget or a donation of materials, constructing a wood fence may be an option. Different heights and styles can be used depending on your project needs. Keep in mind wood fencing requires proper treatment to prevent rot so these fences should only be used where children will not come in contact with the treated wood.



c) Split rail fencing

Split rail fences are typically made of cedar rails. They can be constructed easily and weather well without the use of chemical treatment. Construct split rail fences using one to six rails, depending on the height required and the amount of space allowable between rails for safety concerns. More rails spaced closer together will not allow children to climb through the fence. Overlap rails at corners or turns using angled or vertical rail posts and securing with galvanized bolts or strong rope. Wire is not advised since it can easily catch clothing or scratch a bare limb.

Amherstview Public School



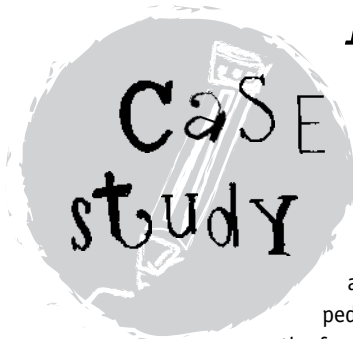
d) Cedar post fence

Cedar posts can be used to create an informal fence around an area, helping to identify the entrance to your site. The posts can be cut to different heights, varying the look of the fence and making it less of a barrier. Posts that are 15 centimetres (six inches) in diameter, or larger, can also create play areas for children and places for seating. Posts can be created from trees that are felled by the municipality, or by using ends or scrap wood from a lumber store.

Codes and Safety Standards



- Gates must be wide enough for wheelchair access.
- Keep fences in good repair.
- Avoid gates with swing parts to prevent accidents.
- Do not use pressure treated wood.
- Use galvanized brackets and screws. Do not use nails to secure fence or gate structures.
- Take care not to create climbing structures out of fences. Use single rail fences, do not stagger fence rails like steps and do not provide access to fences around trees where students could climb from one to the other.
- Do not use fences in areas where unintentional segregation could result between groups or abilities of students.



Learning Grounds Structure St. Anne's School, Cornwall, Ontario

The fence and the arbour were planned as part of an overall site plan for the Learning Grounds at St. Anne's School. The fence provides a designated area for children waiting for and getting off the bus at the front of the school. The fence also prevents trampling of plant material and directs pedestrian traffic toward the arbour. There is symbolic value in the fence as it clearly demarcates the managed land from the natural land inside the school grounds.



St. Anne's School

The arbour provides a dramatic entrance to our Learning Grounds. It is strategically located at the end of the street where it is visible from quite a distance, catching the attention of visitors to the school area and the surrounding community. The arbour is situated so that children must walk through it everyday on their way to the school ground. Constructed with a gabled end, it is an imposing structure that makes one feel they are entering a special place. A plaque announces the place and welcomes all that come. The arbour has become a gathering place for kids waiting for their friends and a place for parents to drop off their children. It has graced the cover of our yearbook and has become part of our school culture.

The fence and arbour were constructed of eastern white cedar. Cedar is cheap, rot resistant, easy to work with, weathers to an attractive silver-gray, requires little maintenance and does not contain any chemicals, making it a great material to use on school grounds. The fence was created using post and rail construction which consists of placing cedar posts in the ground and attaching rails and cross pieces. The cost of the fence was approximately \$300. It was constructed through a Youth Services Canada Summer Work Program during the summer of 1997. The arbour was designed by a local landscape architect and cost about \$200 to construct out of heavy cedar logs.



Where to *go* from here?

Sources for this fact sheet

Moore, Robin C., Goltsman, Susan M. and Iacofano, Daniel S. *Play for All Guidelines: Planning, Design and Management of Outdoor Play Settings for All Children*. Berkeley, California: MIG Communications, 1987, 1992.

Example projects

Signs

- Broadacres Junior School, Etobicoke, Ontario: (416) 394-7030
- Edmison Heights Elementary School, Peterborough, Ontario: (705) 745-0722
- Humber Arboretum, Etobicoke, Ontario: (416) 675-5009
- North Shore Public School, Keene, Ontario: (705) 295-6898
- Sunningdale Public School, Oakville, Ontario: (905) 844-9941

Gates and Fences

- Amherstview Public School, Amherstview, Ontario: (613) 389-0628
- St. Anne's School, Cornwall, Ontario: (613) 938-5943