

NEWS

How to design spaces for people with autism

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For people on the spectrum, the physical space they occupy can go a long way in providing a sense of comfort and support. Architects are working with schools to create welcoming, versatile spaces for autistic students.

This video looks at two projects: an urban campus in New York City and a rural one in New Jersey. In both locations, icons and colors guide autistic students from one classroom or floor to another.

Special materials dampen sensory input: Cork floors soften footsteps; shutters modulate sunlight and views; extra-wide hallways ease transitions by providing more room for students to move; and 'escape spaces' offer them respite from overwhelming experiences or interactions.

"People are nicer to each other in positive space, and part of our goal for children with autism in schools is for them to want to be there, and want to be around each other," says **Catherine Lord**, distinguished professor in residence of psychiatry and education at the University of California, Los Angeles. (Lord served as an advisor on both projects.)

The video also offers hints for other schools interested in creating autism-friendly spaces.