Acadia board wants walls in Crowley High open areas

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CROWLEY — Trying to conduct class in the "open areas" at Crowley High School is "almost abusive" to the students, an English teacher told school board members.

When CHS was built in the early 1970s, the "open classroom" was being lauded by many as a state-of-the-art concept in education.

Now it's being called a "design flaw" and some members of the school board want it fixed.

So do most teachers.

Open classrooms are just that, classrooms with no walls.

Not long after the school opened, portable partitions began popping up in that area dedicated to this "new" student environment.

"It's almost abusive what the students have to go through during class," Beth Kennedy, whose class is in one of the open areas at the school, told board members.

"I teach English. I have a French class on one side and a Spanish class on the other. Can you imagine what that's like?"

Besides the confusion of hearing two or three different classes — and in this case, in two or three different languages — at one time, students area also often interrupted or preoccupied with the happenings in the hallway, according to Kennedy.

"Since I have no walls and no door, every time a class or a group of students walks down the hall, all of my students watch them. They're looking for their friends or checking out who's wearing what."

Other teachers followed Kennedy in asking the board to authorize the construction of permanent walls in the open areas, and a group of students stood ready to add their pleas when the board voted to have Ron Lawson, architect, present a cost estimate for the project at the next meeting.

The students were promised that they will have the opportunity to speak prior to a board vote on the project in April.

Not all board members favor the construction.

Dr. Marietta James, superintendent, spoke out against the project during a recent budget committee meeting, saying that other schools will be asking for similar projects if this one is approved.

John Suire, who said that, although he is "probably the only board member who attended Crowley High," it is a hard decision for him.

"When I think 'yes, it's needed,' the other students in Acadia Parish pop up," Suire said.

Lawson's proposal is expected to be presented for consideration at the April 5 meeting.

Beth Kennedy
Teacher whose class is in one of the open areas at the school

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