

# High school shows signs of wear, age, overcrowding

WestLife 2/11/09

By Kevin Kelley

## WESTLAKE

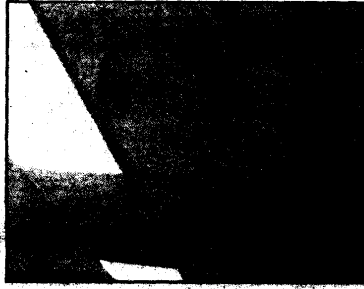
Westlake High School Principal Tim Freeman is often proud of his students' academic and athletic achievements. But he said he's often ashamed to give tours of his school building.

That's because the high school, which was built in 1960 with additions added in 1970, 1988 and 1998, shows signs of age and overcrowding, he said.

West Life joined several members of the district's 20/20 Vision Committee, which was commissioned to come up with proposals to address the facilities issue, on a tour of Westlake High School in early December.

The 24-member 20/20 Vision committee last month recommended that the district construct a new high school, new intermediate school and two or three new elementary schools.

Beginning the tour in the high



Ceiling tiles at Westlake High School show signs of a leaking roof. (West Life photo by Kevin Kelley)

school's library, Freeman said many library subrooms must be used for classrooms.

While the school was built to hold 1,240 students, enrollment now stands around 1,400, he noted.

"We are out of lockers," he said, noting that some students share.

Some bathrooms have been closed to utilize the space for storage, he said.

"We don't have enough commodes," the principal said. "We need to reopen some of these bathrooms."

The building's roof leaks in some places, he said. Some classrooms become so warm some days that teacher put up paper on the windows to block the sun, he said.

When a handful of students were arrested in connection with alleged drug use a year ago, some questioned whether upperclassmen should be permitted to leave campus during the school day for lunch. But Freeman said a closed campus is not possible because the school's cafeteria is too crowded.

The ability to make renovations at the building is limited, Freeman said. Wooden doors and walls are filled with asbestos, so holes can't be drilled into them, he said.

Computer-based measuring technology can't be installed in the school, he said.

An eye wash sink in a chemistry lab lacks a drain, he noted.

"There's not the infrastructure to support a new (science) lab," he said.

Freeman expressed pride that Westlake students continue to excel despite the facilities issues.

"We kick butt with 1975 technology," he said of the achievements of his staff and students. "I can't imagine what they'd do with the right tools."

An \$8.7-million Performing Arts Center adjacent to the high school opened in 2005, but the infrastructure of the existing school building was not updated, Freeman said.

"The PAC is not indicative of our facility," the principal said.

Superintendent Dan Keenan has said that a new high school would be built on the current high school campus.