Bilingual Schools in Lafayette
Big Help to Refugee Families

LAFAYETTE, La. (AP) — Two families of Vietnamese refugees who settled here have registered their younger children, who speak more French than English, in Lafayette schools that use both languages.

The French-English schools were set up to preserve the Acadian heritage of the region. But for the Tu and Ho families, the language program means their children can start school immediately.

Hai Thi Vu, a Lafayette resident who works for the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana, took her two Vietnamese sisters into her home to settle here permanently if jobs can be found.

The sisters and their families left Saigon in the last minutes before the North Vietnamese takeover.

On Tuesday the Tus and Hos took their children to American schools for the first time. Huong Que Thi Tu, a 15-year-old girl who can speak English, will attend Lafayette High. Huong Nam Thi Tu, a 10-year-old girl, and Duc Minh Ho, a 5-year-old boy, were registered in Boucher Elementary, where pupils are taught in both French and English.

The youngest child, a 4-year-old girl named Mai Tuet Ho, probably will attend nursery school.

Lafayette School Supt. Harold Gauthe and Asst. Supt. Dudley Duhon arranged for the children to attend the schools most suited to their language capabilities.

The families said they had only 10 minutes to leave Saigon in the last frantic moments of the evacuation.

“We could not take anything heavy with us on the plane,” one of the women said. “We had only our handbags filled with what we could.”

The necessary papers to leave were secured by her American brother-in-law, she said, and the fact that they had relatives in the United States was proof of support that they needed.