Complying with ADA could cost $1 million at Lafayette schools

By Jennifer Smith
Staff Writer

Complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act at three local schools will cost the Lafayette Parish School Board an estimated $1 million.

Dr. Owen Bush, assistant superintendent of schools, personnel and facilities services, said Alleman Middle School, Montgomery Elementary School and Lafayette High School will be the first group of schools in Lafayette Parish to receive major repairs in order to comply with the act.

School board officials are in the process of surveying Lafayette schools to determine if they are in compliance with the act, and a consultant has been hired to determine what modifications need to be made at local schools.

Bush said Alleman, Montgomery and Lafayette High will need a system of alarms to alert hearing impaired students of a fire.

This construction will include strobe lights and hand rails throughout each building.

Bush said these three schools are considered high priority schools that must be corrected by the end of 1995, and construction there will begin right away.

“Right now they have the most need,” Bush said.

Funding for the improvements will come from bonds that the school board will issue in the next few months, Bush said.

Bush said construction at these schools are improvements that will make a big difference for hearing-impaired students there.

“They’re just things that you and I take for granted,” Bush said.

Other schools in the parish for the most part are already meeting the needs of hearing impaired students, Bush said.

Susan Chiquelin, director of special education for the Lafayette Parish School Board, said schools are priority ranked, and modifications are recommended for facility changes that would be barriers to students.

Chiquelin said they identify architectural barriers and try to make school buildings completely accessible to students with disabilities.