More parents opting to teach children at home

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Staff Writer

LAFAYETTE — Home schooling is becoming increasingly popular in Louisiana, especially in Acadiana. More than 11,000 students around the state are being taught at home, said J.P. Beaudoin, director of school accountability for the state Department of Education. Nearly 1,700 of them are in eight Acadiana parishes.

"Trend analysis says there has been an increase over the last four years," Beaudoin said. "Generally speaking, throughout the country, there is an overall increase in the type of schooling formats.

Charter schools, home school programs and voucher programs give variety to parents to enroll their children in various types of educational environments, he said.

"There is more diversity throughout the country," Beaudoin said. "You would expect Louisiana to parallel these trends."

As a father of five school-aged children, Mike Flowers of Maurice said there are a number of reasons why he has kept his children out of public and private schools.

"It is our faith and the contradiction it has with the public school system," Flowers said.

Flowers serves as secretary for the Christian Home Educators Fellowship of Louisiana, a Christian group that provides support for home school groups around the state and nation.

Flowers said religion is a top reason why parents choose to home-school their children.

In Lafayette Parish during the last school year, 497 students were home-schooled or attended an in-home private school, said Harriett Taylor, director of student services for the Lafayette Parish School System.

"In-home private schools are individuals who register with the state and teach two to 30 students," she said.

The number of home-schooled students is slightly down from 2000-01, when 504 students were home-schooled, but up from 1999-2000, when 394 students learned at home, according to records.

Taylor said the system also keeps track of when these students take placement tests or request a transcript evaluation.

There were 106 home study students in 2001 who were tested, and 35 of them were not registered

Students being home-schooled in Acadiana:
Acadia — 201 students
Evangeline — 94 students
Iberia — 229 students
Jeff Davis — 159 students

Lafayette — 497 students
St. Landry — 209 students
St. Martin — 104 students
Vermilion — 195 students

Acadiana Total — 1,588

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Mike Flowers
Home school parent

Home schooling parents agree that their children do just as well or better in a home setting.

"I am an avid home school fan," Flowers said, "and our children, Lord willing, will never return to the public school system."