Officials’ expectations high for Saturday Magnet Mania

By KRISTEN KING
Advocate staff writer

East Baton Rouge Parish school officials are expecting Magnet Mania this year to be as successful as last year’s event, which drew twice the anticipated crowd.

The event will be held from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday at the Mall of Louisiana.

About 3,200 people showed up last year for the parish’s first Magnet Mania, which features exhibits of each of the public schools’ magnet programs — all under one roof.

Applying for a magnet program in East Baton Rouge Parish

► Application period: Monday through Nov. 20; applications also will be accepted at Magnet Mania.

► Selection process: Random selection of applicants who meet program requirements and apply by Nov. 20.

After that, students may apply on a first-come, first-served basis if space is available. Program requirements are specific to each program, and space is limited by race and grade level.

► Notification: Students will be notified of acceptance by mail by Feb. 28.

► Further information: Programs will be showcased at Magnet Mania from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday in the Center Court at the Mall of Louisiana. For more information, call 922-5443.

Advocate graphic

100 spots in its French immersion program when it opened this year. That compares to the Spanish immersion magnet program that opened at South Boulevard Elementary in the fall of 1997 and which now has 243 of its 261 slots filled.

South Boulevard had already established itself as a magnet program before Spanish was introduced more than a year ago. Before that, it had an extended-day magnet program.

Lewis said the schools that have been successful at recruiting students include the Baton Rouge Center for Visual and Performing Arts and the Montessori magnet programs at Belfair and Dufrocq elementary schools.

Those three programs were the first to be implemented in 1996 — the first year of the desegregation plan.

“I think for next year, (the programs) definitely will grow,” she said. She said it’s difficult to predict growth but that she’s hoping for a 20 percent increase in participation systemwide.

That would mean a systemwide magnet enrollment of 5,780 students next year — an increase of 963 students.

Last year, participation systemwide increased by only 3.2 percent.

Representatives of many of the magnets also visit other schools to recruit students, Lewis said.

“We need to emphasize to our parents that our magnet schools ... provide learning enrichment opportunities that are not always available in a regular school setting,” Lewis said.

She said magnets provide lower pupil-teacher ratios than regular classes, extended-day programs and free transportation.