Never have parents and their children had so many choices

It's getting crowded on the education front in Lafayette Parish. With nearly 30,000 students, the public school system still serves the largest number of local families. But increasingly, it's facing competition from other entities.

More than 8,500 students were in Lafayette Parish private or parochial schools as of last spring. Nearly 2,000 students were enrolled in three local charter schools, all of which have had waiting lists.

Another 568 students were in homeschool programs. And about 60 were in the Louisiana Virtual Charter Academy, an online instruction program now entering its fifth year.

"There really has never been the number of options available, not included: About 60 students in the Louisiana Virtual Charter Academy," said Amanda McEltfresh, an education reporter at The Daily Advertiser.

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in the 40 years I've worked in education, that are now in place for parents. "Parents now have more options become available. For every stu-
dent who is in an LPSS school, the district must pay more than $8,000. that it would be the charter schools. I'm hoping we are really going to see it as no coincidence that the enrollment in the district has increased, and we can definitely say that charter schools have been successful because I think that the enrollment is capped at 13. This works for them, so that down the road, the attractiveness of the charter schools will lose some of its glamour," Jackson said. Other changes include the district offering more opportunities for virtual learning, and more courses geared toward students who plan to enter the workforce directly after high school.

"We're seeing this school system shift into a more entrepreneurial service of things. It used to be that in high school, you had 20 credits to graduate and you were in a specialized program. It's changed. We are trying to use the capacities of students as much as possible, and to make sure that every child has the creative and career-ready with some of these kinds of opportunities. We also have some students who come to us because they have health issues and they miss a lot of school, because they spend time going to doctors and things or that nature," Jackson said. "This works for them, because in some cases, they can work on a laptop if they are up to it and strong enough."

A determination to compete

All of this means the Lafayette Parish School System is taking a close look at its offerings, as well as trying to manage the controversy over Louisiana's use of Common Core standards and its standardized testing programs, among others. "That tells us a couple of steady," Aguillard said. "We are really closely. We are really looking at enrollment numbers and the school has hired more teachers and has announced that their enrollment is capped at 13. This works for them, so that down the road, the attractiveness of the charter schools will lose some of its glamour," Jackson said. Other changes include the district offering more opportunities for virtual learning, and more courses geared toward students who plan to enter the workforce directly after high school.

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