



## DIOCESE OF HARRISBURG

4800 Union Deposit Road • Harrisburg • Pennsylvania 17111-3710  
(717) 657-4804 • FAX (717) 657-2453 • [www.hbgdiocese.org](http://www.hbgdiocese.org)

### Frequently Asked Questions Closure of Lebanon Catholic

**Q1: How are decisions made regarding the closure of a school?** Every decision regarding the closure of a school is taken very seriously by the involved pastors and the Diocese. Closing a school is not a reaction to isolated factors. The process is lengthy and is prayerful. The pastor(s) of the impacted parish(es), after considering all the available options, make a determination on what course of action is best for the overall health of the parish. If the decision is to recommend closing, the pastor will officially request permission to close from the Bishop as the episcopal member of the charitable trust.

**Q2: Why is Lebanon Catholic closing?** Lebanon Catholic has been struggling financially for years. Ever increasing expenses, decreasing enrollment and economic challenges have led to significant debt accumulation. At the end of the 2019/20 school year, we estimate Lebanon Catholic's cumulative debt will be nearly \$3 million. As a ministry of the area parishes, this debt is the responsibility of the parishes. The debt burden at Lebanon Catholic has reached a point that the area parishes can no longer sustain. It is important to understand that the problems facing Lebanon Catholic are long-term realities that can't be resolved with short-term fundraising.

**Q3: Is the Diocese closing our school?** The role of the Diocese is to assist the pastors in meeting their obligation to provide Catholic education to the children of the parish. The Diocese does not have the authority to close a school without the recommendation from the pastor, as every school and parish is a separate legal entity. The pastors ultimately make the decision. However, the school cannot be closed without the permission of the Bishop as the episcopal member of the charitable trust.

**Q4: What resources has the school received during these challenging times?** The school has received a substantial investment of time, talent, and treasure for many years from the area parishes and the Diocese. However, due to consistent serious budget shortfalls that are jeopardizing the future of the parishes, and the inability of the Diocese to offer any additional financial support, we are faced with no other option then to close the school.



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**Q5: Did poor academic performance contribute to the closing?** No. Students at Lebanon Catholic generally score at grade level or above on standardized tests.

**Q6: Are there plans to reopen the school at some point?** No, but the legacy of Lebanon Catholic will be alive in the students, parents, teachers, and alumni who have been the life-blood of the school and Catholic education in the Lebanon area for more than 150 years. Despite this wonderful legacy, it is clear that Lebanon Catholic is not sustainable for the future.

**Q7: What steps are being taken to facilitate the transition of students and teachers into other Catholic schools?** The Diocesan Education Office will work closely with families who wish to continue their child(ren)'s education at nearby Catholic schools. This office is also working closely with the parishes and school to address the needs of teachers and staff.

**Q8: What has been the enrollment trend for the school?** Enrollment was at 370 in 2015 and is at 317 this year (2019/20) and is expected to be less than 300 next year (as of April 7, enrollment was less than 250). That is a loss of over 100 students in five years.

**Q9: What will happen to the Lebanon Catholic school building?** That decision will be made by the area pastors.