



**For Immediate Release:**  
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## **Archdiocese of Philadelphia and Faith in the Future Announce Results of Ongoing Strategic Study Initiative: John W. Hallahan Catholic Girls' High School and Bishop McDevitt High School to Close at the Conclusion of the 2020-2021 Academic Year**

### **Contextual Background**

In the summer of 2020, [Faith in the Future \(FIF\)](#), which is charged with the operational management of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia's high schools throughout the five-county region, initiated a sustainability study. That study was part of ongoing strategic planning processes aimed at determining the overall health of each high school in the system.

A group of highly qualified and independent professionals oversaw the execution and analysis of this study with cooperation from the senior leadership of FIF and the Archdiocesan Office of Catholic Education (OCE).

Included in the group are three current or former CEOs of large enterprises, an academic dean, a former managing partner of a Big Four accounting firm in Philadelphia and a commercial banker with more than 30 years of experience in the non-profit education sector. Each brought to the process not only impressive credentials, but also a strong commitment to supporting and sustaining Catholic education in the greater Philadelphia area.

The study was extensive in its depth and breadth. It examined current and projected enrollments, student retention rates, regional demographic trends, capacity figures, and financial solvency. Each of these areas was analyzed to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and trends relative to the ability of the system as a whole, and each of its schools to provide a high quality academic and extracurricular program infused with Catholic values.

Policies and procedures were established to effectively collect data, determine how the data would be assessed, set standards for the evaluation of the data and provide concluding recommendations based on a two-prong approach: analysis of the system of secondary schools and review of each of the 17 individual secondary schools.



## **Today's Announcement**

As a result of this exhaustive process, the group recommended to the senior leadership of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia that John W. Hallahan Catholic Girls' High School and Bishop McDevitt High School be closed at the conclusion of the 2020-2021 academic year.

That recommendation was accepted by Archbishop Pérez after thorough review of the analysis as well as consultation with the senior administration of FIF, OCE, and the Archdiocese. As a result, both schools will close permanently following the completion of the current school year.

Hallahan and Bishop McDevitt have rich histories as well as dedicated and talented faculty, administrators, staff, boards, benefactors, students, and alumni(ae) corps. However, they are currently operating at 36% and 40% of enrollment capacity, respectively. Enrollment forecasting reports, developed with state-of-the-art analysis techniques, point to continued declines for both.

Without painful, but necessary action at this juncture, declining enrollment would have caused tuition increases to accelerate rapidly in order to cover school operating expenses and prohibited these schools from offering an affordable educational experience without incurring massive deficits. In addition, the decline would have seriously jeopardized the ability of these schools to provide rich and diverse academic and extracurricular offerings that families expect and deserve from the gift of Catholic education.

"Today is one of great sadness," said Archbishop Nelson Pérez. "Catholic education is a precious gift that bears lifelong fruit to all those who receive it. The closure of any Catholic school is deeply painful, most especially for the students, teachers, faculty, staff, alumni, and supporters so intimately connected to them. I know that today's announcement will weigh heavily on every member of the Hallahan and McDevitt school communities. I share in that grief. Understanding that this moment is one of extreme difficulty, I pledge that we will provide every possible assistance during this transition and that the rich legacy of these schools will be upheld. I have an obligation to ensure that each of our students is being provided with the best educational experience possible and that their teachers and coaches are provided with the resources to fulfill that mission. Given circumstances, those resources were depleting rapidly and could not be restored. My prayers are with all of you and my heartfelt gratitude goes out to our school families for choosing the gift of Catholic education as well as the faculty, administrators, and staff working each day to provide it."

While the recommendation for the closure of these two schools was not made because of the current national health crisis, the ongoing uncertainty being caused by the



COVID-19 pandemic reinforces the need to take immediate action. Requests for tuition assistance are up 46 percent year over year. In addition, families who have never received financial aid now find themselves in need of support. This trend has resulted in a severe strain on available financial aid resources, particularly in schools which are heavily dependent upon it as part of the tuition payment structure.

Irene Hannan, Chief Executive Office of Faith in the Future said, “The first priority of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and Faith in the Future is – and always will be – to ensure our students receive a superior educational experience steeped in academic excellence as well as athletic and artistic offerings ground in Catholic values. The decisions announced today were difficult. We know they have great impact on our families and school communities. Making them now will allow us to continue providing the product our families need and deserve with an eye to strengthening the other schools in the system. Our strong focus is on the future of Catholic secondary education in Philadelphia, ensuring it remains accessible and affordable for all.

Our deliberations surrounding the difficult decision to close both schools included significant consideration about the commitment of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and Faith in the Future to underserved students throughout Philadelphia, and our obligation to provide them access to quality Catholic secondary education. Our commitment to them remains the same, and students from Hallahan and McDevitt will have the opportunity to attend any number of other schools in the system, many of which serve equally diverse student populations.”

### **Impact on Students, Teachers, Administrators and Staff**

The Archdiocese of Philadelphia and Faith in the Future will work diligently to ensure the transition of students to other high schools within the system is smooth and respectful. All schools within reasonable proximity of Hallahan and McDevitt can accommodate additional students beginning in the 2021-2022 academic year and provide opportunity for the provision of continued excellence in a Catholic education. Additionally, best efforts will be made to transition teachers, administrators and staff to other schools throughout the Archdiocese where possible.

“Individualized transition plans will be created for students, and our faculty and staff are committed to supporting them every step of the way,” said Sister Maureen Lawrence McDermott, I.H.M, Ph.D., Chief Academic Officer and Superintendent of Secondary Schools, Archdiocese of Philadelphia. “We will coordinate with other diocesan schools to hold open houses and provide important information so students can make informed transfer decisions. Every effort will be undertaken to help families impacted by these closures be in a position to continue their student’s education at the Archdiocesan school of their choice.”



The remainder of the 2020-2021 school year will proceed as normal at both schools slated for closure and students will continue to receive a holistic, high quality Catholic secondary education.

### **Ongoing Strategic Planning**

Today's announcement is part of ongoing work to ensure that each Archdiocesan high school can best fulfill its mission and obligation to school families. The Archdiocese of Philadelphia and Faith in the Future remain steadfast in their joint commitment to improving the long-term viability of Archdiocesan high schools while providing students with a quality Catholic education.

Ongoing planning and supports are in place to bolster the remaining schools in the system. Each school has a customized strategic plan in place which, along with related tactics and objectives, will be reviewed and updated as necessary. All schools have their own boards of specified jurisdiction, responsible for school culture, budgeting and fundraising. Our schools of special education have formed a single board to support their distinctive mission. Our school leaders bring an entrepreneurial and innovative approach to education and a commitment to academic excellence.

SAT scores have risen across the network and 93 percent of students continue their education at a two-year (12 percent) or four-year (81 percent) college. In 2020, graduating seniors received \$412 million in college scholarships.

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**Editor's Note:** For additional information about Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, please visit [aopcatholicchools.org/](http://aopcatholicchools.org/). For information about Faith in the Future Foundation, please visit [www.faithinthefuture.com/](http://www.faithinthefuture.com/).

To learn more about John W. Hallahan Catholic Girls' High School, please visit <https://www.jwhallahan.com/> and for additional information on Bishop McDevitt High School, please visit <https://www.mcdevitths.org/>.