

“BEST OPTION FOR LC IS UPGRADES”

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to Timothy B. Petrosky’s Oct 16 response to my Sept 29 response to Daniel Manning’s Sept 22 comments about Lansdale Catholic.

All of us agree on a lot. At the top of the list of agreements is our mutual interest in doing what we think is best for students at Lansdale Catholic. And, we agree that more will be accomplished by dealing with facts than emotions.

We also agree that students deserve state of the art, 21st century classrooms to prepare them for the modern challenges they’ll face in college and in the larger economic arena. Where we start to disagree is on the role of the exterior structure and the campus amenities.

The main reason for my response to Mr. Manning’s Your Say of Sept 22 was to gain access to the two studies that he mentioned to support the statement that Lansdale Catholic is “...unsuitable, both structurally and fiscally...” As a member of the Lansdale Catholic Planning Committee working on the future of the school, I have not seen these studies. If either Mr. Manning or Mr. Petrosky has copies of these studies, I welcome the chance to read them.

In the absence of factual data that might be in the two studies, I envision a modernized Lansdale Catholic on its current 33 acre campus that will give students a competitive advantage because it is the right size, at the right location, with the right technological classroom tools.

In my opinion, the single biggest problem at Lansdale Catholic over the past decade was its academic and athletic success that was not matched by a reasonable amount of upgrades and maintenance. The physical appearance of the facility and surrounding area steadily deteriorated, largely due to neglect.

Fortunately, the neglect of the exterior did not penetrate the classrooms or the quality of the teaching. Lansdale Catholic may have the most impressive academic statistics in the entire Archdiocese and one of the best, if not the best, retention rate. It’s been said by officials at the Archdiocese that when a student enters Lansdale Catholic, the student stays at Lansdale Catholic until graduation.

The exterior neglect and the uncertainty about the future of Lansdale Catholic caused a decline in enrollment, but in recent years, with modest improvements, such as air conditioning the gym, replacing windows and repairing the roof, student enrollment is on the rise and on target to reach 1,000.

Educational leaders, such as Paul Valles of the Philadelphia school system, are moving toward high school populations around 1,000 as an optimal size. Larger student populations do not equate with better education. Coincidentally, Dr. Valles also feels that

class room improvements in existing schools have a better educational payoff than new construction.

The current thinking by Hilltown advocates is that a \$50 million new Catholic high school for 1200 students is in the best interest of all stakeholders. The Friends and Alumni of Lansdale Catholic cannot see the fiscal logic of gambling \$50 million to attract an additional 200 students.

A much more reasonable approach that would satisfy most stakeholders is an investment of a small fraction of \$50 million to continue the rock solid success of Lansdale Catholic in Lansdale with classroom expansion and upgrades.