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## Economy closes St. Bernard's Elementary School in Crawfordsville

(Crawfordsville) The Paper of Montgomery County

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### The Paper of Montgomery County

It has been a week since St. Bernard's Elementary School was dismissed for the year, but this time the dismissal is more than just for the summer.

When the doors closed after the last student left on May 22, it was for good - at least for now. The official announcement that the school would not be opening next year had been made the week before after months of fact-finding and discussions according to the school's Principal Sister Mary Karen Bahlmann.

"It was a very long and well-thought out process," Sister Bahlmann said. "The ultimate decision on closing a school rests with the pastor and sometimes they just make the decision. Here, Father Dave took a very long and hard look into the situation and got advice from the financial advisors, teachers, parents, administration. This decision was not done without an awful lot of consideration."

According to Sister Bahlmann the bottom line came down to the economy.

"The economy closed this school," she said. "It is tough enough to operate a Catholic school in good times, but in times like we are in now it is just not possible. Crawfordsville has been hit very hard, maybe more so than some people know. We just couldn't keep the school open."

Sister Bahlman said the school had 120 students this past school year about where it had been over the past few years. Enrollment papers for next year were never sent out.

"It became evident that we would not be able to keep the school open so we did not even see what the enrollment figures might be for next year," she said.

According to Bahlman had the school been able to remain open the tuition would have been \$4,800 for the year compared to \$3,100 this past year.

"It would have just been astronomical for the parents," Sister Bahlman said.

According to Sister Bahlmann the possibility of the closing became a possibility shortly after Christmas.

"At that time Father Dave started hearing of layoffs here in Crawfordsville," she said. "It was 200 here and 270 there and it just became clearer as the year progressed that closing the school was going to be a real possibility."