

A CENSUS OF JEWISH  
DAY SCHOOLS  
IN THE UNITED STATES  
2018-2019

MORDECHAI BESSER

Elul 5780

---

August 2020



## A NOTE FROM AVI CHAI'S CHAIRMAN

The AVI CHAI Foundation is pleased to present the 2018–2019 census of Jewish day school enrollment in the United States. This census represents the fifth and final AVI CHAI census.

We are extraordinarily grateful to Rabbi Mordechai Besser, who built on the first four censuses that were conducted by Dr. Marvin Schick ז"ל beginning in 1998. Rabbi Besser is the former principal of Manhattan Day School and is now Executive School Consultant at Torah Umesorah. Rabbi Besser's vast experience and broad contacts within the day school communities enabled him to attract responses from virtually 100% of all day schools. We consider ourselves fortunate to have attracted Rabbi Besser and appreciate his first-rate data collection and analysis.

As noted, Rabbi Besser succeeded Dr. Marvin Schick, who conceived of the census project and conducted the first four AVI CHAI censuses. Dr. Schick was a senior consultant to AVI CHAI, and his enormous contribution to our work over 30 years reflected only a small portion of his far-reaching communal activities. With Dr. Schick's passing, the world has lost a great human being.

As you undoubtedly realize, the census was written before the outbreak of COVID-19, which has created many difficult challenges for the day school system. It is important to note the success that many of the Jewish day schools had in developing solutions to deal with the crisis, including via online learning. We are confident that through resolve and creativity, the schools will successfully navigate through the many additional challenges that remain ahead.

We hope that this fifth census will provide useful information for the day school field and serve as a resource for those organizations and individuals who seek to enhance the ability of Jewish day schools to thrive in the 21st century. With the cessation of AVI CHAI's general grantmaking, we hope that someone else will pick up the torch and conduct the next census in 2023-2024.



**Mem Bernstein**  
Chairman, The AVI CHAI Foundation



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	4
THE SURVEY'S COMPLETENESS AND ACCURACY	5
THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL CATEGORY	6
2018-2019 CENSUS FINDINGS	9
NUMBER OF STUDENTS	9
NUMBER OF SCHOOLS	9
ENROLLMENT BY SCHOOL CATEGORY	10
ENROLLMENT BY GRADE LEVEL	16
ENROLLMENT BY SCHOOL SIZE	19
THE GEOGRAPHIC FACTOR	21
NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY	24
CONCLUSION	30

## LIST OF TABLES

TABLE 1: 2018-2019 ENROLLMENT DATA BY SCHOOL CLASSIFICATION AND GRADE FOR ALL DAY SCHOOLS IN THE U.S.	6
TABLE 2: DAY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT OVER 20-YEAR CENSUS PERIOD	10
TABLE 3: NON-ORTHODOX ENROLLMENT BY GRADE GROUPINGS	18
TABLE 4: TOTALS BY GRADE GROUPINGS	18
TABLE 5: ENROLLMENT BY SCHOOL SIZE	19
TABLE 6: NUMBER OF SCHOOLS BY SCHOOL SIZE	20
TABLE 7: NUMBER OF STUDENTS BY SCHOOL SIZE	20
TABLE 8: STUDENT POPULATION BY STATE	22
TABLE 9: ENROLLMENT OUTSIDE OF NY & NJ	23
TABLE 10: LAKEWOOD ENROLLMENT	24
TABLE 11: NYC ENROLLMENT	25
TABLE 12: NYC ENROLLMENT BY SCHOOL CATEGORY	26
TABLE 13: NYC, NASSAU, SUFFOLK, WESTCHESTER, ROCKLAND & ORANGE COUNTY ENROLLMENT	28

## LIST OF DISPLAYS

DISPLAY 1: SCHOOL ENROLLMENT (ALL DAY SCHOOLS) BY GRADE	16
DISPLAY 2: NON-ORTHODOX SCHOOL ENROLLMENT BY GRADE	17





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This is the fifth census of Jewish day schools in the United States sponsored by The AVI CHAI Foundation. Conducted at five-year intervals, beginning with the 1998–99 school year, this research project provides a picture of central trends in the day school world over a 20-year period. This report presents enrollment data for the 2018–2019 school year, as well as analysis of the major trends and changes in the day school world since 1998.

The enrollment data featured in this report were provided by 906 Jewish day schools, reflecting the participation of every known Jewish day school in the U.S. As such, the data presented here are not extrapolations. Please see the section entitled “The Survey’s Completeness and Accuracy” for details on both the thoroughness and limitations of our research process.

This report notes two leading challenges confronting day schools:

- The challenge of addressing the long-term trend of a decline in Jewish day school enrollment in large sections of the Jewish community.
- The challenge of whether there will be sufficient communal resources to tackle the growing costs and declining affordability of quality education throughout the entire Jewish day school community, especially given the continuing growth in enrollment in the Yeshiva World and Chasidic sectors.

Below, some of the report’s key high-level takeaways are cited in brief.

---

### NUMBER OF STUDENTS

In the 2018–2019 school year, a total of 292,172 students were enrolled in Jewish elementary and secondary schools in the U.S. (see Table 1). This represents an increase of 37,423 students (14.7%) in the five-year period since the most recent census in 2013–2014 and a 58.5% increase since 1998.

Over the 20-year span covered by our research, day school enrollment has grown by 107,839 students. This is an impressive rate of growth, yet the vast majority of it is attributable to increased enrollment in the Chassidic and Yeshiva World sectors, which currently comprise more than 65% of all day school enrollment. Other sectors, such as Community and Modern Orthodox, have experienced modest growth, while a number have shrunk, notably Solomon Schechter/Conservative and Reform. The implications of these dynamics are discussed in full within the main narrative of the report.

Please see the section below entitled “Number of Students” for more information.

---

## NUMBER OF SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL SIZE

The number of Jewish day schools indicated in this census (906) is considerably greater than the 861 reported five years ago and the 802 reported ten years ago. In the 1998–1999 school year, the number of schools was 676. The 34% increase in the number of schools over the past 20 years likely has important financial implications for both the day school world and Jewish philanthropy.

Nearly all the growth in the number of schools over the past five years has been in the fervently Orthodox sectors—primarily within the Yeshiva World sector, where for a host of reasons, there is a tendency toward smaller schools, especially those serving boys and those operating at the high school level.

Although there are large Jewish day schools, because of geographic dispersal and denominational diversity, most day schools are relatively small institutions, particularly by comparison to public schools and to most nonpublic schools, be they religious or private.<sup>1</sup>

Please see “Number of Schools” and “Enrollment by School Size” below for more discussion of these issues.

---

## ENROLLMENT BY SCHOOL CATEGORY

The largest enrollment groups are Yeshiva and Chassidic institutions. Since approximately half of enrollment in Chabad schools can also be identified as fervently Orthodox (as is true of Chabad schools in Crown Heights, Brooklyn and several other communities), 68% of all day school enrollment can fairly be identified as fervently Orthodox. Most of these students come from homes where day school or yeshiva education is firmly embedded in the family’s belief system; few children from such homes will be found in public schools.

Enrollment in the three non-Orthodox school categories—Reform, Solomon Schechter/ Conservative and

<sup>1</sup> Please note that in some cases, separate boys and girls divisions are counted as separate schools. This will influence the size of the schools relative to what they would be in a co-educational environment.

Community—amounts to 30,756 students, or approximately 10.5% of the total number of students in all Jewish day schools. This represents a small proportion of all school-age children in non-Orthodox homes. This is a matter of obvious concern, because the low number is indicative of what might be viewed as the significant changes occurring in much of American Jewish life outside the boundaries of the Orthodox.

Outside of New York and New Jersey, non-Orthodox school enrollment is 25,362 and total school enrollment is 71,859, meaning that 35% of students outside New York and New Jersey are in non-Orthodox schools. This is a meaningful statistic, indicating that non-Orthodox schools are maintaining a meaningful presence outside the New York/ New Jersey metropolitan area.

The report section on “Enrollment by School Category” below provides detailed information on the enrollment patterns that the census found within various types of non-Orthodox and Orthodox schools. The section also discusses some of the factors influencing these patterns, and explores some of the ramifications of the patterns. This section also describes enrollment patterns within schools designated as Immigrant and Outreach schools, as well as Special Education schools, both of which operate, for the most part, under Orthodox auspices.

---

## THE GEOGRAPHIC FACTOR

There are currently Jewish day schools in 37 states and the District of Columbia. Aside from New York and New Jersey, which are discussed next, in most states with major cities that have a significant number of Jews, the census found that enrollment has held up and has usually increased. This is true of California, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Texas.

A total of 26 states had enrollment increases from the 2013–2014 census, although in several cases, the number of students was quite small to begin with. In 6 states, total enrollment is under 50, in 2 other states, enrollment is below 100. In 18 states, enrollment declined from the 1998–1999 census.

New York and New Jersey have experienced spectacular growth in day school enrollment. Between 1998 and 2018, enrollment in New York day schools grew by more than 66,611 (a 64.1% increase). In New Jersey, the number grew by 31,839 (a 177.3% increase). Total enrollment in U.S. day schools has grown by almost 108,000 over the 20-year census period, with nearly all of this growth attributable to New York and New Jersey. Notably, nearly all of the growth in these two states is attributable to increased enrollment in Chassidic and Yeshiva World schools, although enrollment in New York City non-Orthodox schools has increased in every census. In addition, between the 20-year census period, Modern Orthodox day school enrollment has increased 21.5% in the New York City and Suburban New York City region.

In raw numbers, New York and New Jersey had 220,313 day school students in 2018. The financial challenges facing the geographic communities and also the religious communities that sustain these institutions is enormous, and the challenge is made even greater by the necessity to create additional facilities to accommodate the remarkable growth. Nearly all of the additional students over the past five years in New Jersey schools are attributable to the sensational growth of yeshivas and day schools in Lakewood, New Jersey. This relatively small municipality is home to Beth Medrash Govoha, the largest advanced yeshiva in the world, with an enrollment of 7,000 seminary students.

Please see “The Geographic Factor” section below for detailed discussion and analysis of the census findings in this regard.

## INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In 2018–2019, I conducted a fifth census of Jewish day school enrollment in the United States. As was true of the census surveys conducted in the 1998–1999, 2003–2004, 2008–2009, and 2013–2014 school years, this research was sponsored by The AVI CHAI Foundation, which, for a full generation, has made day school education the centerpiece of its philanthropic activity in North America.

The first four census surveys were conducted by Dr. Marvin Schick z”l. I wish to acknowledge Dr. Schick’s monumental contributions, and my debt to him and his foundational work. This report utilizes Dr. Schick’s methodology. Much of the writing is based on his earlier reports, with changes reflecting the new data, and my own experience and opinions. I would also like to acknowledge the contributions and editorial support provided by Mayer Fogel, Azriel Novick, Yossi Prager, Deborah Fishman, Gerry Gomez Pearlberg, Rabbi Marc Wolf, Paul Bernstein and Prizmah: Center for Jewish Day Schools.

The five-year interval between each census provides comparative data and perspective on an activity that is crucial in American Jewish life. We can measure changes over time in enrollment patterns and try to determine the extent to which developments in the day school world mirror what is happening more broadly in American Jewish life.

We are living in a time of significant social and technological changes. Although religious life—and certainly Orthodox Jewish life—is generally conservative in nature, overall, American Jewish life has been far from static. Nor, in fact, has Orthodox Jewish life remained static. There have been profound changes, ranging from the disaffiliation of a great

many people who were born and raised Jewish to the embrace of more intensive religiosity by many others.

In the past five years, a trend has developed whereby some schools have shed their traditional denominational titles (e.g., Conservative and Reform) in favor of cross or non-denominational identification (e.g., Community Day Schools). I suspect the motivation is to attract a more diverse population and away from identifying purely by single denominations. I expanded the Solomon Schechter category to include the word “Conservative” and give them some flexibility. These developments—and many others not addressed in this report—have had a profound impact on American Jewish life, including day school education.

By and large, for American Jews—perhaps as many as 80%—yeshivas and day schools are, in a sense, “foreign territory.” As more American Jews, including many from traditional homes, move further away from religious commitment, in the period since the first census in 1998, the notion of Jewish day school education has declined in popularity among a large segment of those who were previously committed.

We can fervently believe in day school education and can demonstrate through an abundance of studies over the past

quarter-century that day school education is far and away the greatest guarantor of Jewish continuity. Yet the fact remains that for an overwhelming number of American Jews (including those who continue to identify as Jewish by religion), Jewish commitment is articulated in more secular terms.

As a practical matter, this can translate into diminished philanthropic support for day schools. It also means that fewer children are accessing a day school education within the sectors of American Jewish religious life that are most in need of what a day school education can provide.

---

### THE SURVEY'S COMPLETENESS AND ACCURACY

When the previous four censuses of day school enrollment were completed, it was believed that the research was comprehensive, meaning that grade-by-grade enrollment had been obtained for every Jewish day school in the United States. This belief was correct in the sense that data had been secured for every school listed in all of the day school directories, along with schools known through other sources.

However, it later came to be known that in each census, a few small schools had escaped detection, usually because they had been recently established and were not yet included in any day school directory or list. Similarly, while this census is thorough and complete, there is the possibility that a few small schools that were not included will come to light after this report is published.

This report is the culmination of an intensive effort to reach out to and engage the cooperation of every yeshiva and day school in the country. For about 50% of the schools, the process was straightforward; schools received the census questionnaire and responded fairly quickly. For most of the other schools, the process was painstaking, requiring a great number of follow-up phone calls and emails entreating the schools to participate so that our aim of delivering a complete census could be achieved.

What needs to be underscored is that the data presented here are not extrapolations. They are the enrollment numbers reported by 906 schools. Although, as noted above, a small number of small schools may have been missed, these

omissions would have little, if any, effect on the overall presentation of data and its implications.

Of somewhat greater concern is the issue of accuracy in data reporting. Without exception, reliance is placed on self-reporting. There is no governmental entity or Jewish agency that can corroborate the data. It is a good bet that there are schools—we believe a small number—that have misstated their enrollment by providing an exaggerated figure, perhaps because they perceive some financial benefit in doing so. More likely, any such overstatement arises from an emotional source, as school officials may find it difficult to face the reality that their numbers have declined.

The quest for accuracy is also challenged by rapidly occurring developments in the day school world—schools that change their name, relocate, and/or merge. Perhaps most critically, in the case of schools that are branches of existing schools—a phenomenon prevalent in Chassidic groups—care must be taken to avoid double counting.

Some deliberate omissions should be noted. Although the census includes the four-year-old cohort, a significant number of children in this group (and even some in the five-year-old cohort) are not included in the data presented here because this census excludes institutions that operate exclusively at the preschool level. Accordingly, children enrolled in community centers or other programs that terminate before the first grade are not included in this report. For example, because of extraordinary space constraints in Lakewood, New Jersey, the tendency in that community is for four-year-olds and, in some instances five-year-olds, to not be enrolled in a formal school setting. Instead, these children are enrolled in *ad hoc* programs that operate out of homes or in other arrangements that result in their exclusion from the data presented herein.

Additional issues concerning how schools and children are classified will be discussed in the ensuing presentation of enrollment data. Table 1 (as discussed in the next section) presents enrollment data by school classification and grade for all the day schools in the U.S. Table 2 (discussed in “Enrollment by School Category,” below) presents comparative data for all five censuses conducted on behalf of The AVI CHAI Foundation over the past 20 years.

TABLE 1: 2018–2019 ENROLLMENT DATA BY SCHOOL CLASSIFICATION AND GRADE FOR ALL DAY SCHOOLS IN THE U.S.

Classification	# of Schools	4-Year Olds	5-Year Olds	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
Centrist Orthodox	73	1,366	1,684	1,579	1,561	1,655	1,486	1,568
Chabad	78	1,557	1,582	1,417	1,417	1,375	1,302	1,198
Chassidic	172	6,958	11,017	8,326	7,993	7,821	7,252	7,000
Community	91	1,069	1,626	1,599	1,542	1,523	1,534	1,551
Immigrant/Outreach	17	180	184	168	174	162	173	175
Modern Orthodox	85	1,985	2,416	2,405	2,300	2,287	2,259	2,299
Reform	11	184	358	339	317	340	359	373
Solomon Schechter	32	593	810	734	802	781	789	809
Special Ed	35	8	59	62	72	100	100	53
Yeshiva	312	5,099	8,477	8,334	8,079	7,902	7,857	7,543
<b>Total</b>	<b>906</b>	<b>18,999</b>	<b>28,213</b>	<b>24,963</b>	<b>24,257</b>	<b>23,946</b>	<b>23,111</b>	<b>22,569</b>
<b>Percentage of Total</b>		<b>6.503%</b>	<b>9.656%</b>	<b>8.544%</b>	<b>8.302%</b>	<b>8.196%</b>	<b>7.910%</b>	<b>7.725%</b>

### THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHOOL CATEGORY

Denominational diversity has been, and to some extent remains, a crucial aspect of American Jewish life. It is not sufficient to inquire about belief and practice. We also need to know whether a person self-identifies as Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, unaffiliated or in some other fashion. Although Jews constitute less than 2% of the U.S. population, even these four categories are not sufficient to convey the breadth and depth of the Jewish denominational diversity. At least with respect to the Orthodox, there is the need to report subcategories, such as Modern Orthodox, Centrist Orthodox, Yeshiva World and Chassidic.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Although I am not convinced there are sufficient differences between Modern Orthodox and Centrist Orthodox to justify two different categories, I have maintained the distinction in this report for the purposes of compatibility with past reports.

Whatever justifications may be offered for the conduct of American Jewish demography, it is not possible to understand the Jewish day school world without indulging in sub-categorization. As shown in Table 1, in the 2018–2019 school year, there were 292,172 students enrolled in Jewish day schools operating at the elementary and secondary school levels. These students came from homes that self-identified with one or another of the denominations, or perhaps with no denomination.

Our communal life reflects this remarkable diversity. A synagogue is not only a place of worship, but an institution with an identity—and that identity includes its location on the denominational spectrum. The same is true of the day school world. A day school is generally identified as an educational institution with a dual curriculum, religious and academic. In counting the number of schools, a non-Orthodox school and a fervently Orthodox yeshiva are



6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	Special Education	Total	% of Total
1,575	1,518	1,689	1,217	1,185	1,099	1,067	16	20,265	6.936%
1,164	1,095	1,031	662	615	617	376	0	15,408	5.274%
6,776	6,449	5,750	5,267	5,289	4,627	3,786	68	94,379	32.303%
1,543	1,576	1,503	1,190	1,214	1,156	1,200	0	19,826	6.786%
165	170	160	155	171	153	180	0	2,370	0.811%
2,132	2,158	2,069	1,844	1,847	1,762	1,678	0	29,441	10.077%
350	180	203	27	21	30	0	0	3,081	1.055%
684	605	598	138	170	167	169	0	7,849	2.686%
90	84	100	57	64	47	44	1,017	1,957	0.670%
7,376	7,001	6,660	6,098	5,865	5,696	5,381	228	97,596	33.404%
<b>21,855</b>	<b>20,836</b>	<b>19,763</b>	<b>16,655</b>	<b>16,441</b>	<b>15,354</b>	<b>13,881</b>	<b>1,329</b>	<b>292,172</b>	
<b>7.480%</b>	<b>7.131%</b>	<b>6.764%</b>	<b>5.700%</b>	<b>5.627%</b>	<b>5.255%</b>	<b>4.751%</b>	<b>0.455%</b>		

included in the same reckoning. It is certain, however, that Charedi (fervently Orthodox) yeshivas operate very differently from non-Orthodox schools. It may be even said that they are nearly a world apart.

Even among the non-Orthodox, denominational diversity is often an indicator of significant Jewish educational diversity. As a primary example, Solomon Schechter/Conservative schools tend to have a more fully developed Judaic curriculum than most Community day schools and all Reform day schools.

For the overwhelming number of yeshivas and day schools, designations are self-evident—schools sponsored by the major Chassidic groups readily self-identify, as do most of the educational institutions in the other denominational categories. But in some instances, categorization is challenging, particularly in the case of

schools that straddle more than one zone of identity.

This phenomenon is increasing because, like the rest of American Jewish life, the day school world is subject to change and growing complexity.

In the past censuses, each school was categorized/identified employing criteria that can be reasonably described as objective. This census retains the same criteria, but—unlike previous reports—this time around, the schools were asked to indicate how they wanted to be identified. Overwhelmingly, their choices coincided with mine, based on the criteria being applied. In perhaps two dozen instances, schools opted for multiple identities, and it was left for me to determine which to choose. In seven (7) cases, a school chose an identity that differed from my selection; here too, the decision was mine. In some instances, I accepted their self-reported designation; in others, I did not. I readily acknowledge that a small number of my choices might be challenged.

What makes this census more difficult is not how schools self-identify, but whether any operational changes they may have made since the previous censuses call for a categorization change. One important example: Orthodox day schools that educate boys and girls in the same classroom have been categorized as Modern Orthodox. However, at least some of these schools now separate classes by gender at the middle school level or earlier. Perhaps they should now be identified as Centrist Orthodox. Moreover, there are schools previously identified as Centrist Orthodox that once split classes according to gender at the middle school level or earlier that have since increased the degree of gender separation to even earlier grades. Should these schools continue to be identified as Centrist Orthodox?

In addition, there are day schools that may be regarded as Modern Orthodox that have become more modern in orientation and have joint affiliation with Torah Umesorah—The National Society of Hebrew Day Schools (which

is Orthodox) and with Prizmah: Center for Jewish Day Schools (the merged organization servicing all Jewish denominations). The point is that identifying some schools has become a more nuanced undertaking. Should a school that was previously in one category now be moved to another category? Or should the previous identification be maintained, unless the changes that have occurred within the school compel a reassignment? Whenever changes are made in how schools are identified, there is an inevitable impact on the enrollment statistics presented in this report.

My preference is to retain, to the greatest degree possible, the identities that were previously used. When a school has clearly changed in character and affiliation, I have abandoned its previous identity and selected the one that best conforms to its present status. In making these determinations, I have striven to be objective. The choices I have made in this limited number of instances have little, if any, bearing on the overall statistics.



## 2018–2019 CENSUS FINDINGS

---

### NUMBER OF STUDENTS

A total of 292,172 students were enrolled in Jewish day schools operating at the elementary and secondary school levels in the United States in the 2018–2019 school year.

This represents an increase of 37,423 students, or 14.7%, in the five-year period between the 2013–2014 census and this report. Each of the previous three censuses showed increases of 11% over the preceding reports. It thus appears that the rate of growth in the day school world has accelerated—good news for advocates of day school education.

However, the growth rate is entirely lopsided. Nearly all the growth in the number of students is in the Chassidic and Yeshiva World sectors that now comprise more than 65% of all day school enrollment. The implications of this are enormous and will be touched on later in this report.

In the earlier censuses, schools were asked to indicate whether they educated boys or girls or were coeducational, but were not asked to provide a numerical breakdown by gender. In the 2013–2014 and 2018–2019 censuses, they were asked to provide a breakdown by gender. Five years ago, the schools reported enrollment of 130,490 male students and 121,879 female students. In 2018–2019, the schools reported enrollment of 146,740 male students and 143,475 female students. (These figures did not include Special Education schools.) Interestingly, at each level—preschool (the four- and five-year-old cohort), elementary school (grades 1–8), and high school (grades 9–12)—there were more boys than girls.

---

### NUMBER OF SCHOOLS

It is a greater challenge to count the number of schools than it is to count the number of students. At the institutional level, much depends on whether schools that have separate divisions for boys and girls at separate locations are to be considered a single institution or two schools. Another familiar issue is whether schools that have separate branches, notably those operated by major Chassidic groups, are regarded as a single institution. The general rule I have followed is to rely on how each school responded to the census questionnaire. If a school indicated that it had gender-based separate divisions or separate branches, those were counted as separate institutions in this report.

Despite the challenges of precisely parsing the number of schools, what primarily matters is the number of students. For the purposes of this report, it makes little difference whether a sponsoring Chassidic group reports that it has one institution or multiple institutions.

That said, the number of schools indicated in this census (906) is considerably greater than the 861 reported five years ago and the 802 reported ten years ago. In the 1998–1999 school year, the number of schools was 676. The 34% increase in the number of schools over the past 20 years probably has important financial implications for both the day school world and Jewish philanthropy.

Nearly all the growth in the number of schools over the past five years has been in the fervently Orthodox sectors—primarily within the Yeshiva World sector, where for a host of reasons, there is a tendency toward smaller schools, especially those serving boys and those operating at the high school

TABLE 2: DAY SCHOOL ENROLLMENT OVER 20-YEAR CENSUS PERIOD

Classification	1998	2003	2008	2013	2018	Change 1998- 2003	% Change 1998- 2003	Change 2003- 2008	% Change 2003- 2008	Change 2008- 2013	% Change 2008- 2013
Centrist Orthodox	20,504	18,696	17,650	18,925	20,265	-1,808	-8.818%	-1,046	-5.595%	1,275	7.224%
Chabad	7,438	8,609	12,296	12,649	15,408	1,171	15.743%	3,687	42.827%	353	2.871%
Chassidic	39,059	48,446	60,955	81,940	94,379	9,387	24.033%	12,509	25.821%	20,985	34.427%
Community	14,849	17,416	20,838	20,413	19,826	2,567	17.287%	3,422	19.649%	-425	-2.040%
Immigrant/Outreach	5,136	4,823	3,432	2,384	2,370	-313	-6.094%	-1,391	-28.841%	-1,048	-30.536%
Modern Orthodox	26,961	28,720	29,397	27,217	29,441	1,759	6.524%	677	2.357%	-2,180	-7.416%
Reform	4,485	4,462	4,569	3,704	3,081	-23	-0.513%	107	2.398%	-865	-18.932%
Solomon Schechter	17,563	17,702	13,223	9,718	7,849	139	0.791%	-4,479	-25.302%	-3,505	-26.507%
Special Education	695	1,780	1,967	2,118	1,957	1,085	156.115%	187	10.506%	151	7.677%
Yeshiva World	47,643	54,381	63,985	75,681	97,596	6,738	14.143%	9,604	17.661%	11,696	18.279%
<b>Total</b>	<b>184,333</b>	<b>205,035</b>	<b>228,312</b>	<b>254,749</b>	<b>292,172</b>	<b>20,702</b>	<b>11.231%</b>	<b>23,277</b>	<b>11.353%</b>	<b>26,437</b>	<b>11.579%</b>

level. These schools, usually called *mesivtas*, tend to be small because the preference of educators and parents is to have just one class per grade.

Although there are large Jewish day schools, because of geographic dispersal and denominational diversity, most day schools are small institutions, particularly by comparison to public schools and to most nonpublic schools, be they religious or private. If we divide the total number of students by the total number of schools, the average is 322 students per school, an increase over the 2013–2014 average of 296 students per school. If we exclude Chassidic schools from this calculation, there are 734 schools with 197,793 students, for an average enrollment of 269 students per school.

By U.S. educational standards, Jewish day schools are small, a circumstance that has financial and curricular implications. In many homes where the values of day school education are less of a priority, “smallness” may feed the perception that it is preferable to send children to much larger public schools that offer a wider range of educational and extracurricular offerings than the typical Jewish day school. This and related issues are fully discussed in the “Enrollment by School Size” section, below.

#### ENROLLMENT BY SCHOOL CATEGORY

The largest enrollment groups are Yeshiva and Chassidic institutions. Since approximately half of enrollment in Chabad schools can also be identified as fervently Orthodox (as is true of Chabad schools in Crown Heights, Brooklyn and several other communities), 68% of all day school enrollment can fairly be identified as fervently Orthodox. With a small number of exceptions, these students come from homes where day school or yeshiva education is firmly embedded in the family’s belief system; few children from such homes will be found in public schools.

Centrist and Modern Orthodox schools constitute 17% of the total school population. Throughout the 20-year span, this category has grown 5% despite experiencing a decrease of 14 schools (partially a result from school mergers).

Enrollment in the three non-Orthodox school categories—Reform, Solomon Schechter/ Conservative and Community—amounts to 30,756 students—representing about 10.5% of the total number of students in all Jewish day schools. This represents a small proportion of all school-age children in non-Orthodox homes. This is a matter of obvious

Change 2013- 2018	% Change 2013- 2018	Change 1998- 2018	% Change 1998- 2018	1998 # of Schools	2003 # of Schools	2008 # of Schools	2013 # of Schools	2018 # of Schools	Change 2013- 2018	Change 1998- 2018	% Change 2013- 2018	% Change 1998- 2018
1,340	7.081%	-239	-1.166%	80	78	72	77	73	-4	-7	-5.195%	-8.750%
2,759	21.812%	7,970	107.152%	44	54	73	80	78	-2	34	-2.500%	77.273%
12,439	15.181%	55,320	141.632%	81	101	105	137	172	35	91	25.547%	112.346%
-587	-2.876%	4,977	33.517%	75	95	98	97	91	-6	16	-6.186%	21.333%
-14	-0.587%	-2,766	-53.855%	31	30	24	19	17	-2	-14	-10.526%	-45.161%
2,224	8.171%	2,480	9.198%	92	87	86	83	85	2	-7	2.410%	-7.609%
-623	-16.820%	-1,404	-31.304%	20	19	17	13	11	-2	-9	-15.385%	-45.000%
-1,869	-19.232%	-9,714	-55.309%	63	57	50	39	32	-7	-31	-17.949%	-49.206%
-161	-7.602%	1,262	181.583%	18	43	33	34	35	1	17	2.941%	94.444%
21,915	28.957%	49,953	104.849%	172	195	244	282	312	30	140	10.638%	81.395%
<b>37,423</b>	<b>14.690%</b>	<b>107,839</b>	<b>58.502%</b>	<b>676</b>	<b>759</b>	<b>802</b>	<b>861</b>	<b>906</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>5.226%</b>	<b>34.024%</b>

concern, because the low number is indicative of what might be viewed as significant changes occurring in much of American Jewish life outside the boundaries of the Orthodox.

Outside of New York, there is a greater tendency for non-Orthodox parents to send their children to an Orthodox school, and a greater tendency for Orthodox schools to accept such students. Secondly, Chabad school enrollment outside of New York and New Jersey has grown from census to census, and a large number of enrollees in these Chabad schools are from non-Orthodox homes.

Table 2 provides a snapshot of enrollment across the span of all five censuses conducted over 20 years. The data show an overall growth trajectory in Jewish day school enrollment. In 1998, 184,333 students were enrolled in all day schools in the U.S. In the latest census, with total enrollment at 292,172, we see a 58.5% increase over 20 years.

In terms of facilities, day school financing and communal planning, the addition of 107,839 students over two decades is an extraordinary achievement. The significant increase in enrollment also suggests the enormous challenges the day school world has faced, especially given that governmental

funding is not available for capital or operating expenses.<sup>3</sup> We can readily surmise what a great challenge it is to build facilities and find seats for 107,839 additional children, and to find the funds to meet the steadily increasing cost of operating the day school world.

What is evident is that the day school world is going in two directions: greater enrollment in Orthodox schools (notably in the Chassidic and Yeshiva World sectors) and declining enrollment in many non-Orthodox schools.

There are notable exceptions. In New York City, every census in the last 20 years shows higher numbers for the

<sup>3</sup> The issue of government funding is nuanced and complicated. Although constitutional strictures are a barrier to direct governmental support of parochial school education, many states have programs that provide financial assistance to religious schools. In New York, for example, there is state-level support for recordkeeping and purchasing of textbooks and technology. Such funding constitutes a very small part of the typical day school's operating budget.

Eighteen (18) states have enacted scholarship tax credits or voucher programs. This governmental program pays the day schools most (or all) of the student tuition, predicated on the schools maintaining a strong general studies program.

Public funding, sometimes at significant levels, is available to day school families and children in need, and this can be a major factor in the financial profile of some schools that serve such families, notably in the Yeshiva and Chassidic community.

non-Orthodox schools. In addition, several cities around the nation have shown meaningful growth in non-Orthodox schools over the past five years, including: Los Gatos (CA), Davie (FL), Miami Beach (FL), Sandy Springs (GA), Cincinnati (OH), Youngstown (OH), Wynnewood (PA), and Washington, DC. Some other cities have maintained or slightly increased the size of their enrollment population in non-Orthodox schools.

It is worth noting that outside of New York and New Jersey, non-Orthodox school enrollment is 25,362 and total school enrollment is 71,859, meaning that 35% of students outside New York and New Jersey are in non-Orthodox schools. This is a meaningful statistic, indicating that non-Orthodox schools are maintaining a meaningful presence outside the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area.

### ENROLLMENT IN NON-ORTHODOX SCHOOLS

As noted, enrollment in non-Orthodox schools in 2018–2019 totaled 30,756—representing a 20-year decline in enrollment within these school categories. In 1998, there were nearly 37,000 students combined in Reform, Solomon Schechter/Conservative and Community day schools; in 2013–2014 there were 33,835 students. Put another way, student enrollment in non-Orthodox schools declined by 16.6% in 20 years and fell 9% in the past five years alone.

Although the three non-Orthodox school categories have been combined thus far in this section, it is well to consider each of them separately because there are distinctive factors affecting enrollment in each category.

**Reform:** It cannot be said that the Reform movement has ever emphasized day school education. Overwhelmingly, children of school age in nominally Reform homes are either in a supplementary school (often a weekly Sunday school) or not in any kind of Jewish school.

There was, however, a time when—in the aftermath of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey—Reform movement leaders stated that day school education was beneficial. These days, day schools are a declining presence in the Reform scheme of things. In 1998, there were 20 schools linked together in an association called Pardes. In the past school year, the number had dropped to 11.

Between 1998 and 2018, enrollment in Reform day schools declined by over 31%. In view of the number of children being raised in homes identifying as Reform, the 2018 statistic of 3,081 children in Reform day schools clearly points to relatively low engagement in day school education within the Reform community.

It is also noteworthy that enrollment in Reform day schools is primarily concentrated in the preschool and lower grades. In the middle school grades, and in high school, enrollment is exceedingly low.

**Solomon Schechter/Conservative:** As the Conservative movement goes, so go the Solomon Schechter/Conservative schools. When the Conservative movement was expanding, notably in suburbia, new Solomon Schechters were established and enrollment in these schools grew rapidly. In what seems to be the blink of an historic eye, there has been an extraordinary reversal. As has been widely reported, many Conservative synagogues have merged, while others closed and still others continue—albeit with a persistent increase in the number of empty seats. All this translates into fewer children in Conservative homes available for day school enrollment.

The Solomon Schechter school movement has been in a state of shrinkage in the last 20 years, in the number of schools and total enrollment. In 1998, there were 63 schools with an enrollment of about 17,500. Five years later, there were six (6) fewer Solomon Schechter schools; interestingly, enrollment inched up by a tiny number.

Then came a rapid turnaround. The 2008–2009 census showed enrollment of 13,200, a decline of nearly 4,500 students or about 25%. Also, an additional seven schools closed between 2003 and 2008. In 2013, the census reported 9,718 students in 39 Solomon Schechter schools. This trend continues in 2018–2019 with 7,849 students in 32 Solomon Schechter/Conservative schools.

Part of this trend can be connected to the fact that four schools officially changed their designation from Solomon Schechter/Conservative to Community Day Schools in the last five years. These schools are in Albany (NY), Lawrence (NY), Los Gatos (CA), and Memphis (TN).

This trend is not universal as the population of Schechter schools is stable in New York suburbs and nearly stable across New York overall.

Although it does not challenge the picture of enrollment in Solomon Schechter/Conservative schools presented here, it needs to be noted that an indeterminate number of children in Conservative homes are enrolled in other day schools. Community schools are an obvious choice, particularly in localities where there is no Solomon Schechter/Conservative school. There are also children from Conservative homes who attend Orthodox day schools.

**Community Day Schools:** Community day schools' enrollment has decreased slightly in the past five years. During the 20-year census period, however, these schools increased enrollment from 14,849 to 19,826, a 33.5% increase, alongside a 21.3% increase in the number of schools.

#### ENROLLMENT IN ORTHODOX SCHOOLS

Schools under Orthodox auspices have always been dominant in the Jewish day school world. For the first half of the 20th century, these were the *only* day schools in existence.

Even with the enthusiastic establishment of Solomon Schechters in the post-Holocaust period and expanded non-Orthodox interest in day schools in the aftermath of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey, Orthodox schools have, by a great margin, remained the largest component of the day school world. If only because of the contraction in non-Orthodox sectors, the proportion of students in Orthodox schools relative to the entire day school universe has grown. As noted, the 2018–2019 census shows 107,839 more day schoolers than 20 years ago, almost all the increase attributable to enrollment in Orthodox schools.

Demographers routinely note that although the Orthodox constitute a relatively small proportion of all American Jews (perhaps 12% today), they are a varied lot. This has a direct bearing on how we look at the census data. In this research report, as with its predecessors, we include what may be regarded as four primary Orthodox categories: Modern Orthodox, Centrist Orthodox, Yeshiva World and Chassidic. With the exception of the Chassidic community, all the other categories under the heading of “Orthodox” can bleed

into one another, and at the margin the differences between schools may be small. But in the main, the schools in each category represent different sectors of the Jewish community.

In addition, there are Chabad schools that increasingly act as a world apart from the rest of the Orthodox day school world. There are Immigrant and Outreach institutions, most of them operating under Orthodox auspices. My impression is that most of the Special Education schools whose mission it is to serve special needs Jewish students also operate under Orthodox auspices.

There are further complexities. The day school world is dynamic, and this is highly relevant to our understanding of each of the Orthodox categories. If some non-Orthodox schools have been affected by forces in American Jewish life that impel them toward greater secularity and, therefore, lesser religiosity, there are, within Orthodox life, forces that impel many yeshivas and day schools toward greater religiosity.

As for the Centrist Orthodox, their schools can clearly be said to have moved rightward, with greater gender separation and additional hours of religious study. The Yeshiva World has not been immune to these developments, as in this sector the tendency is toward greater emphasis on the number of hours of religious study. It follows that this results in a collateral de-emphasis of the general studies curriculum. Geography is a significant determinant of the character of Yeshiva World institutions. Lakewood schools are more “yeshivish” than those in Brooklyn, and those in Brooklyn are more “yeshivish” than those away from the New York Metropolitan area.

It would be foolhardy to divide the Orthodox day school world into additional categories, yet it is certain that a Yeshiva World school in Lakewood varies significantly in curriculum and ambiance from many Yeshiva World schools away from New York.

**Modern Orthodox** schools are distinguished by a number of characteristics. Generally, these schools are coeducational. Even with the recent trend to separate by gender in religious studies at the middle school level and perhaps earlier, coeducation remains a principal feature of these schools. There is a strong emphasis on both the Judaic and general



studies programs, and the curriculum tends to include subject matter that is not included in the curricula of typical yeshivas. Hebrew language is stressed, and it is often the language of instruction in Judaic courses. Identifying with Israel and Zionism is essential in these institutions, not only in the teaching of subject matter but perhaps more critically in the attitudes embedded in the school. At the high school level, the expectation is that graduates will go to Israel for at least a year of seminary study, and that when they return home, they will enroll in college.

As indicated in Table 2, over the course of the five censuses, enrollment in Modern Orthodox schools has been stable. The 2018–2019 census indicates an increase of 2,224 students over the last five years, bringing the total to 29,441.

**Centrist Orthodox** day schools occupy a middle ground on the continuum of Orthodox Jewish life—as is the case with Centrist Orthodoxy in general. Centrist Orthodox schools partake of meaningful doses of modernity, including strong emphasis on the academic program and strong support of Israel. Yet they also are pulled in the direction of the more fervently Orthodox, as evidenced by the spreading tendency to divide classes by gender, either altogether or at an earlier grade than used to be the case. The outcome of Centrist Orthodox schools being pulled in two directions is that they are somewhat less modernistic and less Zionist than they used to be. Yet, they remain significantly more committed to a strong general studies program and to Israel than Yeshiva World institutions. The current census shows that Centrist Orthodox schools enrolled over 20,000 students, near the 1998–1999 figure, representing an increase of 1,340 students since 2013–2014.

There were 97,596 students in **Yeshiva World** schools in 2018, representing one-third of all day school enrollment. This represents an impressive growth rate of 22,000 students (29%) between 2013 and 2018. Nearly all of the increase is attributable to the remarkable growth in enrollment in Lakewood, New Jersey schools. With few exceptions, Lakewood schools are in the Yeshiva World category.

Although the designation “Yeshiva World” might suggest great homogeneity among the institutions so described, this category is actually broad, with a wide range of schools,

as noted above. At one end of the spectrum are intensive yeshivas, in Lakewood and elsewhere, where the religious studies curriculum is overwhelmingly predominant and the general studies program is relegated to a back seat. At the other end of the spectrum are schools—primarily located away from New York and New Jersey—sharing many of the attributes of Yeshiva World institutions, yet distinguished by a curricular approach that is much more seriously engaged with the general studies program. Greater identification with the State of Israel is also an attribute of some Yeshiva World schools at this end of the spectrum.

This category, like the Modern Orthodox and Centrist Orthodox categories, refers to the orientation of the institution, not necessarily the characteristics of the student body. There are Yeshiva World schools, for example Bais Yaakovs, that enroll a considerable number of students from Chassidic homes. There are also a handful of schools under the leadership of a Chassidic Rebbe, but included in the Yeshiva World category because in ambiance and curriculum they align with that category.<sup>4</sup>

Although there are a number of large schools included in this category, in aggregate, Yeshiva World institutions tend to be small. This point is suggested by the Table 2 statistic showing that 312 of the 906 schools in the census are Yeshiva World institutions. The next largest category in the number of schools is the Chassidic, which has 55% of the number of Yeshiva World schools.

In the first census, **Chassidic** schools had fewer than 40,000 students. In 2018, enrollment was over 94,000 students, an increase of 142% in the 20-year span covered by these census reports.<sup>5</sup>

Chassidic schools tend to be large. This is especially true for those associated with Satmar, which has 38,597 students or 13.2% of all yeshiva and day school enrollment. Chassidic schools tend to be far more monolithic in their enrollment

<sup>4</sup> For example, the Brooklyn yeshiva established and headed by the Novominsker Rebbe z”l is regarded as a Yeshiva World institution.

<sup>5</sup> Although noted in the text, it should be emphasized here that enrollment of Chassidim in yeshivas and day schools is not the same as enrollment in Chassidic schools. A significant number of students from Chassidic homes attend Yeshiva World institutions. And a considerable proportion of enrollment in Special Education day schools is Chassidic.

patterns, with few non-Chassidim found in these schools. There is also a high degree of homogeneity in the parent body, student dress and curriculum. All the major Chassidic dynasties, including those primarily located in Israel (such as Belz and Ger), operate schools in the United States. Each group has separate schools for boys and girls, and each has schools that begin at the preschool level and continue through seminary for male students. It is a tribute to the Chassidic communities that they have been able to raise the funds for much-needed capital construction and to meet the ongoing operational budgets of their schools.<sup>6</sup>

Excluding Chabad, which is treated as a separate category, all Chassidic school enrollment is in New York and New Jersey. There are, of course, Chassidim living elsewhere in the U.S. They send their children to local schools or perhaps have an arrangement with family members living in the New York/New Jersey area that permits their children to attend the schools operated by their group.

There are 78 **Chabad** day schools in the U.S., up from 44 in 1998. There is now a significant emphasis within Chabad on day school education. Actually, this emphasis was apparent in the first stage of Chabad development on these shores, because when the previous Rebbe arrived in 1940, he immediately set out to establish yeshivas and day schools, primarily in major cities in the Northeast and Midwest. When he was succeeded by his son-in-law, the late Rebbe, there was a shift in policy that, in the opinion of many, resulted from the determination of the Rebbe not to establish Chabad schools that would compete with existing yeshivas and day schools. The movement focused for many years on afterschool programs, summer camps and other activities that pointedly veered away from establishing Chabad day schools.

This changed in the last years of the Rebbe's life, almost certainly because Chabad emissaries felt that they needed to have local schools that could help further their mission and perhaps serve as places where they could educate their young children. What also furthered this development

<sup>6</sup> As a perhaps fascinating aesthetic footnote, the Chassidic schools operated by the major groups are invariably attractively maintained, a significant achievement in view of the heavy use of these facilities. Facilities often include a catering hall that provides income to the school but also presents maintenance challenges.

was the weakening and, at times, disappearance of day schools, Orthodox and non-Orthodox, that served small Jewish communities.

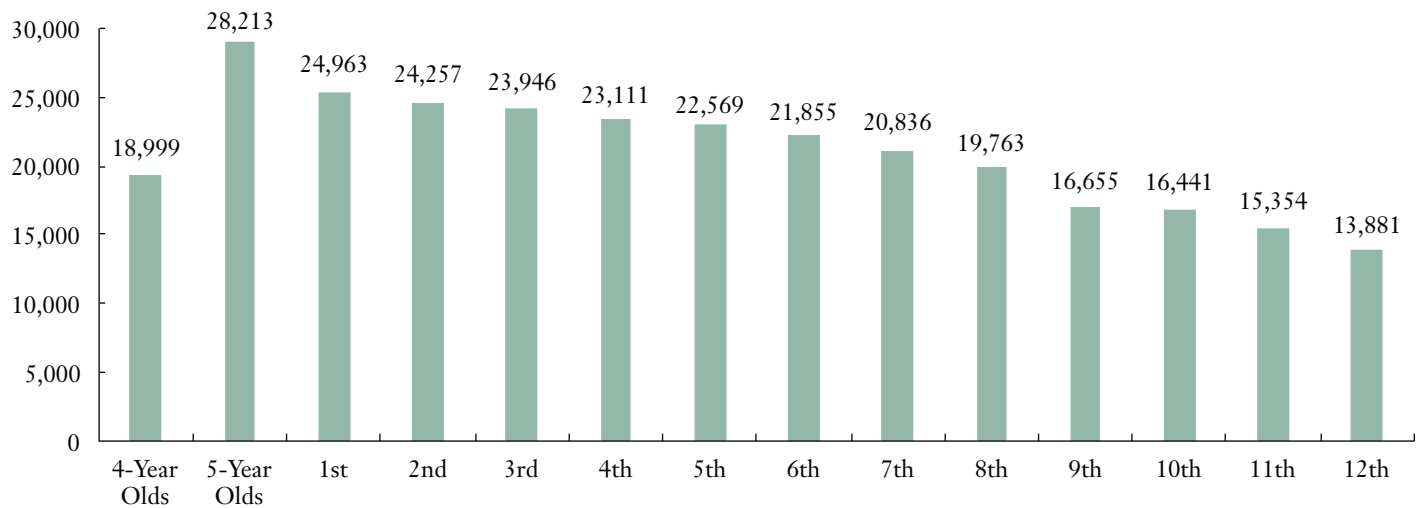
Because of the *ad hoc* nature of certain Chabad activities, particularly in education, it is difficult to fully grasp the parameters of the Chabad day school network. Presently, there may be a number of subcategories in Chabad schools. The largest in enrollment, mainly located in Brooklyn, educates children from Chabad homes. These schools have a strong Lubavitch student body and orientation.

A second category consists of what may be regarded as outreach schools established by the emissaries to primarily serve local families that themselves are not Chabad. The attraction for parents, many of them ex-Israelis, is a Judaic curriculum and ambiance, as well as remarkably low tuition charges. Then there are day schools, mainly in small communities, that have historically had nothing to do with Chabad. As enrollment in these schools declined and there were attendant financial problems, those who were previously responsible for these schools withdrew and Chabad rabbis took over leadership of the schools without substantially changing their orientation and program. By and large, I have retained the previous designation of these schools, so those designated as Community schools in the earlier censuses continue to be identified as such.

The current census places Chabad day school enrollment at 15,408, an increase over 2013–2014, and an increase of 7,900 students (107%) since 1998. Were it not for the Chabad network, thousands of children now being educated in day schools would not be receiving a meaningful Jewish education.

In 1998, there were more than 5,000 students in schools designated as **Immigrant and Outreach** institutions. Five years later, there was a slight reduction to 4,800 students. By 2008, enrollment declined to 3,400; Russian immigration was no longer a major communal concern, nor were there as many outreach families with younger children who might be enrolled in Jewish schools. This census shows a further decline to 2,370 students. Between 1998 and 2013, these schools saw a more than 50% decline in enrollment, with their numbers holding more or less steady between 2013 (2,384) and 2019 (2,370).

DISPLAY 1: SCHOOL ENROLLMENT (ALL DAY SCHOOLS) BY GRADE



Many immigrant/outreach schools have closed. In 1998, there were 31 such schools. In 2013, there were 19—some of them barely surviving. In 2018–2019, the number is 17 schools. There is no indication of significant communal interest in sustaining these schools, most of which are under Orthodox auspices, although much of the parent and student body is not Orthodox. However, because immigrant enrollment is heavily Bukharian and not what may be referred to as Russian, there is a strong traditionalist orientation, which enhances the prospect for effective outreach and beneficial Judaic outcomes. Some Bukharian schools have been successful in attracting and retaining Jewish families in the New York area.

It will never be possible to gain a comfortable understanding of enrollment in **Special Education** schools. One obvious issue is that many mainstream schools have classes or tracks devoted to special needs students, and include enrollment data for these children in their overall enrollment figures. As for schools exclusively established for special education purposes, since they rely enormously on public funding, there is, sometimes, an obligation to accept non-Jewish children.

This census has made a substantial effort to accurately count special education enrollment, and I believe the figure we have come up with is close to the mark. In 2013, there were more than 2,100 students in Special Education schools under

Jewish sponsorship, a modest increase over 2008, and a three-fold increase over 1998. In the past five years, this sector has lost 161 students. The current census identifies 35 schools as distinctly focused on serving Special Education students.

#### ENROLLMENT BY GRADE LEVEL

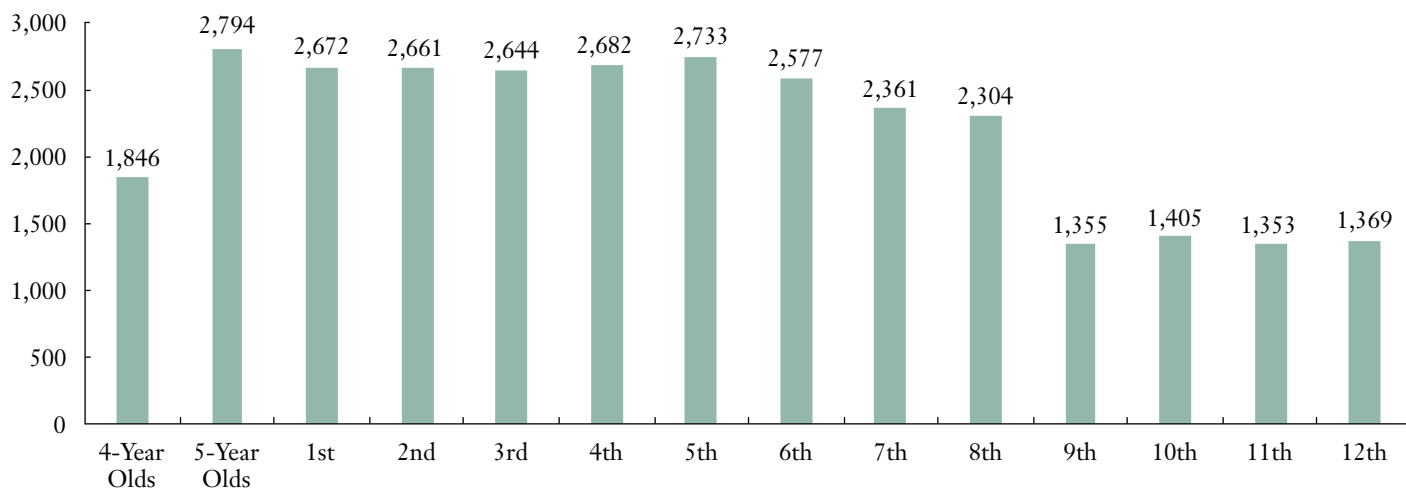
In most school systems in the U.S., enrollment does not vary significantly from one grade to the next. Although there are exceptions (particularly in the high school grades), the overall pattern is one of stability: a school that has two classes at one grade level usually has two classes at the other grade levels as well.

Jewish day schools do not adhere to this pattern. As the previous censuses show, the enrollment pattern is such that lower grades have higher enrollment than the upper grades and overall enrollment generally decreases with each successive grade level.

A possible explanation for the decline in enrollment as grade level goes up pertains specifically to non-Orthodox schools. Some parents send their children to such schools for a limited number of years, often only for the lower grades or even when their children continue through elementary school, often not into high school. There are several reasons



DISPLAY 2: NON-ORTHODOX SCHOOL ENROLLMENT BY GRADE



for this. As the college years approach, with their attendant high tuition and other costs, parents become more reluctant to pay day school tuition. Another factor is the parental perception, often misplaced, that for a quality education and/or to better the prospects of getting into a top-notch college, Jewish schools are a less safe bet than a strong public high school or other type of private school.<sup>7</sup> Parents rationalize their decisions by stating that they have already given their children a good “Jewish” education.

Display 1 indicates that, with the exception of the four-year-old cohort, the enrollment pattern by grade resembles a modest downward slope. The exception of four-year-olds has already been attributed to many children not being enrolled in a Jewish day school until they reach the pre-1A or kindergarten level.

For all other grades, there is a decline in the number of students from grade to grade, starting with the five-year-old cohort all the way to the 12th grade. Without exception, each successive grade has fewer students than the grade below

<sup>7</sup> There is strong impressionistic reason to contradict this parental belief. In the aggregate, graduates of Jewish high schools do very well on standardized tests. Many years ago, Dr. Marvin Schick conducted an informal survey of admissions by top-flight colleges of graduates of Jewish high schools. The results were stunning in that they pointed to a strong inclination to accept Jewish high school graduates. All indications point to this still being the case.

it. By and large, the decline from grade to grade is modest, usually in the range of about a thousand students.

However, since enrollment steadily declines as grade level goes up, the cumulative impact is considerable: the 12th grade cohort (with 13,881 students) has less than 50% of the enrollment seen in the five-year-old cohort.

In non-Orthodox and Modern Orthodox schools, the 5th grade often represents the termination of what is referred to as the “lower school.” This helps explain the drop-off in enrollment between the 5th, 6th and 7th grades in non-Orthodox schools. There are parents who believe that five or six years of a Jewish day school education is sufficient and by then, the time has come to transfer their children to other school settings, primarily public school.

Enrollment in the middle school grades (grades 6–8) is relatively stable in non-Orthodox schools. However, there is a sharp drop between enrollment at the conclusion of middle school and enrollment in the high school grades. Again, this is attributable to parents believing that their children would be better off if they were not in a small Jewish high school, as well as to the financial considerations mentioned earlier. Another factor is that in many communities, there is no Jewish high school for students who graduate from a Jewish elementary school.

TABLE 3: NON-ORTHODOX ENROLLMENT BY GRADE GROUPINGS\*

	1998	2003	2008	2013	2018
4- and 5-year-olds	6,384	6,103	6,225	5,130	4,640
Grades 1-5	20,381	20,333	18,438	15,665	13,392
Grades 6-8	7,815	9,043	8,316	7,527	7,242
Grades 9-12	2,190	4,100	5,593	5,501	5,482
<b>Total</b>	<b>36,770</b>	<b>39,579</b>	<b>38,572</b>	<b>33,823</b>	<b>30,756</b>

\*These totals do not include ungraded special ed students.

Table 3 provides a snapshot of non-Orthodox enrollment by grade groupings across the five censuses. Since enrollment in these schools has declined by nearly 8,000 students over the past decade, we might expect a decline in each group of grades. In fact, that has occurred for each of the elementary school cohorts, with the greatest losses in grades 1–5.

The vital information regarding grade distribution by school category and by grade category is incorporated into Table 4.

Here again, there are four primary grade groupings. As noted previously, Reform day schools are heavily oriented toward the four- and five-year-old group. What might be regarded as strange or puzzling is that in Chassidic schools, more than 19% of enrollment is in the same group. This is much higher than the distribution for four- and five-year-olds in Yeshiva World schools.

Part of the explanation is that many Yeshiva World families do not send their children to yeshiva until they are five. Perhaps a more critical factor is that while Yeshiva World schools tend to adhere to standard cut-off dates for admission (i.e., a child must be four by a stated date to be allowed into 4-year nursery and five by a stated date to be admitted to kindergarten), Chassidic schools are far more flexible. This is particularly true of Chassidic boys' yeshivas. The attitude is that boys must be taught to read from a *siddur* (prayer book) at a younger age than is generally standard in Yeshiva World schools, and therefore they are enrolled in yeshiva at a younger age than is true of all other school categories.

TABLE 4: TOTALS BY GRADE GROUPINGS

Classification	4-5 Age Group	4-5 Age Group as % of Total	Grades 1-5	Grades 1-5 as % of Total	Grades 6-8	Grades 6-8 as % of Total	Grades 9-12	Grades 9-12 as % of Total	Total
Centrist Orthodox	3,050	15.06%	7,849	38.76%	4,782	23.62%	4,568	22.56%	20,249
Chabad	3,139	20.37%	6,709	43.54%	3,290	21.35%	2,270	14.73%	15,408
Chassidic	17,975	19.06%	38,392	40.71%	18,975	20.12%	18,969	20.11%	94,311
Community	2,695	13.59%	7,749	39.09%	4,622	23.31%	4,760	24.01%	19,826
Immigrant/Outreach	364	15.36%	852	35.95%	495	20.89%	659	27.81%	2,370
Modern Orthodox	4,401	14.95%	11,550	39.23%	6,359	21.60%	7,131	24.22%	29,441
Reform	542	17.59%	1,728	56.09%	733	23.79%	78	2.53%	3,081
Solomon Schechter	1,403	17.87%	3,915	49.88%	1,887	24.04%	644	8.20%	7,849
Special Ed*	67	7.13%	387	41.17%	274	29.15%	212	22.55%	940
Yeshiva	13,576	13.94%	39,715	40.79%	21,037	21.61%	23,040	23.66%	97,368
<b>Total</b>	<b>47,212</b>	<b>16.23%</b>	<b>118,846</b>	<b>40.86%</b>	<b>62,454</b>	<b>21.47%</b>	<b>62,331</b>	<b>21.43%</b>	<b>290,843</b>

\*There were 1,329 ungraded special ed students that, perforce, are not included in this table.

With respect to the other school categories, there are practically no Reform movement high schools, as noted previously. The number of students in the Solomon Schechter/Conservative students is low.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, high school enrollment in Community schools is relatively strong. It is possible that some of the Solomon Schechter/Conservative elementary school graduates transferred to Community high schools. There is also a strong proportion of high schoolers in Immigrant/Outreach schools, which tend to accept students who apply at any grade level, irrespective of whether they have the requisite Judaic skills associated with a given grade level.

#### ENROLLMENT BY SCHOOL SIZE

As a consequence of the above-described factors, smallness is a major feature of the Jewish day school world. As Table 5 shows, 8% of all day schools enroll no more than 25 students, and 11.7% enroll 25–50 students. There are 139 schools with 51–100 enrolled students. In aggregate, 35% of all Jewish day schools (N=318) have no more than 100 students, and most of these have far fewer. These 318 schools have a total enrollment of 15,530 students, representing just 5.3% of the total enrollment in all Jewish day schools in 2018–2019.

Interestingly, the 35% statistic for enrollment in small day schools has been constant for all five censuses, which is to say that smallness is embedded in the Jewish day school world for the reasons previously described. The consequences of smallness are self-evident, including a relatively high institutional “mortality” rate. More importantly, smallness is a dynamic factor, meaning that it feeds on itself. Because a small school cannot have a multi-varied curriculum, there are students who have special requirements—because they are gifted or have special needs—whose parents will not send them to a small school. There are other parents who simply believe that a small school is, for social and/or educational reasons, not a good fit for their child. Of course, there are other parents—a much smaller number—who regard small classes and schools as beneficial.

For all the ramifications of smallness, from a communal standpoint, small day schools have efficacy. They do not, as

<sup>8</sup> It is not possible to ascertain the number of Conservative affiliated students in high schools without knowing the denominational affiliation of all students attending Community and Orthodox high schools.

TABLE 5: ENROLLMENT BY SCHOOL SIZE

School Size (# students)	# of Schools	Total Students	Percentage of Total
1-25	73	1,217	8.06%
26-50	106	4,035	11.70%
51-100	139	10,278	15.34%
101-200	186	26,739	20.53%
201-350	163	43,992	17.99%
351-500	79	32,927	8.72%
501-750	76	46,534	8.39%
751-1,000	38	33,140	4.19%
1,000+	46	93,310	5.08%
<b>Total</b>	<b>906</b>	<b>292,172</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

a rule, charge higher tuition because there is a small parent/student base to help pay the bills. Despite their indisputable shortcomings in facilities, educational enhancements and extracurricular activities, they may provide stability for a community. Bais Yaakov schools for girls that are scattered around the country illustrate the point: a number of them are tiny, yet without these schools, there are families that would not remain in the community. Non-Orthodox schools in communities around the country also provide the motivation of Jewishly committed families to maintain contact with Judaism through the day schools. Chabad day schools outside of New York also tend to be small, and here, too, the argument can be made that preservation of a small day school helps sustain what remains of a committed Jewish community.

Table 6 shows the wide variations in the proportion of small schools across the day school world. There are, for example, 312 Yeshiva World institutions, of which 122 have 100 students or fewer, and only 61 have more than 500 students. This is in contrast to the pattern seen in the 172 Chassidic schools: only 36 schools have 100 or fewer students and 51 have more than 500 students.

Modern Orthodox schools also tend to be relatively large. By contrast, 35 of the 91 Community day schools have fewer than 100 students. Chabad institutions are even more prone to smallness, with 37 of the 78 schools in this category having fewer than 100 students. Only seven Chabad schools have

TABLE 6: NUMBER OF SCHOOLS BY SCHOOL SIZE

Classification	1-25	26-50	51-100	101-200	201-350	351-500	501-750	751-1000	1000+	Total	% of schools < 101 students
Centrist Orthodox	4	8	6	16	21	7	9		2	73	24.66%
Chabad	11	15	11	16	18	1	2		4	78	47.44%
Chassidic	5	11	20	33	37	15	25	10	16	172	20.93%
Community	6	9	20	25	13	9	4	5		91	38.46%
Immigrant/Outreach	1	5	2	5	2	1	1			17	47.06%
Modern Orthodox	5	8	12	16	14	12	5	7	6	85	29.41%
Reform			1	1	6	2	1			11	9.09%
Solomon Schechter	2	2	3	10	8	5	1	1		32	21.88%
Special Ed	8	13	8	6						35	82.86%
Yeshiva	31	35	56	58	44	27	28	15	18	312	39.10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>106</b>	<b>139</b>	<b>186</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>906</b>	<b>35.10%</b>

more than 350 students, and these are located in Brooklyn and serve Chabad families. Among non-Orthodox schools, 43 out of a total of 134 (32%) have fewer than 100 students.

When we examine enrollment data by school size, in Table 7, we can see that, despite the great number of small schools, smallness comprises a very small proportion of all day school enrollment. Only 15,530 Jewish day schoolers attend schools with 100 students or fewer. By comparison, there are 26,739 enrollees in schools with 101–200 students. And about 93,310

students (32% of the total number of enrolled students) are in schools with 1,000 or more students.

In short, from the standpoint of the number of schools and for many communities across the country, the smallness of day schools figures large. When examined from the perspective of total enrollment, however, what emerges is large school dominance, with 172,984 Jewish day schoolers enrolled in schools with 500 or more students.

TABLE 7: NUMBER OF STUDENTS BY SCHOOL SIZE

Classification	1-25	26-50	51-100	101-200	201-350	351-500	501-750	751-1000	1000+	Total Students
Centrist Orthodox	69	285	478	2,466	5,762	2,904	5,547		2,754	20,265
Chabad	189	613	791	2,163	4,795	478	1,098		5,281	15,408
Chassidic	61	439	1,565	4,551	9,743	6,327	15,444	8,677	47,572	94,379
Community	116	325	1,487	3,906	3,540	3,661	2,354	4,437		19,826
Immigrant/Outreach	24	204	112	593	528	377	532			2,370
Modern Orthodox	85	312	902	2,290	3,872	5,089	3,099	5,972	7,820	29,441
Reform			59	124	1,612	785	501			3,081
Solomon Schechter	21	89	223	1,498	2,398	2,240	600	780		7,849
Special Ed	150	468	556	783						1,957
Yeshiva	502	1,300	4,105	8,365	11,742	11,066	17,359	13,274	29,883	97,596
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,217</b>	<b>4,035</b>	<b>10,278</b>	<b>26,739</b>	<b>43,992</b>	<b>32,927</b>	<b>46,534</b>	<b>33,140</b>	<b>93,310</b>	<b>292,172</b>

---

## THE GEOGRAPHIC FACTOR

As the saying goes, what matters in real estate is location, location, location. In addition to their inherent educational mission, day schools are a form of real estate because they consist of buildings located in communities. As the community goes, so go the day schools serving that community.

As noted, Jewish settlement in the United States was spread across much of the country, including every large American city and many that were moderately-sized or even smaller. There was hardly a city in the country that did not have one or more synagogues, and a great number had other accouterments of Jewish communal life, including day schools. There were, and still are, nearly 150 Federations in the U.S. and a great number of separate Jewish Boards of Education or educational divisions that are an integral part of Federations.

Americans move quite a bit, and we Jews certainly have not been an exception to this pattern. In fact, because of our high degree of socio-economic mobility, we probably have been more prone to locational mobility than many other Americans. In addition, Jewish population tends to follow the job market (e.g., the Houston Jewish community grew when more jobs became available).

There also seems to be a trend of Jewish families moving to larger cities. Smaller communities and neighborhoods that were once home to a significant number of Jews have experienced critical population shifts, the result being a great decline in the number of Jews and, consequently, a decline in the institutions and instrumentalities of local Jewish life. This has been the sole or primary factor in the closing of day schools in certain communities where there was no longer a sufficient number of children to sustain the schools.

Assimilation and abandonment of Jewish identity have been powerful collateral factors in the changing—i.e., declining—character of Jewish life in many localities. Even where the number of nominal Jews, as defined by our demographers, has remained stable, there has been a decline in the number of those identifying in religious terms as Jews, whether as Orthodox or another denomination. Consequently, there is an undeniable decrease in the number of families that might be committed to a Jewish day school education.

Away from the New York Metropolitan area, there are communities (mostly in major U.S. cities) that have not adhered to the pattern of Jewish population and/or Jewish identity loss. In these communities, Orthodox Jewish life has been strong, and Jewish institutional life has thus flourished. Most major American cities continue to have vibrant Jewish communal life, including day schools. Nevertheless, even where the Orthodox have been a strong presence, there have often been losses in their ranks, because newlyweds have tended not to stay in the places where they grew up. Many have gravitated toward New York and New Jersey, with those who are fervently Orthodox tending to settle in Lakewood, New Jersey—a phenomenon described more fully below in the subsection entitled, “New York and New Jersey.”

Outside of New York and New Jersey, non-Orthodox school enrollment is 25,362 and total school enrollment is 71,859, meaning that 35% of students outside New York and New Jersey are in non-Orthodox schools. This is a meaningful statistic, indicating that non-Orthodox schools are maintaining a meaningful presence outside the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area.

Table 8 provides day school enrollment for the five censuses for the 50 states and the District of Columbia. Presently, there are 13 states that do not have a Jewish day school—more than in any previous survey. In six states, total enrollment is under 50; in two other states, enrollment is below 100. In 18 states, enrollment declined from the 1998-1999 census to the 2018-19 census. A total of 26 states had enrollment increases from the 2013-2014 census, although in several cases, the number of students was quite small to begin with.

Putting aside New York and New Jersey, which are discussed in depth below, in most states with major cities that have a significant number of Jews, enrollment has held up and has usually increased. This is true of California, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Ohio and Texas.

Table 9 examines enrollment patterns across all five censuses for all school categories outside of New York and New Jersey. Chassidic schools are not listed because, as noted, there are virtually none outside of New York and New Jersey.

TABLE 8: STUDENT POPULATION BY STATE

State	1998	2003	2008	2013	2018	Change	Percentage
Alabama	152	104	92	69	54	-98	-64.47%
Alaska							
Arizona	589	769	950	788	922	333	56.54%
Arkansas		7	17	14	20		
California	14,696	15,533	15,762	15,270	15,413	717	4.88%
Colorado	782	832	889	866	860	78	9.97%
Connecticut	1,673	1,666	1,801	1,845	2,080	407	24.33%
Delaware	94	110	47	54	33	-61	-64.89%
District of Columbia	180	158	245	316	394	214	118.89%
Florida	8,129	8,956	9,428	9,248	11,248	3,119	38.37%
Georgia	2,014	2,399	2,621	2,319	2,366	352	17.48%
Hawaii	19	7	10				
Idaho							
Illinois	5,127	5,021	5,099	5,248	6,777	1,650	32.18%
Indiana	416	342	273	283	296	-120	-28.85%
Iowa	52	141	131	97	112	60	115.38%
Kansas	338	298	251	225	226	-112	-33.14%
Kentucky	148	86	30	9	16	-132	-89.19%
Louisiana	75	124	40	48	90	15	20.00%
Maine	36	34	39	41	31	-5	-13.89%
Maryland	6,926	8,207	8,003	7,556	8,281	1,355	19.56%
Massachusetts	3,189	3,523	3,496	3,084	2,543	-646	-20.26%
Michigan	2,419	2,430	2,555	2,505	3,445	1,026	42.41%
Minnesota	822	732	933	655	616	-206	-25.06%
Mississippi							
Missouri	734	751	681	552	792	58	7.90%
Montana							
Nebraska	22	21	43	49	49	27	122.73%
Nevada	419	271	579	855	827	408	97.37%
New Hampshire							
New Jersey	17,954	22,488	28,738	38,804	49,793	31,839	177.34%
New Mexico	60	62	59	39			
New York	103,909	116,661	132,573	151,391	170,520	66,611	64.11%
North Carolina	354	479	572	455	173	-181	-51.13%
North Dakota							
Ohio	3,355	3,276	3,166	3,095	4,386	1,031	30.73%
Oklahoma	79	44	34	46	30	-49	-62.03%
Oregon	249	304	299	305	367	118	47.39%
Pennsylvania	4,016	3,636	3,227	3,156	3,822	-194	-4.83%
Rhode Island	386	308	271	204	313	-73	-18.91%
South Carolina	248	265	276	217	261	13	5.24%
South Dakota							
Tennessee	464	522	505	375	375	-89	-19.18%
Texas	2,260	2,434	2,674	2,825	2,830	570	25.22%
Utah							
Vermont		13					
Virginia	565	573	562	495	530	-35	-6.19%
Washington	635	723	650	709	545	-90	-14.17%
West Virginia							
Wisconsin	748	725	691	637	736	-12	-1.60%
Wyoming							



TABLE 9: ENROLLMENT OUTSIDE OF NY & NJ

Classification	1998	2003	2008	2013	2018	Change 1998- 2018	% 1998- 2018	1998 # Schools	2018 # Schools	Change # Schools 1998-2018	% Change # Schools 1998-2018
Centrist Orthodox	7,543	6,593	6,050	6,957	8,558	1,015	13.456%	34	36	2	5.882%
Chabad	3,544	3,925	5,023	5,738	6,579	3,035	85.638%	34	43	9	26.471%
Community	13,883	16,424	19,182	18,463	17,539	3,656	26.334%	69	79	10	14.493%
Immigrant/Outreach	647	700	332	354	373	-274	-42.349%	5	2	-3	-60.000%
Modern Orthodox	11,578	11,556	11,944	9,064	9,766	-1,812	-15.650%	57	49	-8	-14.035%
Reform	4,128	3,956	4,002	3,188	2,653	-1,475	-35.732%	19	10	-9	-47.368%
Solomon Schechter	11,606	11,719	8,479	6,098	5,170	-6,436	-55.454%	41	23	-18	-43.902%
Special Ed	113	187	321	274	179	66	58.407%	3	5	2	66.667%
Yeshiva	9,428	10,790	11,668	14,418	21,042	11,614	123.186%	44	84	40	90.909%
<b>Total</b>	<b>62,470</b>	<b>65,850</b>	<b>67,001</b>	<b>64,554</b>	<b>71,859</b>	<b>9,389</b>	<b>15.030%</b>	<b>306</b>	<b>331</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>8.170%</b>

Community schools have fared rather well, gaining 3,656 students and 10 schools across the 20-year period. This represents enrollment growth of 26%. It must be noted, however, that there was a decline of 1,643 students between 2008 and 2018.

Chabad schools have also done well, growing by about 3,035 students, or more than 85%. In 2018, there were 9 more Chabad day schools than operated in 1998. The statistics also provide a sense of the relative smallness of Chabad schools.

What is most striking and consistent in the overall picture described earlier is the Solomon Schechter/Conservative decline over the 20-year period. In 2018, 6,436 fewer students were enrolled in Solomon Schechters than in 1998—a 55% decline. A commensurate decline in the number of schools identified as Solomon Schechter/Conservative occurred during this period, with 41 such schools in 1998 and only 23 in 2018. Not surprisingly, day schools associated with the Reform movement have also experienced a decline in enrollment and number of schools.

What is possibly surprising are the data concerning Modern Orthodox schools outside of New York and New Jersey, which lost 1,812 students (more than 15% of their enrollment) over the 20-year period, and now have eight

fewer schools than in 1998. Since overall Modern Orthodox school enrollment has held up and increased over the 20-year period (as shown in Table 2), it is obvious that there now is a greater concentration of Modern Orthodox families in New York and New Jersey.

Although New York and New Jersey are the center of the Yeshiva World, in most major cities there are schools in this category, and they have fared well over the 20-year period. Enrollment has grown by 11,614 (more than 123%) and there are now 84 such schools, up from 44 schools 20 years ago. As previously noted, quite a few Yeshiva World schools are at the high school level and are small.

Between 2013 and 2018, day schools outside of New York and New Jersey gained 7,305 students. In 2013, these schools had 64,554 students. Five years later, they had 71,859 students. In the same period, enrollment in Orthodox schools grew by over 9,692 students. Put another way, in 2013 Orthodox enrollment outside of New York and New Jersey accounted for 57% of the total enrollment across all schools, and by 2018 the proportion had grown to 65% of the total.

Especially away from New York and New Jersey, enrollment of children from non-Orthodox homes in day schools cannot be calculated simply by adding the number of students in

TABLE 10: LAKEWOOD ENROLLMENT

	Schools		Students		Schools		Students		Schools		Students		Change in # of Students 1998-2018		Percentage
	1998	2003	2008	2013	2018	1998-2018	Percentage								
Centrist Orthodox	-	-	1	112	1	91	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Chassidic	2	464	1	200	2	703	10	2,527	8	3,437	2,973	640.73%			
Modern Orthodox	1	119	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-119	-100.00%			
Solomon Schechter	1	119	-	-	-	46	-	-	-	-	-119	-100.00%			
Special Ed	-	-	1	109	1	201	3	287	-	-	-	-			
Yeshiva	16	4,613	33	8,528	51	13,779	70	20,815	69	30,247	25,634	555.69%			
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>5,315</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>8,949</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>14,820</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>23,629</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>33,684</b>	<b>28,369</b>	<b>533.75%</b>			

schools identified as non-Orthodox. For one thing, the likelihood is that away from New York, there is a greater tendency for non-Orthodox parents to send their children to an Orthodox school, and a greater tendency for Orthodox schools to accept such students. Secondly, Chabad school enrollment outside of New York and New Jersey has grown from census to census, and a large number of enrollees in these Chabad schools are from non-Orthodox homes.

**NEW YORK AND NEW JERSEY**

The flip side of what may be referred to as stagnant enrollment outside of New York and New Jersey is the spectacular growth in these two states.

Between 1998 and 2018, enrollment in New York day schools grew by more than 66,611 (a 64.1% increase). In New Jersey, the number grew by 31,839 (a 177.3% increase). Put otherwise, since total enrollment in U.S. day schools has grown by almost 108,000 over the 20-year period, nearly all of this growth has been in these two states. And nearly all of the growth in these two states is attributable to increased enrollment in Chassidic and Yeshiva World schools.

In raw numbers, New York and New Jersey had 220,313 day schoolers in 2018. The financial challenges facing the geographic communities and also the religious communities

that sustain these institutions is enormous, and the challenge is made even greater by the necessity to create additional facilities to accommodate the remarkable growth.

Nearly all of the additional students over the past five years in New Jersey schools are attributable to the sensational growth of yeshivas and day schools in Lakewood, New Jersey. This relatively small municipality is home to Beth Medrash Govoha, the largest advanced yeshiva in the world, with an enrollment of 7,000 seminary students.

As Table 10 shows, in 2008 there were 14,820 students in Lakewood schools, while in 2018 there were 33,684 students. Over the 20-year span of these censuses, Lakewood day school enrollment has risen from 5,300 to 33,684, a growth rate of 538%.

Put another way, enrollment in Lakewood Jewish elementary schools and high schools now grows by about 1,500 students annually. Each year, that number of additional seats must be created, and each year it is necessary to sustain on an operating basis a growing number of schools. In the 2018 school year, there were 77 schools operating at these levels. The number grew by approximately five schools each year from 2008 through 2013. In the past five years, even though the student population rose by 10,000, the number of schools declined by six.



TABLE 11: NYC ENROLLMENT

	Schools	Students	Schools	Students	Schools	Students	Schools	Students	Schools	Students
	1998		2003		2008		2013		2018	
Bronx	4	1,039	5	1,347	4	1,608	4	1,805	4	1,799
Brooklyn	160	61,967	179	67,777	180	76,840	196	87,707	226	92,169
Manhattan	15	3,881	14	4,326	13	4,354	13	4,733	18	5,369
Queens	30	7,725	31	8,285	32	9,618	30	10,964	35	13,008
Staten Island	5	926	6	828	6	854	7	1,027	7	1,010
<b>Total</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>75,538</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>82,563</b>	<b>235</b>	<b>93,274</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>106,236</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>113,355</b>

In the 2018 school year, the Jewish elementary schools and high schools in Lakewood enrolled more students than are enrolled in all of the Jewish day schools in Illinois, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, and Ohio combined—states with major cities and suburban areas that are home to large Jewish communities and a significant Orthodox Jewish presence.<sup>9</sup>

Although New York City schools have not grown in enrollment at anywhere close to the level of Lakewood, the city's statistics are quite impressive.

As Table 11 shows, between 1998 and 2018, New York City saw an increase of 37,817 day school students—a 50% growth rate. Between 1998 and 2018, Brooklyn enrollment grew by over 30,000 students, meaning that almost 80% of all New York City Jewish day school enrollment growth occurred in the borough of Brooklyn.

It is notable that this growth rate—citywide and in Brooklyn—occurred during a period of significant movement out of the city by mainly young Orthodox families—many to the Five Towns area in Nassau County (Long Island)

<sup>9</sup> The Lakewood story is even more remarkable when we consider two additional factors. The first is enrollment in post-high school institutions or seminaries. Mention has been made of Beth Medrash Govoha. In addition to that very large institution, there are nearly 50 schools for male students operating at the post-high school level in Lakewood. There are, of course, quite a number of post-high school seminaries for girls.

A perhaps even more remarkable statistic is that Lakewood itself is a small community. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Lakewood's population was 54,000, of whom 48.4% were under the age of 18. Is there another locality in the country with such a statistic?

or to Rockland County, north of New York City. Another migration resulted from the development and growth of Kiryat Joel, the large Satmar community in Orange County, New York. And, as already noted, a great number of young Orthodox families have settled in Lakewood, New Jersey. Overwhelmingly, this movement away from New York City occurred among families who previously lived in Brooklyn, which makes the growth in enrollment within Brooklyn, and citywide, impressive and extraordinary.

Table 12 presents New York City enrollment data by school category for each of the five censuses. Only 1 in 40 Jewish day schoolers in NYC is attending a non-Orthodox school—of which there are only nine in the city. Of note, the number of enrolled students in NYC's non-Orthodox schools has increased with every census.

In 1998, New York City was home to 214 Jewish day schools serving a total of 75,538 students. In 2018, the number of day schools in New York City had risen to 290, serving a total of 113,355 students. Consistent with the steady increase in the number of students in Jewish day schools in the city, there has been a commensurate increase in non-Orthodox school enrollment, most of it in the Community school sector.

As for the Orthodox, half of the enrollment is in Chassidic schools and more than a quarter is in Yeshiva World institutions. By far the lion's share of the growth in New York City day school enrollment has been in Chassidic schools, which saw a 98% increase since 1998. Yeshiva World enrollment grew by 27% during the same 20-year span.

TABLE 12: NYC ENROLLMENT BY SCHOOL CATEGORY

Classification	1998			2003		
	Schools	Students	% of Total	Schools	Students	% of Total
<b>Orthodox</b>						
Centrist Orthodox	25	6,313	8.36%	21	4,763	5.77%
Chabad	6	3,609	4.78%	11	4,225	5.12%
Chassidic	61	27,983	37.04%	70	32,909	39.86%
Immigrant/Outreach	22	4,130	5.47%	24	3,993	4.84%
Modern Orthodox	11	6,694	8.86%	11	8,052	9.75%
Special Ed	8	276	0.37%	19	668	0.81%
Yeshiva World	71	24,584	32.55%	70	25,686	31.11%
<b>Orthodox Total</b>	<b>204</b>	<b>73,589</b>	<b>97.42%</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>80,296</b>	<b>97.25%</b>
<b>Non-Orthodox</b>						
Community	4	785	1.04%	4	949	1.15%
Reform	1	357	0.47%	1	506	0.61%
Solomon Schechter	5	807	1.07%	4	812	0.98%
<b>Non-Orthodox Total</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>1,949</b>	<b>2.58%</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>2,267</b>	<b>2.75%</b>
<b>NYC Total</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>75,538</b>		<b>235</b>	<b>82,563</b>	

Unlike Lakewood, New Jersey, which has significant tracts of land that can readily be developed for school use, Brooklyn is densely populated, especially in the neighborhoods with large concentrations of Orthodox Jews. Therefore, it is a constant challenge to find space to accommodate enrollment growth. Whereas Yeshiva World schools in Brooklyn tend to be in the heart of the neighborhoods where their families live, Chassidic groups are willing to build facilities at the edge of their neighborhoods and even in neighborhoods that have few or no Chassidim. For instance, there are now Satmar schools in Brooklyn in Bedford Stuyvesant. What often happens is that after a Chassidic school is planted in a non-Chassidic neighborhood, Chassidic families begin to move in. This has already happened in a significant portion of Bedford Stuyvesant.

Table 12 shows that Modern Orthodox and Chabad schools have more than held their own over the 20-year period. Centrist Orthodox and Immigrant/Outreach schools have not. The enrollment decline in Immigrant/Outreach schools reflects the declining interest in educational institutions with an outreach mission. As for Centrist Orthodox schools, enrollment decline likely arises from a shift of Centrist Orthodox families to the suburbs, and a greater tendency to enroll their children in Yeshiva World schools.

Table 13 (on p.28) provides data for what is commonly referred to as the nine-county New York Metropolitan area, plus Orange County, which is a bit further north and includes Kiryas Joel, the large and rapidly expanding Satmar community. If we add enrollment in Kiryas Joel schools, the total comes to almost 170,000 students, 58% of all day

2008			2013			2018		
Schools	Students	% of Total	Schools	Students	% of Total	Schools	Students	% of Total
19	4,727	5.07%	18	4,901	4.61%	18	4,221	3.72%
17	6,345	6.80%	18	5,680	5.35%	21	6,890	6.08%
72	40,239	43.14%	83	52,063	49.01%	102	55,485	48.95%
18	2,781	2.98%	13	1,853	1.74%	14	1,889	1.67%
13	9,255	9.92%	13	9,465	8.91%	15	9,685	8.54%
14	849	0.91%	17	1,051	0.99%	23	1,206	1.06%
75	26,711	28.64%	79	28,541	26.87%	88	31,251	27.57%
228	90,907	97.46%	241	103,554	97.48%	281	110,627	97.59%
4	1,240	1.33%	5	1,454	1.37%	5	1,736	1.53%
1	567	0.61%	1	516	0.49%	1	428	0.38%
2	560	0.60%	3	712	0.67%	3	564	0.50%
7	2,367	2.54%	9	2,682	2.52%	9	2,728	2.41%
<b>235</b>	<b>93,274</b>		<b>250</b>	<b>106,236</b>		<b>290</b>	<b>113,355</b>	

school enrollment in the United States. The figures for 2018 include Sullivan County for the first time.

Mention must be made of Monsey (Rockland County, New York). In the past five years, the Chabad student population has risen nearly 88%, from 513 to 963. The Chassidic student population rose from 15,847 to 19,959 (26%), and the Yeshiva student population increased from 6,651 to 9,087 (36.6%).

Demography is a tricky field, and many predictions about population patterns have turned out to be mistaken. But there are reasons to believe that the population trends indicated in Tables 10–13 are almost certain to continue, meaning that in five years, there will likely be more students in Lakewood schools, New York City schools and the

counties near New York City, resulting in a significant increase in the proportion of all U.S. Jewish day schoolers being educated in these localities.

The financial implications for schools across the nation vary. In the New York Metropolitan area and in Lakewood, New Jersey, there will be capital needs in the tens of millions of dollars over the next decade and the operating deficits of many schools will increase.

The implications away from New York and New Jersey are even more serious, because they concern not only what may happen to the schools (some of which will surely close because of declining enrollment), but at least as importantly, the impact on the communities where these schools are located.

TABLE 13:  
 NYC, NASSAU, SUFFOLK,  
 WESTCHESTER, ROCKLAND  
 & ORANGE COUNTY  
 ENROLLMENT

Classification	1998					
	NYC		Suburban NYC		Total	
	Schools	Students	Schools	Students	Schools	Students
Centrist Orthodox	25	6,313	10	3,034	35	9,347
Chabad	6	3,609	2	73	8	3,682
Chassidic	61	27,983	17	10,357	78	38,340
Community	4	785	0	0	4	785
Immigrant/Outreach	22	4,130	1	40	23	4,170
Modern Orthodox	11	6,694	9	4,369	20	11,063
Reform	1	357	0	0	1	357
Solomon Schechter	5	807	7	2,248	12	3,055
Special Education	8	276	4	150	12	426
Yeshiva World	71	24,584	27	6,477	98	31,061
<b>Total</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>75,538</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>26,748</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>102,286</b>

Classification	2013					
	NYC		Suburban NYC		Total	
	Schools	Students	Schools	Students	Schools	Students
Centrist Orthodox	18	4,901	9	3,669	27	8,570
Chabad	18	5,680	8	717	26	6,397
Chassidic	83	52,063	38	26,446	121	78,509
Community	5	1,454	2	134	7	1,588
Immigrant/Outreach	13	1,853	0	0	13	1,853
Modern Orthodox	13	9,465	6	3,203	19	12,668
Reform	1	516	0	0	1	516
Solomon Schechter	3	712	2	1,053	5	1,765
Special Education	17	1,051	5	368	22	1,419
Yeshiva World	79	28,541	34	7,524	113	36,065
<b>Total</b>	<b>250</b>	<b>106,236</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>43,114</b>	<b>354</b>	<b>149,350</b>

2003					
NYC		Suburban NYC		Total	
Schools	Students	Schools	Students	Schools	Students
21	4,763	12	3,350	33	8,113
11	4,225	5	273	16	4,498
70	32,909	25	15,024	95	47,933
4	949	0	0	4	949
24	3,993	0	0	24	3,993
11	8,052	7	4,342	18	12,394
1	506	0	0	1	506
4	812	5	2,350	9	3,162
19	668	9	562	28	1,230
70	25,686	27	6,785	97	32,471
<b>235</b>	<b>82,563</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>32,686</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>115,249</b>

2008					
NYC		Suburban NYC		Total	
Schools	Students	Schools	Students	Schools	Students
19	4,727	6	3,108	25	7,835
17	6,345	10	753	27	7,098
72	40,239	26	18,891	98	59,130
4	1,240	0	0	4	1,240
18	2,781	0	0	18	2,781
13	9,255	7	3,709	20	12,964
1	567	0	0	1	567
2	560	4	2,097	6	2,657
14	849	6	373	20	1,222
75	26,711	34	8,066	109	34,777
<b>235</b>	<b>93,274</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>36,997</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>130,271</b>

2018					
NYC		Suburban NYC*		Total	
Schools	Students	Schools	Students	Schools	Students
18	4,221	8	3,773	26	7,994
21	6,890	9	1,314	30	8,204
102	55,485	58	35,122	160	90,607
5	1,736	1	164	6	1,900
14	1,889	0	0	14	1,889
15	9,685	8	3,760	23	13,445
1	428	0	0	1	428
3	564	2	1,068	5	1,632
23	1,206	6	425	29	1,631
88	31,251	55	10,739	143	41,990
<b>290</b>	<b>113,355</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>56,365</b>	<b>437</b>	<b>169,720</b>

\*Includes Sullivan County for 2018.

## CONCLUSION

**W**hat emerges from this report's findings is that there are two enormous challenges confronting our most vital educational institutions. The first challenge is addressing the long-term trend of a decline in Jewish day school enrollment in large sections of the Jewish community.

The second challenge is whether there will be sufficient communal resources to tackle the growing costs and declining affordability of quality education throughout the entire Jewish day school community, especially given the continuing growth in enrollment in the Yeshiva World and Chasidic sectors.

If more government funding is forthcoming to help address financial needs of schools, then it seems reasonable to surmise that the number of families choosing Jewish day schools—Orthodox and non-Orthodox—will increase. That will be good news for the further growth of day school education in the United States.





**USA**

The AVI CHAI Foundation  
1015 Park Avenue  
New York, NY 10028  
Phone: 212-396-8850  
Fax: 212-396-8833  
E-mail: [info@avichaina.org](mailto:info@avichaina.org)

**Israel**

AVI CHAI Israel  
44 King George Street  
94262 Jerusalem  
Phone: 02-621-5330  
Fax: 02-621-5331  
E-mail: [office@avichai.org.il](mailto:office@avichai.org.il)