The past 16 months, dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic, have been filled with unexpected moments of both darkness and illumination. Amid all the trauma caused by the virus, light has bent to reveal both rainbows and shadows. What we share now reflects our best effort to learn from all those moments. In this publication, we harness the data and learning from Jewish day schools and yeshivas, to bring light from throughout the field that will help guide the path ahead. Directing the beams of educational light is inherent to Prizmah’s name and purpose.

No one could have anticipated the tremendous ways our schools have pivoted in response to Covid; no one could have predicted the seemingly limitless energy and dedication of the people who make our schools work: educators, administrators, board members, and the students themselves. Jewish day schools exceeded expectations. In a period when schools everywhere have struggled, our schools offered students and families a world-class education, in an environment of warm support and community. Enrollment in our schools grew this year; we are optimistic that the ways in which day schools’ strength and value has shone through will lead to sustained growth in years ahead, and recovery in schools that have been less fortunate.

Covid amplified the longstanding strengths of Jewish day schools: their excellent general and Judaic academics, the power of a vibrant community, the focus on the whole child and providing a differentiated learning environment for each student, the power of a (Jewish) values-driven education, the centrality of focus on social and emotional health, and the ability to innovate, no matter what the obstacles. Deeply committed day school faculty and staff continually go “above and beyond” to maintain the best possible experience for students and families.

Yet even amidst all this “never before...,” we know that the core of what our schools do and why they matter so much is remarkably unchanged. So much is different, and still so much remains.

My “Covid-keeper” question is, How can we harness the excellence of the work of Jewish day schools, and turn positive signs, such as the increase in enrollment, from a possible “blip” into real lasting trends? Where the light has bent more brightly, I believe we can grow our impact. And where challenges like financial concerns have darkened the horizon, I believe we can similarly learn to construct opportunities for greater partnership and sustainability. The learning comes as we “refract” the experiences, approaching them from a learning perspective.

According to Proverbs 8:2-3, wisdom dwells “at the crossroads, near the gates at the city entrance.” When we position ourselves at boundaries, we can often learn the most. One of the delights of being on a “school calendar” is how summer makes us all switch gears and “leave the gates” of our routine. The past year and a half has taken its toll on students, families and educational leaders alike. My wish and prayer is that the time away from school brings us rest and rejuvenation as well as the chance to catch our breath and capture the many sources of light that got us through this unprecedented time.

Paul Bernstein
Chief Executive Officer
INTRODUCTION

During the summer of 2020, Jewish day school leaders were overwhelmed with emotions and responsibilities. For a brief minute after the 2020 school year ended, they breathed a sigh of relief. Despite needing to close their buildings at the beginning of the pandemic, most Jewish schools managed the transition to online learning with miraculous aplomb. In just a couple of days, the schools had their students accessing teachers’ web rooms and continuing their studies as if they had prepared for remote schooling for years instead of hours.

True, so many things had suddenly changed during that initial response to the pandemic: There were no classrooms, no sports, no arts, no tests (or grades), no recess, no hanging out with friends, and so many distractions. Sadly, so many lives were suddenly cut short, in the world, in North America, and in our communities, including many relatives and friends of people in our schools. Still, given all of the hurdles, at the end of the 2020 school year, most schools were able to close their virtual doors and tell themselves, We did it.

Yet they had little time for celebration, for ahead of them lay the seemingly impossible task of preparing for the unpreparable, for the prospect of the resumption of school. As many school heads expressed, they were taking on a job for which they had no training and no road map. Many heads devised extensive plans for multiple scenarios, needing to place their bets on one outcome while being ready to switch course on a dime. They braced themselves for a summer without a vacation, without a break, as intense or more than regular school months, with scarcely an evening to relax. The anxiety of extreme uncertainty was alleviated only by the sense of camaraderie felt by all stakeholders whose shoulders were lowered to the task. The feeling of a school as a team, with all members devotedly contributing, had never felt more real.

During the summer of 2021, we have entered a new season, buffeted by the feeling of hope from the rapid production of vaccines and the renewed anxiety caused by the spread of the Delta variant. Hopefully, we can take a deeper breath and allow ourselves time to celebrate and rest, va-yinafash. Although the impact of Covid fell differently in different communities and schools, as we will parse in the report, collectively as a field Jewish day schools adapted nimbly and powerfully to the numerous challenges and are emerging in strength to confront the year ahead.

Looking ahead, school leaders are planning for a long-anticipated return to a new normal, taking the lessons they have learned from their successes and applying them. They are evaluating which adaptations during Covid they will
want or need to continue, which they are ready to abandon, and what new adjustments they will need to make, train and prepare for. Next year also brings with it many unknowns, as the pandemic’s lasting impact is still far from certain. What health and safety measures will we still need to preserve? What lingering effects will we need to address—learning lag? Continued mask mandates and social distancing? Vaccine requirements? Mental health challenges? Teacher burnout and attrition? Economic costs, including increased need for tuition assistance? Nonetheless, the level of urgency is down significantly, and the amount of planning should leave time for spiritual rest and recuperation.

Most importantly, Jewish schools have reason to reflect that they have emerged from this time with a new sense of their institutions’ strength and resiliency. They have confronted the most serious crisis in recent decades and withstood it, demonstrating remarkable creativity, innovation and collaboration. As Jack Wertheimer and Alex Pomson observed, they were able to draw upon decades-long work upgrading the sophistication of their education and pedagogy, developing teacher skills, and enhancing recruitment, advancement and governance.1 These factors enabled day schools to shine by their nimbleness, making a host of transitions and adjustments speedily and continuously monitoring, reflecting and strategizing to ensure consistent delivery of high-quality learning.

Schools have been working hard on ensuring that those students have the best experience in their day school, and that they are motivated to stay, as well as enabling more families to learn about the quality of their day schools, in order to continue attracting more and growing further. In some communities, demographic shifts spurred by Covid, leading to declining population, are creating challenges that schools must address. At the same time, many schools are tackling the challenge of handling capacity restrictions in their buildings, with a number of schools reporting that they are welcoming an influx of students into many grades and classes.

The information in this report was developed by synthesizing the surveys, research and data collection from the Prizmah Knowledge Center during the 2020-2021 school year. In particular, three initiatives inform this portrait of the field:

1. **Data and Analysis for School Leadership (DASL)**
   Prizmah in partnership with the National Association of Independent Schools has a Jewish day school and yeshivah benchmarking cohort within their data analysis tool called DASL. More than eighty schools have participated in DASL in the previous data collection cycle. DASL collects data in many areas of school functioning including finance, enrollment, development and salaries. The information in DASL reflects schools’ experience in the 2019-20 school year, thus including the beginning months of Covid-19.

2. **Prizmah Pulse Surveys**
   Prizmah fielded four pulse surveys during the pandemic focused on particular aspects of school operations, including finance (tuition assistance, tuition, budget, etc.), admissions, fundraising and education. They were meant to help schools understand the decisions being made at a time of great uncertainty and how Covid was affecting various aspects of school functioning.

3. **School Counselors Survey**
   In February 2021, Dr. Oshra Cohen, faculty support and efficiency consultant and guidance counselor at Maayanot Yeshiva High School for Girls in Teaneck, partnered with Prizmah to survey school counselors, teachers and administrators about their mental health and well-being.

4. **General**
   We have drawn from our Prizmah team’s vantage point of the field, through our work with hundreds of Jewish day schools, to add insights into the condition of schools of all kinds and in different places.
Prizmah has partnered with NAIS to collect information through their comprehensive data system DASL for the past two years. Schools report information that they already have for the current year—e.g., enrollment and salary—and other items from the prior school year (financials, fundraising); hence, the portrait we see in any given year is hybrid.

We now have a baseline of comparison to measure trends in day school metrics, along numerous indices, pre-Covid, and some statistics during the pandemic. These figures will help us understand the ways that day schools changed, both in the short and long term, as they grappled with the pandemic and its numerous ramifications. They provide a baseline for the results from pulse surveys in the sections below, reflecting the impact of Covid on a range of school functions.

Among the 85 Jewish schools that completed DASL, the average enrollment in 2019-20 was 376. They represented a range of affiliations: half were community or pluralistic, 19% Orthodox, 15% Conservative and 6% reform. Schools represented geographic diversity: 42% from the East Coast and Southeast, 31% from the West and Southwest, 18% from Canada and 9% from the Midwest. There was a wide range in size as well, with 52% under 300 students and 19% over 600.
PORTRAIT OF THE FIELD

This report from the Prizmah Knowledge Center uses data culled from Jewish schools over the 2020-2021 school year to substantiate impressions on the activities and trends during the year, concretize them and give them nuance. It offers glimpses at how Jewish schools have fared during this pandemic year, in five main areas:

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Learning Models

In March 2020, all schools pivoted from in-person to remote learning. Although the technical challenges of teaching online were formidable, the task was clear. In-person learning was not an option, for the foreseeable future.

Administrators and faculty would never have imagined the need to transfer, on a dime, all learning from the school grounds to a computer. Nevertheless, they managed to accomplish this unprecedented task in astonishing time, often with a break of a mere day or two. In retrospect, a number of conditions that were already in place at many Jewish schools made this rapid transition possible. These include the parents’ deep trust in the administration and faculty, nourished through regular communications; ongoing attention to differentiation that continued in the new environment; a spirit of innovation fostered for years that encouraged teachers to adapt to changing educational trends; technology that was already introduced and used to advance educational goals; a drive toward educational advancement and adaptations in order to ensure the school’s reputation for excellence. At heart, the deep connections that bind together teachers and students, schools and families, enabled the community of stakeholders to pull together and make the new circumstances as viable as humanly possible.

As schools faced the daunting challenge of planning for the resumption of learning in the fall, they had to try to peer into the future through a thick fog. On the positive side, they had glimmers of hope that in-person learning could indeed resume, under a slew of conditions: masking, hand-washing, cleaning rooms, social distancing, space dividers, traffic directions, increased air filtering and flow, use of extra rooms—sometimes off-campus—and limiting the numbers of people in the building, staggering start and end times to avoid congested entrance, and so much more. On the negative side, they had no idea if the sum total of all of these plans would yield success. Medical experts might change their guidelines to make in-school learning more doable or impossible; additionally, guidelines differed state by state, depending on multiple factors, including the level of infection and hospitalization. For some communities, the option of returning to the school building was delayed through the year, with some schools being able to return only in the last weeks of school.
Essentially, schools needed to prepare for three scenarios at once: in-person, hybrid and remote learning, with no sense of which option was most likely. In a normal year, school planning consists of guesstimation within basic parameters: number of students, size of the budget, tuition-assistance, staff and faculty needs, and a host of “line items.” When planning began in the spring of 2020, there were no guidelines, no normal. The data that informed strategic decision-making were replaced by crowdsourcing decision-making and sharing plans and expertise with colleagues throughout the field. Nonetheless, back in May 2020, 45% of school heads did not yet have a sense of what their calendar would look like. They felt like they were throwing darts without a target.

School leaders worked tirelessly over the summer, without a break, to perfect each of these plans as much as possible. They all prayed for students to be able to return to campus, making the adjustments and raising funds for that desired eventuality to come true. The side bets, however, could not be wished away, and so schools needed to have robust plans in place for alternate scenarios. By last August, most schools were prepared to open their doors for classroom learning, whether full time or on a rotating hybrid schedule, with allowance for students who chose to learn remotely. Two-thirds of schools expected teachers to work in person, 10% expected them to work remotely—and 23% still weren’t sure or had yet to decide.

The workload and the stress of not knowing, combined with the toll of Covid spread and social isolation, left a mark whose imprint may remain long past this year. These deleterious effects were overcome by the adrenaline of the moment, by the collegial warmth of a community all rowing together toward the same goal, and, ultimately, by the success that most schools experienced during the school year. Prevailing wisdom last summer held that the school year would likely be fluid, with periods in and weeks out due to the spread of Covid. Few would have foreseen that the measures implemented would prevent nearly all transmission within schools throughout the year. The overwhelming majority of students who tested positive contracted Covid off-premises.

School stakeholders should look back at the summer of 2020 with awe and great pride. Teachers gained skills to teach remotely, hybrid and concurrently—with students in the class and at home learning virtually at the same time; school facilities were recreated to enable some version of the classroom experience; outdoor spaces were configured for learning and distanced recreation; nurses and medical teams instituted policies and systems to keep everyone healthy and safe. The administrators ensured ongoing, transparent communication that enabled parents to understand the new policies and procedures and cultivated further trust in the school. And most importantly, school happened. For those schools that did not return to the classroom until later in the year, the faculty, staff and administration honed remote teaching and learning and tackled each new challenge with technological creativity.

Technology can be a powerful educational tool. Its necessity this past year illustrated that many barriers that previously prevented widespread adoption could be overcome. A question remains as to how and whether schools will incorporate more educational technology when it is an option and not a necessity.

Looking to the 2021-22 school year and beyond, school leaders are considering what the Covid-keepers are, including online community meetings, parent-teacher conferences, club meetings and school visits. There are also a growing number of innovative models of Jewish day schools developing that utilize technology to expand their reach and bring a Jewish day school education to families and communities previously underserved.
Enrollment

Background Data
This year, the average cost of tuition in day schools that participated in DASL was $24,244 (median: $21,375). Many schools held the line on tuition increases or rolled back expected increases. Looking forward, a number of schools have indicated that they are considering tuition increases of 1%-2%, modestly lower than historical tuition increases and in response to Covid-related economic concerns.

The average attrition rate, representing non-graduating students who do not return to the school, was 12.1% in 2019-20 (median: 9.7%). The increased attrition may be due to families who opted to home school their children or who moved their families to more suburban settings in response to Covid. Early reports from schools suggest that attrition rates may stabilize with more families staying put now that the pandemic appears to be somewhat abating.

Trends
Enrollment trends during Covid were striking and, like much else, thoroughly unexpected. For the first time in 20 years, enrollment increased in the sector of non-Haredi schools. In total, day school enrollment increased 1.8% this past year and was heavily impacted by the pandemic. Some of the most dramatic increases occurred in small schools in small communities, schools that had long seen slow declines. Orthodox schools, which have generally been experiencing modest growth, reported an aggregate decline of 1.8%. Non-Orthodox schools, which had been experiencing more significant enrollment declines historically, increased by 4.2%.

When day schools were given the proper circumstances to shine, they did. Schools that thrived did so because they were allowed to be open for business and offered a compelling educational model. They proved that they could succeed despite immense obstacles; they were able to continue serving students well, delivering high-quality education and caring for students’ well-being, at a time when other schools, whether public or private, had great difficulty. A great many of the gains came in markets where governments allowed schools to open, but some schools were unable to do so at all or only part time.
They showed that they acted as a team: their administrators making plans and coordinating responses; teachers having the skills and poise to make transitions seem as seamless as possible; support staff, including IT, empowering teachers to learn on the job, to recreate their classes and pedagogy in ways that felt authentic and connected to the regular learning experiences that they had always known. Parents took note, spread word and were impressed. Significantly, more Jewish schools experienced a bump (62%) than anticipated back in August (55%), meaning that schools continued to receive additional enrollment after the beginning of the school year.

In other cases, however, schools faced limitations that were difficult to overcome. Across the board, preschool enrollment declined by 18%, since online preschool had drawbacks. Schools with large preschools thus started with a disadvantage. Some states or localities never permitted schools to open their doors, or did so late in the year. Many parents in those areas did not feel compelled to pay private school tuition for schools that were limited to providing only a fraction of their usual offerings, whether state-of-the-art STEAM labs, sparkling sports fields, or advanced music and drama facilities.

As noted earlier, overall student enrollment increased among the 78 respondents. For some small schools, the rise was exponential, with one school reporting an increase of 38 students, a 59% increase in enrollment for that particular school. Twenty schools reported an increase of over 10% in enrollment.

A priority for Prizmah in the year ahead will be to work with schools on developing successful retention strategies and amplifying their value proposition in light of these major successes. Federation representatives in some of the largest day school markets report that retention among new day school families is expected to be remarkably high. Therefore, it is widely expected that enrollment will remain stable in schools that experienced positive trends this past year.
Background Data
In 2019-2020, the average total annual campaign was $1,042,513. In addition to a surprisingly strong level of individual giving, many schools turned to outside funding sources for help. Among participants in DASL, the average contribution per school from federations rose from $707 in 2018-19 to $1,259 in 2019-20, a striking increase that may in large measure reflect one-time, emergency giving to schools as the pandemic set in.

Average Revenue from Non-Tuition Sources: 2019–2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Revenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gifts &amp; Grants</td>
<td>$1,158,796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Aid</td>
<td>$494,541</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summer, Extended Day &amp; Other Programs</td>
<td>$323,214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>$196,718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>$158,993</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As we’ll see, with the great urgency for funds to cover emergency expenses, many schools paused their endowment campaigns this year or temporarily delayed the launch of a new endowment campaign. Nonetheless, there are promising fieldwide trends in this important area for fiscal sustainability. Seventy-five percent of schools reported that they have an endowment, with an average per student of $13,459. The highest reported endowment is valued at $46 million. The table below shows average endowment by school size.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Average Valuation of School Endowment</th>
<th>Number of Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 100</td>
<td>$842,391</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>101-200</td>
<td>$1,120,784</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>201-300</td>
<td>$2,706,460</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301-400</td>
<td>$5,562,015</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>401-500</td>
<td>$13,353,167</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>501-600</td>
<td>$5,309,000</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600+</td>
<td>$8,995,680</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Endowment Valuations**

- **Range**: $18,000 – $46,000,000
- **Median**: $1,000,000
- **Average**: $4,950,883

**Trends**

The fundraising story of Jewish schools during the pandemic is as dramatic, exciting and significant as the story of educational success, but much less well known.

At the beginning of Covid, financial instability was the dominant feeling. The economy imploded as people stopped leaving their homes, the workforce faced massive layoffs, and entire industries crumbled. Restaurants and entertainment could barely operate; commercial real estate suddenly was empty. In our world, fundraising campaigns hit a wall. Forty-five percent of schools did not meet their targets for the 2020 fiscal year; their average shortfall was $160,000.

Additionally, 16% of schools had aimed to start an endowment campaign and were forced to put it on hold. As a consequence of the stalled economy and uncertain prospects, most schools lowered their development targets for the 2021 year.

By August 2020, most schools were not optimistic about their fundraising prospects in the new year. Sixty percent of schools anticipated a decline, with 21% steelfing themselves for a significant decrease. For their major fundraisers, only 3% were hopeful that they could hold it in person; 38% were certain it would transpire online. Nearly half of schools were unsure if it would be in person or remote—or perhaps, if it would take place at all. There were too many unknowns, and so many pressing matters to handle first.

Nevertheless, they persisted: day school supporters overwhelmingly rose to the occasion. Although the economy did not begin to turn around at the start of the new year, donors were nonetheless moved. They saw the school adapt and thrive in the face of so many challenges and new expenses. They were inspired by the work of the teachers and administration, and no matter their own financial circumstances, they gave. The crisis made them care about the school more than ever and feel more connected to its teachers, families, values. They were determined to ensure that the school received the resources it needed to persevere and thrive.

The data is overwhelming and encouraging. Of schools that ran emergency campaigns (44% of respondents), the average amount raised was $269,420. By early February, 86% of schools reported that donations from major donors had either increased or remained steady. Over 40% of schools experienced an increase both from major and other donors. At that time, already 75% of schools expected to meet or exceed their goals for the year.

Schools received support from outside sources as well. The Jewish community prioritized Jewish schools: 79% of respondents received Covid-specific relief funding from the local federation or other Jewish organizations. With Prizmah’s guidance, schools accessed funding through JCRIF, the Jewish Community Response and Impact Fund, to help families in need receive support in order to keep their children enrolled. Some schools were also able to receive interest-free JCRIF loans to help with additional costs, such as PPP, and budget shortfalls.
Finance

Background Data
The average school budget this past year was $8,631,318. The chart below breaks this figure down by school size. Note the discrepancy between schools with enrollments of 300-399 and 400-499; average numbers can be affected by one or two outliers. Still, we see that schools in the largest category have an average budget nearly twice as large as the ones in the next grouping.

Average Budget Size by Enrollment Grouping: 2020-2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment Group</th>
<th>Average Budget</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 to 99</td>
<td>$1,289,878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100 to 199</td>
<td>$4,104,434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200 to 299</td>
<td>$5,800,140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>300 to 399</td>
<td>$9,124,956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>400 to 499</td>
<td>$7,697,989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>500 to 599</td>
<td>$10,589,159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600+</td>
<td>$19,149,665</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Trends
No question, Covid set schools in a financial squeeze. Families’ loss of income caused schools to lose revenue; there was a sharp increase in need for tuition assistance; expenses for Covid-related accommodations mushroomed. Yet as we saw, the impressive rise in donations, both from traditional school supporters and communal backers such as federations, enabled schools to meet the shortfall and emerge in strong shape for the year ahead.

The combination of decreased revenue and increased expenses put school leaders and boards in an unquestionably tight spot. In May 2020, 90% of schools anticipated an increase of 10% or more in tuition assistance. By August, schools had a clearer picture of the impact: on average, the tuition assistance budget increased by 16% over the prior year, rising $145,000 per school. Covid-related expenses averaged $173,000 and $669 per student; one school spent over $900,000.
Leaders anticipated a variety of measures to stanch expenses, from pay freezes to cuts in professional development, non-program staff and administrative support. Ultimately, internal fundraising and external support enabled most schools to withstand the financial pressures with far better results than anyone could have imagined in the initial months of the pandemic.

Looking ahead, the variety of measures taken by schools should help them stand in good stead for the 2021-22 year. In some cases, the increase in enrollment brought families who are staying with the day school community, and even others are enrolling because of the school’s higher profile and renown. Many schools made budget cuts as needed that enabled the school to balance its books. Others established deeper relationships with funders and appealed to newer donors, providing prime opportunities for cultivation. A number of schools explored alternative tuition models that should make schooling more affordable and attractive to middle-income families. And with the abatement of the pandemic and return of the economy, schools can resume robust endowment campaigns to help secure the school’s long-term sustainability and provide a cushion for any future financial challenges.
Jewish schools have long prided themselves as communities that care about the whole student, and not just on academic achievement. That commitment served schools well during Covid, when students suffered greatly and in a wide variety of ways from the increase in screen time and social isolation. While some students who found in-person pressures uncomfortable seemed to thrive online, the majority found remote learning challenging. Studies noted a surge in cases of student depression, anxiety and PTSD, conditions that impacted their cognitive functioning and abilities to perform in schools. Even as schools looked to cut expenses, many found themselves hiring more counselors or increasing their hours in order to meet the greater needs of their students and staff, and to fulfill the new mandate of the school as a caregiver.

In response to requests for guidance and training to support day school professionals who lead efforts to support student mental health and well-being, Prizmah conducted a survey to assess the stresses and challenges that they are confronting, especially during Covid. In total, 564 people from 32 schools responded, roughly three-quarters of them teachers. The large sample size affirms the representative validity of the results obtained.

Respondents indicated that the method of teaching exerts considerable impact on teachers’ well-being. Two-thirds said that in-person teaching enabled them to maintain a healthy work-life balance; remote and hybrid learning prompted responses only slightly over 50%. Presented with a list of emotions, the top three that they felt in the past few months were “stressed, fatigued, overwhelmed.”

Teachers, counselors and administrators were compared in their experiences of stress on the job. Whereas teachers (45%) expressed the greatest difficulty in falling asleep, counselors found it hardest to relax (67%) and felt the most loss of free time (80%). Again, counselors (30%) perceived themselves as having the least success in maintaining work-life balance.

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2 High Prevalence of Mental Health Risk Amid COVID Pandemic Taking a Serious Toll on U.S. Students’ Cognition.
Given the opportunity to respond to open-ended questions, participants voiced the professional and personal support that they seek. Recognition by administrators of the difficult challenges they face would lighten the burden. Teachers wish that administrators would understand the lengths to which they often go in order to support their students, and the struggles that students are having during Covid. They seek permission to work less during off-hours and to guard more vigilantly their work-life balance. And they seek opportunities to rekindle the camaraderie that they miss while the faculty room is no longer a safe place for eating.

One of the greatest challenges of the Covid pandemic, our individual and collective mental health and wellness, drew into stark relief the social and emotional crisis many school counselors and professionals felt has been emerging. Over this past year, schools adapted and shifted their schedule to shorten their school days; they created more personal contact points between students and teachers; school counselors have stepped in to support the students, faculty and administration; and schools have collectively expressed gratitude and appreciation to teachers for all they have done. Prizmah will continue our close collaboration with the field of guidance counselors to help ensure that the compulsory attention to mental health and wellness this past year endures as an ongoing investment in greater social and emotional education in Jewish day schools.
CONCLUSION

In each of the areas covered in this report—learning models, enrollment, development, finance, and mental health and wellness—the data and knowledge gathered from the field have identified emergent trends and surfaced essential questions. As we look to the 2021-2022 school year, the strategic issues of finance and management, lingering questions from the pandemic, and intriguing questions will be the focus of the collective attention of the field of Jewish day schools and yeshivas.

This survey has highlighted some of the larger strategic issues of finance and management that will occupy school leaders in the coming year:

• How can schools that attracted new students work with their families to retain them and solidify their ties to the school?
• What can these schools do to build on the successes of last year and continue to attract new families?
• For schools that lost students, how can they win some of those families back to the school and use their record of success during Covid to attract new recruits?
• Given the impact of Covid on the economy and personal finances, what are the likely prospects regarding tuition assistance needs and development opportunities?
• What adjustments will schools need to make to retain middle-income families in the near and long term, and to balance the books?

Even with the successes of the past year, Jewish schools face many lingering questions from the pandemic, including many issues arising beyond their control:

• Will Covid-19 continue to provide a significant risk?
• Will vaccine-resistant mutations of Covid, such as the current Delta variant, arise and spread, thus continuing the pandemic?
• Will the emergency health measures that schools have taken still be required, or can they be removed?
• What will be the impact of Covid upon students’ academic development?
• What effects will we see on the mental health and well-being of students and their families, faculty and staff?

• How will the economy respond in the aftermath of the pandemic? How will the new economy play out regionally and among the stakeholders at various schools?
• Will the increased need for tuition assistance remain or abate next year?
• Among donors who raised their contributions this year, will they continue to be as invested when the crisis has passed?
• After Covid, will the pervasive use of technology leave its impact throughout the school?
• How will larger demographic trends in American society—leaving cities, decreased birthrate—impact the Jewish community as a whole and Jewish schools in particular?

Some intriguing questions have emerged as schools were compelled to consider new possibilities for their school and new ways of schooling:

• How might schools continue to look to leverage the potential advantages of remote learning, including tapping into global connections and expertise and giving students more time for independent learning?
• Will school leaders and job-alike colleagues continue to collaborate, both locally and nationally, with such eagerness to share ideas and resources and think together about common challenges?
• Which ties may schools seek to strengthen with local Jewish agencies and others, for a variety of purposes—education, development, strategy?
• Will schools look to continue to develop and use outdoor spaces more than in the past?
• In what ways can schools continue to expand upon the foundations pre-pandemic in areas such as differentiated instruction?
• Will the shift to seeing teachers and schools as mental health providers continue?

As school leaders and boards consider the answers to these and other issues that have emerged during the past year, they are girded by the experiences that have informed their leadership and the confidence that they have acquired sailing through turbulent seas with a watchful eye and a steady hand.