

DEVELOPMENT TREND REPORT

Jewish Day Schools and Yeshivas Pivot Fundraising Strategies During the Hamas-Israel War: October/November 2023

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PRIZMAH
Center for Jewish Day Schools

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

The financial sustainability and longevity of Jewish day schools and yeshivas heavily relies on the success of fundraising efforts. On average, approximately 9% of revenue for Jewish day schools and yeshivas is derived from the annual campaign¹. In the wake of the ongoing Hamas-Israel war, Jewish day schools and yeshivas have assumed the crucial responsibility of supporting faculty, students, and broader communities amidst various critical challenges such as security concerns, exposure to violence on social media, antisemitism, and trauma. The communities served by these schools have been significantly impacted by the repercussions of the ongoing war in Israel. Development professionals have had to strategize how and if they should continue with planned fundraising campaigns while meeting the existing and increased financial objectives (including fundraising and volunteer campaigns to support Israel) of their respective institutions.

In response to questions from development professionals about how school fundraising plans will be impacted by the war, Prizmah fielded a survey to understand how fundraising strategy is shifting throughout the current landscape in Jewish day schools and yeshivas.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The survey was open to responses during the week of October 20th and to October 27th, 2023. It was sent via email directly to development professionals and heads of school. The following is a report and analysis of the findings and represents that snapshot in time. The landscape continues to change rapidly and may be different within a few weeks time.

Schools are herein referred to as respondents.

PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

Representatives from **71 schools** responded to the survey. Responses were received from all over North America. The findings represent 63 schools in the US and 8 schools in Canada. The greatest number of schools responded from the Northeast including the metropolitan New York area (29%) and the Western regions (21%).

Forty-four percent of the schools that responded are Community/Non-denominational, 28% are Orthodox, 10% are Conservative, 10% are Pluralistic, 6% are Reform and 3% comprise schools that don't identify with these categories.

The responses, while not fully representative of the Prizmah Network of schools, offer a significant window into the trends around fundraising in Jewish day schools and yeshivas.

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Source: Data and Analysis for School Leadership 2021-2022 school year.

KEY TRENDS AND FINDINGS

Fundraising Campaign

Schools across the US and Canada are making a variety of decisions around development efforts since the war in Israel started. **More than half of schools (56%) reported that they are not putting any campaign efforts on hold**, while 41% reported they are pausing at least one campaign. Thirty percent of all schools are delaying the annual campaign. Seven percent are putting the capital campaign on hold and 4% are pausing their endowment campaign. At the time of the survey, there were still a few schools who hadn't made any decisions yet about delaying campaign efforts.

Development Messaging

The majority of schools (79%) reported changing their development messaging in response to the war in Israel. Another 20% of schools had not yet decided if or how they would alter their messaging as of the time of the survey. **Schools swiftly adapted their messaging to reflect the changing landscape, in particular the need for funds for enhanced security measures and to support Israeli transfer students.** Other critical themes schools emphasize include advocating for Israel, fostering Zionist values, securing the Jewish future, nurturing future Jewish leaders, expressing support for Israel, offering prayers for the nation and addressing the rise of antisemitism.

Donor Events

Most schools that were planning donor events in the next two months intend to keep as scheduled. **Fifty-four percent of schools reported to have donor events planned in the next two months.** Of those, 65% are keeping them as scheduled, 16% are postponing, 8% have not yet decided, and 3% canceled.

Targeted Donations

Forty-seven percent of schools reported receiving targeted donations to their school in response to the war in Israel. This influx of targeted financial support underscores the strong commitment and solidarity of donors toward the affected schools and their mission during this challenging period. These contributions are instrumental in enabling these educational institutions to address the multifaceted challenges arising from the current crisis.

Conclusion

In light of the recent survey findings, it is evident that despite the ongoing challenges posed by the war in Israel, schools across the US and Canada remain resolute in their fundraising endeavors, with a substantial portion still pushing forward with their campaigns. The findings illustrate the dynamic and adaptive nature of the fundraising strategies employed by Jewish day schools and yeshivas to meet their changing funding needs, particularly for enhanced security measures. This collective resilience serves as a testament to the unwavering dedication of Jewish day schools and yeshivas to their vital missions.