

Enrollment Trend Report

The Impact of the Israel-Hamas War on Jewish Day School Enrollment in North America

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Overview

In the wake of the Israel-Hamas war, the landscape of Jewish day schools and yeshivas in North America has experienced significant shifts. This second Enrollment Trend Report delves into the influx of temporary Israeli students and an emerging trend of interest from public and independent school students for mid-year transfer to Jewish day schools during this time.

Covering the period from the start of the war in October, 2023 to December 8th, 2023, this report presents a snapshot of the responses from enrollment professionals and heads of school from 110 schools in the United States and Canada. Data collection was open for two weeks from November 27th, 2023 through December 8th, 2023. While the sample is not fully representative of the field of Jewish day schools and yeshivas, it clearly depicts that the trends reported herein are happening amongst one-third of the Prizmah network of schools.

The report highlights a significant increase in inquiries and temporary enrollments¹ from Israeli students and transfer students from public and independent schools into Jewish day schools and yeshivas in North America following the Israel-Hamas war.

¹ In this report, the enrollment of temporary Israeli students is discussed. These students did not go through a typical application and enrollment process. They are visitors of the school and do not have official enrollment status.

The surge in inquiries from Israeli students has prompted Jewish day schools and yeshivas to swiftly address the evolving needs of these students and their families. The collective resilience of the schools, combined with the collaborative efforts of local Jewish organizations, illustrates a community-driven approach in delivering comprehensive support for the incoming students.

TEMPORARY ISRAELI STUDENTS

Since the last **enrollment trend report**, the number of inquiries from temporary Israeli students nearly doubled. Ninety-five percent of schools reported receiving inquiries and/or enrollment from temporary Israeli students interested in transferring on a short term basis to a Jewish day school, and over 1,000 temporary Israeli students enrolled in the schools that responded to the survey.

Jewish day schools and yeshivas have exhibited remarkable adaptability by warmly embracing temporary Israeli students. These schools, with a strong emphasis on fostering a connection to Israel, play a pivotal role in the development of the culture and identity of the broader Jewish community. The findings in this report reveal that in times of crisis, schools consistently maintained their commitment to cultivating positive connections with Israel, underscoring the Jewish day school community's unwavering support for and dedication to Israelis, which has lasting generational and communal impacts.

PUBLIC AND INDEPENDENT SCHOOL STUDENTS

Four in ten schools received inquiries for enrollment from public school and or independent school students.

A rise in inquiries of transfers from public and independent schools to Jewish day schools during this period is attributed to the desire of parents to have their children in a Jewish environment and concerns about antisemitism. The findings emphasize the resilience and adaptability of these educational institutions in responding to the increased interest of transfer students and their families.

The landscape of enrollment in Jewish day schools and yeshivas is rapidly evolving in response to the current crisis in Israel, and the report demonstrates that Jewish day schools and yeshivas continue to exhibit communal engagement and support, financial adaptability, and the willingness to provide support services to students and families in urgency. It also underscores the schools' commitment to providing a supportive environment, despite the anticipated return of temporary Israeli students to Israel.

Profile of Respondents

PROFILE OF SCHOOLS (RESPONDENTS)

- Representatives from **110 schools** responded to the survey.
- The findings represent **99 schools in the US** and **11 schools in Canada**.
- The greatest number of schools responded from the **Northeast (29 schools)** and the Western regions (**18 schools**).

AFFILIATION

Of the responding schools:

- **44%** are Community/Non-denominational
- **27%** are Orthodox
- **14%** are Conservative
- **11%** are Pluralistic
- **5%** are Reform

Findings

TEMPORARY ISRAELI STUDENTS

- Throughout the US and Canada and across religious denominations, **95%** of schools reported receiving inquiries and or enrollment from temporary Israeli students interested in transferring on a short term basis to a Jewish day school.
- The number of inquiries from temporary Israeli students nearly **doubled** since our last report, from 944 total inquiries reported in October² to **2,020 total inquiries** from October through December.
- **1,037 temporary Israeli students enrolled** in Jewish day schools and yeshivas since the start of war.
- The median number of students enrolled per school is **6**.
- The **Western region** and **Canada** reported the highest number of temporary Israeli students, **187** students and **167** students, respectively.
- Community, Conservative, Pluralistic and Reform schools had **11** temporary Israeli students on average while Orthodox schools had **6** on average.

Additional Supports for Temporary Israeli Students

- Most schools reported that their temporary Israeli students need English Language Learning (ELL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) support.
- **68%** of respondents, representing 65 schools, reported needing staff to support the ELL or ESL needs of the temporary transfer students.
- Of these respondents,
 - 20% reported they already hired new staff
 - 17% reported that they have volunteers supporting these students,
 - **26% reported they need additional staff, but haven't hired anyone**
 - 37% reported already having the staff in place
- Mental health support is often needed for students fleeing their country due to war.
- **46% of schools reported that their current mental health staff will be providing support.**
- 6% have already hired new staff to support these students' mental health, and 7% of schools utilize volunteers to support these students.
- 16% of schools reported they haven't yet hired the needed staff to support the mental health of the temporary Israeli students.
- 16% reported their students don't need this additional support.

² Enrollment Trend Report: Israeli Transfers to Jewish Day Schools and Yeshivas during the War in Israel: Week of October 20–27, 2023

Tuition

- Tuition for temporary Israeli students has differed from the standard tuition practices that normally applied to enrolled students. **Nearly half (49%)** of schools reported not charging tuition to these temporary students. The remainder of schools reported charging a prorated tuition, made decisions on a case by case basis, and free for the first month with steep discounts afterwards.

Outside Funding

- **56%** of schools secured additional funding to support temporary Israeli students, 41% of schools have not secured additional funding, and 4% reported the school does not need additional funding.
- **35%** secured funding from their local federation, 21% secured funding from donors/philanthropists and 3% secured from a foundation, 11% of schools reported “Other” and indicated they are still working on securing funding.

PUBLIC SCHOOL TRANSFER STUDENTS

- **39%** of schools, representing 42 schools, reported inquiries and or enrollment from public school students interested in transferring mid-year.
- This trend was experienced heavily in the Western region (61% of schools), the Metro NY area (47% of schools) and in Canada (45% of schools).
- **41%** of Community, Conservative, Reform, Pluralistic schools and **33%** of Orthodox schools reported inquiries and or enrollment from public school students interested in transferring.
- **42** schools reported receiving **146** inquiries and a total of **24** public school transfer students already enrolled in **13** schools.

Top reasons schools reported that public school transfer families provided for transferring:

- 1 Wanting their child(ren) to be in a Jewish environment (73%)**
- 2 Fear of antisemitism in school or community (68%)**
- 3 Response from their current school around the war in Israel (32%)**

INDEPENDENT SCHOOL TRANSFER STUDENTS

- **20%** of schools (22 schools) reported receiving inquiries and or enrollment from independent school students interested in transferring midyear.
- These schools reported a total of **51** inquiries and **8** students that have enrolled so far in **4** schools.
- This trend was experienced heavily in the Western region (33% of schools), in the Metro NY area (27% of schools) and in the Mid-Atlantic region (25% of schools).
- **21%** of Community, Conservative, Reform and Pluralistic schools received inquiries or enrollment from Independent school transfer students and **17%** of Orthodox schools.

Top reasons schools reported that independent school transfer families provided for transferring:

- 1 Wanting their child(ren) to be in a Jewish environment (80%)**
- 2 Response from their current school around the war in Israel (50%)**
- 3 Fear of antisemitism in school or community (40%)**

LOOKING AHEAD

- Compared to this time last year, 51% of schools reported inquiries are the same for the upcoming 2024-2025 school year. **35%** of schools reported inquiries have increased and 14% reported inquiries are down compared to this time last year.
- The top locations where the most schools reported an increase from last year are the Western region (61% of schools), Metro NY (58% of schools) and Canada (45% of schools).