A Census of Jewish Day Schools in the United States 2003–2004

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary

This census of Jewish day schools in the U.S. covers the 2003–04 school year. It is a follow-up to the comprehensive 1998–99 study of these schools that was sponsored by The AVI CHAI Foundation.

The enrollment statistics in this census include all schools on the membership lists of Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Community day school associations, as well as perhaps an additional 100 schools that were located through an examination of governmental and Jewish community records. For nearly all schools, the data and other requested information were provided by school officials.

NUMBER OF STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS

There were 205,000 students in Jewish elementary and secondary schools—the four-year-old level through grade 12—in the 2003–04 school year. This represents an increase of a bit more than 20,000, or 11% from 1998–99. Without any doubt, a growth rate of 11% in five years is impressive. If this rate is extrapolated over a decade, we can project a nearly 25% increase in day school enrollment in the 10 years between 1998–99 and 2008–09.

The census puts the number of schools at 759, about 80 more than five years previously. The increase reported here results mainly from the establishment of new schools, notably in the Community, Chabad and Special Education sectors.

ENROLLMENT BY AFFILIATION

A bit more than 80% of day school students are in Orthodox schools, representing a slight increase over the 1998–99 distribution and consequently also a slight dip in the non-Orthodox share. In the five-year period, Orthodox schools grew by about 12%, as compared to a growth rate of a bit over 7% in non-Orthodox schools. For the Orthodox, a virtually mandatory all-day, dual curriculum education in a Jewish school, coupled with a high fertility rate, ensures continuing enrollment growth. For the non-Orthodox, though, rising tuition charges combined with the condition of the economy over the past five years and other factors may negatively impact on day school enrollment. As a result, the growth in the non-Orthodox schools should be viewed as significant.

Orthodox enrollment is spread across six categories, they being Centrist Orthodox, Chabad, Chassidic, Immigrant/Outreach, Modern Orthodox and Yeshiva-world. There are three non-Orthodox categories—Solomon Schechter (Conservative), Reform and Community. Special Education institutions are treated separately, although nearly all are under Orthodox sponsorship.

Because a day school education is virtually mandatory among Orthodox Jews, the enrollment growth in their schools is attributable to a high fertility rate. For the non-Orthodox, enrollment growth is predicated on several factors, including the creation and expansion of schools in areas where the non-Orthodox were underserved and also changing attitudes toward day school education in a relatively small number of Conservative, Reform and unaffiliated families.

Within the Orthodox sectors, the enrollment pattern varies markedly. Yeshiva-world and Chassidic schools account for one-half of all U.S. day schoolers, with the Yeshiva-world having the larger share. But the growth rate is higher for Chassidic schools with enrollment rising by 24% in five years, while Yeshiva institutions increased by 14%. Here, too, fertility is the dynamic factor as Chassidic families are larger than Yeshiva-world families.

By day school standards, Modern Orthodox (co-educational) schools are large and while there are fewer such institutions than there were in 1998–99, enrollment in them has grown by 6%, with more than 1,500 more students, a development that counters the claim that Modern Orthodoxy is in a weakened state. At the same time, Centrist Orthodox (single-sex) schools have lost nearly 2,000 students, nearly 10% of their enrollment, a result that is largely attributable to the vulnerability of these institutions as they face competition from newer day schools. Another factor is the tendency of young Orthodox families to move away.

Chabad or Lubavitch schools tend to be small and many of them are new. This sector has grown by a robust 15% over five years, a pattern that is likely to continue because there is a substantial impetus within this movement to create additional schools, even in areas where there are existing Orthodox institutions. Newer Chabad schools invariably have an outreach orientation. Their healthy picture is in contrast to the enrollment loss in Immigrant/Outreach schools, many of which once served Jewish immigrant families from the former Soviet Union. This pool of potential students has diminished.

Among those who prefer non-Orthodox day school education, the recent stress has been on Community or transdenominational schools. There are 20 more such institutions than there were five years previously, and they are responsible for the strong Community enrollment growth of 17%.

There is evidence that Solomon Schechter schools are struggling, including a slight dip in enrollment. As for Reform day schools, a category that has but 2% of all enrollees, here too there has been a slight decline in the number of students.

Non-Orthodox enrollment is concentrated in the preschool and lower grades, with student population declining sharply as the high school grades are reached. However, the enrollment growth at high schools that began a decade ago continues impressively. In 1992 there were 1,500 students in non-Orthodox high schools, a figure that rose by nearly 50% to 2,200 in 1998–99. In the current census, there is a further increase of nearly 100% to 4,100 students. The growth trend is certain to continue because additional non-Orthodox high schools have been established, and some do not have as yet their full complement of grades.

THE SMALL SCHOOL PHENOMENON

For all of the enrollment growth, day school education is in large measure a small school phenomenon, as 200,000+ students attend 760 schools. One-sixth of all day schools have fewer than 50 students and many of these enroll fewer than 25. Nearly 40% of all day schools have fewer than 100 students. This situation arises from two intersecting factors: the geographic distribution of American Jews and our denominational diversity.

The existence of a great number of small schools has educational and financial implications. It is difficult and often impossible to offer a varied curriculum that meets the needs of students of different capabilities and interests when classrooms have but a handful of students. The financial difficulties are self-evident.

In some measure because of their small size, but also as a result of other factors, a significant number of day schools are struggling to stay afloat. While enrollment has increased overall, a significant and perhaps surprising proportion of U.S. day schools have suffered a loss of students. Of the institutions included in both surveys, at least 173 have experienced enrollment declines. Demographic shifts have contributed to this development, as has the establishment of competing schools. Although the new schools may be justified and needed on educational or denominational grounds, competition inevitably results in the weakening of existing schools. At least 30 day schools have closed in the five-year period between the initial census and this current one.

NEW YORK DOMINANCE

New York continues to dominate the day school scene. In New York City alone there are 82,500 day schoolers, a number that is but 7,000 shy of the enrollment of all day schools outside of New York State. Many thousands more are educated in schools in the New York metropolitan area. New Jersey ranks second in day school population. When its numbers are added to New York's, the two states have 139,000 students or 68% of the U.S. total. All other day schools in the country enroll 66,000 students, a statistic that suggests that communities outside of the New York region should be able to focus financial and communal resources on local day schools.

The picture that emerges from this second census is of a measure of change within a pattern of overall stability. Over time, there will be additional changes and challenges, and for this reason alone it is to be hoped that, in due course, there will be a third comprehensive survey of these institutions.

A Second Census of Jewish Day Schools

This census of Jewish day schools in the U.S. covers the 2003–04 school year. It is a follow-up to the comprehensive study of these schools conducted five years previously and sponsored by The AVI CHAI Foundation. Censuses are generally regarded as decennial activities. Because of the expanded American Jewish interest in day schools, as well as the success of the first survey, AVI CHAI's Trustees determined that this new study should be conducted at the half-decade point. The findings presented in this report justify this decision.

As was true of the 1998–99 report, the enrollment statistics that are presented here encompass all Jewish day schools in the U.S. that are included in the membership lists of Orthodox, Conservative, Reform and Community day school associations and also on governmental and Federation lists in all key states that have substantial Jewish populations. Perhaps as many as 100 schools that are not found on any of these lists have been located and enrollment data has been secured for them, as well. Some of these additional schools—and this is especially true of the transdenominational Community day schools—are not affiliated with any association. Others apparently fell through the cracks, either because they are new or very small.

Although this report reflects a 100% response rate for all known day schools, it is likely that some schools have been missed, a conclusion that is fortified by what was learned after the 1998–99 survey, which also covered all known schools. It turned out that a few institutions were missed. Their impact on the overall data is inconsequential.

In addition to presenting a detailed enrollment profile, this follow-up study allows us to study trends, specifically whether the significant pattern of enrollment growth that was evident throughout the 1990s has been sustained in recent years. This question is of heightened importance for non-Orthodox schools, for they operate in communal sectors that historically have been less than enthusiastic about day school education. Over the past decade or more, there has been a substantial philanthropic investment aimed at the creation of additional non-Orthodox schools and enhancing the enrollment of those that were previously established.

For the Orthodox, an all-day, dual curriculum education in a Jewish school is virtually mandatory. This factor plus their high fertility rate ensures continuing and significant enrollment growth among the Orthodox.[1] For the non-Orthodox, rising tuition charges, the condition of the economy and, perhaps most importantly, declining religiosity and shifting attitudes toward day school education may all have a negative impact on day school enrollment data.

If the 2003–04 data are to be compared with the earlier findings, it is necessary for this follow-up to adhere closely to the format of its predecessor. Thus, the core enrollment questions are repeats from five years previously. However, in 1998–99 the non-Orthodox schools were asked to estimate how many Orthodox students they enrolled and Orthodox

[1] There are, in fact, Orthodox parents who opt out of day school education for their children, preferring public or private schools. This is particularly evident at the high school level and among Modern Orthodox families. In addition, a growing number of parents, including many who are quite religious, are choosing home schooling for their children, either because they want to avoid the high tuition charges and/or because they believe that this mode of education is preferable. It is impossible to know how many Jewish children living in what nominally would be regarded as day school homes are being home-schooled. One estimate puts the figure at above 1,000. Whatever the true number, almost certainly it is growing.

Table 1: Enrollment in Jewish Day Schools, 2003–04

Classification	# of Schools	4 Yr. Olds	5 Yr. Olds	1st	2nd	3rd	4th
Centrist Orthodox	78	1,293	1,602	1,479	1,451	1,292	1,307
Chabad	54	642	900	759	779	688	675
Chassidic	101	3,985	5,126	3,956	3,936	3,643	3,420
Community	95	752	1,782	1,731	1,762	1,658	1,603
Immigrant/Outreach	30	263	343	329	288	313	312
Modern Orthodox	87	1,872	2,376	2,383	2,316	2,231	2,287
Reform	19	396	573	559	545	533	460
Solomon Schechter	57	779	1,821	1,898	1,978	1,863	1,850
Special Education	43	-	-	-	-	-	-
Yeshiva	195	3,125	4,958	4,496	4,119	4,101	4,007
Total	**759**	**13,107**	**19,481**	**17,590**	**17,174**	**16,322**	**15,921**
Percentage of Total	**-**	**6.393**	**9.501**	**8.579**	**8.376**	**7.961**	**7.765**

Special education students in non special ed. schools	331
Students in special ed. schools	1,780
Total Special Education Students	**2,111**

schools were asked to estimate their non-Orthodox enrollment. This question was not utilized in the follow-up as it is certain that the essential pattern that existed five years earlier is little changed.

Nor were the schools asked about their occupancy rate, as they were in the first survey. At that time, a large number reported that they were operating at capacity or even above capacity. Shortly before that census, AVI CHAI launched an ambitious program of interest-free loans of up to $1 million per school for day schools that were enlarging or significantly improving their facilities.[2] In the period since, there has been an impressive boom in day school construction. AVI CHAI has made loans totaling about $60 million to 75 day schools. At least another 100 have built new facilities or are planning to do so. This unprecedented capital investment in full-time Jewish schools has obviously resulted in expanded capacity.[3] It's a sure bet that many institutions that previously reported a shortage of seats and space now have sufficient capacity.

While this report does not explore the school capacity issue, enrollment data may provide an opportunity to examine the assumption that improved facilities are a magnet for attracting non-Orthodox families and students that may have been turned off by facilities they regarded as woefully inadequate and far inferior to what is available at competing local public and private schools.

In 2003–04 day school officials were asked whether the economic downturn had adversely affected enrollment.[4] Those that were in existence for at least five years were also asked whether enrollment was greater or lower or about the same as it had been five years earlier. Comparative enrollment statistics for these schools

[2] The innovative loan program established years before by the Gruss Foundation served as an impetus to AVI CHAI to develop its own initiative.

[3] In line with the pattern in other Jewish philanthropic areas—hospitals and senior facilities are good examples—while contributions to day school capital projects have risen substantially, contributions for operating purposes have remained steady and relatively low. Tuition and other mandatory charges account for an ever-expanding share of the typical day school budget, while donations constitute a shrinking share.

[4] A year earlier, during the 2002–03 school year, I surveyed a cross-section of Jewish day schools in the U.S. to determine how the severe economic downturn had affected their enrollment and operations. The news was quite bad, particularly for non-Orthodox day schools. The findings are reported in Marvin Schick, "The Impact of the Economic Downturn on Jewish Day Schools" (The AVI CHAI Foundation, 2003).

5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	Special Ed.	Total
1,328	1,313	1,266	1,341	1,261	1,302	1,245	1,090	126	18,696
675	623	635	569	533	431	399	287	14	8,609
3,313	3,377	3,066	3,210	3,470	2,862	2,739	2,343	-	48,446
1,554	1,405	1,192	1,161	848	805	638	524	1	17,416
327	337	338	343	445	402	392	342	49	4,823
2,280	2,109	2,181	2,138	1,719	1,609	1,637	1,496	86	28,720
462	366	300	268	-	-	-	-	-	4,462
1,877	1,540	1,439	1,372	361	328	348	248	-	17,702
-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,780	1,780
3,921	3,914	3,714	3,703	3,784	3,705	3,606	3,173	55	54,381
15,737	**14,984**	**14,131**	**14,105**	**12,421**	**11,444**	**11,004**	**9,503**	**2,111**	**205,035**
7.675	**7.308**	**6.892**	**6.879**	**6.058**	**5.581**	**5.367**	**4.635**	**1.030**	**-**

are, of course, available without this question being asked. The point of the question was to ascertain how these officials perceive the situation of their school and to attempt to measure whether this perception accords with the reality as indicated by enrollment data.

THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS

There were 205,000 students enrolled in Jewish elementary and secondary schools in the U.S. in the 2003–04 school year, as is indicated in Table 1.[5] This represents an increase of a bit more than 20,000 students and about 11% over the enrollment five years earlier in the 1998–99 school year. In subsequent sections the data will be analyzed to determine how the growth in day school population has been distributed according to school category, grade level, school size and geographic location. It is sufficient to note here that an 11% growth rate in just five years is without any doubt an impressive figure. If we project or extrapolate this growth rate over the course of an entire decade and factor in the crucial element of Orthodox fertility, we can expect a nearly one-quarter increase in Jewish school enrollment in the decade between the 1998–99 and the 2008–09 school years.[6]

The statistics presented in Table 1 range from four-year olds in preschool through the 12th grade. The inclusion of four-year olds is a departure from the ordinary compilation of educational statistics in the U.S. Five-year olds who are nearly universally referred to as kindergartners are invariably considered to be the youngest school cohort. Four-year olds need to be included in Jewish school censuses because they

[5] The figure of 205,000 students includes an indeterminate number who are not Jewish by any definition. This is a recent phenomenon that has been spreading, primarily in non-Orthodox schools. In some instances, the number is small, at times the result of staff members wanting their children to attend the school where they work. More prevalent is the willingness of certain day schools, notably those that are small, to accept non-Jewish applicants, the argument being that the additional enrollment strengthens the institution by enlarging classes and adding to the school's income.

[6] All reports of school enrollment statistics rely on self-reporting by participating schools. That is the case with this census and its predecessor. There is always the prospect, even the certainty, that there are reporting errors arising from misunderstandings or mistakes by those who submit the data for their schools. There is also the prospect that some schools may deliberately misstate their enrollment. I am certain that the statistics presented here are close to the mark.

constitute a key component in the structure and curriculum of many of these schools. Not included in this census are children below the age of four, although a number of day schools have programs for them and count them in their enrollment statistics. Nor does this census include four-year olds and even five-year olds who attend preschool and educational programs in Jewish institutional settings other than day schools, such as synagogues, community centers and private kindergartens.

When we examine the disparity in Table 1 between the number of four-year olds—which should be the larger of the two pre-first grade groups—and five-year olds, it appears that in the aggregate as many as 10,000 pre-first graders in Jewish institutional settings other than day schools are not included in this census' enrollment figures.[7]

Apart from schools that may have fallen through the cracks because they are new or tiny, there likely are other students at full-time Jewish schools who are not included in Table 1. There are Chassidic yeshivas that can fairly be described as ad hoc arrangements, perhaps somewhat akin to the cheders that existed a century ago, where children are being taught in primitive facilities or make-shift classrooms and with no effort being made to license or register the school.

There are yeshiva high schools for boys that have post-high school seminary programs and this is also true of some Orthodox high schools for girls. The thousands of students in these programs are not included in this census, although understandably the institutions that they attend include them in their enrollment figures.

It is difficult to track special education students in Jewish schools, the majority of whom are now in institutions with a special education mission.[8] Other such students are in separate programs that have been established in regular day schools. In line with an expanding societal and governmental commitment to special education, there has been significant growth in this sector. Almost certainly, the census undercounts the number of special education students enrolled in day schools under Jewish sponsorship.[9]

Five years ago, I estimated that as many as 5,000 students may have been missed, in addition to the larger number of pre-first graders who certainly are not included in the statistics presented here. There is no way of knowing what the true figure is. I am comfortable with estimating once more that there may be as many as 5,000 students in grades 1–12 who are not included in this census.

The Number of Schools

There is no way to arrive at an accurate figure for the number of day schools. Much depends on whether branches, separate boys and girls divisions, and high schools connected to elementary schools are considered separate institutions. While it is necessary to know how many students there are, it may be of small consequence to have an accurate count of schools. However, there are several school categories—Community and Solomon Schechter, for example—where numbers do matter.

Most reports on American Jewish education put the number of day schools at above 800. The 1998–99 census indicated 676 schools, a figure arrived at essentially by not counting separate branches and divisions. This census encompasses

[7] There are crucial definitional and operational issues that affect preschool enrollment calculations. These were discussed at length in an appendix to the 1998–99 report, which is available at AVI CHAI's website (www.avichai.org). Briefly, different terms are employed for the educational programs aimed at four-year old and five-year old children. In most places, nursery is the term used for those who are four-years old, while those who are five-years old are in kindergarten. However, there are many Orthodox schools, particularly in the Yeshiva-world and Chassidic sectors, where kindergarten refers to the four-year old cohort and pre-1A or primer is for the children who are one year older.

[8] The Special Education category includes several schools that have been established within the Orthodox community for students at risk. These schools are difficult to categorize and since they are ungraded to one extent or another, they have been included in the Special Education category.

[9] Added to the difficulty of calculating the number of special education students is the presence in Jewish-sponsored special education institutions of students who are not Jewish by any definition. These schools depend enormously on governmental funding and are obligated, at least in some localities, to accept non-Jewish students.

some 750 schools, a substantial increase that results mainly from the establishment of new schools in the Community, Chabad and Special Education categories and, to a lesser extent, from a greater tendency on my part than previously to consider divisions and branches of Chassidic schools as separate institutions.

It indicates the establishment of new schools in communities that may not have been served previously by a non-Orthodox institution. Likewise, the decline in the number of Solomon Schechter schools is a reflection of a development that has significance and may tie in with trends in the Conservative movement. These issues are explored more fully in subsequent sections.

Perhaps a more serious issue in the presentation of preschool statistics is the flexible attitude toward age requirements in nearly all Chassidic schools for boys, as well as in a number of yeshivas. These schools do not adhere to the conventional cut-off dates for enrollment, so that children may be barely five when they enter the first grade and this discrepancy in cut-off dates is maintained in subsequent years. There is the strong feeling that young boys must begin their religious study and learn to read and pray at an age that is below what would be possible if the standard admission dates were followed.

A corollary issue arises at the end of the nominal grade spectrum. Because Chassidic schools and many institutions in the Yeshiva-world want male students to devote themselves full time to religious study no later than at age 17—and often at a younger age—for such students the 12th grade essentially is the first year of beth medrash or seminary study. Governmental and other compilations of educational statistics generally regard such students as 12th graders and that is the approach taken in this survey.

ENROLLMENT BY GRADE LEVEL

While Jewish day school enrollment has been described as pyramidal, with the preschool and early grades forming a fairly broad base and enrollment declining significantly at each successive grade level, as the 1998–99 census demonstrated, the pattern more resembles a slope with enrollment tapering off as grade level rises. In fact, because the several Orthodox sectors dominate the day school picture and attendance in an all-day religious school through high school is nearly mandatory in Orthodox families, an enrollment pattern that resembles a pyramid would be startling. Nonetheless, it is telling that five years ago, the overall 12th grade student population was less than half of the first grade's. As will be seen, the picture has improved significantly.

As discussed, the preschool figures, especially for four-year olds, are affected by the large number of children who are in Jewish institutional settings other than day schools. Interestingly, the five-year old level has the highest enrollment—and by a margin of nearly 2,000—of any of the 14 grade levels, this despite the obvious fact that there are some children in that age group who ultimately will wind up in a day school but who are now going to classes elsewhere. To a lesser extent, there are children, notably at the four-year old level in non-Orthodox schools, who will not continue in a day school after the preschool period.

One explanation for what might be regarded as the erratic preschool enrollment pattern is the high Orthodox fertility rate, as is evident in the grade level distribution for Chassidic children in Table 1. There are nearly 1,200 more students in the five-year old group than in the first grade. Fertility alone cannot, however, account for this large gap between five-year old enrollment and first grade enrollment. In 1998–99 there were more than 18,000 five-year old enrollees, while five years later the total first grade enrollment is below 18,000,

which should not be the case if fertility is such a decisive factor. There must be additional explanations. One of these may be that for the Orthodox, notably in the Chassidic and Yeshiva-world sectors, the different way of calibrating grade level to age may have a direct bearing on the preschool figures. Admittedly, this is difficult to pin down. More assuredly, among the non-Orthodox there are parents who believe that a preschool experience in a Jewish school is sufficient and when that is concluded it is best to send the kids to the local public school or a private school.

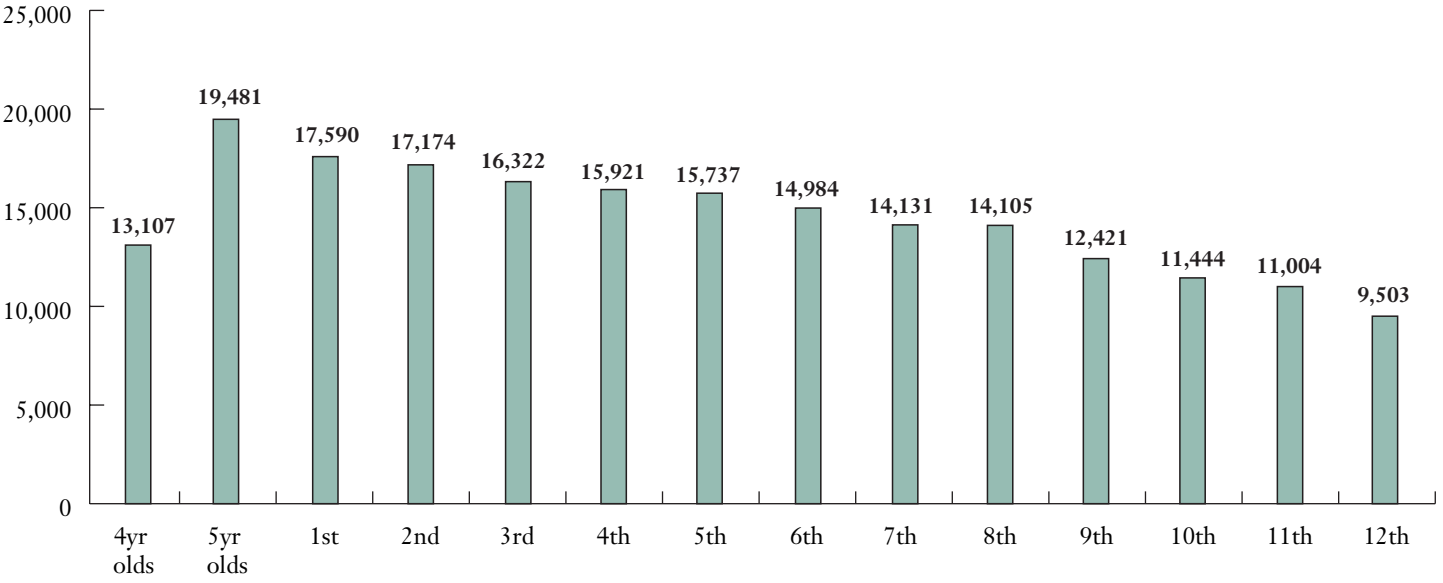
As Display 1 shows, for grades 1–8 there is an enrollment decline with each successive grade level. Overall, these declines are modest, with the most substantial drop of about 850 students occurring between grades 2 and 3 and then a similar drop after grades 5 and 6. Since fertility accounts for a portion of the decline from grade to grade, what clearly emerges is that overwhelmingly parents who opt for a day school education are committed for the long haul, at least through the elementary school grades.

There is a marked change when high school is reached. After the 8th grade, the drop is 1,700 students or a decline of about 12%. There are significant successive declines in enrollment for grades 10, 11 and 12. By the 12th grade, total enrollment is 9,500 as compared with 17,500 in the first grade. Whatever role fertility may play in this, obviously other factors are at work, primarily the switching away from a Jewish school after the conclusion of elementary school. Although their number is declining, there are communities that have day schools at the elementary school level but no Jewish high school for the 8th grade graduates to go to. Alternatively, there may not be a high school that meets the religious and/or educational preferences of certain parents.

Still, with 9,500 students, grade 12 enrollment is nearly 55% of grade 1 enrollment and this represents a meaningful improvement over what was indicated five years ago.

When the enrollment pattern of the three non-Orthodox school categories (Community, Solomon Schechter and

Display 1: School Enrollment by Grade

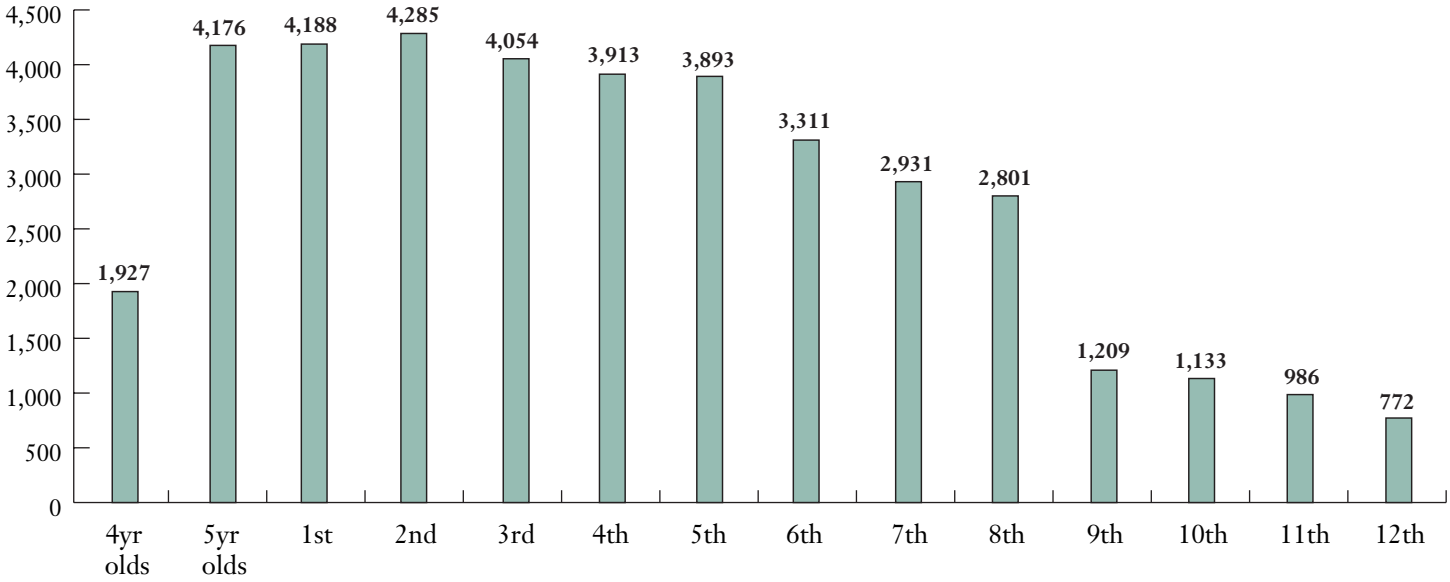


Reform) is presented separately, as in Display 2, the picture that emerges is of a steeper and bifurcated slope that differs considerably from the tapered slope presented in Display 1. Putting aside the four-year old level that is affected by special circumstances, we see a nearly even enrollment pattern from the five-year old level through grade 5. There is what may be regarded as an anomalous upward spike in the second grade. After the 5th grade, there is a meaningful drop in the student population, obviously because that grade serves as an exit point for certain families. The decline accelerates in grades 7 and 8, so that the final elementary school grade has but two-thirds of the student population of grade 1.

The crucial high school grades show far steeper declines, with the 9th grade having fewer than half of the students of the grade below. By the 12th grade, there are but 772 students. Obviously, a full day Jewish high school is not yet the cup of tea for a majority of non-Orthodox day school families.

In view of the large communal investment and interest in promoting Jewish high schools for the non-Orthodox, the enrollment decline in high school may be regarded as disappointing. There is a different and more rosy way to look at the numbers. In 1992, there were but 1,500 students in non-Orthodox high schools. The figure rose by nearly 50% to 2,200 in the 1998–99 school year. Five years later, we find an additional increase of nearly 100% to 4,100 non-Orthodox students in Jewish high schools. Accordingly, while only about 10% of non-Orthodox enrollment is in the high school grades, there has been considerable growth in recent years. Almost certainly, this growth trend will continue because additional non-Orthodox high schools have been established and some that are already in operation do not have as yet their full complement of grades. There is also the prospect that other such high schools will be opened.

Display 2: Non-Orthodox Enrollment by Grade



ENROLLMENT BY AFFILIATION

For all of the relatively small number of Americans who continue to identify themselves as Jewish, American Jewry is a diverse religious and ethnic group. There are separate denominations and shadings and differentiations within each of these. The penchant for diversity is especially pronounced among the Orthodox who although they are but 10% of all American Jews, receive disproportionate attention and are divided into at least four or five distinctive subgroups.

Inescapably, the instinct for diversity is reflected in communal life, as is evident in synagogues as well as day schools. This makes data-gathering and interpretation more exacting tasks because it is not sufficient to designate a school as Orthodox and calculate its enrollment. Orthodox schools must be identified according to the subcategories that best describe them. At an operational level, the tendency toward separateness means that especially away from the New York area, in a number of communities there is competition among Orthodox day schools for the relatively small number of students whose families identify as Orthodox. The inevitable result is that there is an abundance of small schools.

In the discussion and statistical presentations that follow, I have adhered to the categories employed five years ago. Apart from Special Education schools, there are nine day school categories, six of them Orthodox. Since four out of every five day schoolers are in an Orthodox institution, the number of Orthodox categories should not be surprising.

To maintain consistency and to facilitate comparative analysis, schools that were included in the 1998–99 survey are with few exceptions designated as they were then. The exceptions are necessitated by the changed identification of certain schools, as when a school switches its affiliation, and in other instances when the character of a day school has changed. An illustration of the latter situation is when what was a Centrist Orthodox school realigns its program so that there is greater gender separation than previously and this circumstance may make it a Yeshiva-world institution.

Admittedly, it is at times not easy to designate Orthodox schools because there are those with certain characteristics that point in one direction and other characteristics that point in another direction. Likely, if the school designations were made by another person, certain schools would be categorized differently. I doubt that these borderline situations significantly affect the overall profile.

Because designation is a crucial element in the day school picture, it is necessary to briefly identify the distinguishing characteristics of each school category. Here, too, the discussion is in line with the approach taken in the 1998–99 report, although I will note several changes that have occurred in the interim period.

Nearly all Reform day schools are linked to local congregations of that denomination. There are now 19 such schools, down one from the previous census. Three of the Reform schools included five years ago have closed and two additional schools have opened. These day schools are organized in an association known as Pardes, which once seemed ready to emerge as a major agency within the Reform movement. Pardes is not now an effective force and this may reflect a declining interest in day schools among many who identify as Reform and especially among the movement's leadership. It should be noted, though, that Community day schools throughout the country enroll students in families that are affiliated with the Reform movement.

Solomon Schechter or Conservative day schools have long been a mainstay of that movement. Most of these schools operate only at the elementary school level, although two major Conservative high schools have recently opened. Since the last census, the Solomon Schechter movement has lost as many as six schools. At least three have closed and several others now identify themselves as Community day schools.[10]

[10] In the previous census, there were a number of schools that were aligned with both the Solomon Schechter movement and the Community day schools. The practice then was to identify them as Solomon Schechters. In this census several of these schools have been identified as Community day schools, in line with the preference expressed by school officials.

As a generalization, Conservative day schools serve families from the more traditional sector of Conservative Jewry. As the traditional base of Conservatism has eroded, the Solomon Schechter schools have suffered. As will be seen, enrollment is flat and in various communities the Solomon Schechter schools face competition from Community day schools. In addition, where non-Orthodox high schools and even elementary schools are being established to serve non-Orthodox families, the strong tendency is to create a Community and not a Conservative day school.

Because they are a varied lot, it is hard to pin down the Community day schools, although overwhelmingly and increasingly their Judaic curriculum and ambiance are weaker than what is found in Solomon Schechter schools. Many Community day schools are small institutions; at times they are the only day school in the community, while in some localities there may also be a small Orthodox school. A handful of schools that are now identified as Community were once designated as Orthodox, but with changes in the Jewish population, the leadership of these schools decided that it is best to be transdenominational or a Community school. There is a loose association of Community schools known as RavSak, an organization that has grown in its reach and professionalism, although its membership includes only about half of all Community day schools.

Orthodox Schools

For all of the attention paid to non-Orthodox institutions, the day school world continues to be dominated by the Orthodox, with a bit more than 80% of all enrollment.[11] As is well known, despite their relatively small numbers, the Orthodox are a diverse lot and this is reflected in the establishment of institutions, including schools, which though they are all identified as Orthodox, vary considerably in their programs and outlook. The variety of Orthodox day schools is increasingly manifested in separate school associations. While Torah Umesorah—The National Society of Hebrew Day Schools, which was established 60 years ago remains the most important of these groupings, its reach has slipped appreciably in recent years. It has less to do with Modern Orthodox institutions, which now have their own association known as the Association of Modern Orthodox Day Schools and Yeshiva High Schools, which is affiliated with Yeshiva University. With the expanding number of Chabad day schools, there is also greater independence and professionalism in that sector.

Chassidic schools are characterized by a strong emphasis, at times nearly exclusive in yeshivas for boys, on religious studies. Yiddish is usually the language of instruction for Jewish subjects, again especially for boys. There is total gender separation, except in several special education programs. In accordance with the belief that boys should devote themselves to Torah study, the secular portion of the curriculum is apt to be sharply curtailed. Female students receive a fuller secular education.

Without exception, Chassidic schools are sponsored and operated by one of the Chassidic subgroups. These include Satmar, Bobov, Skwere, Vishnitz, Pupa, Belz and a number of smaller groups. These schools tend to serve families that identify with a particular Chassidic subgroup, although some also attract outside families. The Chassidic schools are among the largest Jewish schools in the country. Satmar,

[11] Aliyah is disproportionately Orthodox and it has a disproportionate impact on day school enrollment, as well as on the number of U.S. Orthodox. As has been noted frequently, aliyah from North America has been modest. Emigration to Israel has scarcely affected the ranks of the 4–5 million American Jews who are not Orthodox. However, for the 10% or 500,000 American Jews who are Orthodox, aliyah has resulted in a significant reduction in numbers. Whatever the true figure of those who have left the U.S. for Israel, for day school enrollment purposes, the impact is enlarged substantially by the number of offspring of those who have made aliyah. There are now second, third and even fourth generation former American families living in Israel and the children in these families have reduced both the number of American Orthodox and the number of day school attendees in Orthodox schools.

I would hazard the guess that the cumulative impact of aliyah is the reduction in U.S. day school enrollment in 2003–04 by no less than 20,000 students. The greatest effect is on the Modern and Centrist Orthodox sectors and then to a lesser extent on the Yeshiva-world. Except for one or two Chassidic groups, only a small number of Chassidim have made aliyah. Of course, there has been aliyah among Jews who are not Orthodox and this, too, has affected the enrollment numbers for non-Orthodox day school sectors.

which is increasingly decentralized, is by far the largest, having in its various locations about 20,000 students or nearly 10% of all U.S. day school enrollment.

In their gender separation and religious attitudes and ambience, **Yeshiva-world schools** have much in common with Chassidic institutions. Religious studies constitute by a considerable margin the lion's share of the educational program and this emphasis has become more intense. The student body is exclusively Orthodox, with a strong trend toward homogeneity that is in contrast with the character of these schools a generation ago. At the elementary school level, there is a distinctive focus on the secular curriculum and this is particularly evident at schools for girls. At the high school level there is a tendency toward smaller schools for boys.

Centrist Orthodox schools have a more modern orientation and a greater focus on secular studies. However, they are not co-educational, except at times in the early grades. Boys and girls invariably are taught in the same facility. The Centrist Orthodox promote a positive attitude toward Israel, which is another characteristic distinguishing them from the Yeshiva-world. Hebrew is at times the primary language for religious instruction. The student body is overwhelmingly and, at times, exclusively Orthodox.

Outside of New York, Centrist Orthodox schools were once the key local day school, attracting students across the Orthodox spectrum and even students from non-Orthodox homes. With the establishment of competing institutions, at times in the Yeshiva-world sector and others of the Community variety, Centrist institutions have become vulnerable and quite a few have seen their enrollment decline.

The distinctive feature of **Modern Orthodox** schools is that they are co-educational. Hebrew is often the language for religious instruction, particularly in the New York area. Additionally, there is a modernist approach to contemporary life. As an example, there may be greater receptivity toward feminism. The student population is in the main Orthodox, but there usually is a fair sprinkling of students from non-Orthodox homes, notably the traditional wing of Conservatism. For all of what distinguishes them from other Orthodox schools, these are clearly Orthodox institutions.

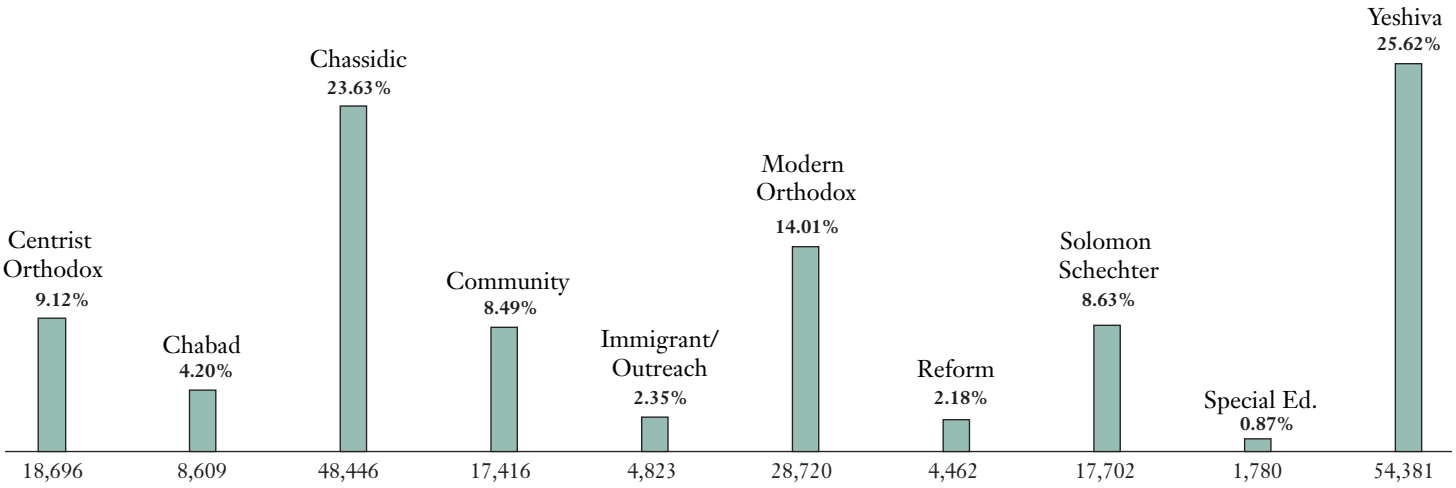
Chabad constitutes a growing day school sector, reflecting a greater commitment to this form of religious education. In an earlier period, Chabad schools were concentrated in older cities in the Northwest and Midwest and they primarily served Chabad families, including those that were newly religious. More recently, Chabad schools have been established in suburban areas where there are no Orthodox day schools and some communities where they compete with the existing Orthodox school. Apart from having an outreach function, Chabad tuition charges are below, often by a considerable amount, what is charged in nearly all other day schools.

Nearly all of the **Immigrant/Outreach** schools are tied to the Yeshiva-world. More often than not there is gender separation. However, secular education is prominent in the curriculum, in recognition of the insistence of parents, many from the former Soviet Union, that they would not send their children to a Jewish school if it did not have a credible academic program. More than any other day schools, Immigrant/Outreach schools experience rapidly shifting fortunes. A number that were open five years ago have closed, some to be replaced by new schools.

ENROLLMENT BY SCHOOL CATEGORY

As Display 3 shows, more than one-quarter of all day school enrollees are in Yeshiva-world schools and nearly another quarter are in Chassidic institutions. Thus, these two categories alone account for a bit more than one-half of U.S. day school enrollment. The proportion would be higher if we include Chabad schools, such as those in Crown Heights in Brooklyn, that focus on educating members of

Display 3: Enrollment by School Category



that Chassidic movement. Also, as suggested five years ago, a case can be made for designating certain Centrist Orthodox schools as being within the Yeshiva-world ambit. However measured, the fact that half of all day schoolers are in charedi or fervently Orthodox institutions is a critical aspect of the day school world.

In the aggregate, Orthodox school enrollment comes to a bit more than 80%, up very slightly from the 1998–99 figure. I suggested five years ago that the Orthodox share had been constant for at least a decade and that it "is unlikely to decline even as there will be continued growth in non-Orthodox enrollment. The increasing interest in day schools among non-Orthodox Jews is at least matched by the population growth in the Yeshiva-world and Chassidic categories."

This 80%–20% distribution is not likely to be altered much over the next five years. It is evidence of stability in both the Orthodox and non-Orthodox sectors, the point being that despite a sustained and substantially higher Orthodox fertility rate, the non-Orthodox have retained their market share. To the extent that the proposition can be tested, the significant growth in student population and the retention of market share provide a strong indication that increased capacity and improved facilities have had a beneficial impact. Were the additional seats not available, enrollment could not have grown as much as it has, if only because there would have been no place for the additional students.

It needs to be noted that even with enrollment growth during the past five years, the total non-Orthodox enrollment is below 40,000, a small proportion of the school-age children in non-Orthodox homes.

The combined enrollment in Centrist and Modern Orthodox schools is a notch below total Chassidic enrollment and even further below the Yeshiva-world statistic. Here, too, as well as for Chabad, Immigrant/Outreach and Special Education schools—all of which contribute modestly to the overall enrollment figures—it will be useful to compare the data of five years ago with the statistics for 2003–04.

GRADE LEVEL DISTRIBUTION AND SCHOOL CATEGORY

Table 2 shows how each sector's enrollment is distributed by grade level, providing a look at the data from another angle. We see once more how little of the non-Orthodox student population is in the high school grades. There are several points to be made about the elementary school distribution.

More than one-fifth of Reform enrollees are pre-first grade and nearly 60% are in the five levels, four-year olds through grade 3. The next five levels have 40% of the students and there are no Reform high schools.

Solomon Schechter schools show a steady pattern from the five-year old cohort through the 5th grade. These six levels have nearly two-thirds of all Conservative day school enrollment. The four high school grades have but about 7% of the Solomon Schechter students or about the same number of students as there are in grade 8. This is a statistic that should be reflected on by the Conservative movement.

The enrollment pattern is generally even for Community day schools, although as should be expected there is steady decline as the grade level rises. Still, one-sixth of all Community school students are in high school, constituting more than 80% of all non-Orthodox high school enrollment. The Community share is likely to continue to grow as the impact of additional high schools in this sector is felt.

When the Orthodox categories are examined, the picture adheres to the tapered downward slope that was described previously. This is most true of Yeshiva-world, Chassidic and Modern Orthodox schools. For each of these sectors, 12th grade enrollment is considerably below that of the first grade. Fertility is clearly a key factor for the two largest groupings.

Interestingly, Centrist Orthodox enrollment is rather evenly distributed. As a critical illustration, there are three-fourths as many 12th graders as there are in the first grade. Unlike the pattern in all other denominational sectors, as grade level rises, there isn't a steady drop in the number of Centrist Orthodox students. This goes against the conventional wisdom that fertility is the dominant factor in Orthodox

Table 2: Grade Level Percentages by Affiliation

	Centrist Orthodox	Chabad	Chassidic	Community	Immigrant/ Outreach	Modern Orthodox	Reform	Solomon Schechter	Yeshiva
4-Year Olds	6.96%	7.47%	8.23%	4.32%	5.51%	6.54%	8.87%	4.40%	5.75%
5-Year Olds	8.63%	10.47%	10.58%	10.23%	7.18%	8.30%	12.84%	10.29%	9.13%
1st	7.96%	8.83%	8.17%	9.94%	6.89%	8.32%	12.53%	10.72%	8.28%
2nd	7.81%	9.06%	8.12%	10.12%	6.03%	8.09%	12.21%	11.17%	7.58%
3rd	6.96%	8.00%	7.52%	9.52%	6.56%	7.79%	11.95%	10.52%	7.55%
4th	7.04%	7.85%	7.06%	9.20%	6.54%	7.99%	10.31%	10.45%	7.38%
5th	7.15%	7.85%	6.84%	8.92%	6.85%	7.96%	10.35%	10.60%	7.22%
6th	7.07%	7.25%	6.97%	8.07%	7.06%	7.37%	8.20%	8.70%	7.20%
7th	6.82%	7.39%	6.33%	6.84%	7.08%	7.62%	6.72%	8.13%	6.84%
8th	7.22%	6.62%	6.63%	6.67%	7.18%	7.47%	6.01%	7.75%	6.82%
9th	6.79%	6.20%	7.16%	4.87%	9.32%	6.00%	0.00%	2.04%	6.97%
10th	7.01%	5.01%	5.91%	4.62%	8.42%	5.62%	0.00%	1.85%	6.82%
11th	6.70%	4.64%	5.65%	3.66%	8.21%	5.72%	0.00%	1.97%	6.64%
12th	5.87%	3.34%	4.84%	3.01%	7.16%	5.22%	0.00%	1.40%	5.84%

enrollment and an explanation is required. While level grade by grade enrollment is an indicator of stability, it may also be a harbinger of impending difficulty since the lower grades should be expected to have significantly more students than the upper grades. Put otherwise, the Centrist Orthodox pattern may mean that there are fewer students in the lower grades than would be expected if this sector is to retain its market share. This is an issue that will be examined when data from the two censuses are compared.

Chabad enrollment conforms to the sloping pattern, which is to be expected because of the fertility factor and also the establishment of additional Chabad day schools that in the main had their genesis as preschool programs.

Finally, Immigrant/Outreach schools depart from the conventional configuration. One-third of the enrollment is in high school, which is higher than for any other category. This reflects the effort in Orthodox circles to establish high schools with an outreach orientation and to recruit students with little or no prior day school education.

CHANGES IN ENROLLMENT

Apart from the hefty 11%/20,000-student increase in enrollment since the previous census, it appears at first glance that the 1998–99 pattern has been maintained. Orthodox enrollment has moved up a notch and the relative market share of the Orthodox and non-Orthodox sectors are in the same rank order. This despite remarkably high Orthodox fertility and several factors, including the economic downturn and yearly tuition increases, that should have been expected to serve as disincentives for some prospective non-Orthodox day school families.

Still, there is more to the story of how the various sectors are faring. Stability in the overall picture may mask meaningful developments in individual sectors. Table 3 provides additional insight into the data by highlighting changes that have occurred between the censuses. What emerges are several critical indicators of intra-Orthodox and intra-non-Orthodox change. While there has been stability, there are areas where the current day school profile varies importantly from what was seen in 1998–99.

Table 3: Comparison of 1998–99 and 2003–04 Data

	1998–99		2003–04		Variance			
Classification	**# of Schools**	**Enrollment**	**# of Schools**	**Enrollment**	**Change in # of Schools**	**Schools % Change**	**Change in Enrollment**	**Enrollment % Change**
Centrist Orthodox	80	20,504	78	18,570	-2	-2.50%	-1,934	-9.43%
Chabad	44	7,438	54	8,595	10	22.73%	1,157	15.56%
Chassidic	81	39,059	101	48,446	20	24.69%	9,387	24.03%
Community	75	14,849	95	17,415	20	26.67%	2,566	17.28%
Immigrant/ Outreach	31	5,136	30	4,774	-1	-3.23%	-362	-7.05%
Modern Orthodox	92	26,961	87	28,634	-5	-5.43%	1,673	6.21%
Reform	20	4,485	19	4,462	-1	-5.00%	-23	-0.51%
Solomon Schechter	63	17,563	57	17,702	-6	-9.52%	139	0.79%
Special Education	18	695	43	2,111	25	138.89%	1,416	156.12%
Yeshiva	172	47,643	195	54,326	23	13.37%	6,683	14.03%
Total	**676**	**184,333**	**759**	**205,035**	**83**	**12.28%**	**20,702**	**11.23%**

By far the major change in the Orthodox sectors is the weakening condition of Centrist Orthodox schools. They have lost nearly 2,000 students or almost 10% of their enrollment, a substantial decline that is perhaps remarkable in the context of an 11% increase in day school student population over the same time period. This sharp decline occurred despite there being about the same number of Centrist Orthodox schools in the second survey (78) as there were five years ago (80). The loss of students cannot be attributed to low fertility because the 1998–99 research indicated that there were 4.26 children per Centrist Orthodox day school family—exactly double zero population growth—and as compared to 3.26 children per Modern Orthodox day school family. As we have seen, Modern Orthodox schools have gained students.

Part of what has happened, certainly away from New York, is that Centrist institutions are facing escalating competition from other day schools, including those in the Chabad and Community sectors. The following statistics show how Centrist schools outside of New York and New Jersey are faring.

	Schools	Students
Prior Census	34	7,543
Current Census	34	6,589

Of the 34 schools outside of these states that were included in both censuses, there has been a decline of nearly 1,000 or half of all of the loss in Centrist enrollment.

Although its growth rate is not much more than half of that for all day schools, the increase in Modern Orthodox enrollment is noteworthy because this sector has five fewer schools than it had in 1998–99. As that year's census demonstrated, the Modern Orthodox fertility rate is significantly below that of all other Orthodox sectors, aliyah to Israel has reduced the Modern Orthodox population base and, perhaps most importantly, there have been constant reports—some from persons with a Modern Orthodox orientation—that this sector is losing adherents and vigor. From the perspective of day school education, this is scarcely the case.

Yeshiva-world enrollment grew by a robust 14%, to be sure above the national average by a comfortable margin but considerably below the nearly 25% growth rate in the other charedi sector, Chassidic schools. Some of this is attributable to fertility. The 1998–99 report showed that Yeshiva-world families have 6.57 children per day school family as compared to 7.92 children per Chassidic family. It appears, however, that other factors are also at work, perhaps aliyah being one of them. Likely, it is only a matter of time—at the most 10 years—until the Chassidic sector has the largest number of day school enrollees.

Numerically, Yeshiva-world schools have grown by 6,700 students. More than half of this growth—or 3,500 students —is attributable to Lakewood, New Jersey, the home of the world's largest yeshiva and certainly the key Yeshiva-world community in the U.S.. In the brief period since the last census, Lakewood day school enrollment has increased by an astounding two-thirds, from 5,399 students to 8,886.

This means that outside of Lakewood, Yeshiva-world enrollment has grown by approximately 8%, considerably below the national average. This is surprising and requires an explanation, not an easy task. Relative to most other day school sectors, Yeshiva-world schools outside of Lakewood have not attempted in recent years to increase their capacity. This is obviously true of high schools for boys. At the same time, these schools are among the toughest in insisting that students toe the line with respect to both educational performance and behavior. There are yeshivas—and more than a few—that routinely refuse admission or expel students, though this means empty seats, because they believe that it is necessary to promote a certain profile and image of their student body and, in fact, even their parent body.

It may be, as suggested by a colleague who has been involved in this project, that the differential in Yeshiva-world enrollment growth between Lakewood and elsewhere arises from the growing practice of younger Yeshiva-world families to remain in or even migrate to Lakewood. Apart from their being comfortable from a religious and social standpoint in Lakewood, their decision where to live is spurred

significantly by the differential in housing costs between Lakewood and other Yeshiva-world communities, notably in Brooklyn.[12]

The two remaining and smallest Orthodox sectors—Chabad and Immigrant/Outreach—are going in opposite directions. Chabad has added ten schools and 1,150 students in these five years, a growth rate of 15%. Since the Lubavitch movement has intensified its efforts to establish day schools, it is certain that in another five years there will be additional schools and another significant increase in enrollment.

The decline in students at Immigrant/Outreach schools should be troublesome to those in the Orthodox community who engage in outreach activity. There has been an unfortunate disconnect between formal religious education as manifested by day schools and outreach activity, the apparent belief being that it is possible to reach out to unaffiliated and marginally religious families without day school education being a core element of this activity. In view of the small number of students in outreach schools and the existence of 30 such institutions, it is obvious that the schools that have this mission are generally small. Experience has shown that too many of them live perilous existences and the mortality rate is high.

It needs to be acknowledged that students who fit the immigrant or outreach profile are not confined to schools with this designation. Nearly all of the newer Chabad schools have a strong outreach purpose. Furthermore, there are outreach families whose children are found in non-Orthodox and some Orthodox schools.

The lion's share of the enrollment gain in non-Orthodox schools has occurred in the Community sector, which experienced strong enrollment growth of 17% or 2,500 students. Again, these transdenominational schools are now the overwhelming favorite of those who push for an expansion of non-Orthodox day school education. One factor contributing to this growth is the inherent attractiveness of schools that are not affiliated with any denomination. Also, Community schools are increasingly the choice of those non-Orthodox families who prefer a curriculum that is not as religiously intense as it is in nearly all Solomon Schechter schools.

Accordingly, it is not surprising that Solomon Schechter's numbers are flat, with enrollment up by less than 1%. As Table 4 shows, the Solomon Schechter market share has

[12] More broadly, housing costs may have important implications for day school enrollment patterns. If young day school families cannot afford housing in suburban and other areas where they prefer to live, the likelihood is that at least some will move to less costly localities. In turn, this may serve as an impetus for others to relocate to those communities. There is early evidence of this happening in the Northeast, away from New York.

Table 4: Comparative Day School Market Share

	As percentage of total:		Change in percentage:			
Classification	**Schools**	**Enrollment**	**Schools**	**Enrollment**	**Schools**	**Enrollment**
Centrist Orthodox	11.834%	11.123%	10.277%	9.057%	-1.558%	-2.066%
Chabad	6.509%	4.035%	7.115%	4.192%	0.606%	0.157%
Chassidic	11.982%	21.189%	13.307%	23.628%	1.325%	2.439%
Community	11.095%	8.056%	12.516%	8.494%	1.422%	0.438%
Immigrant/Outreach	4.586%	2.786%	3.953%	2.328%	-0.633%	-0.458%
Modern Orthodox	13.609%	14.626%	11.462%	13.965%	-2.147%	-0.661%
Reform	2.959%	2.433%	2.503%	2.176%	-0.455%	-0.257%
Solomon Schechter	9.320%	9.528%	7.510%	8.634%	-1.810%	-0.894%
Special Education	2.663%	0.377%	5.665%	1.030%	3.003%	0.653%
Yeshiva	25.444%	25.846%	25.692%	26.496%	0.248%	0.650%
Total	**100.000%**	**100.000%**	**100.000%**	**100.000%**	**-**	**-**

decreased. The next five years will be critical, I believe, in determining whether these schools will be as vital as they once were to both the Conservative movement and to non-Orthodox day school education.

Along with strong enrollment growth, the number of day schools designated as Community has risen in these five years from 75 to 95. It is useful to consider whether the increase in Community students arises primarily from the opening of schools or from enrollment gains at older institutions. The 78 Community day schools that participated in both censuses had 14,918 students in 1998–99. This time around, there were 15,747 students, for a gain of 829 students and an enrollment rise of more than 5%. The bulk of Community enrollment growth is clearly attributable to the establishment of additional schools.[13]

Although claims have been made of greater Reform investment in day schools, the statistics show a somewhat different picture. Enrollment in Reform day schools is flat, indeed down by about 1% over the five years. All told, the Reform market share is just 2%, which is low for the denomination that is said to be American Jewry's largest.[14]

Since Table 4 (page 19) is a restatement of the previously presented data, expectedly it conveys a picture of stability. Except for the Centrist Orthodox and Chassidic schools, no sector has shown a change in its market share in either direction of as much as 1%. For the Centrist Orthodox, there is a significant decline of 2% in its share, which translates into a loss of about 20%, from about 11% five years ago to 9% now. The Chassidic market share has risen 2.5%, a substantial increase.

As was noted earlier, the 2003–04 questionnaire examined how school officials perceive their enrollment trend, whether there were in 2003–04 more or fewer or about the same number of students as there were five years previously. Perception is not reality in the sense that it does not convey reliable statistics. Still, it is useful to know how schools look at their situation. The responses we received are tabulated in Table 5.

[13] The reason why there are 78 schools that participated in both censuses although in 1998–99 there were but 75 Community day schools is that the designation for several schools, one Solomon Schechter and 2 Orthodox, was changed.

[14] In the Jewish Week (New York) of August 20, 2004 David Ellenson and Michael Zeldin, both of whom are leaders in Reform Jewish education, wrote, "Reform day school education indicates that a significant number of liberal Jewish parents now regard our tradition as a precious source that will allow our children to anchor and explore their persona and communal activities as Jews in a meaningful way." While their efforts to promote Reform day school education are praiseworthy, this census raises questions about whether much headway has been made. However, it needs to be noted that Community day schools throughout the country enroll students in families that are affiliated with the Reform movement.

Table 5: How Schools View Their Enrollment Trend

	Perception:			Reality:		
Classification	**Lower**	**About the Same**	**Greater**	**Lower**	**About the Same**	**Greater**
Centrist Orthodox	10	21	24	28	8	19
Chabad	8	9	18	13	5	17
Chassidic	2	8	20	11	4	15
Community	30	5	36	28	9	34
Immigrant/Outreach	7	5	4	13	2	1
Modern Orthodox	27	14	32	29	8	36
Reform	4	1	7	4	1	7
Solomon Schechter	19	11	21	21	10	20
Yeshiva	21	19	74	26	19	69
Total	**128**	**93**	**236**	**173**	**66**	**218**

The most interesting statistic is that while 128 schools thought that their enrollment had declined, the actual number was quite a bit higher, 173. The non-Orthodox schools were closer to the mark, with 53 indicating decline and that was exactly on target. Perhaps because they are more optimistic about day school education, Orthodox schools were considerably more errant. The large gap between reality and perception in the Centrist Orthodox sector may be a sign of a certain disconnect that is linked to the larger difficulties being experienced by these schools.

In a way, the enrollment tables convey another message. While day school enrollment is growing at a strong pace, what we see in the aggregate data does not provide the entire story. There are dozens of schools that have lost enrollment. These are schools that are vital to the Judaic well-being of their communities. Most of them have always faced a difficult road and as their enrollment declines, they lose desperately needed income and face an even greater struggle.

Some schools lose students because of competition from other day schools. At least as likely, enrollment declines because of demographic shifts, as younger potential day school families decide to move away. The upshot is that faced with declining numbers, there are day schools that cease to operate. It is difficult to maintain an accurate count of closed day schools because there are schools that have changed their location and name from what they were five years ago. At least 30 schools have closed in this five-year period, in some instances leaving their communities bereft of any day school.

Five years ago, there was one small day school in Suffolk County in New York, which has a large Jewish population. That school is no more. A small Chabad school has opened for the 2004–05 school year. Or to give another example, there was an Orthodox day school in Lowell, Massachusetts that was established in 1970. In 1998–99 it had 44 students. It closed in 2003. Like textile mills, there are day schools that close down.

SCHOOL SIZE

The U.S. is a very large country and while there are major concentrations of Jews in the New York area and several other parts of the country, American Jewry is a dispersed people. This is a process that began more than 100 years ago and continues unabated as Jews, especially younger families, move to new locations. We will see in the next section that more than two-thirds of all day school students are in New York and New Jersey.

The figure of 200,000+ students is just a drop in the bucket of U.S. educational statistics. Since these students attend more than 750 schools, it is evident that Jewish day schools tend to be small, indeed smaller than not only nearly all public schools, but also schools sponsored by other religious groups. I believe that Jewish day schools are among the smallest elementary and secondary schools in the U.S., a situation that is a function of our geographic dispersal and our sectarian diversity.

The 1998–99 census showed that nearly 40% of day schools enrolled 100 or fewer students. Table 6 (page 22) gives the size profile for 2003–04. It is quickly evident that the pattern has been maintained, constituting another indicator of stability during the past five years. This is as to be expected since the factors that contribute to smallness have not gone away. There are 150 or roughly one-sixth of day schools that enroll no more than 50 students and a good number of these enroll much fewer than 50. Some of this arises from the small size of nearly all Special Education schools, yet without this sector it is apparent that the day school world has an abundance of very small institutions. When the three lowest enrollment categories are combined, there are 290 schools with 100 or fewer students. This works out to 38% of all day schools or a bit below the comparable figure (40%) seen five years previously. To an extent, the 20,000 increase in overall enrollment, as well as the expansion by some schools into additional grades, account for the slight change in the percentage of schools that are small.

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+	Grand Total
Centrist Orthodox	4	8	10	23	19	5	5	3	1	78
Chabad	12	8	15	7	8	2	-	-	2	54
Chassidic	6	5	11	21	21	10	11	3	13	101
Community	8	11	19	30	14	5	7	1	-	95
Immigrant/Outreach	2	4	7	10	5	1	-	1	-	30
Modern Orthodox	2	7	16	23	14	7	6	7	5	87
Reform	1	1	5	4	3	2	2	1	-	19
Solomon Schechter	2	1	7	15	16	5	7	2	2	57
Special Education	19	12	9	2	1	-	-	-	-	43
Yeshiva	13	24	41	39	31	13	16	8	10	195
Grand Total	**69**	**81**	**140**	**174**	**132**	**50**	**54**	**26**	**33**	**759**

When school size is examined in the context of school category, several interesting findings emerge. The Yeshiva-world, which has the largest share of overall enrollment, has 78 schools with 100 or fewer students. This is by far the largest number of small schools for any of the school categories and it gives support to the observation that especially at the high school level, there is a tendency to establish small schools to serve this sector.

It is also not surprising that 35 of the 59 Chabad schools are in the three smallest groupings, a result that arises from the recent focus of this movement on establishing schools in emerging Jewish communities. There are also small Chabad schools that serve the families of emissaries in communities around the country.

Also expected is the concentration of small schools in both the Community and Immigrant/Outreach sectors, a pattern that flows from points that have been underscored in this report.

The tendency toward small schools is least evident in the Chassidic sector. This, too, is not surprising because of the linkage between these institutions and the Chassidic groups that sponsor them. Only 22 of the 101 Chassidic schools are in the three lowest enrollment categories, while 13 have 1,000 or more students. As Chassidic enrollment continues to grow at a rapid pace because of high fertility, doubtlessly there will be additional schools serving this sector and some will start small. It is likely, however, that Chassidic enrollment will overwhelmingly be located in schools that are extremely large by Jewish day school standards.

To an extent, differences about co-education contribute to the small-school phenomenon, especially at the high school level—as examples there are Atlanta, Boston, St. Louis, Dallas and Minneapolis—where Orthodox parents who insist on separate gender schools have opened schools that reflect this inclination. By the same token, because Modern Orthodox institutions are co-educational, schools in this sector are relatively large. Table 6's data supports this observation, as only nine of 87 Modern Orthodox schools have 50 or fewer students and another 16 have enrollments between 51–100.

As Table 7 shows, 17,500 of the 28,720 Modern Orthodox day schoolers are in institutions with 500+ students, amounting to 61% of all Modern Orthodox enrollment. The comparable figure for the Centrist Orthodox is 38%—quite a difference—and this may be regarded as another factor contributing to the hardships faced by these day schools. For Solomon Schechters, a tad under half of the students are in 500+ student schools. At present, there isn't a Community school with as much as 1,000 students. There was one five years ago but it has lost more than 300 students. The 500+ student Community schools enroll 5,366 or 31% of those in Community schools, pointing up once more the concentration in this sector of smaller schools.

By U.S. educational standards, schools that enroll 350 students are assuredly on the small side. Of the 759 Jewish day schools, only 163 or about 20% have more than 350 students. There are good reasons for this situation. Whatever they are, small size exacts a substantial cost in terms of financial stability. Beyond this, there is an impact on curriculum in that too many Jewish schools do not have the enrollment and certainly not the financial means to develop broad curriculum options that meet the needs of students of different interests and capabilities. This is especially true of families that may be interested in non-Orthodox day schools. Expressed otherwise, smallness is a dynamic factor that feeds on itself, serving as a disincentive to too many families and therefore ensuring that there will be little future growth. Yet, small schools are important to the communities and families they serve. They therefore may merit special attention from the philanthropic sector. It is true that their contribution to enrollment statistics is greatly limited. The 69 schools that have 1–25 students have a combined total enrollment of scarcely more than 1,000 day schoolers or 0.5% of the U.S. total. The 150 schools or 20% of the day schools that have 1–50 students have a total enrollment of nearly 4,200 students or about 2% of the U.S. total. The 290 schools with 100 or fewer students enroll 14,500 or but 7% of the total.

At the other end of the size spectrum, the 33 schools with 1,000+ students—4% of the day schools—have 54,500 students or more than one-quarter of the total. The three largest size categories with 500 or more students have nearly 110,000 enrollees or more than half of the total, although they constitute just 15% of all day schools.

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+	Grand Total
Centrist Orthodox	61	311	743	3,520	4,985	1,983	3,046	2,489	1,558	18,696
Chabad	185	324	1,157	968	2,301	826	-	-	2,848	8,609
Chassidic	100	218	838	3,079	5,778	4,032	6,609	2,531	25,261	48,446
Community	119	436	1,364	4,207	3,921	2,003	4,376	990	-	17,416
Immigrant/Outreach	23	150	529	1,596	1,393	352	-	780	-	4,823
Modern Orthodox	41	251	1,141	3,140	3,822	2,763	3,619	6,037	7,906	28,720
Reform	16	35	358	630	840	718	1,048	817	-	4,462
Solomon Schechter	41	26	562	2,287	4,096	1,972	4,379	1,724	2,615	17,702
Special Education	263	440	591	234	252	-	-	-	-	1,780
Yeshiva	217	915	3,121	5,592	8,037	5,367	10,048	6,743	14,341	54,381
Grand Total	**1,066**	**3,106**	**10,404**	**25,253**	**35,425**	**20,016**	**33,125**	**22,111**	**54,529**	**205,035**

GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

The dispersal of Jews throughout the U.S. is only partly reflected in the geographic distribution of day schools. Because day school enrollment is overwhelmingly Orthodox and Orthodox Jews are concentrated in the New York area and to a far lesser extent in several other communities, inevitably the location of day schools mirrors where the Orthodox live. Still, it is intriguing and probably not happenstance that in those places outside of New York City where the Orthodox have established day schools, there is a strong prospect that the non-Orthodox will follow suit. The possible or likely explanation is that in those communities where day schools are on the Jewish agenda, the non-Orthodox are more aware of day school education and are motivated to establish schools that meet their vision.

Table 8 shows that there are day schools in 40 states and the District of Columbia, an increase of two states over 1998–99. eight states have fewer than 100 day schoolers and a couple of states have barely a handful. Half of the 40 states have fewer than 500 enrollees, while seven have 5,000 or more.

Seventeen states and the District of Columbia have lost students since 1998–99, at times only a small number. Still, even minor losses hurt schools that are struggling financially. Illinois and Pennsylvania have had declines. It remains to be seen whether this signals a trend in those two states. On the other side of the ledger, apart from New York and New Jersey, which have the greatest number of students and have experienced significant gains in these five years, there have also been meaningful growth in student populations in Maryland and Georgia where the Baltimore and Atlanta areas respectively have been magnets drawing younger, day school families. California and Florida, next in line after New York and New Jersey in the number of students, have also had enrollment gains.

The New York Dominance

New York City alone has 82,500 day schoolers or about 40% of the total U.S. enrollment. This is one more indicator of stability because in 1998–99 New York's share was also 40%. The number of day schoolers in New York City is but 7,000 shy of the enrollment of all the day schools outside of New York State. In fact, as large as the city's day school population is, some in the Orthodox community have claimed a much higher figure, perhaps as high as 100,000. Here, preschool

Table 8: Day School Enrollment by State

	Enrollment:				# of Schools:			
State	Prior	Current	Change	% Change	Prior	Current	Change	% Change
AL	152	104	-48	-31.58%	1	1	0	0.00%
AR	-	7	7	-	-	1	1	-
AZ	589	769	180	30.56%	5	7	2	40.00%
CA	14,696	15,533	837	5.70%	62	65	3	4.84%
CO	782	832	50	6.39%	7	6	-1	-14.29%
CT	1,673	1,666	-7	-0.42%	11	14	3	27.27%
DC	180	158	-22	-12.22%	1	1	0	0.00%
DE	94	110	16	17.02%	1	1	0	0.00%
FL	8,129	8,956	827	10.17%	32	39	7	21.88%
GA	2,014	2,399	385	19.12%	8	10	2	25.00%
HI	19	7	-12	-63.16%	2	1	-1	-50.00%

Table 8: Day School Enrollment by State (continued)

State	Enrollment: Prior	Current	Change	% Change	# of Schools: Prior	Current	Change	% Change
IA	52	141	89	171.15%	1	2	1	100.00%
IL	5,127	5,021	-106	-2.07%	23	20	-3	-13.04%
IN	416	342	-74	-17.79%	3	2	-1	-33.33%
KS	338	298	-40	-11.83%	1	1	0	0.00%
KY	148	86	-62	-41.89%	2	2	0	0.00%
LA	75	124	49	65.33%	2	2	0	0.00%
MA	3,189	3,523	334	10.47%	23	22	-1	-4.35%
MD	6,926	8,207	1,281	18.50%	18	22	4	22.22%
ME	36	34	-2	-5.56%	1	1	0	0.00%
MI	2,419	2,648	229	9.47%	10	10	0	0.00%
MN	822	514	-308	-37.47%	7	5	-2	-28.57%
MO	734	751	17	2.32%	5	6	1	20.00%
NC	354	479	125	35.31%	4	5	1	25.00%
NE	22	21	-1	-4.55%	1	1	0	0.00%
NJ	17,954	22,488	4,534	25.25%	64	89	25	39.06%
NM	60	62	2	3.33%	1	1	0	0.00%
NV	419	271	-148	-35.32%	3	2	-1	-33.33%
NY	103,909	116,661	12,752	12.27%	306	338	32	10.46%
OH	3,355	3,276	-79	-2.35%	15	17	2	13.33%
OK	79	44	-35	-44.30%	2	1	-1	-50.00%
OR	249	304	55	22.09%	2	2	0	0.00%
PA	4,016	3,636	-380	-9.46%	18	20	2	11.11%
RI	386	308	-78	-20.21%	2	2	0	0.00%
SC	248	265	17	6.85%	3	3	0	0.00%
TN	464	522	58	12.50%	3	3	0	0.00%
TX	2,260	2,434	174	7.70%	14	16	2	14.29%
VA	565	573	8	1.42%	3	6	3	100.00%
VT	-	13	13	-	-	1	1	
WA	635	723	88	13.86%	4	5	1	25.00%
WI	748	725	-23	-3.07%	5	6	1	20.00%
Total	**184,333**	**205,035**	**20,702**	**11.23%**	**676**	**759**	**83**	**12.28%**

Table 9: New York City Enrollment by School Classification

Classification	# of Schools	Students	Total
Centrist Orthodox	21	4,763	5.77%
Chabad	11	4,225	5.12%
Chassidic	70	32,909	39.86%
Community	4	949	1.15%
Immigrant/Outreach	24	3,993	4.84%
Modern Orthodox	11	8,052	9.75%
Reform	1	506	0.61%
Solomon Schechter	4	812	0.98%
Special Education	19	668	0.81%
Yeshiva	70	25,686	31.11%
Total	**235**	**82,563**	

undercounting and the possibility of missing some Chassidic schools—two factors discussed earlier—may come into play.

Table 9 shows that 97% of New York City's day school enrollment is in Orthodox institutions, matching the 1998–99 statistic. It is not easy to calculate day school enrollment for what might be referred to as the New York metropolitan area because for Jewish communal purposes that area is not quite contiguous with what is commonly regarded as the metropolitan region. One question is whether to include Rockland County, which encompasses Monsey and Spring Valley with their large concentration of Chassidic and Yeshiva-world Orthodox. A bit further away in New York is the major Satmar community in Monroe and still further away there is Lakewood, New Jersey. All of these communities are tied communally and emotionally to New York City. If we adopt a broad definition for day school purposes of the New York metropolitan area, day school enrollment is about 130,000.

New Jersey ranks second to New York in day school population. When its numbers are added to New York's, the two states have 139,000 students or 68% of the U.S. total. This stunning statistic suggests how difficult it is to develop philanthropic programs that assist so large a number of students and schools in such a concentrated area. There is another way of looking at this picture. If we exclude New York and New Jersey, there are 66,000 students in all of the Jewish day schools in the country. This is a number that the philanthropic sector should be able to cope with, of course provided that there is an inclination to do so.

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