

THE JEWISH CHRONICLE

Maintaining Day School Enrollment in Tough Times – Some Good News

by dropsofhoney -
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As the 2010-2011 school year winds down, some [recently-released data](#) about Jewish day school enrollment is interesting to examine. The data was compiled by Dr. Marvin Schick who has done several national censuses of day schools in the last decade for the Avi Chai Foundation. Dr. Schick gathers his data from 120 schools across the country with 250 or more students in each, and is limited for this census to non-Orthodox, Centrist and Modern Orthodox affiliated schools.

The data shows that nationally there has been an enrollment decrease less than 1% for this school year despite the economy in most sectors of Jewish day schools. The exception is the Conservative-affiliated Schechter movement which has seen a national decrease of almost 5%. Since overall the data shows an essentially flat enrollment between last year and this year, that is taken as a sign that the day schools are finding a way to keep families enrolled even in tough economic times.

In Pittsburgh, we are seeing good news in this direction with all three of our day schools reporting no decreases in enrollment and in some cases an increase. They are also reporting marked increases in requests for aid though. Our community is fortunate to have two resources many other communities do not that are invaluable here. First, we have a local federation committed to our day schools and helping them to meet the financial need rather than expecting them to sink or swim in this economy. Second, Pennsylvania's tax credit program is a real boost for private education and our day schools are benefitting from it as well. There are legitimate church/state debates about whether tax credits should be used for parochial education, but here they are already in place and making a real difference to our day schools.

Tis the (beginning of the) season for the annual community campaign, and like many of us I am going to be sending in my pledge soon. In an era of struggling and sacrifice to maintain communal priorities, we are fortunate here in Pittsburgh to see some really tangible benefit to our communal fundraising in our day school enrollment numbers. I hope others will join me in remembering that as we make our pledges for next year.

2010-11 Day School Enrollment Data Released

<http://ejewishphilanthropy.com/2010-11-day-school-enrollment-data-released/?pfstyle=wp> December 14, 2010

The question raised frequently in the press and around day school tables across the country has been how the recent and lingering economic crisis is affecting day school enrollments, with widespread predictions of significant enrollment decline, including in the Modern Orthodox sector.

Just-released research by Dr. Marvin Schick provides 2010-11 enrollment data for all schools outside the yeshiva world and Chassidic sectors:

While the above data provides but a snapshot of the day school

GROUP	2009 ENROLLMENT	2010 ENROLLMENT	% CHANGE
Centrist Orthodox	18,453	18,589	0.70%
Community	19,050	18,919	-0.70%
Modern Orthodox	30,378	30,252	-0.40%
Reform	4,298	4,266	-0.70%
Solomon Schechter	13,445	12,806	-4.80%
TOTALS	85,624	84,832	-0.90%

enrollment situation, it indicates day school enrollment, aside from that of the Solomon Schechter schools, has remained fairly stable, despite the continued stresses of the economy.

The data shows an improvement from Dr. Schick's 2009 data. In December of 2009, Dr. Schick collected enrollment data for 2009-10 from 120 schools with enrollment greater than 250 students from the non-Orthodox and Modern and Centrist Orthodox sectors. That data indicated across the board, total enrollment dropped an average of 3%, a rate lower than many had feared last year given the many media stories about transfers from day schools. This year's essentially flat enrollment suggests that, on the whole, day schools have thus far weathered the economic crisis, notwithstanding the strains on both parents and scholarship budgets.