



2020-2021 Census of Milwaukee Area Jewish School Enrollment: An Overview

This year's census was conducted by the Coalition for Jewish Learning (CJL), the Education Department of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation. The census is based on responses from local schools.

It should be noted that this year's census was dramatically impacted by the COVID 19 pandemic. It is expected that the numbers this year are atypical and that numbers will go back up next year.

CJL's annual census documents that the number of children enrolled in Milwaukee Area Jewish schools dropped from 1644 to 1377. This drop (016%) reflects a (pandemic related drop) in the number of preschool and supplementary school students. There are also students who returned to school after the census was done in fall, so these numbers reflect the beginning of the school year, not the end.

Analysis of these figures is limited by the absence of a full census of school age Jewish children. A decline in attendance could be attributed to several factors, but this year we believe most of the change is due to the pandemic.

Preschool Enrollment

There was a 43% decrease (213 students) at the preschool level, from 456 last year to 279 this year. Again, if we had collected numbers again in Spring, this drop would have been less dramatic.

Day School Population

There was 4% increase (26 students) in day school enrollment, from 666 last year to 698 this year. Just like last year, there is considerable variance on a school-by-school basis, but overall the schools grew. All the schools grew, stayed the same, or decreased by a few students. This is the highest day school enrollment since 2008-2009. It is worth noting that some schools grew during the pandemic because parents didn't want their children learning virtually. All our local day schools operated in person (with a virtual option) during the pandemic.

Religious School Enrollment

There was a 24% decrease (119 students) in religious school enrollment from 489 to 370. This is largest ever decrease. School directors hope that after the pandemic, their numbers will grow significantly.

Overall Education and Engagement

Milwaukee can be proud of our education and engagement programs. There are hundreds of teens involved in youth groups. There are hundreds of young families engaged through PJ library.

Questions that Remain to be Answered:

- “How many Jewish children in Milwaukee are not getting any Jewish education?”
- “Are there families looking for more / different Jewish educational opportunities?”
- “How can we engage more children in Jewish education?”
- “How do we help students return to school after the pandemic?”

I wish to thank the schools for their cooperation which allows us to provide this important information to the community.