

Jewish School Security Expenditures Report

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The Cost of Securing Jewish Schools,
Before and After October 7
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Jewish School Security Expenditures 2024

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Teach Coalition Office of Jewish Education Policy and Research

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After Hamas' October 7 attack on Israel, Teach Coalition surveyed its member schools about their security spending. Based on responses from 75 schools enrolling 10% of Jewish students in New York, New Jersey, and Florida, we conclude that:

- ❖ **Before Oct. 7 -**
 - The average respondent spent **\$215,560 annually (\$598/pupil)** on security.
 - Security spending comprised an average **1.66% of respondents' annual budget**.
- ❖ **After Oct. 7 -**
 - The average respondent will spend **\$100,383 more annually (\$256/pupil)** on security.
 - This represents a **47% increase in average security spending** among respondents.
 - Security now comprises an average of **2.35% of respondents' annual budget**.
- ❖ **Security guards comprise 66% of security spending** by the average respondent.
- ❖ **Larger schools generally spend more on security, but smaller schools spend more per pupil.**
- ❖ **Two fifths of students pay a security fee averaging \$367 per pupil.**

With the average Jewish school now spending **\$315,943 annually - 2.35% of their budget** - to meet the basic need for security, these findings underscore the **pressing need for increased government security funding**.

1. Introduction

Providing a secure learning environment is a core responsibility for all schools. Jewish nonpublic schools in particular face an array of threats from anti-Israel and anti-Semitic actors and feel this responsibility most acutely.

The challenge is only growing. In 2021, the FBI reported 8,327 hate crimes in the US - 56% higher than in 2014. Attacks targeting Jews were the most common type of religiously-motivated hate crime for the 25th year in a row with 817 reported incidents in 2021 - 34% more than in the prior year.

The risks facing Jewish schools grew further in the wake of the October 7, 2023 attacks on Israel and ensuing global controversy over Israeli self-defense actions. On October 31, FBI director Christopher Wray testified to Congress that Jews - who comprise 2.4% of the U.S. population - are now the target of 63% of religiously motivated hates crimes. According to the Anti-Defamation League, this year anti-Semitic incidents reached their highest level ever recorded (3,700 reported cases) and since October 7 the rate of incidents has increased by 400%.

For over a decade, Teach Coalition, the state-level government advocacy arm of the Orthodox Union, has advocated successfully for state and local funding for Jewish schools. Public safety is the most fundamental responsibility of governments, so it is only appropriate that they help cover the high cost of securing our schools.

Anecdotally, we know that Jewish schools spend heavily on security. But how much?

This study seeks to quantify both historical security spending by Jewish schools and the impact of the October 7 attacks on school security costs.

2. Methodology

Between October 25 and December 18, Teach Coalition issued two surveys to 150 member schools in New York, New Jersey, and Florida to assess the burden of security spending on these schools.

The first survey, administered to Florida schools, asked:

- ❖ Their current security measures and spending level;
- ❖ Their planned security spending increase after the October 7 attack on Israel; and
- ❖ Which security need will go unfunded without additional government support.

The second survey – administered to New York and New Jersey schools – asked:

- ❖ Their current security spending levels, broken down by guards, equipment, and capital expenses;
- ❖ Their current school budget;
- ❖ Their planned security spending increase after the October 7 attack on Israel; and
- ❖ Their current security fees levied on families, and any planned increases to security fees in the wake of October 7.

Surveys were administered via email and responses collected over a four-week period.

Student enrollment for each school was manually input by Teach Coalition staff, taken from 2022-2023 enrollment reports provided by state education agencies. Analysis of survey responses was completed using Microsoft Excel.

3. Responses

75 schools responded to the surveys. The breakdown of responses by region and school size is as follows:

- Breakdown by State:
 - **Florida** – 40 respondents
 - **New Jersey** – 14 respondents
 - **New York** – 21 respondents
- Breakdown by School Size:
 - **Fewer than 100 Students** – 23 respondents
 - **100-300 Students** – 23 respondents
 - **300-500 Students** – 8 respondents
 - **500-1,000 Students** – 16 respondents
 - **Over 1,000 Students** – 5 respondents

Altogether, respondent schools enrolled over 27,015 students in the 2022-2023 school year – 10.4% of the 258,803 students enrolled in Jewish schools in New York, New Jersey, and Florida.

4. Findings

4.1 Security Expenses, Pre-Oct. 7.

The average Jewish school reported annual Pre-Oct. 7 security expenditures of \$215,558. This number varied little by state, with a low of \$201,308 per school in New Jersey and a high of \$220,295 per school in New York.

Table 1 – Annual Security Spending by State, Pre-Oct. 7

	Florida	New Jersey	New York	All States
Respondents	40	13	22	75
22-23 Enrollment	11,896	6,626	8,493	27,015
Average Per School Security Spending	\$217,584	\$201,308	\$220,295	\$215,558
Average Per Pupil Security Spending	\$732	\$395	\$571	\$598

As we see in Table 1, the security spending averaged \$598 per pupil – however, this number varied considerably by state. Per pupil spending in Florida was nearly twice the per pupil spending in New Jersey.

This variance is likely due to the relatively inelastic nature of security spending. Each building has certain flat expenses (e.g. a guard, an access control system, forced entry-resistant doors and windows). When these are spread among fewer students, the result is a higher per pupil expenditure, and the opposite is true.

Thus, respondents in New Jersey – who had the highest average enrollment of 510 students – also reported the lowest per pupil security expenditure of \$394. By contrast, respondents in Florida – who had the lowest average enrollment of 297 students – reported the highest per pupil security expenditure of \$732.

The inverse relationship between enrollment and per pupil security expenditures is borne out when we consider the results by school size. Table 2 shows that the smallest schools – those with fewer than 100 students, had the lowest per-school security expenditure (\$80,761) of any category, but the highest per-pupil security expenditure (\$1,706). As school size increases, so do average per-school security expenditures rise while per pupil security expenditures fall.

Table 2 – Annual Security Spending by School Size, Pre-Oct. 7

	<100 Students	100-300 Students	300-500 Students	500-1,000 Students	>1,000 Students	All Schools
Respondents	23	23	8	16	5	75
22-23 Enrollment	1,089	3,807	3,257	11,437	7,425	27,015
Avg. Per School Security Spending	\$80,761	\$170,674	\$233,250	\$255,125	\$887,170	\$215,558
Avg. Per Pupil Security Spending	\$1,706	\$1,031	\$573	\$357	\$597	\$598

Notably, schools with 500-1,000 students had the lowest per pupil expenditures – even lower than schools with over 1,000 students. This might be because once a school grows large enough, it needs a full team of guards to secure its entire campus. Indeed, the largest schools generally have multiple buildings (or even multiple campuses) to secure.¹

4.2 Breakdown of Security Expenses.

Our survey of New York and New Jersey schools asked how much they spend on different categories of security costs. These varied widely from school to school, but in general the largest spending category was security guards, comprising 66% of overall security spending.

Next came capital improvements (e.g. walls, doors, windows) at 18% of all security spending, followed by security equipment (e.g. radios, surveillance cameras) at 13% of overall spending.

1 Whereas 19% of schools with 500-1,000 students report more than one campus in their enrollment reports to their state education agency, 40% of schools with over 1,000 students did so.

4.3 Security Fees for Families, Pre-Oct. 7.

Our survey of New York and New Jersey schools asked whether – pre-Oct. 7 – the school charged a security fee in addition to regular tuition.

Of the 35 respondents, fifteen (about 42%) charge a security fee. Among those charging a fee, the average security fee – weighting for student enrollment – was \$367 per student.²

This is substantially below the \$598 average per pupil security expenditures in Jewish schools, and most schools reported no security fee all. Since the funding for security must come from somewhere, the difference between security fee revenues and security-related expenses is necessarily covered by donations or (more likely) tuition charges.

Table 3 – Security Fees by School Size, Pre-Oct. 7

	<100 Students	100-300 Students	300-500 Students	500-1,000 Students	>1,000 Students	All Schools
Respondents	7	12	5	9	2	35
Proportion Charging a Security Fee	14%	41%	60%	56%	50%	42%
Average Security Fee Per Student ³	\$600	\$431	\$342	\$255	\$800	\$367

The smallest schools were the least likely to charge a security fee. Only 14% of the schools with under 100 students charged a security fee, while 40-60% of the schools of 100 or more students charged a security fee. Fees were generally higher in smaller schools – consistent with the higher per pupil security expenditures for smaller schools found in Table 2.⁴

4.4 Increased Security Expenses Post-Oct. 7.

All schools in New York, New Jersey, and Florida were asked how much they plan to increase annual security spending in the wake of the Oct. 7 attacks and rising anti-Semitism.

According to the responses from 68 schools who answered this question, the average school planned to increase their annual security spending by \$100,383 – about 47% of average Pre-Oct. 7 security expenditures.

- 2 Three quarters of respondents charge the fee on a per pupil basis, while one quarter charges on a per family basis. For comparability, our calculations assume that each family has two children enrolled.
- 3 Among schools charging a security fee. Weighted by school enrollment. Some schools charge security fees per family while others charge per student. For comparability, this table assumes each family has two children enrolled in a school.
- 4 One of the two schools with over 1,000 students had a security fee of \$800 per student – the highest of any school – but inferences cannot be drawn from a single school.

Table 4 –Security Spending Increases by State, Post-Oct. 7

	Florida	New Jersey	New York	All Schools ⁵
Respondents	33	13	22	68
22-23 Enrollment	11,536	6,626	8,493	26,655
Average Per School Increased Spending	\$115,383	\$45,646	\$110,227	\$100,383
Average Per Pupil Increased Spending	\$330	\$90	\$286	\$256

Spending increases also varied considerably by state and school size. Consistent with our earlier findings regarding pre-Oct. 7, the highest total increase per school was found in schools with over 1,000 pupils and the highest increase per pupil was found in schools with under 100 pupils.

Table 5 –Security Increases Spending by School Size, Pre-Oct. 7

	<100 Students	100-300 Students	300-500 Students	500-1,000 Students	>1,000 Students	All Schools ⁶
Respondents	17	22	8	16	5	68
22-23 Enrollment	843	3,693	3,257	11,437	7,425	26,655
Avg. Per School Security Spending	\$98,832	\$98,450	\$38,125	\$62,188	\$336,000	\$100,383
Avg. Per Pupil Security Spending	\$1,993	\$586	\$94	\$87	\$226	\$256

4.5 Increased Security Fees Post-Oct. 7.

Our survey of New York and New Jersey schools asked schools whether they plan to increase their security fees – or institute one for the first time – moving forward.

11% of respondents said they will be either increasing their existing security fee or imposing one for the first time.⁷ A further 6% said they are considering increasing security fees.

One school responded that they are not increasing security fees – but they are increasing tuition rates to pay for enhanced security measures. This is likely true for all schools to some extent because schools must pay for their planned security spending increases somehow.

If these increased costs are not covered by donations or external grants, then they will inevitably be funded by higher security or general tuition fees.

4.6 Impact of Security Spending on School Budgets.

Our survey of New York and New Jersey schools asked for their current annual budget for all spending. The purpose was to gauge what percentage of Jewish school spending is allocated to security costs.

Altogether, the 33 respondents to this question reported a combined annual budget of \$358 million. Given combined Pre-Oct. 7 security spending of \$5.9 million, the average respondent spent 1.66% of their annual budget on security expenses. After Oct. 7, respondents reported a combined \$2.49 million increase in security spending – or an additional 0.69% of their annual budget.

Altogether, Post-Oct. 7 spending among respondents has reached \$8.4 million annually, or 2.35% of the average respondent’s budget.

5 Seven schools did not provide their Post-Oct. 7 security spending increase and were excluded from this table.
 6 Seven schools did not provide their Post-Oct. 7 security spending increase and were excluded from this table.
 7 Respondents generally did not indicate in their responses how much they plan to increase security fees.

Table 6 – Security Spending and School Budgets

		New York and New Jersey Surveyed Schools⁸
Respondents		33
Combined Annual Budget		\$358,360,000
Pre-Oct. 7 Spending Baseline	Annual Security Spending	\$5,935,500
	Security Spending, % of Budget	1.66%
Post-Oct. 7 Planned Spending Increase	Security Spending Increase	+\$2,488,400
	Security Spending Increase, % of Budget	+0.69%
Post-Oct. 7 Total Security Spending	Total Security Spending	\$8,423,900
	Total Security Spending, % of Budget	2.35%

5. Limitations

This study relies on survey data from Teach Coalition member schools in New York, New Jersey, and Florida who responded to our surveys. Security spending patterns among Teach Coalition member schools may differ from those of the broader Jewish school population to an unknown extent.

Moreover, responses were received from 75 of the 150 Teach Coalition member schools in New York, New Jersey, and Florida. Since responding to the survey was optional, there may be an unknown amount of selection bias in the results.

Finally, survey responses were self-reported and could not be independently verified.

As a result of these limitations, care should be taken when extrapolating from these survey responses to the state of security spending for Jewish schools as a whole. However, since that this is the largest survey of Jewish school security spending to date, this survey provides the best currently available data on security spending in Jewish schools.

6. Conclusion.

Providing a safe learning environment is a costly challenge for Jewish day schools across the country. This has only become more challenging after the tragic attacks on October 7 and the ensuing nationwide increase in anti-Semitic incidents. Based on the responses from our surveys, the average Jewish school is now spending over \$315,000 annually – or \$854 per pupil – on security. This burden is felt most acutely by the smallest schools, where fixed security costs are spread among the fewest students.

And this is only one aspect of the challenge facing schools. The financial costs of securing a school discussed in this report – while very substantial, as we have seen – cannot fully capture the toll that rising hate and visibly enhanced security measures take on faculty and students in Jewish schools.

These rising costs underscore the responsibility of federal, state, and local governments to enhance the protection afforded to Jewish schools and other at-risk institutions, particularly by ramping up security funding for our schools.

If the government entities responsible for public safety do not assume this substantial burden, then it will fall solely upon the shoulders of families already buckling under the weight of Jewish school tuition.

⁸ The survey to Florida schools did not request schools' annual budget. Two schools in the New York and New Jersey school survey did not provide their annual budget and were not included in this table.