# The Rise and Fall of the "Belz Plan": Incentives and Evaluation as Tools to Promote Core Curriculum Studies in Haredi Boys' Education

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*This paper examines the implementation of the "Belz Plan", a pilot program to promote core curriculum studies in the Haredi boys' education system. The paper addresses the model's planning, its management, and its execution at the institutional level. It analyzes the framework's strengths, limitations, and potential for future development.*

The **first chapter** provides the background, and **the second** reviews the pilot program and its target audience.

The **third chapter** describes the methodology used, while **the fourth** takes a deep dive into the findings, examining the program's strengths (the use of incentives and data) alongside its drawbacks (flawed budgeting mechanism, the timing of budgets and tests, data accessibility, planning, and exam results).

The **fifth chapter** discusses the conclusions: the gap between potential and realization; the feasibility of implementing such programs among various Haredi groups; and principles for field work – institutional variation, trust, and data utilization.

The **sixth chapter** details recommendations going forward.

## Summary

The framework dubbed "The Belz Plan" is an agreement formulated between the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Finance and the Belz Hasidic community for a three-year pilot program, signed on June 2022. Under this agreement, Belz schools would receive funding on condition of including Hebrew, English and math lessons with trained teachers, and periodically testing students' achievements on these subjects. The model relied on incentives (a per-examinee payment with higher tiers at 30%, 60% and 90% pass rates), measurement (external tests in grades 3, 6 and 8), and accountability for outcomes rather than on enforcement mechanisms or far-reaching structural change.

The program served as an intermediate option for institutions unwilling to transition to state-Haredi education (ממ"ח) but open to partial cooperation with the state. Dozens of institutions expressed interest, but most later withdrew under pressure, including the Belz schools themselves. Attempts to halt the initiative failed on legal grounds, and the pilot program was implemented on a limited scale. Political pressure and delegitimization efforts resulted in low participation and a cohort of institutions that were, for the most part, not Haredi.

Nevertheless, even in its restricted scope, the Belz Plan represents a meaningful attempt to address a persistent national challenge. Within the broader landscape of tension surrounding core curriculum studies in Haredi boys' education, it offers an alternative approach: gradual, incentive-based change driven by measurement and voluntary institutional participation. Despite its partial implementation, the pilot generated momentum around core curriculum studies and illustrated the potential of this approach.

The program was analyzed by reviewing documentation (some obtained through freedom of information requests), and interviewing nine individuals: seven school principals and two professionals from the Ministries of Finance and Education.

The Belz Plan's strengths were primarily its incentive mechanism that tied the scope of funding to exam participation and rates of success, thus encouraging institutions to be more systematic in their teaching and learning processes, and to use data for tracking and improvement. Core curriculum instruction was increased, as well as achievement monitoring.

The Belz Plan, however, also suffered many drawbacks: (i) flaws in the budgeting mechanism, such as the reliance on a single passing grade rather than any evaluation of achievement level or progress; the creation of a negative incentive to focus on students likely to pass and neglect those who most need support; and the disqualification of students who missed a single exam, among others; (ii) the budget's timeframe, which generated uncertainty and insecurity; (iii) unsuitable testing dates; (iv) only partial data accessibility, with access to the raw data refused; (v) flaws in planning and management, including poor communication with school principals and onerous bureaucracy; and (vi) the lack of detailed data from the program with which to evaluate its effect.

Furthermore, the implementation of the program was affected by management capabilities, professional infrastructure and the individual institutions' starting point. The absence of regular communication with school principals and reporting overload deepened the dependence of the program's success on the institutions' administration and infrastructure. The pilot's findings suggest that the model's success depends not only on the structure of its incentives, but also on the manner of its implementation, on communication with institutional leadership, and on the capacity to adapt to needs emerging on the ground.

The analysis led to the following conclusions:

(i) Incentives and measurement can generate motivation, focus, and managerial engagement around core curriculum studies. However, an

institution's ability to translate incentive mechanisms into actual educational practice depends also on management capability, the amount and quality of guidance, and the appropriate operational infrastructure.

(ii) Compliance with policy does not depend solely on oversight and monitoring mechanisms. Trust relationships, communication, and the manner in which policy is implemented on the ground likewise shape institutions' and administrations' willingness to invest in the process. School principals serve as a key link in mediating policy and translating it into institutional practice; within Haredi educational institutions, direct engagement with them may serve as a particularly significant mechanism for advancing policy.

(iii) The data generated in the program was designed primarily as a tool for measurement and monitoring, yet it also holds potential for learning and improvement, both at the school level and in the policy design itself.

**Recommendations**:

1. Expand the framework: The framework should be implemented once more in Haredi schools, after making the necessary adaptations based on lessons from the pilot.
2. Change the budgeting and evaluation mechanism: The mechanism should not be based only on participation and passing grades, but rather incorporate metrics that reflect progress over time, alongside reward components for high achievements. Consider a model that decreases the dependence between the different fields of knowledge (so that for instance, improvement in math without improvement in English will still be rewarded), without incentivizing selective choice between subjects. Also consider a component of school funding as a whole in addition to funds earmarked for specific ends, in the understanding that the required change is systemic.
3. Funding and testing timetables: Tests and funding should take place at a point in time that supports pedagogical planning and endeavor. Funding should be provided at an earlier date, and advance payments during the year considered. Testing should take place earlier as well, and be paced further apart, with consideration given to a gradual expansion of tests to additional grades in order to assess progress over time.
4. Make the data accessible and useful: Institutions should be provided with detailed data at the student level, allowing for scholastic and pedagogic improvement. Anchor the use of data for routine evaluation and long-term learning.
5. Guidance, communication and developing capability: A professional coordinating body, charged with giving guidance and developing capabilities, needs to be incorporated as part of the framework. A database should be compiled of external guidance professionals, who also have experience in the Haredi sector, with institutions free to choose from among them, similar to the

“Gefen” model. Such guidance will facilitate maintaining routine interface with school principals and teaching staff, and tailoring action to different institutions and local contexts.
School principals should be included in the early stages of planning, and permanent joint communication frameworks for principals, teaching staff and program leaders be created.

See the full Hebrew paper