

From the J-Vault: Jewish Language and Culture in Public Schools

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Perhaps you've followed recent controversies in the Jewish and secular media surrounding Hebrew language charter schools, which accept public funds, charge no tuition, and teach Hebrew without (theoretically) any Jewish religious instruction. (For background, see [this article](#), [this blog post](#), and the [Hebrew Charter School Center](#).)

As always, however, a peek into the J-Vault reveals that the latest innovation, and the controversy surrounding it, have been foreshadowed by generations past.

This week, from the J-Vault: *Teaching Yiddish in a Public School* (1916)

The Milwaukee Yiddishe Folkschule was a free Sunday morning school which taught Yiddish, Hebrew, and Jewish history from a secular perspective. When the school began to use the space (after hours) of a public school classroom, however, critics charged that the school was an unacceptable violation of the separation of church and state, and also a purveyor of ethnic particularism instead of a healthy assimilation. (Naturally, these critical voices came from within the Jewish community.)

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