

Federal Indian Policy – American Indian Boarding Schools

Fast Facts

Curriculum Area: Social Studies
Grade Level: Grades 6-8
Suggested Duration: Five Days

Stage 1 Desired Results

Established Goals

Social Studies Standard 4, Benchmark 8.6 Investigate, interpret, and analyze American Indian historical viewpoints concerning major events.

Understandings

- History is a story most often related through the subjective experience of the teller. With the inclusion of more and varied voices, histories are being rediscovered and revised (EU 6).
- Establish an understanding of Indian boarding schools from 1870 to present day.
- Compare and contrast the differences in the structure of education that was established for Indian children of the United States.

Essential Questions

- Why did the US Government establish Indian boarding schools in the United States?
- Who ran and funded these schools?
- How were the boarding schools different from other schools in the United States?
- How did the boarding schools impact the lives and cultures of Indian families?
- Are Indian boarding schools still here today and what has changed about them?

Students will be able to...

- discuss the stages of the development of Indian boarding schools in the United States and, specifically, Montana.
- recognize key people and organizations.
- express their findings in oral presentations and journals.

Students will know...

- Indian boarding schools were established in the United States, and Montana Indian children attended these schools.
- Indian boarding schools still exist and there are day and boarding schools in Montana.

Stage 2 Assessment Evidence

Performance Tasks

1. Create a timeline of Indian boarding schools from 1870-present (highlight specific events).
2. Students will read information pertaining to Indian boarding schools.
3. Students will conduct research projects (timeline, journaling, research presentations).
4. Review terminology and key people throughout history.

Stage 3 Learning Plan

Learning Activities

Introduce the topic by asking students how they would feel if aliens came down to earth and took all the children away to be reeducated and shaped and molded in their beliefs. Students would be forbidden to speak the language they already know and would have to learn to communicate like the aliens. Lead a brief class discussion. Share with students that something similar happened to American Indians all across the United States.

Show the clip of the film, *Montana Mosaic*, produced by the Montana Historical Society. Watch the segment titled *Dislocation/Relocation* as it gives a good overview of the boarding school experience.

Ask students to write up a brief reaction paper to the film and have them hand in at the end of class.

Students will be asked to develop a timeline of boarding schools and also write up a brief description of the boarding school experience. Have them utilize the suggested resources. Students could research a specific boarding school such as Carlisle and write up a summary of the information they found. Use the Essential Questions to help guide the students with their research.

Background Information (prepared by Dulce Whitford, Montana educator)

The Reservation Boarding School System - Justification and Rationalization:

- To “settle” the land.
- Term “Kill the Indian and save the man.”
- Settlers moved west “Indians remained a problem.”
- Indians had to be moved out of the way.
- Indians must be taught the knowledge, values, and habits of Christian civilization.
- “Social Evolution” of the Indian as a progressive process that could be accelerated by education.

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- Education which would result in relieving the US government of the cost of feeding and clothing Indian people (which was guaranteed by treaties between the US government and Tribal Nations).
- Providing education as a tool for economic self-sufficiency.
- In 1890, Congress authorized an annual payment of \$100,000 for the support of industrial and other schools among tribes.
- Run by churches and missionary societies.
- Given all authority by government in 1869 to appoint Indian agents and hire personnel employed on the reservations.
- Attendance at mission schools was mandatory by regulation on many reservations for all Native children aged 6-16.
- Day Schools: Children lived in their surroundings, but attend a school nearby.
- Boarding Schools: Children removed from family structure and stayed at school.

Boarding School System – Did It Work?

- NO!!
- The system failed.
- The goal was for assimilation.
- Indian cultures survived.

Share the following excerpt from [Connecting Cultures and Classrooms](#) – OPI publication – a hard copy should be in your school library.

Students should understand that during this period of history (1870-1900), national attitudes and policies toward Indians largely focused on controlling Indians and forcing them to change. Indians were basically confined to their reservations and forced to adopt totally foreign ways of life – plow farming and ranching being notable examples. Federal Indian agents exerted a great deal of control on reservation lands. These agents were often corrupt, stealing the annuities and commodities that were intended for the Indian communities. This effort was reinforced by various Christian religious denominations which were given exclusive contracts to send missionaries to certain reservations. Missionaries often used assimilation strategies that were demeaning and brutal. Traditional religious practices were outlawed. This period of American history also saw the advent of the boarding school era, a time in which American Indian children were forced to attend schools far from home and family, and where their traditional ways of life were totally banned and severe punishments were exacted for even speaking a tribal language" (page 102).

Extension activity

Have students read and prepare a book report regarding one of the following books about boarding schools:

- *Jim Thorpe: Original All American* by Joseph Bruchac
- *Sweet Grass Basket* by Marlene Carvell

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- *My Name is Seepeetza* by Shirley Sterling

Resources

[Montana Mosaic: 20th Century People and Events](#). Helena, MT: Montana Historical Society, 2006

Juneau, Stan, revised and updated by Walter Fleming and Lance Foster. "Chapter Three: The Indian Boarding School (1617-Present)," [History and Foundation of American Indian Education Policy](#). Helena, MT: Montana Office of Public Instruction, 2013.

[Montana Tribal Histories: Educators Resource Guide](#) See Chapter Five - Boarding Schools: The Abduction of Children.

Davis, Mary B. (ed). *Native America in the Twentieth Century, An Encyclopedia*. New York, NY: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1996.

Champagne, Duane (ed). *The Native North American Almanac: A Reference Work of Native North Americans in the United States and Canada, Second Edition*. Farmington Hills, MI: Gale Group, 2001.

The above resources were sent to your library by the Montana Historical Society and the Montana Office of Public Instruction.