

Western Historical Association
October 2008

Native American Boarding Schools

The Education and Cultural Transformation of American Indians under the United States
Government Boarding Schools

Mathew LaMore
Mill Creek Middle School
Comstock Park Public Schools
Comstock Park, Mich.

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Grade Level: 6-8

Content: Western American History

Unit: Interaction with Native People by The United States of America

Time: 110 Minutes

Benchmarks (Utah State of Education Core Standards)

Standard 2 – Students will investigate the relationship between events of different time periods.

Objective 2 – Analyze how contemporary concerns and events affect and are affected by history.

Standard 3 – Students will understand the changes caused by European exploration in the Americas.

Objective 1 – Explore life among the various American Indian nations prior to European exploration of the New World.

Objective 3 – Assess the impact of European exploration on American Indian nations.

Standard 10 – Students will understand the development of the American West following the Civil War.

Objective 3 – Investigate the conflict among various groups involved in the settlement of the West.

Objectives

Upon completion of this lesson students will be able to:

1. Identify what is meant by a Native American boarding school; who and what it is composed of and for what purposes.
2. Identify how government education changed the culture and direction of Native Americans.
3. Compare and contrast views of Native education between educators, the government, American Indians students and their families.

Setup/Preparation

Engage: Prior to the beginning of class, the desks should be arranged in four groups. Ideally, each group is made of 5-6 desks. Students are handed their Handbook upon entering the class. The Handbook contains all teacher-supplied documents they will require for the entire lesson. They will need a pencil to write for the class period.

Explore: Students will use their Handbooks and a writing utensil. They will be rotating among the desk groups. The teacher needs to distribute Primary Sources 1-4, one to each desk grouping. The student Handbook contains response pages for each group from 1-4.

Explain: Teacher should have the PowerPoint presentation on the background of Native American education by the United States Government prepared. Slides for taking notes are provided as part of the Handbook.

Elaborate: Students will use the page titled “Personal Journal” in their Handbook. The students will also use their Handbook page titled “Pros and Cons of Native Boarding Schools”.

Evaluate: Teacher should provide 12x24 sheets and art supplies to students for creating their position poster. If students select to write to Congress as an alternative assignment, they will need lined paper to complete their rough draft in class.

Safety

Teacher should remind students that wild behavior may harm the well being of others and must be avoided for the duration of class.

Prerequisite Knowledge/Skills for students

Students will understand that Native Americans populated North America before the Europeans arrived, and continue to exist in the present. Students will be exposed to the means in which Native land has been taken away throughout the history of the United States, and Native people have been confined to small parcels of land called reservations. Students will be aware that the United States government increasingly sought control over the existence of Native tribes and people from the beginnings of the Nation.

Procedure

Engage: (15-20 Minutes)

On the overhead or whiteboard, the teacher should post five questions/statements for student response. Page 1 of the Handbook has these questions with space provided for written response. Any written answers need not be more than three sentences, and only 5-7 minutes should be allowed for responses to the entire five.

The questions are:

- What does it mean to receive an education?
- Beginning in the 1700’s to the present, Native Americans have been able to preserve their traditional ways of life without any disruption. Agree/Disagree. (circle one)
- Native Americans have always been free to choose how and where they want to live. Agree/Disagree. (circle one)
- What is a Native American Boarding School?
- How do Native Americans live presently in the United States? Why is this so?

After allowing time to write responses, students should compare answers with their small groups that are formed by the desk arrangement. The teacher should then discuss the questions, asking 2-3 students to share their answer for each question.

Evaluate: The teacher will get a sense of student’s prior knowledge and comprehension by hearing student responses to questions. If students are unable to demonstrate prior knowledge,

briefly review the history of the treatment and actions towards Native Americans by the United States.

Purpose:

- To further your understanding of the treatment of Native Americans in the United States throughout history.
- To introduce you to the topic of Native American boarding schools.
- To explain the influence of Native American boarding schools on cultural assimilation.

Explore: (35-45 minutes)

The next portion involves pages 2-5 in the Handbook. Number the four groupings of desks 1-4. At each group the teacher assigns a Primary Source page. Group 1 should have Primary Source 1, and so on. The title at the top of each Primary Source page corresponds to the title at the top of a page in the Handbook. Beginning with the source already at their desk grouping, students will complete the Handbook page with the Primary Source page provided. The teacher should allow 7-10 minutes to complete one Handbook page. Once the group has completed their first page, the teacher will have the entire class rotate with their group to the next station at one time. By allowing 7-10 minutes for each station, the four Handbook pages should be complete within 35-45 minutes.

At each rotation, the Handbook page asks students to evaluate quotes from Native American students, Native American parents, or Indian Agents. There will also be photographs of students and activities at the Boarding Schools for students to evaluate. For each rotation, the students should read any excerpts as a group, and fill out their Handbook page cooperatively. For photographs, they can discuss and evaluate together to come up with their answers.

The documents to be provided for each rotation are included as Primary Sources 1-4, indicated in the lower left corner of each sheet.

Primary Source 1 includes two quotes from former students accounting their experience with white culture at their school. The purpose is to emphasize the difference in culture that Native youth were confronted with. Ideally, the students performing the rotation will identify with these and other quotes based upon age similarity. Primary Source 1 also includes four photographs. One is of Tom Torlino, a Native student, upon his arrival at Carlisle Institute. Another is of Ziewie, a young girl student on her first days at school. On the reverse side of the page the students can see pictures of both Native youth after being “Americanized” at school. The photos will again aid students in identifying with these historical figures based upon age.

Primary Source 2 focuses on Native families reaction to the boarding school system. One quote from a group of Navajo parents expresses support of the school for the purpose of teaching their children to survive in a new world. The second quote is a Hopi uncle expressing his disdain for the White way of life and a need to embrace traditional culture. The purpose is to show students the conflicting feelings parents had about sending their children away. The photograph at this rotation shows a father and daughter in Native dress visiting his two sons at boarding school. The sons are markedly different in appearance. The photograph draws out the changing culture through a single generation.

Primary Source 3 focuses on those who run and organize the boarding schools. The first quote is from an Indian Agent working in Arizona. He describes the process of rounding up students from unwilling families. The second quote is along similar lines, adding the cultural change mandated to students. The purpose of these quotes is to express the viewpoint of those running the schools as to the necessity of education despite resistance. The final quote is from Luther Standing Bear's autobiography in which he describes the initial cutting of hair for young Native men. The haircuts are a very important expression of the cultural transformation for students. The teacher would do well to highlight this for students at rotation 3.

Primary Source 4 focuses on the military discipline and corporal punishment instituted at Native boarding schools. The first quote highlights both the brutal nature of teachers and also the removal of Native language from student life. The second quote describes the often times impoverished conditions of schools, as well as the parallels between military boot camp and the schools. The photograph at the top compliments the notion of military camp. The photograph at the bottom shows laundry class for female students. The participating students should consider whether or not laundry class constitutes an education, and the possible benefits of the boarding school being used as a trade school.

Evaluate: The completion of each of the four Handbook sheets within student groups will provide students with a good primary source knowledge base to complete their final assessment later on in the lesson. The teacher will circulate and keep students on task, as well as answering any questions and defining any terms.

Explain: (10-15 minutes)

The teacher should present the PowerPoint lesson provided. The key points for understanding are outlined in the slides, so without an excess of prior knowledge the teacher should be able to make connections for the students. The students have PowerPoint slides in their Handbook to follow the presentation by the teacher. The Handbook version is missing key words that the students should fill in as they follow along with the teacher.

Evaluate: The Handbook will contain the slides with fill-in-the-blank portions that students should have completed by the end of the presentation. The teacher should check for questions and encourage comments during the entire presentation.

Elaborate: (15-20 minutes)

The Handbook has a page titled 'Personal Journal' which is being used for students to take what they have learned and elaborate on it creatively. Students are to create 3 short journal entries for this portion of the lesson. The students can choose one of two assignments to complete the 'Personal Journal'. The first option is for students to imagine themselves as a young Native American. They are then to write three short entries describing their experiences as a boarding school student. Ideally, the students will incorporate what they have read and learned, and elaborate on that information with their own creativity and imagination. The second option is for students to imagine that they are themselves in the present and are sent to a boarding school in another culture. They can make up their own culture or scenario, or use something they know of from reality. These students must also complete 3 short entries detailing their experiences.

Ideally, these students will take what they learned about Native experience and apply it to a different scenario of their choosing. This option requires students to be exceptionally creative and imaginative. Their entries should mirror what they have experienced throughout this lesson thus far, however. If this option is deemed confusing by the teacher for age group or learning ability, only the first option should be assigned.

Evaluate: Students get to use what they have learned and make connections between themselves and historical people. Students should use specific examples from Native American student journals or the PowerPoint presentation and make them their own through the journal entries. The teacher should see the students identifying with the Native students and reaching a more elaborate understanding of historical experience.

Closure:

Students should draw conclusions about the different views on Native American boarding schools. These conclusions should address the feelings and experiences of Native students, Native parents, and school employees. Students should also understand how the schooling served to assimilate Native youth into white culture.

- What is a Native American boarding school?
- Give examples of cultural differences between the life students were accustomed to versus their new life at a boarding school.
- How do views on Native education compare and contrast between school employees, parents, and students?

Evaluate: (10 minutes)

The students have in their Handbook a graphic organizer title ‘Pros and Cons of Native American Boarding Schools’. They should now be encouraged to fill the organizer out as thoroughly as they can. Students may work within groups, or the teacher may encourage an entire class discussion to get as many ideas and perspectives on the organizer as possible. Students will use the organizer for the final portion of the lesson that evaluates their understanding of the topic. Upon completing the graphic organizer, the teacher should use the final page of Handbook to assign the final project. This project may use class time or be assigned as homework. The students will be creating a position poster on Native American Boarding Schools. The entire assignment description and grading policy is included in the Handbook. This assignment will require students to take a stand on the boarding school policy of the United States and address other solutions.

Time Restraints

If teacher does not have time to complete the entire lesson, the Explain or Explore portions could be used independently to introduce the topic. In addition, the Elaborate portion could simply be removed due to time restraints as well.

If the teacher desires to extend the time of the lesson, the required number of journal entries could be increased. An addition way to extend the lesson time frame is to require all students to complete the alternative assignment of a letter to Congress expressing their opinion about Native American boarding schools.

Evaluation and Rationale

This lesson plan uses a variety of teaching methods designed to help multiple types of learners. For example, in this lesson students are accompanying learning with movement. All learners are approaching this topic hands on while using primary and secondary sources. Those who are audio learners will hear the content through reading of the sources and the guided lecture. Visual learners are provided multiple ways to view the content. Students are using critical thinking and analytical skills while working in groups and evaluating the idea of citizenship in American culture. This lesson crosses curriculum and uses multiple genres. For instance, this lesson involves geography, history, reading, writing, English and language arts. Students are guided through the content through the use of the Student Handbook and graphic organizers. They are also choosing a position on the topic and supporting their position with opinions, facts and observations.

Learning Styles and Accommodations

When presenting this lesson, there are a variety of instructional methods that can be accommodated to help different learners. The teacher must remember to use appropriate wait time and follow up questions such as: “How do you know,” “Do you agree or disagree,” “Tell me more,” “Give an example,” etc. The teacher should also provide instructions visually and verbally to help students stay on task and to clear up any misconceptions.

For students with special needs, this lesson can be modified to help them stay on task with the rest of the class. For instance, instead of having a student with special needs take notes, the notes can be provided in a way that suits them best. An example of this may be providing them notes in outline format or providing a tape recorder to record the lecture.

Following Lesson

The following lesson should explore how Native Americans exist in the United States presently. The lesson should incorporate what the students learned in this lesson about cultural assimilation and the way in which white “American” values were instilled in Native Americans. The lesson will explain that many Native Americans remain on their Reservations, existing in various degrees of poverty. It must also be noted that many Native Americans have successfully assimilated into “American” culture and pursue a multitude of careers and positions in society. In addition, a piece describing how Native Americans identify themselves cultural would be essential for student’s full understanding.

Teachers Notes

1. Distribute Handbook
2. Engage questions and responses
3. Purpose
4. Explore using rotations and Handbook
5. Explain using PowerPoint
6. Journal Entries
7. Graphic Organizer
8. Elaborate Creating Posters

Resources

Adams, David W. *Education for Extinction*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1995.

Annual Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs (ARCIA). 1824-1930. Washington, D.C.:U.S. Government Printing Office.

Anne M. Butler. *Daughters of Joy, Sisters of Misery: Prostitutes in the American West, 1865-90*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1985.

Coleman, Michael. *American Indian Children at School, 1850-1930*. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007.

Lomawaima, K. Tsianina. 1994. *They Called It Prairie Light: The Story of Chilocco Indian School*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press.

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Reyhner, Jon, and Jeanne Eder. *American Indian Education*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2004.

Riney, Scott. 1999. *The Rapid City Indian School, 1898-1933*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press.

Standing Bear, Luther. 1928. *My People The Sioux*. Edited by E.A. Brininstool. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Szasz, Margaret Connell. 1988. *Indian Education in the American Colonies, 1607-1783*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.