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| Teaching with Primary Sources | chssp icon |
| *A historical investigation question requires students to interpret a lesson’s historical content in order to make their own claims.*Lightbulb, plug and globe graphic | RationaleStudents may find this collection of primary sources fascinating because they may identify with the subjects. How Native American students dressed, the academic and non-academic expectations of their education, and their school and living conditions may engage today’s students to consider a different time and place in which federal education policy and its implementation had an imposing affect on Native American lives, community, and culture. The fourth primary source is particularly a worthwhile read for students because it offers a nuanced critique of the reservation system at the same time that it supports the “ideas of industry and manly independence” provided by Native American schools (page 8).   |
| Historical Investigation Question(s)What effect did Native American education programs have upon the students and their families and communities? What purpose did education programs serve for the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and by extension, the federal government?What assumptions about Native American traditions and culture can be distilled from the Bureau of Indian Affairs education policies?  |
| Standards[8.8] Students analyze the divergent paths of the American people in the West from 1800 to the mid-1800s and the challenges they faced. [8.8.2] Describe the purpose, challenges, and economic incentives associated with westward expansion, including the concept of Manifest Destiny and the territorial acquisitions that spanned numerous decades.[8.12.2] Students identify the reasons for the development of federal Indian policy and the wars with American Indians and their relationship to agricultural development and industrialization.Here’s a link to the Standards: <http://www.cde.ca.gov/be/st/ss/documents/histsocscistnd.pdf>  |
| Citation: Library of Congress, “Teacher Guide Primary Source Set: Assimilation Through Education,” <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/assimilation/pdf/overview.pdf>  The United States has a long-standing tension between preserving the cultural heritage of its diverse population and creating a homogenous “American” culture. Indian populations, however, have been outside such consideration. Indians have weathered conscious attempts to replace their traditional ways with those sanctioned by the U.S. government, such as federal programs removing them from their lands and the destruction of their livelihoods and way of life. Education programs were instituted in the late 19th century to remove Indian children from the influence of tribal traditions and offer them a proper education. To make Indian children patriotic and productive citizens, government-run boarding schools, reservation boarding schools and day schools were introduced. These schools strictly adhered to the speaking of only the English language. They were conducted with military-like schedules and discipline, and emphasized farming and other manual skills. The daily schedule was split between academics and vocational training. By 1893, such education for Indian children was mandatory. The Bureau of Indian Affairs ceased to support this form of education in the 1920s. Complaints about costs, substandard living conditions, poor medical care, and poor teaching practices contributed to the demise of this strict, mandatory program. The 1930s were a time of shifting educational philosophy that corresponded to other changes in federal Indian policy. Many Indian children were enrolled in public schools and, as the states assumed control of their education, classroom lessons began to reflect the diversity of Indian cultures.Citation: Peter Nabokov, ed., *Native American Testimony: A Chronicle of Indian-White Relations From Prophecy to the Present, 1492-1992* (New York: Penguin Books), 1991, 213-216. The crusade by white society to educate and indoctrinate American Indian children had actually been going on for centuries. As early as the 1560s the Spanish had established a special school for Indian children on the island of Cuba. Further north, the Virginia Company earmarked financial assistance for white families to shelter and tutor young Indians. ….By the late nineteenth century, however, native parents had little say in their children’s education. Indian reformers insisted that if the young were taught white habits of hygiene, diet, clothing, work by the clock, and worship on Sunday, then paganism and savagery, poverty and dependency would eventually die out. After 1869, the government encouraged Christian missionary societies to manage the far-flung Indian school system.  ….After 1819, the U.S. Congress set aside a so-called Civilization Fund so church groups could “put into the hands of their [Indian] children the primer and the hoe…and they will group in the habits of morality and industry.” By 1838, about three thousand Indian students were “going to see some writing”—a Winnebago phrase for schooling—at over eighty government boarding schools in the eastern United States. ….Once they arrived, the new students entered regimented environment. Often their introduction began with a new name….Their long hair was clipped to the skull, sometimes as part of a public ritual in which they renounced Indian origins. They were forbidden to speak native languages, often under threat of physical punishment. Daily routine intervals for prayer, housekeeping chores, and recesses. The cost of keeping up the buildings and grounds and food was defrayed by student labor. Learning to work was the creed.Secondary Source |

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