Beyond the Schoolhouse

Assimilation policies and Native communities

USH.C.1.3.D "Describe the intent and effects of assimilation policies during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, including the establishment of Indian boarding schools and their impact on Native cultures, languages, and community life..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline what officials wanted boarding schools to accomplish, circle actions schools took, and number two effects on Native families or cultures. Use your marks to connect the policies' intent to their effects.

What Boarding Schools Changed

1. In the late nineteenth century, U.S. officials pushed policies meant to assimilate Native children into white American society. Officials believed that changing children's language, beliefs, and daily habits would lead them to abandon their tribal identities. In 1879, the Carlisle Indian Industrial School opened in Pennsylvania as the first federally supported off-reservation boarding school for Native students. It became a model for other schools. Many children were sent far from home, sometimes against their families' wishes, making close ties harder to maintain.

2. At Carlisle, staff cut students' hair, gave them uniforms and English names, and punished some for speaking their Native languages. Lessons in English and job training aimed to replace tribal knowledge with the customs officials valued. Students also worked at school or in placements outside it. These practices did not affect every child in the same way, but they limited opportunities to learn languages and traditions from family and elders. Separation disrupted the daily relationships through which communities passed on knowledge.

3. Boarding school policies brought harm that reached beyond classrooms. Some children suffered abuse or illness, and some died while away from home. Families lost years of shared life, while communities faced breaks in the passing down of languages and traditions. Yet Native people did not simply give up their cultures. Students and families found ways to keep connections alive, and later generations worked to restore languages and traditions. The policies sought to erase Native identities, but Native communities continued to defend them.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did sending children far from home serve officials' goal, and what did it cost families?

2. Why did staff punish some students for speaking Native languages? What effect could this have?

3. How did job training support officials' goal, and what knowledge could it crowd out?

4. Why did later efforts to restore languages and traditions oppose the goal of these policies?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Imagine a museum exhibit with a boarding school uniform and a family letter. Write a 50 to 70 word label explaining the policy's goal, two effects on Native families or cultures, and how Native people responded.

ANSWER KEY

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PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline what officials wanted boarding schools to accomplish, circle actions schools took, and number two effects on Native families or cultures. Use your marks to connect the policies' intent to their effects. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did sending children far from home serve officials' goal, and what did it cost families?	**Distance made it harder for children to maintain tribal identities through family life. Families lost years of time together.**
2	Why did staff punish some students for speaking Native languages? What effect could this have?	**Staff wanted children to use English instead of Native languages. Punishment limited students' chances to use and learn their languages.**
3	How did job training support officials' goal, and what knowledge could it crowd out?	**It taught work skills officials valued as part of assimilation, while crowding out tribal knowledge.**
4	Why did later efforts to restore languages and traditions oppose the goal of these policies?	**The policies sought to erase Native identities. Restoration helped communities keep or rebuild parts of those identities.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A uniform stands for the school's attempt to replace Native children's customs with those favored by U.S. officials. A family letter points to relationships strained when children were sent far from home. Rules against speaking Native languages also interrupted learning from family and elders. Despite these harms, students and families kept connections alive, and later generations worked to restore languages and traditions.

Accept other passage-supported links between officials' goals and the effects of school practices. Responses should distinguish the policies' intent from their effects and recognize Native efforts to maintain or restore culture.