

## **Letter Home**

Alice Muffly and Rebecca White  
Shaffer Elementary School  
Littleton, Colorado

### **OVERVIEW**

Using primary sources, students recognize how the Indian Reservation School affected the cultural identity of Colorado Indian students.

### **STANDARDS**

- Language Arts Standard 2: Students write and speak for a variety of purposes and audiences.
- Language Arts Standard 4: Students apply thinking skills to their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.
- Language Arts Standard 5: Students read to locate, select, and make use of relevant information from a variety of media, reference, and technological sources.
- History Standard 2: Students know how to use the processes and resources of historical inquiry.
- History Standard 3: Students know how various societies were affected by contacts and exchanges among diverse peoples.

### **OBJECTIVES**

- Students will use technology to investigate a topic.
- Students will recognize how the Indian School affected the cultural identity of Colorado Indian students:
  - cutting their hair
  - wearing a school uniform
  - living away from home
  - adjusting to a regimented school setting
- Students will make connections to their own experiences and lives.
- Students will plan, draft, revise, proofread, and edit written communication.
- Students will practice letter writing.

### **INQUIRY QUESTIONS**

After arriving at the Indian School...

- What changes were made in the kind of clothing worn by the Colorado Indians?
- What additional changes in appearance did you observe?
- How did their living spaces change?
- How was their education affected?
- How were their recreational activities affected?

- What do you think these student missed the most from home?

### **MATERIALS TO BE USED**

- *Doing History/Keeping the Past* CD-ROM disk or web site -the section: *Colorado Indians - Reservation Life: Indian Schools*
- Other local materials that the teacher has gathered as resources for this activity.
- Graphic organizer for taking notes.
- Stationary and envelope
- Pen, pencil

### **PROCEDURE**

1. Begin class with these discussion questions:
  - Have you ever been to camp or away from home for a long period of time?
  - Did you get homesick?
  - Did you have problems adjusting to the new place? The new people? The food? A different routine?
  - What did you miss the most about home?
  - How did you keep in touch with your family back home?
2. Share with the students the fact that Colorado Indian children living on a reservation, either attended a day school or a boarding school. (You may have to discuss what a boarding school is.) Tell students that, like them, the Colorado Indian children probably got homesick and had to adjust to their new surroundings.
3. Tell the students that their task is to write a letter, based on the following question:
  - If you were a Colorado Indian child, what observations and feelings might you write home about after living at an Indian School for the first time?
4. The letter needs to include evidence (based on the Inquiry Questions) of the following:
  - changes made in the kind of clothing worn
  - changes in appearance
  - what the school was like
  - what their education was like
  - their recreational activities
5. The letter should also include what the author thinks would be missed the most by the Colorado Indian child who is away from family and home.
6. Give each child a graphic organizer for taking notes.

7. Have the students use the photographs from the *Doing History/Keeping the Past* CD-ROM disk or web site -the section: *Colorado Indians - Reservation Life: Indian Schools* as well as additional materials about Indian Schools for reference purposes.
8. Provide time for synthesizing information gathered and for writing process activities: rough draft, proofreading, editing, etc.
9. After approval of final draft, give each student stationary and an envelope for their final copy.

### **EXTENSIONS**

1. Have the students read their letters aloud to either the entire class or a partner.

### **ASSESSMENT**

Formal assessment of letter

Content :

- changes made in the kind of clothing worn
- other physical changes in appearance
- what the school was like
- what their education was like
- their recreational activities

Letter writing skills