values and good example I had before I went to residential school by my grandfather and my parents, and all the old people on the reserve where I grew up are the ones who made me a good student."[243]

Work: "No idleness here."

Student education was further undermined by the amount of work the students had to do to support the schools. Because Indian Affairs officials had anticipated that the residential schools would be self-sufficient, students were expected to raise or grow and prepare most of the food they ate, to make and repair much of their clothing, and to maintain the schools. As a result, most of the residential schools operated on what was referred to as the "half-day system." Under this system—which amounted to institutionalized child labour—students were in class for half the day and in what was supposed to be vocational training for the other half. Often, as many students, teachers, and inspectors observed, the time allocated for vocational training was actually spent in highly repetitive labour that provided little in the way of training. Rather, it served to maintain the school operations.

The half-day system was not a formally mandated system. Some schools did not use it, and those that did use it implemented it on their own terms. When, in 1922, Indian Affairs education official Russell Ferrier recommended that the Chapleau, Ontario, school implement the half-day system, he had to rely on his memory of visits to other schools in order to describe how the system operated. Indian Affairs had no official written description of the system.[244] This is telling evidence of the haphazard way in which residential schools were managed.

While the half-day system was supposed to apply only to the older students, the reality was that every student worked. Above and beyond the half-day that students spent in vocational training, it was not uncommon for them to perform daily chores both before and after school. As a result, students often spent more than half a day working for the school. At High River, Alberta, in the 1880s, students who were not learning a trade were expected to put in two hours a day of chores in the winter and four hours in the summer. According to Principal E. Claude, "To these youngest ones pertained the weeding of the garden and the house work on their side of the school, and I must say, that this summer none denied our watchword, 'No idleness here,' as all work was exclusively done by the pupils."[245]

From the time the schools were opened, parents and inspectors raised concerns about just how much work students were being required to do. Inspector T. P. Wadsworth claimed in 1884 that the boys at the Battleford school generally enjoyed their chores, but added that he would protest "against forcing these little fellows to haul water every day and all day from the river in winter, as was the case last year."[246] In 1886, Qu'Appelle school principal Joseph Hugonnard wrote, "During the summer they have more manual labor and