

Initiative

Syllables

in•i•tia•tive

Pronunciation

ih-**nish**-ee-uh-tiv, ih-**nish**-uh-tiv

Definition

The ability to think, make decisions, and act without being asked or guided by someone else.
(When the explorers Lewis and Clark ventured into new territories they showed **initiative**.)

Simply put: Take charge.

Related Terms

Strategy: Plan.

Proposal: Suggestion.

Fundamental Question:

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Do I take action without being asked?

Students will investigate the idea that although children generally receive many daily instructions (from “Get out of bed, please” in the morning until “Get in that bed!” at night and everything in between), initiative requires that we take responsible action without receiving directions.

Objectives

Each student will:

1. Identify a situation that (s)he feels calls for action;
2. Set goals and display initiative in response to the need(s) identified;
3. Actively ask questions and seek answers when (s)he doesn't understand things during the process;
4. Follow through with related commitments; and
5. Evaluate the process and outcome.

Before you begin

- Read up on service projects (there are many wonderful books and sites available) and consider ways to guide your students through such a project;
- Gather a list of needs from your local volunteer bureau and several copies of the week's local newspaper; and
- Print out a copy of *You Started It* for each student.

Note: Allow from one to several weeks for the completion of this project.

Suggested Sidebars:

Speaking of Initiative (Discussion Idea)

What does it mean to be a “self-starter”?

Initiative

Taking It to the Next Level

Use your initiative to think of an unattractive or unpopular task (like taking out the trash or scooping the kitty litter) and accomplishing it today.

Procedure

1. Either in advance or as the class observes, write several of the following on the board. The topics you include should be selected according to the nature and needs of your class as well as in which areas you are comfortable supervising various service projects.

Peace	Safety	Education
Elders	Children	Animals
Earth	Transportation	Health
Crime	Homeless	Hunger
Government		

Ask: “What are some of the things that *all* of these topics have in common; things that every one of them has in common with each of the others.” (Answers may start out as basic as “Each one has at least two vowels.” Ultimately, with your direct guidance, if necessary, the students should conclude that each of these areas is one about which people are concerned and about which people can work to make positive differences. Explain what a “service project” is.)

2. Have each individual (or small team/group) choose an area to address. This is not first-come-first-served, so more than one person or group may select the same area. Final answers should be recorded both by you and the student/team. (A team secretary might be a good idea.)
3. Ask: “Thinking about your topic – for instance, animals – what is a specific issue that concerns you – like pet overpopulation?” (Allow time for thought or team discussion.) Again, the answers should be recorded.
4. Have individuals or teams set their project’s goal. Meet with them. Guide with questions such as: “Who are you hoping to help? What *specifically* do you want to achieve? Is your project realistic? How can you learn more about the sort of help your recipient wants or needs? How will you set your schedule? Who will you contact for permission and assistance?” Ask other thought-provoking questions as needed.
5. Gather and review each plan. Help the children improve them, as needed. Consider factors such as transportation, scheduling, budgeting, chaperoning, and more.
6. At this point, the children should follow through with their plans. Ask for daily (or at least very regular) updates. Encourage problem-solving skills as new or unexpected situations arise.
7. **Follow Up:** Distribute the *You Started It* sheets and review the directions with your students.

Name _____

Reminder: Initiative is the ability to think, make decisions, and act without being asked or guided by someone else.

You Started It

My service project's goal was:

I think that the best way for me to evaluate my project would be to (check one):

- speak with my team.
- speak with my teacher.
- speak with the people at the organization I served.
- think about it on my own.
- other: _____

(If possible, follow through with your selection and write your findings on the back of this sheet.)

The most important thing I learned during this project was: _____

I would have liked to improve the project by: _____

In the space below, write a poem. The poem may be funny or serious, rhyming or not, but should describe something about your service project experience.

Today's Thought: *You've got to take the initiative and play your game. In a decisive set, confidence is the difference.* — **Chris Evert, tennis player**