



**INITIATIVE**

## WHY INITIATIVE?

Inspiring initiative in students teaches them to be the leaders of their own lives. By teaching initiative we are fostering goal setting, self-motivation and empathy in anticipating other's needs. In an increasingly competitive world, initiative is what will set students apart as they continue in their academic and professional careers. There is a positive association between self-regulated learning and academic achievement.<sup>2</sup> Students who are motivated to take initiative in their academic career are more likely to succeed. Additionally, the theory of academic self-motivation supports the idea that students' beliefs in their perceived ability to motivate themselves positively influences their academic goals and achievements.<sup>1</sup> Teaching kids initiative has direct academic results and sets them up for a successful future.

## GOALS

To help your students understand what initiative means.

To help your students understand that initiative means going out of your way to do the best job that you can, often by leading the way.

## MATERIALS NEEDED

Paper and pens/pencils      Chart paper      Stickers      Prizes (optional)



The authors of this manual recognize that you are the expert of your classroom and if you wish to add to this lesson any of your own activities or materials related to this module's theme, please feel free to do so.

<sup>1</sup>Zimmerman, Barry J., Albert Bandura, Manuel Martinez-Pons. (1992). Self-Motivation for Academic Attainment: The Role of Self-Efficacy Beliefs and Personal Goal Setting. *American Educational Research Journal*, 29(3), 663-676.

<sup>2</sup>Zimmerman, Barry J. (1990). Self-Regulated Learning and Academic Achievement: An Overview. *Educational Psychologist*, 25(1), 3-17.

## Introduction

Ask your students if they know what initiative means. Brainstorm together a definition for the classroom, along with examples of taking initiative. Organize these examples of initiative in terms of how to be a take initiative as a(n) a) individual, b) classroom, c) school (see table below). Post this list in your classroom over the next month to help the children remember what being inclusive means. Here are some ways to help them define inclusion and inclusive behaviour:

### For younger students

- Going the extra mile to do a great job
- Helping a friend before they ask for help
- Working hard at a skill to improve it
- Volunteering to be a leader

### For older students

- Going above and beyond the assignment or task
- Anticipating the needs of others and stepping in to help
- Improving your skills and abilities
- Creating and taking leadership opportunities



## What Initiative Looks Like

Taking initiative may include the following:

- Volunteering to be the leader on a project
- Starting a new club or team at school or in the community
- Tidying or cleaning the classroom without having to be asked
- Helping a younger sibling or student without being asked
- Seeking out extra help on your own
- Doing extra research for an assignment
- Helping someone who looks lost or confused
- Looking for new and better solutions to problems that you have not tried before
- Sharing your ideas and opinions in class
- Asking lots of questions to improve your understanding
- Going out of your way to meet someone new
- Seeking out opportunities at school and in the community to challenge yourself (contests, volunteer opportunities etc.)
- Setting goals for yourself
- Researching a career you might be interested in and talk to people doing that job
- Making decisions even when it's difficult
- Taking extra time to practice a skill you want to improve
- Doing something to help someone out without them asking
- Inventing or designing a new way of accomplishing a task

## CHALLENGE: HOW TO TAKE INITIATIVE AS A(N)...



### Individual

Find a new way to solve a problem

Practice a skill you would like to improve

Go the extra mile on an assignment

### Classroom

Volunteer to take on a leadership role in class

Perform a classroom chore without being asked

Ask questions in class to improve your understanding

### School

Identify an area of improvement in your school and put together a task force to solve the problem

Host a career day so students can learn and ask questions about the steps they can take to work towards a career

## Quazar Video Questions

NOTE: These video clips are snapshots of the character attribute. They are not meant to be complete lessons, but simply to bring awareness of the attribute to your students.

Here are some follow-up questions and possible answers for the Quazar video to help your students further discuss and think about initiative:

## Video Questions

- 1) How did the student in the video take initiative?
- 2) When is it difficult to take initiative? Why do we not always want to go the extra mile?
- 3) What does it mean to be a leader?
- 4) What are some ways we can go the extra mile to do a great job in our classroom?  
In our school?



## Classroom Activities

### For younger students

1. This activity is great for teaching an important aspect of initiative and it also works as a “body break” or “daily physical activity” game. Have the students stand at their desks and ask them to perform a simple action, such as tapping their heads. Then after a few moments, have them do another simple action at the same time, such as stomping their feet. Keep these actions coming until the students are unable to do all of the actions they have been told to do and have them sit back down. Then lead a discussion, explaining to students that sometimes doing lots of different things at once can be fun. People who take initiative are never sitting still and they are always looking for the next thing that they can do to improve or help. Brainstorm different ways they can take initiative when they are done a task instead of doing nothing, such as cleaning the classroom or researching a new topic. If you have specific activities they are asked to do in your classroom when they are done everything, then feel free to incorporate these into your discussion.
2. This activity is called the “initiative challenge”. Have a discussion with students, reminding them what initiative is. Together, brainstorm some ways that they can take initiative. Remind them that initiative is recognizing and doing what needs to be done before being asked, as well as going above and beyond what was asked. This activity can then be modified slightly. For younger classes, make a list or a fun chart and have them put a sticker by their name for each time they practice initiative. For example, the chart would have student names vertically and ways to show initiative horizontally. Their goal is to get as many stickers as they can during the month. Alternatively, for older or more mature classes, students can monitor their own acts of initiative without a group chart and record every act of initiative they do in their own personal chart or journal. Again, the goal is to try lots of different acts of initiative over the course of the month. Prizes for top scorers are optional. Note: the top scorer is not necessarily the person who they should nominate. Explain to students that they need to nominate someone based on the quality and genuineness of their actions (and following the “do-be’s and don’t-be’s”).

### For older students

1. This activity is designed to help students think critically about goal setting in their own lives and taking initiative to meet those goals on their own. Ask students to write down three goals that they have for themselves. They can be big, like future career goals or small, like making the basketball team. Then after they have written their goals, they need to write down one thing extra thing that they will do now to help them meet that goal in the future. Make sure to help students understand that the thing they will do to meet the goal must be above and beyond, they cannot just say that they will get good grades so they can have the career they want. They must be specific tasks, such as “I will interview a doctor about how they got to their position”. Then lead a discussion and have students share their goals and ideas. Ask them what it means to take initiative, and brainstorm some ways this can be done beyond the individual level in your classroom and school. Help students to understand that although taking initiative means going above and beyond, it is as easy as sticking to a goal and doing everything you can to reach it.
2. Ask students if they have ever heard the expression “fake it till you make it” and ask them what they think it means. This activity will have them thinking about the tools required to be successful and the ways other leaders took initiative. Students will research someone that they consider to be successful (professional athlete, business innovator, public official etc.) They will write up an essay or journal entry discussing how that person arrived at their successful position. Their challenge is to identify ways in which that person took initiative to get where they are. For example, someone writing about Michael Jordan can discuss the hours he put in practicing as a way he took initiative. Have a discussion with students about ways that they can “fake it till they make it” like these people, by practicing, working hard and taking initiative to achieve their goals.

## **Quotations About Initiative**

These quotations can also be posted in the classroom to remind students about the importance of taking initiative.

**"Go confidently in the direction of your dreams. Live the life you've imagined."**

~ Henry David

**"Without initiative, leaders are simply workers in leadership positions."**

~ Bo Bennett

**"The ones who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones that do."**

~ Steve Jobs



**"Students must have initiative; they should not be mere imitators. They must learn to think and act for themselves – and be free."**

~ Cesar Chavez

**"Unless you try to do something beyond what you have already mastered, you will never grow."**

~ Ralph Waldo Emerson



## Initiative Reading List

The following books explore the theme of initiative for children of different ages and can also be used to help teach students about taking initiative:

### Grades K-3:

- *Henry Builds a Cabin* by D.B. Johnson
- *Violet the Pilot* by Steve Breen
- *If You Decide to Go to the Moon* by Faith McNulty

### Grades 3-5:

- *Rosie Revere, Engineer* by Andrea Beaty
- *The Dog Poop Initiative* by Kirk A. Weisler
- *Pond* by Jim LaMarche

### Grades 6-8

- *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective Teens* by Sean Covey
- *Steve Jobs: The Man Who Thought Different: A Biography* by Karen Blumenthal
- *Unfolding the Napkin: The Hands-On Method for Solving Complex Problems with Simple Pictures* by Dan Roam

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