

INITIATIVE

Australian Supplement to the Character First Education Curriculum

I Will:

- Do what is right before being told
- Not put off until tomorrow the things I can do today
- Contribute to the success of the whole team
- Be a part of the solution rather than the problem
- Look for ways to help others

Definition

Recognising and doing what is expected of me



Illustration

Great flocks of wild budgerigars abound in the interior of Australia, sometimes numbering up to hundreds of birds. To ensure successful survival, male budgerigars have to step up and become leaders in the flock. Read the nature story about this colourful character of the bush to uncover how groups of these birds remain in harmony through initiative.

Western Australia struck an immense gold rush during John Forrest's term as the first premier. However, the Eastern Goldfields lacked one major resource: water. Read the history story to discover how "Big" John Forrest saw the desperate needs of the goldfields and brought to the diggers the longest freshwater pipeline in the Southern Hemisphere.

Initiative in Nature

The Wild Budgerigar

The rusty red outback earth glowed faintly in the first morning light, as the sun pushed its way up the eastern horizon. A new day was breaking over Central Australia. Perched in the majestic river gums growing along the dry riverbed, flocks of small green and yellow budgerigars waited for the sun to appear.

Suddenly, the first orange glimmer peeked over the red sandhills. At first, the birds looked as though they weren't sure what to do next but then a few of the male budgerigars let out a *screech!* and took off into the sky. Almost as if they'd pressed a button, the trees erupted with the raucous cackling of the budgerigars as the flocks ascended into the crisp morning air.

The parrots circled and wheeled about in flight, darting towards each other as if they were calling, "Good morning!" However, a group of male budgerigars knew that the birds wouldn't get anywhere if all they did was fly aimlessly about, so they took off in one direction, chortling loudly for the others to follow.

The rest of the budgerigars were quick to trail the leading males. As they flapped in great numbers, they kept their attention focused on the leaders. Whenever they darted one way, the rest darted with them.

Whenever they circled back in another direction, the rest circled back as one. With pinpoint accuracy, the flock followed the males' flight leading like railway carriages follow the engine. The flock twisted and turned in unity.

While they led confidently out the front, the male budgerigars kept a lookout for a new place to forage for food. Sighting a sandhill carpeted with saltbush and stunted scrub, the males swooped down and settled into the sand. Here, they would spend the next few hours scratching and pecking through the bushes for seeds and grasses to eat. Sometimes, if there was a coating of dew on the grass, they would even roll around in it to get clean, like having a bath!

The budgerigars spent the first few hours of the morning scratching through the spinifex and cracking seeds open with their small, strong beaks. Foraging like this, however, makes them vulnerable prey for hawks or kites, and in order to remain safe, many of the birds take posts on low-lying branches to act as look-outs.

While the other members of the flock feed, these 'look-out' budgerigars will keep a watchful eye for predators. If they spot any danger, they will let out a repertoire of loud twitters and chortles to raise the alarm. After a while, these 'look-outs' fly



down to the ground to feed and other birds will take their place. No-one has to tell them to go on look-out – they know that it's their job to contribute to the success of the whole group.

Wild budgerigars are nomadic birds. They have no home, but fly around from place to place, sometimes travelling long distances in big flocks. Budgerigars inhabit arid and semi-arid regions of Australia, where rainfall is haphazard and there can be prolonged dry spells. Sometimes, during long periods without rain, waterholes dry up and grass dies, leaving budgerigars with very little food or water.

Budgerigars don't need a map to tell them where to go – they follow thunderstorms. When the black clouds release their torrents of rain and lightning forks flash across the sky, the dry outback soaks in the wet and the deserts burst to life. These localised storms, which supply up to 80% of desert water, have a flash flood effect. As the water

tumbles into dry riverbeds, it will leave waterholes along its length. Wild budgerigars, following in the wake of these thunderstorms, “camp” by these waterholes, where there is plenty of food to eat.

No-one has to tell the birds that it’s time to move on when the land dries up – the lead birds will be the first to take flight from the trees. The rest of the flock are quick to follow and the masses of budgerigars are soon flying in search of black clouds across the open plains. In fact, in 1932, millions of budgerigars that migrated north during a heat wave took four hours to pass by a particular spot!

With the confident male birds taking the lead, the enormous flocks of budgerigars take refuge beside waterholes where there are abundant green tufts of grass to eat. No-one has to tell them where to land – the leaders being ready and alert, take the initiative to fly ahead for food.

Not only do wild budgerigars follow thunderstorms and migrate hundreds of kilometres, they are also prolific breeders. Temperature and rainfall govern the breeding seasons, but it is possible for the birds to spontaneously breed after adequate rainfall. Pairs of budgerigars will mate for life and form a close bond between the two.

When the time comes, the female chooses the perfect nesting site in a hollow or dead tree. She will lay four to six white

eggs and she will be the one responsible for sitting on those eggs until they hatch. However, the male budgerigar doesn’t slack off – he now has the responsibility of caring for his mate while she waits for the eggs to hatch.

Every day, the male budgerigar will go back and forth searching for food to feed his mate. All day he goes out to bring her food, then flies out to bring her some more. No-one has to tell him to do that – he knows that he has to take the initiative and work hard to ensure the survival of his mate and the chicks.

After 17 to 20 days, the little eggs hatch and now the nest is filled with squawking babies. Together, the pair of budgerigars rotate to feed the chicks. The youngest birds are fed first, so that it is more likely for the whole brood to survive, rather than just the strongest offspring.

While the one mate collects the food, the other keeps an eye on the nest and the surrounding area. In most cases, whole colonies will nest in different cavities of the same tree. Nesting in large groups is an effective way of protection against predators. In large flocks, many eyes watch the area at the same time. This way – with alert eyes on the look-out for hunters, as well as strong bonds between pairs – many of the young birds will grow to become leaders in the flock.

Remember that nobody has to remind the budgerigars to lead

the way when searching for food or a new waterhole. No-one tells them to watch out for hungry predators or to keep each other fed, or keep guard over the nesting tree. Each individual bird takes the initiative to do whatever is required to meet the needs of the flock, no matter how large or small the task is.

You and I can be like the wild budgerigar, too. When we’re working in a team, whether at school or home, we can be like the budgerigar that doesn’t wait for someone else to do the tasks – it takes initiative to be a leader in its flock. Be a ‘look-out’ for whatever tasks need to be done; don’t wait for somebody else to do it! Whenever you’re working in a team, take the initiative, work hard and work together like the budgerigar.

Initiative in Australian History

Pipe Dreams

Sir John Forrest was the first Premier of Western Australia in 1893 when the bold newspaper headlines proclaimed, **“ONE HUNDRED OUNCES IN TWO DAYS. FOUR HUNDRED MEN ON THE FIELD.”**

Gold had been discovered at a place known as Hannan’s Find (now called Kalgoorlie), 500km east of Perth. Western Australia exploded as people arrived by the shipload from Britain, Ireland, Scotland, Greece, China and America.

However, there was a big problem. The Goldfields lay in dry desert country, with no running streams and very little rainfall. Water had to be carted in by camel team. In fact, water was so scarce that at one time it was considered more valuable than gold!

“What can I do to make Western Australia grow successfully?” John Forrest thought constantly. “What can I do to make things better for the people?” With the need for a better water source on the Eastern Goldfields, he saw the perfect opportunity.

Did you spot the “I will”? John looked for ways to help Western Australia.

John presented some rough plans to his Engineer-in-Chief, Charles Yelverton O’Connor. “What we need is a pipeline, to pump water

from a dam all the way out to the goldfields,” he explained. “It is a very long way and the project will cost thousands, even millions, of pounds. However, the diggers need this water to survive and thrive.”

C. Y. O’Connor studied the plans carefully and stroked his moustache. “I think this might just work,” he said finally.

John immediately put him to work drawing up plans for the pipeline, while he went to raise a loan for the construction of the project. He knew that the mission ahead wouldn’t be easy, and that he’d face many difficulties, but he knew it was the right thing to do.

Did you spot the “I will”? John did what was right before anybody told him to.

John announced the scheme to his government a few days later. “The diggers are dying of typhoid out there in the desert,” he said.

“So I propose I pipeline that will pump over five million gallons of water to the Goldfields. We shall raise a bill of 2.5 million pounds to build our pipeline.

Instantly, John



was met with a barrage of disapproval. “You have to be mad!” one man shouted. “Nobody has ever attempted such a thing!” another cried. “Two and a half million pounds is double the colony’s income!”

When the men calmed down, John stood to speak again. “Men, I know that you think this project is mad. But we can’t put off until tomorrow what we can today. We have the wealth and, if we

Construction of the Goldfields Pipeline



don't do this now, than who will?"

Did you spot the "I will"? John didn't put off until later what he knew could be done today.

The Goldfields Water Supply Scheme needed three key elements: a dam or reservoir to hold the water, a steel pipe to carry the water to Kalgoorlie and eight steam-driven pumping stations. Work began on the project in 1898, with C. Y. O'Connor overseeing the planning and construction.

Over 60,000 separate sections of pipe were used to construct the Great Central Pipeline. The biggest problem faced was the joining of the pipes. The workmen had to slowly line up each pipe and pack the joint with lead. The process, known as caulking, was slow and laborious.

John knew this method wasn't practical for a pipeline of this size. So, instead of sitting back and hoping that the workers would figure out the problem themselves, he bought an automatic caulking machine. This sped up the construction and made it easier for the workers.

Did you spot the "I will"? John didn't just hope that the problem would fix itself; he became part of the solution.

The pipeline's production continued swiftly, until, at last, on the 23rd January 1903, John turned on the tap in Kalgoorlie and clear, clean water bubbled into the Mt Charlotte Reservoir.



The crowd clapped and cheered. The Goldfields Water Supply Scheme was a total success.

A project of this size had never been attempted in the history of Western Australia. Upon opening, it was the longest freshwater pipeline in the world, stretching over 560km. Thanks to the foresight of John Forrest, the water still flows to Kalgoorlie today.

Did you spot the "I will"? John contributed greatly to the success of the Eastern Goldfields.

References

Big John Forrest
Frank Crowley
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John Forrest – Man of Legend
Cyril Ayris
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Road Through the Wilderness
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Kalgoorlie is still a rich gold mining area. The Super Pit is the largest open cut gold mine in the world!



The Kalgoorlie pipeline is the longest freshwater in the Southern Hemisphere!

Project Ideas

Language

Part of initiative is cleaning up before being asked. Challenge your students to write down ways they can use initiative in keeping their desks and class tidy.

Make an initiative mobile out of pipe cleaners, string and paperclips. Every time a student sees a classmate demonstrating initiative, hang a strip of paper onto the mobile describing the act of initiative.

Maths

Encourage your students to take the initiative to go back and check their answers before turning in a maths test. This may seem time consuming, but it is a lot more fulfilling to see a high mark vs. a test covered in red ink.

Science and Technology

Study John Forrest's Goldfields pipeline. Make a model out of toilet rolls. Look at the construction and operation of pipelines in the early 1900s vs. today. Write a chart comparing your answers.

Look at renewable energy sources such as wind, solar, tidal, geothermal, etc. Consider how inventors of these sources have taken the initiative to think of new, more efficient ways to produce energy?



Society and Environment

Make a big poster with a picture of the wild budgerigar and write about its breeding, lifecycle, feeding, etc., highlighting its exceptional initiative.

As a class, take the initiative to collect rubbish from around your school grounds or in a local park or your suburb. Encourage your students to take action if they see rubbish or junk lying around, at school and at home.

Health

Discuss the importance of hygiene and how we can practise good hygiene. Consider how each one of us should take initiative to remain clean, tidy and healthy.

A hockey, basketball or football team relies on initiative to function successfully, as players anticipate moves and recognise opportunities. Encourage the students to notice and practise this on the sports field.



The Arts

Paint a tranquil bush scene with a flock of wild budgerigars in flight.

Act out a situation where initiative is demonstrated vs. not being shown.

Initiative in Australian History



John Forrest

- What is Initiative?

- What was John's Forrest's job when he built the Kalgoorlie pipeline?

- List two ways that John Forrest demonstrated Initiative

1.

2.

- Who was John Forrest's Engineer-in-Chief and what was his role?

- How can YOU show Initiative....

Today:

This week:



INITIATIVE

Recognising and doing what is expected of me.

