

Future Problem Solving Program International Community Problem Solving Overview



What is Community Problem Solving?

Community Problem Solving (CmPS) is a team or individual activity in which students identify real problems and implement real solutions in a community – local, state, national, or even global. Students use the skills of the problem solving process as they work on their project; however, since real life is not always as organized as an academic exercise, the process may not proceed neatly from step to step. CmPS can be pursued as an extracurricular activity or as part of the regular school curriculum and projects can be one or more years in length.

Why Community Problem Solving?

Future Problem Solving Program International (FPSPI) provides the tools and strategies students need to face the challenges of today and the future. What better way to prepare students for their future than by teaching them to think systematically about problematic situations, to gather information to understand the situation, and to evaluate multiple solutions in order to best address the situation? Students involved in Community Problem Solving learn powerful lessons about creating change, about dealing with local authorities and organizations, and about making a positive impact. The implementation of real solutions gives students a strong sense of accomplishment and helps them to see the practical applications of the processes and skills that they have been learning. CmPS participation may fulfill service-learning requirements, although CmPS projects are typically more extensive.

Future Problem Solving Program International's problem solving model is aligned with National Curriculum Standards, Common Core Standards, and the National Association for Gifted Children (NAGC) Standards. Through participation in Community Problem Solving, students refine critical and creative thinking skills, focus on a real community or school issue, produce solution ideas, generate criteria to evaluate solution ideas, determine the best plan of action, and implement the plan to resolve their problem.

Who can participate in Community Problem Solving?

Students may participate in CmPS in multiple divisions equivalent to grade levels of the USA: Junior (grades 4-6), Middle (grades 7-9), and Senior (grades 10-12). Having a background in the Global Issues or Action-based components of FPSPI is a great start for students in CmPS, but this is not required. If students have not been involved with these components, they do need to learn the problem solving process as part of their Community Problem Solving experience.

2017 Beyonder Award "Don't Sugar Coat It" Johnson Central High School, Kentucky

"This project was designed to spread awareness to the entire community about the dangers of diabetes. Our community suffers with limited knowledge of diabetes, healthier eating habits, and simple exercise habits. Hosting diabetes walks, informing members of our community about diabetes, and helping people make healthier lifestyle choices is just a few things we have done to help our community. Our primary goal is to raise functionality for people who suffer from the dangers of diabetes."

How do students participate in CmPS?

Individuals or teams of any size may participate in Community Problem Solving. For a team, you may want at least 3 or 4 students to handle all requirements; and for larger projects, the group may consist of even more students, as complex projects often require substantial organization with tasks divided among the participants. Please note that a maximum of 15 students on a team advancing to the International Conference may participate in the CmPS interview, but all team members may participate in the CmPS Fair. Since CmPS projects are long-term activities lasting up to a year or more, students need to be committed to following through with the activity.


How can I get started with students?

Training in the problem solving process is important for coaches of Community Problem Solving teams and individuals. Affiliate Programs often hold workshops in the problem solving process, and you can find resources for the problem solving process within the Global Issues Problem Solving or Action-based Problem Solving publications at fspimart.org. See “CmPS Essential Publications” for information focused on Community Problem Solving and “Tips for Coaches” for ideas on working with your students. Contact your Affiliate Director or the FPS International Office for more information.

How do I register students for Community Problem Solving?

Each Affiliate Program determines its own processes, fees, and due dates for registration and entries. Your Affiliate Director can provide you with registration and submission materials and may be able to put you in touch with experienced CmPS coaches.

2017 Middle Ind Grand Champion
Project SharkMate
The Illawarra School, Australia



“As *SharkMate* educates the public about the psychological and physical effects of shark attacks and the slaughter of sharks has a perverse level of acceptance in society today. With one hundred million sharks killed every year globally their future existence would seem to be precarious at best and the delicately balanced ecosystem of our oceans is ultimately at risk.

SharkMate can alleviate fear of attack by providing a likelihood factor of shark presence to users of our waterways. This app will allay fear and assist in preventing the needless destruction and slaughter of wildlife in the world's oceans and ultimately help protect our ecosystems.”

How are CmPS projects evaluated?

CmPS projects are scored by trained evaluators who consider all elements of the project. At the Affiliate level, these assessments usually include evaluation of a six-page written report, supporting documentation within an addendum, and a scrapbook. Additional requirements for projects that qualify for International Competition include a CmPS Fair where the team shares their projects and presents a table-top display, an oral presentation, a media presentation, and an interview. In most Affiliate Programs, at least the first place projects move on to the International Competition (IC).

Where can I find a sample project to view?

An example of a written report, addendum, and the team's PSA media presentation are found on fsp.org (WHAT WE DO menu/COMPETITIVE COMPONENTS/Community Problem Solving).