

Community Problem Solving (CmPS) Component

What is Community Problem Solving?

Community Problem Solving (CmPS) is a group or individual activity in which students identify real problems in the school or community and implement real solutions. Students use the steps and skills of the problem solving process from the Future Problem Solving Program as they work on the project. However, since real life is not always as organized as an academic exercise, the process may not proceed sequentially from step one through step six. Projects should begin early in the year. Good projects are long-term activities lasting up to a year (and some may even take more than one year to complete).

Why Community Problem Solving?

Today's students will be running the world someday. What better way to prepare students 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 CmPS learn very powerful lessons about creating change, about dealing with local authorities and organizations and about making an 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.

Who can participate in CmPS?

Students may participate in CmPS in one of three divisions: Junior (grades 4-6), Middle (grades 7-9), and Senior (grades 10-12). It is very important for CmPS students to have an understanding of the problem solving process. Competition in the Global Issues Problem Solving Component is great for students who wish to compete in CmPS, but it is not required. **If students have not been involved with another component of FPS, they will need to be taught the problem solving process as part of their Community Problem Solving experience.** Coaches and teams can choose to pursue CmPS as an extracurricular activity or as part of the regular school curriculum. Any CmPS student also wishing to participate in the Multi-School Competition at the Affiliate Competition **MUST** be proficient in the six-step problem solving process and must have **formally practiced** the Global Issues problem solving process during the current school year.

What is the composition for team CmPS?

An Individual CmPS project is executed by one person. Complex projects may take quite a bit of organization, with tasks divided among participants. Since CmPS projects are usually long-term activities lasting up to a year or more, students need to be committed to following through with the activity. A large group may work on a Team CmPS project. However, should the team qualify for the Affiliate Competition; a maximum of 15 students may participate in the interview, the display set up, and the CmPS Showcase (required for Middle and Senior levels). A maximum of 15 awards will be given at the Affiliate Competition. A smaller group may work on a team project, but Florida evaluators require a minimum team size of 5 students. If a smaller team is necessary, the team must request an exception by communicating specific circumstances with the

CmPS Coordinator prior to the first deadline. *Please note:* Florida CmPS projects invited to compete at the FPSP International Conference will be required to send a minimum of 50% of the team.

How can I get started with my students?

All CmPS materials are available free of charge by emailing Nick Whaley, whaley.nicholas@gmail.com. The packet includes guidelines for submission, samples of recent CmPS projects, coaching techniques, and official entry cover sheets. ***The new due dates are included on the website.***

For further information regarding the Community Problem Solving component of Florida FPS, and for program materials, please visit our website at FLFPSP.org. CmPS resources are also available from the FPSPI catalog at FPSPIMART.org.

Direct questions to Nick Whaley, whaley.nicholas@gmail.com.