

What is Action-based Problem Solving?

Action-based Problem Solving (*AbPS*) is a non-competitive component of GA FPSP designed to introduce creative problem solving skills to students as a part of the curriculum. AbPS equips students with the life-skills needed to become effective citizens.

- AbPS is designed specifically for use in the regular classroom.
- AbPS introduces the classroom teacher and students to creative problem solving, higher-level thinking, and action skills in a hands-on, non-threatening manner.
- The concepts behind each problem-solving step are taught in short, challenging lessons, making the concepts easy to understand and apply.
- AbPS actively engages all students in learning, constructing meaning, and applying both knowledge and process to real-life situations.
- AbPS is performance based and has real-world applications for authentic learning. It is designed to guide students into the Community Problem Solving component.
- Four to six students comprise a team. Teams are encouraged to work on one or two topics throughout the school year.
- AbPS provides a model that is effective in the classroom for all students and can be implemented as:
 - * a strategy for use in the inclusion model,
 - * a curriculum in exploratory classes,
 - * an extension of any curriculum unit, and
 - * a model to introduce higher level thinking skills to gifted students.

Why Teach AbPS?

Future Problem Solving Program International (FPSPI) meets standards for curriculum and instruction, language arts, social studies, science, the arts, math, geography, civics, technology, life skills, and behavioral studies. Action-based Problem Solving provides opportunities for students to develop and exercise the skills necessary to meet and exceed these standards through research and investigation of topics relevant to their world. Action-based Problem Solving provides a convenient package designed to stimulate the creative and critical thinking skills younger students need in order to synthesize the massive amount of data brought to them by Information Age technology.

FPSPI teaches students how to make informed choices and solve complicated problems. *AbPS* facilitates discovery by presenting the students with perplexing issues and providing the means to become active inquirers. *AbPS* provides students with the procedural, brainstorming, decision-making, and communication strategies needed for learning. The action-based hands-on model turns the classroom into an authentic learning community, bridging the gap between school and the real world. Students learn to work cooperatively toward a common goal, discovering how to manage time as well as the project. They begin to see a purpose for their education and develop a personal commitment to learning.

Generating Ideas by Brainstorming

Brainstorming is a generating tool involving the spontaneous contribution of ideas from all members of the group. In order to encourage a free flow of ideas, utilize the brainstorming masters found in the *AbPS Teacher's Manual* (Available from the FPSPI Catalog, www.fpspimart.org or 1.800.256.1499, item FPSAB at a cost of \$30.00) (Section 3). These exercises generally take 5-10 minutes and can be used to begin each AbPS session or as a "sponge" or filler between other lessons. The exercises are designed to encourage students to view each item from many different perspectives, thereby increasing both their fluency (quantity of ideas) and flexibility (variety of ideas).

The 'Fuzzy' Challenge

A fuzzy challenge is a short scenario that establishes the time, place, people, and issues related to the topics. It is important for the students to carefully read or listen to all the information presented. Some of the problems or challenges are specifically stated and some are implied. As in real-life, not everything is clear-cut. Students will develop the ability to make connections between what is actually stated and what might happen. This part of the process stimulates growth in listening skills, reading skills, and critical and creative thinking.

There are different fuzzies for each topic, based on the division. The primary/junior division fuzzies, for grades K-6, are written at a lower reading and comprehension level and require less research. Each junior/middle division fuzzy, for grades 3-9, follows the same theme but has more substance. Both versions direct students to think about how the topic might impact their community.

Teachers can develop topic-specific activity packets, used as learning centers, once students begin working on the topic. Encourage the use of the technology by having students use topic research information through reference sources on the Internet. Consider introducing the steps of the creative problem solving process through the use of a scenario based on a school-related problem such as raising funds for a school field trip, buying more band equipment, recruiting more community volunteers for the school library, etc. Fill-in-the-blank examples of generic fuzzies are found in the *AbPS Teacher's Manual*.

The object is to introduce the creative problem solving process to both students and teachers at a graduated pace. The teams will sharpen their problem solving skills on the topics throughout the year!