



## Lesson 3: Problems, Policy, and Civic Actions

### Overview

This lesson gives students further background in problems, policy, and civic action to prepare them to get started on their own CAP. First, students analyze problems in terms of causes and effects. Next, they explore how policy can be linked to problems. Finally, they receive their CAP assignment and become familiar with the CAP Proposal.

### Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Analyze given problems in terms of causes and effects.
- Understand five different ways policy can be connected to problems.
- Formulate opinions about how policy might address particular problems.

### Preparation & Materials

- Be ready to have students work in the same groups as the previous lesson with the articles they collected in the newspaper search.
- **Proposal ([Online](#) | [PDF](#))**
- **Civic Action Project Proposal Tips**—Use either the online version or the [pen/paper version](#)—1 per student
- **[Handout 3A: Policy Implications](#)**—1 per student

## Procedure

### I. Discussion of Causes and Effects of Problems

A. Tell students that for CAP they soon are going to select a problem or issue with policy implications and begin doing civic actions to address their selected problem or issue. Explain that today they are going to look further at problems, policy implications, and civic actions to give them a head start on their own CAPs.

B. Ask students to get in the same groups that they were in when they did the newspaper search.

C. Explain that they are going to first look at problems and analyze them in terms of causes and effects. Write “Crime” on the board and the words “Causes” and “Effects” on each side. Ask students: What do you think the causes of crime might be? Allow a couple of minutes for the brainstorm and accept all reasonable answers, writing them under “Causes.”

Students might respond with the following causes:

- Poor parenting
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Greed
- Poverty
- Lack of morals/values
- Racism
- Child abuse and neglect
- Failure in school

Don't dwell on particular answers. Explain that these are just possible causes.

D. Repeat the same process for the effects of crime.  
Students might respond with the following effects:

- Injuries and death
- Lost income and money
- Fear of going out at night
- Fear of certain neighborhoods
- Business failure
- Rise in insurance rates
- Hospital costs

E. Ask the groups to select one of the problems that they found in their newspaper search. Have each group share the problem so that you can make sure that what they

chose lends itself to cause/effect analysis and to ensure a variety of problems are looked at.

F. Ask each group to work together to discuss and analyze possible causes/effects of the selected problem. When they are ready, have the groups report on the problem and two possible causes and effects. As groups discuss their answers, touch on why analyzing causes and effects is important. Particularly consider these points:

- Causes and Effects: Help you see connections between one problem and another and help you determine how serious the problem is and how the effects might be minimized.
- Causes: Can help you think of things you could do to address a problem.
- Effects: Help you determine and show the seriousness of a problem.
- For CAP: Can help you narrow down an issue. Example: Someone concerned about addressing youth crime could narrow it down to a particular cause or effect. Possible causes: peer pressure, lack of positive role models, no options for recreation, etc. Possible effects: a rise in juvenile crime rates, stores that only allow two teens in at a time, new and strict curfew laws.

## II. Discussion of Policy Implications

A. Remind students that the problem they work on for CAP needs to have some connection to government and that connection will likely be through policy.

As they think about the problem, issue, or policy they want to address, they need to find a policy implication. Explain that there are a number of ways they can look at policy implications. Distribute [Handout 3A: Policy Implications](#) to each student. Allow 3-5 minutes for students to complete the handout. (You might want students to work in pairs so that they can discuss the scenarios and possible implications.)

B. When students have complete Handout 3A, engage them in a discussion to check their answers:

**Eliminate** a policy that is unfair: All fundraising for social events at Harshville High School must now be spent on replacing lost textbooks instead.

**Modify** an existing policy: Slowsville had a terrible drag-racing problem every Saturday night on Main Street. The city adopted a policy that on Saturdays from noon to midnight, Main Street would be closed to all traffic. People want this policy changed to close Main Street during the hours that drag racing usually takes place, not during the day.

**Create** new policy: Trashytown invested a huge amount of money to buy automated garbage trucks. But waste cans are accidentally being knocked over by

the trucks, making a mess on the streets. The town council is considering a policy that requires drivers to take a course in operating the new trucks.

Issues of **enforcement**: It is against the law to sell drugs. But in Criminalcity, there is a well-known park where drug dealers do their business. The problem is that the police rarely visit the area, so dealers just keep dealing there.

Use policy to **leverage change**: There is national concern about improving the nutrition and healthy eating habits of young children. Policies about healthy food choices at schools are in being enacted throughout the nation. A vender sets up a cotton candy cart outside a local middle school every afternoon. The vendor is licensed and though no law is being broken, parents and school authorities cite current policies related to child nutrition to “encourage” the vender to either sell healthier snacks or move on.

C. Have students apply the different ways to find policy implications using news stories/articles they collected. You could set up a contest:

Which group can come up with the most points? They will have ten minutes to find examples of:

1. A policy they think should be eliminated. (1 point)
2. A policy they think should be changed. (2 points)
3. A policy that they think should be better enforced. (4 points)
4. A situation that calls for new policy to be created. (5 points)
5. A way to leverage change by using a policy. (6 points)

D. Give students 10 minutes, call time, and give them time to total their points. Call on groups to give examples (and reasons) of each of the policy implications. Explain that as they look for a problem, issue, or policy to work on, they can think about these and other policy implications.

### III. The Civic Action Project Assignment

A. Distribute a **Civic Action Project Proposal** and **Tips** to each student. Explain that over the next \_\_\_ weeks, their assignment is to find something—a problem, issue, or policy—they want to try and have an impact on through CAP. Remind students that this is what their whole K–12 education has prepared them to do—to be informed, active, and engaged citizens.

B. Review each part of the CAP Proposal, discussing the Tips with students to ensure they understand the objectives and expectations for each section. When you get to the

last prompt (*What are the first things you would do?*), explain:

- Each thing you do, including just finding out more about the problem/policy you choose, is a civic action.
- Figuring out who can help you is a civic action, and contacting those people is also a civic action.

C. Tell students that once they have had their proposal approved, they will get started doing civic actions to make an impact on the problem, issue, or policy they chose. Tell them that more help for working on their proposals is available online:

[www.crfcap.org](http://www.crfcap.org)

So that students have a “roadmap,” you may want them to preview the rest of the planners and *Tips for Thinking It Through, Civic Actions*, and *CAP Report* on the web site.

D. Explain that they will be doing more CAP lessons in class, which will help them with ideas for choosing a problem/issue, types of civic actions they might take, and other parts of their CAP assignment.

#### **IV. CAP Logistics in Your Classroom**

A. Students will need to know:

- Whether CAP is a whole-class, small-group, or individual assignment. If your students are going to work in small groups, they will need to meet together to choose a problem, issue, policy to work on.
- The deadline for having the CAP Proposals turned in.
- The deadline for completing CAP.