

## Hospital Helpers, Junior Division CmPS (5<sup>th</sup> Grade)

### GA FPSP Notes:

- This project report is from 2019. The requirements for CmPS changed for the 2021-22 school year. Instead of one report, the requirements are a Project Proposal (Area of Concern, Challenges, Underlying Problem, Solution Ideas, Determination of Best Solution, and Action Plan) and a Project Report (Implementation of Action Plan).
- Identifying information (names, places) have been edited.

### Part 1: Project Overview

#### **A. Area of Concern**

Staying in the hospital can be a scary time for kids. A lot of times, kids just come, then leave right away. Sometimes, kids stay there for days, weeks, or even months. This can cause many problems, including extended time away from school. Kids who stay in the hospital for a long time get behind in their classes, and lose the academic edge that comes from daily instruction. How can they keep their minds sharp? We decided this needed to be our focus.

The reason this topic means a lot to us is because we all know what it feels like to be sick and not be able to go to school. It's stressful to fall behind and have to catch up on work that was missed. This topic is also special to us because a member of our team...has parents (both of them) who work at [a children's hospital]. That gave us a personal connection to the hospital. It means a lot for us to help [there]. Personally, our team loves to be at school and learn, so it breaks our hearts to think about kids who are stuck in the hospital and unable to learn.

To gather more about our project focus, we invited [our team member's mom] to come to our classroom and tell us more about the hospital. We asked her questions and listened to her advice. She listened to our ideas and said that the one about making laminated educational activity mats was a really good one.

#### **B. Challenges Identified**

1. Some kids have nothing to watch in a hospital room.
2. The hospital rooms need to seem happier and more enjoyable.
3. Kids are scared about procedures.
4. The hospital is very plain and not fun or colorful.
5. There is nothing fun for them to do.
6. Some kids don't have many visitors.
7. There is nothing productive for them to do. Also nothing to take their minds off of things they don't look forward to.
8. They have no education in the room, and nothing to help them practice learning.
9. There is not a lot of storage for the patients' stuff.
10. Their hospital gowns are plain and not fun.
11. The staff doesn't have a lot of storage for tools and instruments.
12. The hospital does not have the best food.

13. There is not any entertainment for them. They don't get to see and do cool things.
14. Their trash cans stink and could make rooms smell.

### **C. Underlying Problem**

Because children who stay in the hospital for days to months at a time miss important instructional time in school, in what ways might we challenge their thinking and keep their minds sharp while they are absent due to illness? We want to help the patients at the hospital keep thinking academically. If the kids in the hospital keep their minds active, then once they get back to school it will be easier for them to catch up on what they missed.

### **D. Alternative Solution Ideas**

1. Create or buy math flashcards
2. Donate or bring books
3. Tutor day for the children
4. Bring teachers to teach the kids
5. Donate educational magazines to the hospital
6. Educational placements
7. Donate whiteboards: small dry erase boards for practice work, math facts, etc.
8. Do small group learning
9. Work with different grade levels
10. Work in groups by subject
11. Educational puzzles
12. Educational crosswords
13. Thinking game groups
14. Include other schools in game/tutor day
15. Summer assignments/activities
16. Include siblings in game/tutor day
17. Prizes/rewards for successes
18. Include Beta Club or other clubs: ask them to help with the children's school work

### **E. Plan of Action**

The first plan of action that we wanted to pursue was leading the patients in small groups, playing thinking games. Our rationale for choosing this over our other ideas is because we thought it would be the most pleasing to the staff, it would educate the children best, it would have the longest-lasting effect on the children, it would be very appealing to the patients, and it would not be very disruptive to the staff. We believed the impact of this plan would be that kids in long-term hospital care would be able to keep their minds sharp by playing thinking games such as Quarto and Chess with other kids. We were hoping to visit regularly with the patients and lead these groups each time we came. Sadly, our first plan of action was not approved because no one under the age of 18 is allowed to visit patients past the first floor of the hospital.

We are fifth graders. ALL of us are under 18. It was a major setback, but we knew we couldn't stop there.

So we came up with a second plan. We chose to make laminated educational activity mats. The kids will be able to read interesting articles and solve fun puzzles using wet-erase pens. The hospital has specially approved wet wipes that can be used to erase the kids' work so that other patients can enjoy the mats without spreading germs. Our reason for deciding to follow this second idea is that it would have a similar rationale and impact as our first plan, but without any direct interaction with the patients at the hospital. We think the impact of our second idea will be kids in long-term hospital care will keep their minds sharp by enjoying interesting articles, activities, and puzzles on the mats that we make for them.

We are happy to announce that our plan is successful! The Donations Coordinator at [the children's hospital] said "The kids have loved the mats! Most of them say that they enjoy the crossword puzzles and the fun facts that you have put on them the most. One friend said, 'I get to have fun and learn too!' It's super helpful for me that you laminated the mats. That way I can clean them in-between patients." We will continue to make and mail new educational activity mats to the hospital. [The Donations Coordinator] will ask the patients to give suggestions for topics and subjects on future mats, so that the next batch we send will be custom-ordered!

## Part 2: Implementation of the Plan

### **A. Actions and Outcomes to Date**

We chose to bring school to hospitalized kids in a fun way. We wanted to visit the hospital and do thinking game groups. We asked for permission from the Activities Coordinator at the [hospital]. Unfortunately, she told us that we had to be at least 18 to visit with the patients. This was a problem since we are only 5th grade elementary students. We were so afraid that we would have to go back to the beginning of this whole process, but then we remembered another idea that we came up with during our brainstorming. This solution still had our goal in mind, but we wouldn't have to directly interact with the patients. Our solution was to make educational activity mats that the children could work on. [The Activities Coordinator] connected us with the Donations Coordinator. She told us the mats would be great, so we got to work!

We made 5 activity mats for our first delivery. We presented them on Wednesday, March 27th. While we were there, [the Donations Coordinator] told us all about her career as the Donations Coordinator, and she answered all of our questions about the kids in the hospital. [She] told us that she loved our activity mats, and she knew the kids in the hospital would, too. Now, kids in long-term hospital care can read interesting articles and work on fun activities that involve math, space, animal classification, arctic animals, and the ocean. But that's not all! There is more to come as [our school's] Future Problem Solvers continue to make more activity mats for the patients at the [hospital] to enjoy. We will continue meeting regularly and we will send activity mats to the hospital as we make more. We hope to create them in different topics and for different grade levels.

## **B. Organization**

Our team consists of nine students from [our] Elementary School. Once we decided that our focus would be our local children's hospital, we worked as a whole group to follow the six steps of creative problem solving together. In order to carry out our plan of action, we broke into groups of two or three to make educational activity mats for the patients at the [hospital]. These pairs and groups were based on interest: math, animal classification, oceans, arctic animals, and the solar system.

After completing the mats, we broke into three groups to work on the scrapbook, the addendum, and the report. We chose these groups by our team members' specialties. Some kids are better at art than computers, while some kids love computers but can't draw a circle. Others are very persuasive with their writing. We put all of this into consideration when forming our groups. In the end, [four students] worked on the scrapbook. [Five students] worked on the written report, and the teams collaborated by using our shared Google drive to create the addendum.

## **C. Resource Identification and Utilization**

For this project, we relied on two sources of information for the Hospital Helpers. One source is the mother of one of our CmPS team members. [She] is the Senior Staff Nurse at the [hospital]. She came to our classroom to help us understand what needs the hospital might have, and what kinds of limits we would encounter as we decided what we could do for our project. [She] told us that anything that was going to be touched by the kids had to be wipeable. She warned us that we could not donate things like latex, balloons, sanitizer, or anything with a strong odor. She also mentioned that we would not be able to visit during flu season.

Next was the Donations Coordinator for [the hospital]. At our visit on March 27th, [she] gave us lots of wonderful insight. She said that the length of a hospital stay for kids varies widely, depending on their illness. She stated that most kids just stay one night, like when they break a bone. But some kids have long-term illnesses like cancer or cystic fibrosis. She said that kids with CF tend to spend the most amount of time in the hospital. [She] also told us about all the activities they provide to help the kids feel better. There is a gym, a library, a chapel, a McDonald's, and a Subway. There are daily activities and lots of fun themes to make things more interesting. We were very excited to learn that [the hospital] also has two service dogs that come daily to be with the patients. The dogs are trained to help calm kids down when they get shots, lie with them while they are feeling yucky, be a model for what's about to happen to them, or just be available for the kids to enjoy their company.

Finally, we utilized social media to get the word out about our project. [Our school] has accounts on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. After delivering our activity mats to the [hospital] we asked our media specialist to post the pictures and a description of what we did to all of our school's social media outlets. Our principal sent the picture and information to the [district] office so that our story can be included in the county newsletter. This publication highlights special accomplishments of [our county's] students, and it goes to every employee in the entire

school system! It makes us very proud of all the hard work that we did to help the patients at [the hospital]!

### Part 3: Project Outcomes

#### **A. Accomplishments**

To kickoff our first Community Problem Solving team meeting, our principal asked for our help with a service project right here at [our school]. She requested that we weed and replant the flowerbed in front of our school's marquee. It was a lot of hard, sweaty work, but we really enjoyed making the entrance of our school beautiful. This was our first community service project as a team. What a great start!

After working our way through the six steps of creative problem solving using a practice problem, we focused on what we would do for our real CmPS project. During January, we determined that we wanted to help the kids who are patients at our local children's hospital. We started working together to create a fun and educational way for the kids to learn. We understand that while children are staying at [the hospital], they miss a lot of school. We wanted to find a way to help keep kids' minds sharp and active, even when they can't be in school.

We finally came up with a great idea to go to the hospital and lead small groups with fun thinking games. On February 25th, we sent an email to the Activities Coordinator. Sadly, she informed us that we could not interact with the patients at the hospital, because we are under the age of 18. After what we thought was a major setback, we all agreed that our next best idea was to make educational activity mats. [She] connected us with the Donations Coordinator who really liked our idea. We all worked really hard to create mats on a lot of different subjects like math, animal classification, arctic animals, the solar system, and oceans.

When we finished our first set of mats (5 in all), we went to the hospital to deliver them on March 27, 2019. This was a very special day for our group, because 8 of our 9 team members, and our coach, finally got to visit the [hospital]. As a group, we presented our finished activity mats to [the Donations Coordinator]. It was a really great moment, but we assured [her] that it wouldn't be the end of our donations. We enjoyed making the mats so much, that we will keep making them and sending them her way until the end of the school year!

#### **B. Reflection on Outcomes**

Thinking back to the beginning of this project, we wanted to go to the [local children's hospital] to lead fun thinking games. It was really disappointing that we were not allowed to follow our first plan of action. But we think our second plan was a really good compromise. It was a lot of fun creating these awesome mats! We received a bunch of donations for vis-a-vis markers (they are wet erase markers) for the mats. We went to the hospital to meet with [the Donations Coordinator] and she loved the mats. She really appreciated the thought of us caring about the children there. The mats will solve our underlying problem by keeping the patients' minds sharp, even when they can't be in school. Even though we delivered all the mats we made, we are going to make more mats and continue to mail them to the hospital. [She] is going to give

us the patients' suggestions for future mats so that we can make them even better. We were proud to present our mats to the [hospital]. This project makes us feel like we are actually doing something important for children who are sick in the hospital.

After just a few days of the delivery, [the Donations Coordinator] told us "The kids have loved the mats! Most of them say that they enjoy the crossword puzzles and the fun facts that you have put on them the most. One friend said, 'I get to have fun and learn too!' It's super helpful for me that you laminated the mats. That way I can clean them in-between patients."

### **C. Scope of the Project**

Our team created educational activity mats that would help the patients at the [children's hospital] by keeping their minds active and sharp, even when they have to miss school. Once we finished, we were given permission to visit the hospital. We met the Donations Coordinator and gave her our activity mats. She loved them, and she told us that the patients were very excited about them, too! Now, the children at the hospital can work on the activity mats. When they are finished, the patients will be able to wipe them off with hospital-approved, sanitized wipes and another child can use them. This project has the potential to impact children for a long time. And we're not done! We will continue making and mailing activity mats until the end of the school year, continuing to give the [hospital] plenty of fun, educational opportunities for their patients.

Our Community Problem Solvers project was covered on [our school's] Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter pages. Also, it was featured in the county newsletter for every employee of the [our school] System to read. There are photos of us delivering the mats, along with a brief description of what we did. These show our educational activity mats and the team members of the [our school's] Future Problem Solvers.

We feel very proud that we have helped the kids in the [children's hospital] with their education. This project makes us feel like we're doing something right, and important, for someone else, that we are improving people's lives. We are grateful for the opportunity to make a difference. We expect this project to have long-lasting effects in the lives of the patients, but we also think that being a part of something like this will have long-lasting effects on our lives as well. This has made us more aware of others' needs, and the fact that even though we're young, we can make a difference!

### Part 4: Timeline

**October:** Meet weekly. Kickstart the club with the first service project, the marquee flowerbed.

**November:** Use the creative problem solving process to solve our practice problem involving the lunchroom.

**December:** Finish the practice problem before we get out of school for Christmas break.

**January:** We will use the creative problem solving process to come up with a real Community Problem Solving project.

**February:** Our problem is the education of patients at the [children's hospital]. We will ask permission to visit the patients.

**March 15 - 29:** Start meeting daily so we can finish the project components.

- Create activity mats
- Receive vis-a-vis marker donations
- Deliver mats to [the hospital]
- Write report
- Create scrapbook
- Create addendum