

# New Jersey Future Problem Solving Program

**To:** Coaches and Evaluators, Team and Individual components

**From:** Jason Navarino, Assistant Evaluation Director

**Date:** Monday, July 21, 2003

**Re:** **Changes and Updates to the International Guidelines in New Jersey for 2003-04**

The international Governing Council of FPS at its June 2003 meeting approved a number of changes to the evaluation guidelines and scoresheets for the Team and Individual Problem Solving competitions. Some of these are mandatory and permanent changes, while others are under consideration for being made permanent and are being piloted in the 2003-04 school year. Dr. Jeanne Carlson and the NJ FPS Board of Directors have agreed to pilot all optional evaluation changes in New Jersey in the upcoming school year.

This letter describes all of the changes made by the Governing Council to the evaluation guidelines. In addition, this letter reiterates the amendments to the international guidelines made by the state program that are applicable at the state level of competition (both Practice Problems, the Qualifying Problem, and the State Bowl) and that have been in place in New Jersey for some time. Coaches and competitors (and evaluators) who advance to the International Conference should note that international evaluators are required to adhere strictly to the international guidelines, and may not be familiar with the state-level changes explained in this letter.

Please note that the annual **Coaches' Training** session will be held on **Friday, October 17 at the Fords Library in Fords, NJ**. This year's meeting will be very important, as the evaluation and rules changes described in this letter will be discussed more in depth. Additional information about this meeting will be sent out in the coming weeks. Also, coaches and evaluators should be aware that the NJ FPS Board of Directors holds its annual meeting on or about the last Saturday in June of each year. All coaches and evaluators are strongly encouraged to attend these meetings, as they play a crucial role in the future planning and direction of the state program. In addition, all coaches and competitors are invited and encouraged to go to **<http://www.fpsp.org/topics&calendar.htm>** in order to learn more about the FPS topics for 2003-04 and for 2004-05, and to vote on topics for 2005-06.

## **Mandatory Changes**

1. In Step 2 (Underlying Problem), the descriptor for 2 points for condition phrase has been changed to read "condition phrase present and related to the future scene." The descriptor for 0 points for Stem and KVP has been changed to read "missing or has 2 verbs or 2 objects." The word "trivial" has been removed from the descriptor for 1-3 points for adequacy.
2. In Step 3 (Solutions), a mark of P for Perhaps has been added to the scoring options. A P will be given for solutions whose relevance to the UP is unclear (especially if a team has not explained a solution's purpose – see NJ amendment #2), whereas a W for Why will continue to be given when the solution is plainly irrelevant or in need of an explanation of its relevance.

3. In Step 4 (Criteria), the rule stating that up to two criteria (one according to NJ FPS rules) may be made Target merely by adding a future scene parameter (topic, place, time) has been abolished. Criteria can be made Target by being relevant specifically to the Key Verb Phrase, Purpose, populations, places, or processes of a team's Underlying Problem. The inclusion of a "target group" is helpful for this purpose. Wording add-ons (i.e. taking a Stock criterion and adding on words such as "in order to ...," followed by the words of the KVP or Purpose) are not sufficient to make a criterion Target in NJ FPS.

### **Piloted Changes**

1. The flexibility scales in Steps 1 (Challenges) and 3 (Solutions) have been changed to give students one full point for each category used, thus making it easier to obtain more flexibility points. The fluency scales in Steps 1 and 3 have been changed to make it easier for students to obtain more points (more points per Y in Step 1 and per R in Step 3). The elaboration scale in Step 3 has been shifted to make it harder for students to obtain elaboration points (fewer points per E).
2. The descriptors discussing the quantities of Ys, Ps, and Ws in the clarity scale in Step 1 have been removed. Clarity is a measure of how well students explain their ideas, not the quality of the ideas themselves. Although students who have good ideas but difficulty expressing those ideas will likely receive few Ys (a low fluency score) and a low quality score, it is possible for a team to have strong fluency but weak clarity, or to very clearly explain only a few relevant ideas.
3. The automatic penalty of 1 point for focus and 1 point for adequacy if an absolute verb is used in Step 2 has been abolished. Students are still advised against using absolute verb phrases, however, as evaluators may still score a UP with an absolute verb very low, and they are instructed to be very critical of Step 3 solutions based on an absolute UP verb phrase.

### **New Jersey Amendments to International Guidelines**

1. Underlying Problems in Step 2 that restate, broaden, or are irrelevant to the charge of the future scene are given 1 point for adequacy and 1 point for focus, and the Step 3 score for booklets with such UPs is reduced by half, since such UPs are assumed to oversimplify the task of generating solutions.
2. In New Jersey, students are required to explain for each solution idea in Step 3 both what their solution idea is, AND how the idea accomplishes the Purpose of their UP in Step 2, in order to receive a grade of R (relevant). Additional details of 'who,' 'how' and/or 'why' (in regards to the KVP, not the Purpose) are required to receive a grade of E (elaborate). International guidelines permit the purpose explanation to be counted as a 'why' explanation, but this is not the case at the state level.
3. If the solution idea in Step 3 from which the Action Plan in Step 6 originates is deemed irrelevant to the UP, the Action Plan is assigned an automatic total score of five points (one point in each category).