

PARENT PERSPECTIVES

This issue of *Parent Perspectives* comes from Diane Fisher of the Georgia Affiliate. Diane shares with us her experiences as a parent, coach, chaperone, evaluator, and competitor! Please enjoy!



FPS: Beyond the Competition!



Pictured are Diane (center) with her two daughters, Allison and Michelle, at IC 2014 in Iowa.

I know a thing or two about FPS competitions. For more than a decade I have written press releases touting the many awards earned by students from my community at FPS State and International competitions. I have been to 12 Georgia State Bowls as an observer, chaperone, coach, parent, and Presentation of Action Plan evaluator, and have attended 6 International Conferences. Both of my daughters, Allison and Michelle, are International Grand Champions in Global Issues Problem Solving and I took home second place honors in the Adult Multi-Affiliate Global Issues Competition (MAGIC) the first time I competed.

Success in Future Problem Solving State and International competitions is a mark of pride in our family and community.

But the true impact of FPS in the lives of participants lies in the fact that FPS provides a concrete process for approaching difficult situations - not only for succeeding in an academic competition, but for tackling the real personal and societal problems that they will face in their futures. I hear from high school and college students all the time who use the 6 step process in their academic and career lives. When my daughters were first taught E. Paul Torrance's six-step process - analyzing a Future Scene on a given topic, identifying potential challenges in the scene, selecting the most significant Underlying Problem, brainstorming potential solutions, creating and implementing criteria to rank solutions, and elaborating upon the top-ranked solution - it set the cogs in their elementary school minds spinning. As 10 year olds, they were given a framework for analysis that they have used ever since.

It was soon after returning from their first International Conference that my rising 6th and 8th graders realized that the six-step process could be used to approach real world problems. They learned that most successful FPS programs worldwide had significant adult support. In our school system, however, adult involvement after elementary school was sparse to nonexistent. To solve this real-life problem, Allison and Michelle wrote their own scenario and completed the six-step process, focusing on the lack of support for FPS at the Middle School. As a result, they convinced their principal to provide teacher, advisors, and financial resources for FPS in our school. Even at a young age, they were aware that exposing more students to FPS was a worthwhile endeavor. What was once a theoretical tool for solving problems set far in the future proved practically effective as a means of implementing change in our community.

The FPS mindset helps students in the classroom as well. They are well trained in researching new topics and applying that knowledge, skills that make for strong students at all levels. Whether it is in one of my older daughter's college computer science classes or one of my younger's sociology seminars, they have been able to draw useful connections between past research topics and their studies, thereby enriching class discussions and their own understanding. The FPS mindset builds on Margaret Mead's counsel that "Children must be taught *how to think*, not *what to think*", which is particularly beneficial to students in upper level academic pursuits.

There are tangible rewards to having the six-step process as a go to tool in their intellectual arsenal. As an Independent College Counselor, I spend a great deal of time helping high school students understand and navigate the college admissions process and advise them on how to best tell their personal story to the admissions committee. You don't have to look farther than some of the most popular prompts for college essays to see that colleges today are looking for creative problem solvers:

- Tell us about a problem you've solved or a problem you'd like to solve.
- In your opinion, what is an important challenge facing your generation in the next 50 years?
- Describe how you express your creative side.
- Please share an example of an instance when you feel creative thought really did matter.

Students who have participated in FPS have already given great thought to questions such as these, whether or not they have come home from a competition with a trophy. Moreover FPS-ers tend to have a global perspective, a thirst for learning more and applying knowledge, all of which are traits highly coveted by school admissions offices.



Getting ready for Presentation of Action Plan at IC!



Competitors at IC 2012!



Pictured left are: Allison and Michelle with Kathy Russo, who was named FPSPi Coach of the Year in 2012. Kathy was the teacher who originally taught my girls the 6 steps.

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 • "At the end of the day, the most
 • overwhelming key to a child's
 • success is the positive involvement of
 • parents." ~Jane D. Hull~
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FPS's impact can be felt beyond the classroom and academy. Allison has had the opportunity to intern at some of today's largest and most forward thinking companies. Many of the technical interviews she has had on her way to being hired were concerned with the process by which she approached problem solving, rather than the answer at which she arrived. She tells me that she had seen how companies invest large portions of their capital in teaching their employees basic problem-solving skills - skills that she has already acquired and nurtured for years. This past summer, Michelle was able to apply her interests in creative education, developed in no small part by her exposure to FPS, as an intern with Connecticut's Higher Order Thinking Schools. Her supervisors were excited to have her incorporate her experiences with creative problem solving with their educational approach understanding school culture change, curriculum integration, leadership development, and arts-infused program design. Utilizing the skills learned through FPS can open professional opportunities and makes those using those skills valuable employees.



Competitors from our Cluster schools and their trophies.

More than 50 years ago, E. Paul Torrance created a framework for creative thinking. Each year, students around the world learn the six-step Future Problem Solving process. Whether or not they go on to win competitions, they are given a framework for thinking that will not only impact their personal opportunities, but the lives of those who will benefit from the creative solutions they will envision. I am forever grateful that my daughters had the great privilege to have been taught the 6-step Future Problem Solving process. In doing so, their teacher made a valuable investment in their development as critical thinkers, innovators, and an engaged global citizens by equipping them with the tools of flexibility, interdisciplinary collaboration, and analytical thinking. While I have focused on my daughter's experiences, I know from talking to many FPS alumni that they each have their own stories to tell which would make the same point.

Each time I attend an FPS competition, I focus not on the awards received, but on the intellectual and creative dexterity our young people are developing. As they move into their own futures, I have full trust in the current generation of Future Problem Solvers to tackle important challenges and generate constructive change in our world. And I smile, knowing that if these students are our future, then our future is bright.

