“The Dance Known as FPS” by Cassie Decker, Iowa Alumna

The skills and experiences that I have gained during my years as a competitor and evaluator in The Future Problem Solving Program have been essential in the development of my personal, academic, and professional life. FPS provides an avenue to acquire new abilities and further develop current ones. It teaches a process of thinking that can be applied to everyday challenges—such as how to balance a heavy schedule—often without realizing that the practice is underway.

The Future Problem Solving steps also help individuals adequately assess complex issues; I used the process in determining my thesis project, which involves identifying a structural issue that manages generational poverty. It helps in making critical decisions like choosing the best employment after graduation. Through the Future Problem Solving Program, a child will learn to be engaged in social issues, understand how to critically address practical problems, and discover a love for research and writing without ever realizing that these steps are occurring. This can essentially promise to anyone involved in the Future Problem Solving Program, but I can also guarantee that each child will gain additional skills based on his or her academic and personal situation.

I began Future Problem Solving due to an intersection of opportunity and a sudden need to advance academically. Fifth grade was a pivotal time; my parent’s divorce resulted in disenchantment with my current life, which then focused primarily on ballet, and sparked interest in academics, including Future Problem Solving. Although my team did not progress to State, I had the fortune to attend an individual. I still remember the afternoon that my teacher and beloved mentor, LeAnn Morris, informed me that I was going to State. I ran home with the large binder that she had prepared and drew a creative chart to formulate my own understanding of the FPS process. I noticed patterns within the way research, writing, and critical thinking were described as if the process were a choreographed dance. Future Problem Solving allowed for both structure and interpretative creativity. I fell in love with the process, and still utilize it today in determining and assessing challenges and solutions within my research and work.

Although I hope all parents can gain from this testimony, I would like to dedicate my story to single parents or families who might be experiencing a financial downturn. After my father left, my mother supported us by working three jobs. She sacrificed proper health care and new clothes for years, and still maintained a positive outlook on our current situation and hope for our future. Most importantly, she insisted upon our participation in extracurricular academics and activities. I could never conceptualize this level of sacrifice and love at the age of ten, but looking back I realize that my mother gave me the most amazing gift possible. She encouraged me to remain in Future Problem Solving. She supported me at every level of the competition for eight years. She even attended evaluator training to better understand my ramblings. (Continued on next page)
FUTURE PROBLEM SOLVING

I have a long history with the Future Problem Solving Program. My mom was a very successful junior coach for many years and I was a competitor from the 4th grade through the 8th grade. I had the pleasure to judge FPS during my college years. Now, many years later, I’m excited to report that I’m coaching my own son in FPS (at Morningside Elementary in Twin Falls, Idaho). I have found it so much fun to get back into the program and remember all of the benefits participation has for everyone involved.

Even though I haven’t competed in FPS for close to 25 years now (yikes!), I still carry with me the lessons of FPS everyday. I left a competitive FPS program and went right into a competitive speech and debate program when I was a freshman in high school. Speech and debate became the focus of my life for over 20 years and I completely credit my success in that area to a background in FPS. The ability to think critically and creatively in both divergent and convergent ways is vital in academic debate. Further, the ability to create and use criteria to make decisions is a sorely needed skill that FPSers have in spades!

I am now a college professor at the College of Southern Idaho where I teach critical thinking and argumentation classes. There are so many days that I look at my college students and wish they had some of those FPS skills! The ability to research, brainstorm, find problems and create solutions, work as a team and operate in a competitive environment is invaluable. My college students who can do these things have a vital 21st Century Skill set that will take them far. I am grateful to the Future Problem Solving Program for instilling in me these skills and look forward to watching my own son begin the same journey.

Tiffany Seeley-Case
Professor of Communication
College of Southern Idaho

“One of the most powerful wellsprings of creative energy, outstanding accomplishment, and self-fulfillment seems to be falling in love with something - your dreams, your image of the future.”
E. Paul Torrance

Pictured are Tiffany Seeley-Case and her son Parker, mother and son FPSers!
IN THEIR WORDS...

Future Problem Solving is...

"Thought-provoking!"
"Really cool!"
"Hard work!"
"Teamwork!"
"Really hard!"
"So much fun!"
"Awesome!"
"Really fun, if you know the topic!"
"More than a competition!"
"My best thing!"
"My life!"
"Electrifying!"
"Nerve racking!"
"Challenging!"
"The best!"
"Kinda amazing!"
"Everything!"
"Life changing!"

These are just a few responses from students as they entered their 2014 affiliate competition!

I have spent the last four years of my high school career being involved in the Clyde High School Community Problem Solving team. As a freshman, I was encouraged to join the team by a family friend who had a son on the team. She failed to tell me what joining this team would have in store for me, but I joined with an open mind.

As the first meeting rolled around, I scanned the room for fellow freshmen and to my disappointment, there were none. With no other freshmen on the team, I was positive this was going to be a long year, but I decided to keep my commitment and stayed with the team. That year, our project was based upon a fallen soldier in our community, Sergeant Michael Murphy. The team members shared with me that they had decided to continue their project from the previous year so they kindly filled me in on his story. I learned how they created a scholarship in his honor to award to a graduating senior at our school. Our team was at every single community event there was, including our local pecan fest, football games, and our community resource fair, sharing this man’s story and getting any support we could. This was no easy task. I learned that in order to achieve your goals, that sometimes the journey getting there is not easy.

As the year went by, I grew to love each and every member on our team. Even though they were older than me, they took me in like one of their own and till to this day I keep in contact with all of them. Their kindness and willingness to open up to me carried me through the next three years of being a member of the team. I have kept these loving people in mind as I have served as president for the past two years. This helps me show the same love and compassion that they showed me to the new incoming members.

All four years our team has been coached by Misti Kingston. She has coached the Clyde High School Community Problem solving team for some twenty years now. She is the most special woman I have ever met. She is not only our coach but she is our friend. She is there any time we need her with love and support. I grew to love her my first year and she has helped us succeed to the state competition every single year.

The love and compassion I have received through these years have helped me understand the kind of person I can only hope to be when I am older. I plan on attending Tarleton State University, where I will major in nursing. I have taken so much from my experience through the FPSP that is going to mold my attitude and character while I work to become the best nurse I can possibly be. I will cherish this experience and these wonderful people throughout my life.

Trisha Burnett
2014 Graduate
Clyde High School
Clyde, Texas
My experience with Future Problem Solving began in the 7th grade. It took the form of a regular class period during the school day. At the time, I had no idea what FPS was, and I don’t even remember if I signed up for the class or if I was assigned to it. What I do remember is that I felt engaged and motivated in this class unlike in any other class I’d ever taken. Of course, you don’t articulate it this way as a 7th grader. I just thought it was fun.

It wasn’t until my senior year of college that I realized the amazing impact FPS has had on me. Fall of senior year is typically job interview season. This was an introspective time for me. I knew that as long as I really knew myself, my skills, and my philosophies, I would be able to give authentic and valuable answers to any question. It occurred to me that a lot of my skills and philosophies were centered around problem solving, such as how I consider potential challenges, come up with solution ideas, balance creativity with criteria, and the sentiment that there is always more than one solution. Of course, my thinking process does not exactly emulate the 6-step problem solving process I learned in FPS, but I know that my increased awareness of problem solving strategy has much to do with FPS and the coaching I received through the FPS program. What I got out of FPS is a deep-seeded and intuitive set of critical thinking skills that manifest themselves outwardly as effective problem-solving and creativity.

After considering jobs in consulting, finance, and engineering, I ultimately settled into a career in patent law, preparing patents and counseling on patent strategy for large companies like Apple and GE as well as small technology start-ups. Each of these industries requires their own set of skills and knowledge. However, what is consistent among them is the need for strong problem solving skills. Because of my awareness and understanding of my own problem solving skills, I always felt like I had an edge. I believe that FPS plants the creative problem solving and critical thinking seeds that can grow into a multitude of applicable skills relevant to any field. In my opinion, this is the very real world value of FPS. It’s truly an asset. I’m still in the early stages of my career, but I’m very much looking forward to what else is in store for me, and how my problem solving skills will continue to grow and evolve from the seed planted by FPS.

Sharon Du
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Lisa Quintana participated in FPS from 7-12th grades in Arizona and competed at the International competition 4 years. She taught the FPS process at the U.S./China Education Conference in Beijing in 1997. Lisa currently evaluates for several affiliate programs and voluntarily teaches the FPS process in classrooms. Lisa graduated from Arizona State University in Business Marketing and has worked at companies such as News America Marketing, PepsiCo, and The Nielsen Company. She currently works at the Dr Pepper Snapple Group in Innovation Insights. Lisa leverages the skill sets she learned through FPS in her career to stand out in job interviews as well as to be successful in the business setting.

In her quest to train as many people as possible about the Future Problem Solving Process, Lisa has been collecting video testimonials of students who credit the FPS process with their success.

To see some of these fascinating videos go to: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-4RmRMIzns8&list=PLH6-PpkuGYmHHJOL5PGCpQ4kOoC23DKVy