

PARENT PERSPECTIVES

This issue of *Parent Perspectives* features a student's journey to the Future Problem Solving International Conference to participate in the Scenario Writing Team Competition in the junior division. Nazrul Shafiq bin Shahril Effendi from Malaysia FPS submitted his story to enlighten parents on the impact FPS has had on him. He is eleven years old and is a student at HELP International School. His hobbies beyond FPS include soccer/football and video games.



MY EXPERIENCE AT IC 2014

I enrolled into a program called FPSP (Future Problem Solving Program International) in the year 2013. What it has taught and is teaching me is very different from what I normally learn in school. I enrolled late and had missed a few things but I managed to catch up. At first I didn't understand GIPS but after a few weeks, I finally understood the whole process. It was meant to improve my problem solving skills so that in the future I would have the ability to gauge and anticipate real life scenarios more objectively and critically. I worked hard and sometimes I struggled a bit but after a few sessions, I was moved to the middle division as it was too easy at the junior level for me. It was very hard and I almost gave up but I managed to qualify to go to the finals in Iowa, USA, in June 2014.



Nazrul Shafiq bin Shahril Effendi

Another component that I participated in was scenario writing. It wasn't as easy as just writing a normal essay. There are the specific topics for each year and the story has to be based on one of them. The story uses the problem solving process, but has to be creative and futuristic. You are tasked to locate issues in the topic of your choice and turn one issue into a story. Amazingly, I qualified for the scenario writing too. In the end I had to choose either one to participate in the competition and I chose scenario writing. During the competition, all the participants had to work in a team of four. They were given a future scenario and each team had to come up with the story line together. After that, each team member will be assigned a certain part in the story to be written individually. When everyone is done, they had to gel the parts together to make up the full story which had to be at least 20 years in the future. It made the writing process a lot tougher and we only had 2 hours to complete it. (Continued)

When I left KLIA on the day of departure, I felt very sad. Our coach had said that we were the only group that had cried once we left. What cheered me up a bit was when we watched some movies on board the plane. Each transit area I would call my parents with my iPad but mostly I couldn't get them as they were sleeping.

When I arrived in the US, we were greeted by our homestay parents. I was very nervous to meet them but tried to keep calm and not look too scared. We stayed with them for about 4 days before we got off to the university. During the homestay we did many fun activities such as going to the zoo and the Mall of America. We had a cook out at our homestay and we invited the Minnesota team to come and eat the Malay food we cooked. I loved staying there - there was even a place to play football/soccer. It was also a great experience to know how different the Malay lifestyle is from the American one.

The competition was going to be held in a university so we were driven there by one of the coaches. When we arrived at the university we were assigned to our dorms. The rooms were very uncomfortable but once you got used to it, it wasn't that bad. On the day of the competition I woke up nervous again and sweat was pouring all over me.

I got assigned to a group and found out that all my group members were girls! They were from Turkey, Singapore and New Jersey. The group was very indecisive and argued a lot and it took us a while to come



Shafiq and friends at Iowa State

up with a plot. I was stressed and very worried as time was running out. But eventually, we finished the essay on time. The lesson I learned here is that I really need to convince my fellow teammates to make a quick decision as time was not on our side.

The next day we had to practice for the variety show. The variety show was where people perform to display something about their country. For us we did a song combo of "Abang Beca" and Malaysian boy. We had to practice nearly every day at the university and I was very reluctant to do the show as I am awful at dancing and singing. First we had to go for auditions. I was feeling a lot of stress as I was scared of forgetting my lyrics. As we waited for the results of the auditions, I was hoping we would get in as we worked really hard, but at the same time I wished that we didn't qualify as I didn't want to embarrass myself. Finally the results came in and I was horrified. We had qualified! During the variety show itself I was a nervous wreck and when we were called upon I felt like it was the end. Luckily I realized that I was meant to have fun on stage so I just persevered. The moment we started the crowd went silent, that brought my nervousness back but when we started rapping, the crowd cheered wildly! It was a true experience.

"Just as we develop our physical muscles through overcoming opposition - such as lifting weights - we develop our character muscles by overcoming challenges and adversity." ~ Stephen Covey ~



The next day, the awards ceremony took place and my friend won 2nd place. I felt happy for her but I was also a little jealous. I tried to shake it off positively and I hoped that I could do as well as she did next time.

In the afternoon we packed up and headed towards the airport as we returned home to Malaysia. But as luck would have it, we missed our connecting flight as our flight from Iowa was delayed and we were stranded in Chicago. At that point I felt very confused and frightened. I really missed my family but I knew that whining and complaining was not going to solve anything. Through team work we managed to get a replacement flight and a hotel to stay in overnight. The next day we decided to explore Chicago and its shops. When we boarded the plane, I was extremely relieved. I couldn't wait to see my family. When we arrived in KLIA my mother had prepared cupcakes for the whole team and it felt very welcoming.

Overall, this trip gave me a lot of valuable skills and life lessons. Lessons that I would have never learned back at home. I learned skills such as managing my time, my stress level, my teammates, being patient as well as valuable life skills such as doing my own laundry and cooking. I was very fortunate to have been selected for this trip. I hope I will be lucky to do it all over again in the future.

We are happy to share a follow-up interview with Shafiq which provides more background on his experiences:

- 1) Since you competed in both Global Issues Problem Solving and Scenario Writing, will you continue with both? **Yes, because both are very exciting even though once in a while it stresses me immensely.**
- 2) Will you ever become involved in Community Problem Solving and attack real problems of your community? **Yes, as it sounds more exciting because it's in real life and I am more of a physical type of a person.**
- 3) Do you envision a positive or negative future for people your age? **I think the future may be more negative in many little ways for people my age, because they are very lazy. It can be overcome if people put in more effort to learn or to achieve a goal.**
- 4) What is the best way a parent can help students in their involvement with Future Problem Solving? **My mom will write an article about it.**

Do you have an FPSPI story to share? Does your child or student have a story to share? Does your FPSPI alumni want to share their experiences? We invite anyone to write an article or testimonial to share with us! Please send your questions, comments, or articles with a photo to the Parent Committee via [Deb Woythal at dwoythl@gmail.com](mailto:dwoythl@gmail.com)

Share your thoughts and ideas with us!



THANK YOU for sharing your journey with us, Shafiq!