A Global Perspective for Topic Selection

TOPICS

I believe topics are the core of Global Issues Problem Solving and Scenario Writing, especially since these topics ignite the whole process of thinking. Topics get the ball rolling with a vision of the future. To be relevant, the topics must be pertinent today and for the future and targeted at the populations of this program - mainly children, adolescents and young adults.

Evaluations and policy regulations are important from the point of view of competitions and administration of the program respectively, and these are not in any way less important. However as a parent, teacher, coach and mentor, I feel that topics “will develop the ability of young people globally to design and promote positive futures through problem solving using creative and critical thinking skills” – as stated in the mission statement of FPSPI.

When participants address a series of global topics by learning and applying the six-step creative problem solving process, they are on the way to viewing their world from a larger perspective, often anticipating the possible trends and challenges in a world that is beyond their own personal experience.

Global Issues problem solvers apply their topic and creative problem solving knowledge to address a scenario presented in a hypothetical but possibly real situation - the Future Scene. As such, the descriptors and Future Scenes have to be mindful of the real world issues of the Affiliate Programs involved in the international program to enable “real” understanding of issues worldwide.

Given that so many countries are now part of the Future Problem Solving Program, the list of topics needs to deal with sensitivities of culture and religion, as well as the educational trends of these countries.
Topics must have a global relevance, which is why parents, teachers and children (from all over the world) have become key players in this program. Now that the parents, teachers and children can vote for and submit topics, all should be encouraged to vote and submit topics. Topics need to be relevant to the expected time of their use. Many topics are relevant at the time of discussion and selection, but in the time frame of four to five years when they become the actual topics for competition, they may no longer be relevant, and thus, they must be revised or even discarded.

Why are topics so key?
* If students relate to the topics, they will be motivated to read and research.
* Learning becomes relatable, real and enhances latent skills such as communication and comprehension.

For students on a team to develop communicative competence, topics must resemble (or be) real-life topics that enable real life communication. This may be achieved in three ways:
1. The topic needs to be relevant to all. It must be the kind of topic with which students across the board can identify.

   *Language may be a challenge, but pre-reading discussion, reviewing new vocabulary before reading, and asking students to perform tasks that are within their competence, such as skimming to get the main idea or scanning for specific information, may help.*

2. The purpose of a topic being discussed must be for reasons that make sense and the purpose must have relevance for the students, not just because a committee assigned the topic.

3. To identify relevant topics, ask students what topics they are most interested in studying. Give them opportunities to help choose the topics via www.fpspi.org.

Topics accomplish goals such as the following:
* developing students’ awareness of global issues in a particular area of discussion
* explaining the how and why of the specific scenarios
* encouraging students to evaluate their comprehension of similar yet different situations globally
* encouraging the development of reading skills and knowledge base
* applying the particular strategies of FPS in different types of scenarios or in conjunction with other skills.

Topics help with the skills of FPS by providing the following:
* emphasizing positive problem solving skills
* offering students the opportunity to apply information they have acquired through their research and readings to the pertinent issues of today’s world
* applying the six-step creative problem solving process to analyze complex problems of the future
* providing learning in a fun and meaningful way
* enabling different talents and abilities of each child
* encouraging teamwork
* allowing for competition or non-competition setting
* motivating and challenging higher order of thinking amongst people from various ability groups and backgrounds

Relevant and authentic topics “provide opportunities for learning beyond tests” and encourage forward thinking global citizens.

Lalitha Nair, Affiliate Director of FPSP Malaysia.

"Everyone here has the sense that right now is one of those moments when we are influencing the future."
~ Steve Jobs~
Cast your vote for your favorite topic! Did You Know?

- All topics must fall in one of three categories; Business/Economics, Science/Technology or Social/Political.
- Anyone (parents, coaches, or students) may submit a possible topic and vote for upcoming topics.
- You can vote for the 2017-18 Topics at fpspi.org through April 16, 2015. Click on What We Do, scroll over to the Topics menu and click on Topic Vote. You can then read the descriptors and cast your vote on the competition topics you believe we should study in the future!

FPSPI Would LOVE to have your input! In order to submit a competition topic for consideration, you'll be required to enter the following:

- Topic Title (example: Trade Barriers, Endangered Animals)
- Topic Category (Social/Political; Business/Economics; Science/Technology)
- Topic Descriptor (maximum 1000 character descriptor) The topic descriptor should be 5-6 sentences, a combination of declaratory statements and open-ended questions, and should not be in first person singular (ie. I, me).
- References/Web sites (maximum 1000 character) Please provide any references or web sites to support your topic.

We would appreciate a valid e-mail to contact you if clarifications are required, as sometimes it is necessary for the descriptor to be altered and we'd like to ensure the fundamental intent is preserved.

Once you have your idea and the above listed requirements, just go online to the Topics menu bar under “What We Do” and click on SUBMIT TOPIC.

Its Not Too Late!

Our next edition of Parent Perspectives will be our annual testimonial edition. We would love to include any testimonial about your child’s experience in the Future Problem Solving Program. We welcome submissions from parents, current students, alumni, administrators and coaches. Please consider writing and sending us a testimonial. When sending a testimonial, we would also like a photo of the author. The deadline to receive them is April 6, 2015 at dwoythal@gmail.com.