PARENT PERSPECTIVES

October 2021

This edition of the ***Parent Perspectives*** newsletter contains submissions from our Wisconsin affiliate. Affiliate Director, Lynne Buckmaster, shares her thoughts on "**Parent Power!**" Also included are some fascinating testimonials from some Wisconsin Alumni. Look for our new section titled "Cultural Corner." In each of our upcoming editions, we will share interesting facts about one of our affiliates around the globe. In this way, we hope that all of us all learn a bit more of the culture and customs in the interesting places that make up the Future Problem Solving Program International family! Please enjoy!

Parent Power!

Lynn Buckmaster, WI Affiliate Director

As a parent, you have more power than you may realize to effect change in your child's education. Case in point? In Madison, Wisconsin, two fifth grade teachers at one elementary school implemented Future Problem Solving in a variety of ways -- by incorporating it into the curriculum, as an after-school club, and in pull-out groups. This school became an FPS powerhouse. More importantly than placing at state and international competitions, students learned how to use a problem solving process, employ creative and critical thinking tools, implement decision-making strategies, communicate effectively, and work in a team structure. Their participation in FPS enabled them to become more flexible, self-reliant, and goal-oriented. Who wouldn't want this type of learning to continue?

However, when these students moved on to middle school, Future Problem Solving was non-existent. But within one year, FPS became ingrained into the curriculum. How? **Parent Power!** Parents exercised their power to collectively create change by organizing, collecting accurate information, and educating and convincing the "powers that be."

If you're interested in exerting your Parent Power to implement FPS in a particular school, this issue has of tips for arming yourself with the "ammunition" you need. Good luck on using your Parent Power!

Some Basic Tips for "Selling" FPS:

- Gather and become familiar with basic information about the various components of FPS (GIPS, CmPS, Scenario Writing and Performance).
- Meet with teachers currently implementing FPS to gain knowledge of their perspective and expertise.
- Emphasize non-competitive options as well as competitive.
- Collect material on the benefits of FPS as a program/process.

- Get statements from FPS students about the impact it has had on their lives. Why do they like it? What have they learned?
- Collect specific examples of what students have accomplished. For example, a copy of an actual booklet, a summary of a Community Problem Solving Project, a video of a scenario performance.
- Problem-Based Learning is a popular focus in education. This is what FPS is! Show the correlations between the two.
- Think of ways FPS can be implemented in the curriculum and how you as parents can help facilitate.

What is Problem-Based Learning (PBL)?

According to the Center for Innovation in Teaching & Learning, " . . . (PBL) is a teaching method in which complex real-world problems are used as the vehicle to promote student learning of concepts and principles as opposed to direct presentation of facts and concepts (Duch et al, 2001)." The Hun School of Princeton states, "Problem-Based Learning (PBL) . . . [is an] open-ended problem-based learning style that presents students with a real-world issue and asks them to come up with a well-constructed answer. . . Unlike traditional learning, there might not be just one right answer, but the process encourages young minds to stay active and think for themselves."

Sounds like Future Problem Solving, doesn't it? Especially so for Community Problem Solving. Here are some of the benefits of PBL:

- Incorporates many of the 21st Century Learning Skills that are transferrable to many areas:
  - planning, critical thinking, reasoning, and creativity
  - strong communication skills
  - cross-cultural understanding
  - visualizing, problem solving, and decision making
  - personal and social responsibility

- Follows an interdisciplinary, student-centered approach that encourages greater, more meaningful content
- Promotes more in-depth understanding as students build on their research skills and deepen their learning beyond facts or memorization
- Provides more intrinsic reward and builds self-confidence
- Encourages perseverance as students learn to manage obstacles more effectively, learn from failure/mistakes, and make adjustments
- Aids in greater understanding of issues and enhanced student retention
- Involves/builds teamwork, collaboration, and interpersonal sills
- Addresses real-life issues that require real-life solutions which empowers students
- Promotes active, self-directed, lifelong learning

Sources

- https://www.prodigygame.com/main-en/blog/advantages-disadvantages-problem-based-learning/
- https://www.edutopia.org/project-based-learning-guide-importance
- https://www.teachermagazine.com/au_en/articles/real-world-and-active-the-benefits-of-problem-based-learning
- https://www.destinationimagination.org/blog/10-benefits-of-project-based-learning/

Let's Meet some Wisconsin Alumni!

David Buerger

David currently works as a Staff Council for the Wisconsin Ethics Commission. As staff counsel, he provides legal advice to the Commission and its staff, investigates alleged violations of campaign finance, lobbying, and ethics law, and represents the Commission in all legal matters. He is currently a Wisconsin evaluator and serves on the board of Wisconsin Future Problem Solving.

"FPS taught me a problem solving process that I still use today. Whether the problem is global warming or an aging voting system, the steps to address it are largely the same."

Dan Jonovic

Dan is a graduate of UW Madison and currently works at Epic Systems in Verona, Wisconsin, as an Integration Engineer. He manages the implementation of interfaces used to exchange data between systems at healthcare organizations that are installing Epic's electronic medical records. He is a state evaluator and also serves on the board for Wisconsin Future Problem Solving.

"FPS helped me develop critical thinking skills in middle and high school that helped prepare me for engineering courses. The process also contributed towards my involvement in extracurricular activities at college."

Paula Myatt

Paula has a BBA from UW-Madison and a Masters in Student Affairs Administration from UW-La Crosse. She is now working as a Residence Life Coordinator at the University of Northern Iowa. She is an evaluator for Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, California, and also the International program.

"Researching in FPS was definitely a benefit when I was writing research papers in college. I've also noticed that many people I went to school with got stuck doing things one way and found it difficult when forced to change their thought process or think outside the box. I never had that problem. FPS has remained a large part of my life, even post-graduation, since I evaluate at the state and international level. I've been lucky enough to meet some of the most amazing people!"

Evan Wolf

Evan has a PhD in Ecology from UC Davis. As a restoration ecologist, he identifies and repairs degraded wetland and river ecosystems. He and three colleagues started the Applied Ecohydrology Institute to provide expert ecosystem science and restoration design services to National Parks and other land managers. This work is essentially professional-level ecosystem Problem Solving. He collects broad and accurate physical and biological datasets used to identify and define problems, then creatively proposes, details, and evaluates a range of potential solutions to arrive at a preferred restoration action.

"During my entire K-12 tenure in the Madison School District, no other experience was more influential or beneficial to my ability to think broadly and creatively than FPS. At many points in my life, without actively thinking about it, I have taken what seemed like the obvious, simple and necessary step of evaluating situations by prioritizing problems and choosing from a range of potential solutions"

Cultural Corner—Wisconsin!

Wisconsin was admitted to the Union on May 29, 1848 as the 30th state. Our capital is Madison, and Milwaukee is our largest city. Our state symbol is the badger, our motto is "Forward" and we're nicknamed America's Dairyland. We border two of the Great Lakes (Michigan and Superior) and have 15,074 lakes of our own, most of which were caused by glaciers. We rank #1 in number of milk cows (1,500,000) and produce over 15% of the country's milk. Almost one third of all Americans live within a 500 mile radius of Wisconsin! We're also famous for these "firsts" in the US:

- Ice cream sundae (created in Two Rivers, 1881)
- Kindergarten classes (held in Watertown, 1856)
- Harvesting machine(invented by George Esterly, 1844)
- Patent for the first typewriter (created by Christopher Latham Sholes, 1868)
- Nation's first automobile race (held 1878)
- Successful bone-marrow transplant (performed 1968)

A beautiful state!