FPSPI PARENT PERSPECTIVES

Why is problem solving important?

Future Problem Solving International teaches students HOW to think, not WHAT to think, using a problem solving process. Just why is problem solving important? This issue will answer that question.

Problem solving allows students to increase their understanding about a topic or situation.

In Global Issues Problem Solving (GIPS), students analyze and work through important futuristic topics. In Community Problem Solving (CmPS), students gain understanding about a community issue they identify, then implement real solutions as a result of that understanding. Although Scenario Writing (SW) and Scenario Performance (ScP) produce a creative and imaginative product, they begin by developing a basis of information about the topic their stories are based on.

Problem solving promotes critical and creative thinking.

The process students use in FPS alternates between creative/divergent thinking to generate ideas and critical/convergent thinking to focus and analyze those ideas and to make decisions about them. Creative thinking is important because it broadens our perspective by pushing us out of a linear way of thinking. It instills curiosity and encourages questions, opening us up to the concept of many new ideas. It allows us to think without judgment, showing us that there are many perspectives to any issue, and many innovative solutions to any problem. https://www.lifehack.org/788835/creative-thinking; https://www.youth.ie/articles/why-is-creativity-important-and-what-does-it-contribute/ - :~:text=Creativity allows us to view, can help us overcome prejudices.

Critical thinking helps us think clearly and systematically, teaching us how to break down information and improve our ability to comprehend. It helps identify bias and promote open-mindedness. Knowing how to sort through all the "extra noise" helps us reflect, develop, and justify our decisions. Critical thinking promotes the development of many crucial life and career skills, such as logical thinking, decision-making, and open-mindedness.
https://www.uopeople.edu/blog/why-is-critical-thinking-important/;
https://www.coursera.org/articles/critical-thinking-skills

Problem solving is empowering.

Continually learning and expanding one's knowledge helps students tackle personal challenges in their lives. Futuristic topics allow students to address world problems that will exist in the future. Self-confidence is boosted as students learn that they can make a difference. Problem solving in FPS helps students develop persistence, embrace change, and overcome obstacles – all of which are empowering life skills.

Problem solving is a collaborative approach.

Working cooperatively with others helps students realize that a variety of knowledge, perspectives, and experiences can enhance the outcome. Empathy is developed, and relationships are strengthened as students learn to respect other perspectives, opinions and differences. Problem solving improves decision-making, teaches compromise, and reduces conflict as students work together rather than against each other. Students learn to share ideas appropriately and with respect. They become more invested in finding a solution, which can encourage them to take ownership of the problem and follow through on any actions needed to implement the solution.

https://medium.com/@techgenafrica/10-ways-collaboration-can-benefit-problem-solving-9a76e43dbe52

Problem solving is an essential skill for the workplace.

Future Problem Solving addresses the top skills desired in the workplace identified by the World Economic Forum. FPS alumni tell us time and time again that their participation has helped them in their careers.

➢ **Complex Problem Solving**
➢ **Critical Thinking**
➢ **Creativity**
➢ **People Management**
➢ **Coordinating with Others**
➢ **Emotional Intelligence**
➢ **Judgment and Decision Making**
➢ **Service Orientation**
➢ **Negotiation**
➢ **Cognitive Flexibility**

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- "During my entire K-12 tenure, no other experience was more influential or beneficial to my ability to think broadly and creatively than FPS." (Evan, Restoration Biologist)
- "In FPS I learned to see undesirable and/or unforeseen circumstances as solvable challenges rather than insurmountable problems." (Danielle, Master Social Worker)
- "I learned about conflict and compromise and negotiating the dynamics of a group of very strong-willed, often stubborn teammates under intense pressure -- skills I've drawn on in my life ever since." (Reuben, History/Social Science Content Support Lead, MA Dept. of Elementary & Secondary Education)
- "FPS taught me a problem solving process that I still use today. Whether the problem is change or distrust in elections, the steps to address it are largely the same." (David, Attorney, Wisconsin Ethics Commission)

A **specific model** provides a foundation for effective problem solving, as it helps one strategize, prioritize, and make decisions. Future Problem Solving uses the Creative Problem Process (CPS) created by Alex Osborne in the 1940s. He and his colleague, Sidney Parnes, worked to further develop the process in the 50s and 60s. CPS is the basis for many creative problem solving methods used in the business world today.

Terminology in the many problem solving models that exist may vary, but the process and thinking skills are the same. All models incorporate three basic elements: (1) understanding the challenge/issue/situation; (2) generating ideas; (3) preparing for action. These elements correspond to the process students use in FPS as follows:

Basic Elements in all Models	Specific Step(s) in FPS
Understanding the challenge/issue/situation	Step 1: Identify Challenges
	Step 2: Select an Underlying Problem
Generating ideas	Step 3: Produce Solution Ideas
Preparing for action	Step 4: Generate & Select Criteria
	Step 5: Evaluate Solutions
	Step 6: Develop an Action Plan

In summary, perhaps Bill Gates in *The Road Ahead*, says it best: "More than ever, an education that emphasizes general problem-solving skills will be important. In a changing world, education is the best preparation for being able to adapt."

Cultural Corner—Iowa

- Iowa Future Problem Solving was one of the very first programs in FPS. The first year of Iowa FPS was in 1975. Future Problem Solving began in 1974 when E. Paul Torrance was working with a group of high school students in Athens, Georgia in order to address the concerns of the decline of creativity and the lack of interest in the future by Americans. The Future Problem Solving Program grew out of this month-long curriculum unit created by Dr. Torrance.
- Another interesting FPS fact in regard to Iowa is that Future Problem Solving Program was incorporated in Iowa in May 1984.

Other interesting facts about Iowa include:
- Hogs outnumber people 4 to 1
- One of the highest rates of motorcycle ownership in the nation
- Largest producer of pork, corn, and eggs in the nation
- Iowa has an island, Sabula (on Mississippi River)
- Restaurant chains that originated in Iowa include Pancheros, Maid-Rite, and Pizza Ranch.
- Red Delicious apple originated from Peru, Iowa
- University of Iowa was the first state university in the nation to open its degree programs to women. Because of that, the first woman attorney in the United States was from Iowa (Arabella Mansfield).

Iowa has many interesting events/festivals to visit each year, such as:
- National Hobo Convention held every August (Britt)
- Annual Tulip Festival in Pella
- The Largest Community Star Trek Festival in the World (Riverside)
- Iowa State Fair (Des Moines)
- Color the Wind Kite Festival in February (Clear Lake)
- RAGBRAI every July (Register's Annual Great Bicycle Ride Across Iowa, is more than just a bike ride, it is an epic eight-day rolling festival of bicycles, music, food...)
- 10 Fantastic Eagle-Watching Spots in Iowa

So, instead of "flying over Iowa", stop in and enjoy a few activities!