

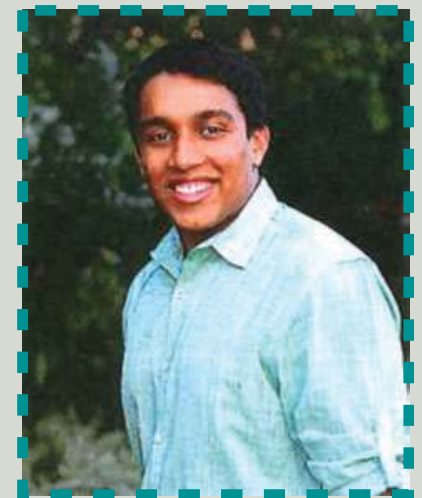
# PARENT PERSPECTIVES

This issue of *Parent Perspectives* is a compilation of testimonials from several affiliates. Please enjoy the viewpoints of parents, students, and alumni as they share about the Future Problem Solving Program!



Part of the thrill of coaching Future Problem Solving is observing the growth of students over the years. The success of Vivek Pandit is a shining example. In 6<sup>th</sup> grade, Vivek was part of the International Junior Grand Champion Community Team, *i-GROW*, coached by Teri Wied. As a 7<sup>th</sup> grader, he was part of Global Issues team and in 8<sup>th</sup> grade he wrote a Scenario entry. In a conversation with Vivek, he recounted all of the skills he learned through his FPS experience that helped on the road to success. Learning how to communicate effectively with adults during the *iGROW* project benefited Vivek's crusade to have correct information published in a textbook. He and his friends communicated their dismay at the misinformation in such a way that the textbooks were republished with correct information. Vivek also was able to navigate his way through the world of revision with adult editors as he worked on his book, *We are Generation Z*. Creating a schedule to meet deadlines was also learned through CmPS. Again, this became a very important aspect of his life during the multiple revisions of what became *We Are Generation Z*. Teamwork and collaboration are necessary in the workplace today. Vivek experienced various degrees of efforts at teamwork through *iGROW* as well as the Global Issues team. Learning how to not only bring your part to the table, but encouraging others to do the same will have a huge impact as Vivek moves through college and into the workplace. Vivek is one of my success stories. Some are more public in their success than others. But over and over my students return to me to tell me about how the skills learned, and perfected, through the Future Problem Solving Program have served them well.

Karen Moxley  
GIPS and CmPS Coach  
Texas Affiliate

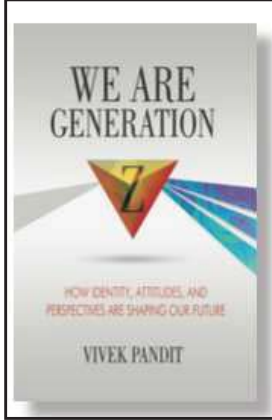


Vivek Pandit is a senior at Grapevine High School in Grapevine, Texas. He played varsity football, participated in GIPS, all while writing and publishing his first book.

Vivek's suggests these tips for success in FPS:

- \*Pay attention to your Coach/ Mentor
- \*Remember to collaborate with your team!
- \*Always thoroughly research your topic!

Vivek will attend Brown University in the fall of 2016.



Purchase Vivek's book on AmazonSmile and Amazon will make a donation to Future Problem Solving Program International Inc.

**First, select FPSPI as your charity!**



## Future Problem Solving 2.0: Using FPS in the Workplace

“What’s the structural issue behind this? The root cause?” the Senior Vice President of the United Way of Manatee County asked during a staff meeting my very first morning on the job. “We are here to be leaders of change in our community,” she explained. I reflected on my experiences in Future Problem Solving as the Senior VP described how identifying three major issues in our area (health, financial stability, and literacy) has resulted in programs that continue to build and deepen the impact we make on the lives of others.

Last year, I wrote how my participation in Future Problem Solving prepared me for upper-level graduate courses and an independently designed and executed Master’s thesis research project reaching hundreds of migrant families in central Florida. I have been deeply engaged in this program for over 17 years now as a Global Issues competitor (team and individual), scenario writer, evaluator (for Global Issues and scenario in three different states), coach, mentor for other coaches, and catalyst for the development of FPS in the Tampa Bay area. Each of these opportunities within FPS spurred the development of various skills and ignited a passion for research, community engagement, and problem solving that have become an integral part of who I am. Not only did experiences within Future Problem Solving train me for the necessary aspects of a community-engaged profession, I truly believe it helped me receive a job offer in general.



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First, poverty and other global issues spur from root causes as explored in Step 2 (the Underlying Problem) of the FPS process. While impact organizations such as the United Way of Manatee County (UWMC) still work tirelessly to address “challenges” (Step 1) by supporting volunteer efforts and other organizations for immediate problem solving, UWMC ultimately seeks solutions to the underlying (structural) issues. We brainstorm solutions to these issues and utilize criteria-based critical analysis to identify the most plausible and impactful solutions. Then we execute such solutions holistically (much like an Action Plan).

I run through various aspects of the FPS process daily. Thankfully, due to my long-term involvement, I am able to handle multiple “underlying problems” and “action plans” simultaneously. I recognize that in FPS 2.0 (the workplace) not all FPS “packets” (present-day topics and scenarios) run smoothly from start to finish. Take, for example, the national, state, and local Campaigns for Grade-Level Reading, which focus on ensuring that our children are reading on grade-level by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Our previously mentioned Senior Vice President was the catalyst for Manatee County’s involvement in this national movement, which led to the creation of a regional approach called the Suncoast Campaign for Grade-Level Reading.

In this campaign, there is no “final” action plan. Leading the movement, we focus on attendance, school readiness, and summer learning as our underlying problems to the charge (reading on grade-level). Although other cross cutting challenges occur (as evident in Step 1 of the FPS process), our focus remains on addressing the charge by creating solutions to these three underlying issues. Solutions are consistently vetted through collaboration among the UWMC team and community partners and “action plans” executed. Post action plan, sometimes we return to the Underlying Problem for new brainstorming and sometimes we return to different (or similar) solutions to create deeper impact and develop more sustainable relationships with our community.

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I am grateful that my mother and wider support network helped me get to and get through higher education. However, I largely credit Future Problem Solving for my ability to execute an impactful Master's project and weave research and reflection into my job. I am thankful for the opportunities that this program and mentors within the program have given me and am incredibly blessed to have the opportunity to utilize such skills in my professional life to carve out a better life for our children.

Cassandra Decker  
Alumna of the Iowa Affiliate

[www.uwmc.net](http://www.uwmc.net)  
<http://www.gradelevelreadingsuncoast.net>  
<https://twitter.com/CDeckerUWMC>

## Perspectives from Parents...

From all the other activities Lara has participated or is participating in, this project is without a doubt the one that satisfies her the most, where she is more committed and happy! It was a surprise for us as parents to see her so dedicated to something of her own free will. During these last 2 years, our daughter has evolved so much that is hard to put in words. This Programme is not only centered upon "creative thought," but above all it teaches how to manage relationships, to hear and respect other opinions, to develop teamwork to define objectives and solutions in a quick but weighted way, and take into account all the perspectives and challenges raised by the problems proposed to her.



This kind of thinking process and work method is also reflected in her personal life. It has helped Lara to relativize her day-to-day situations, to know how to work around the obstacles that get into her way and to take the best decision possible in each moment. This is true for her personal challenges, but also for family or friend's situations. When a situation arises she stops, thinks 2 or 3 minutes, and then presents possible solutions in a structured way. Her participation in the Creativity Olympics and in FPSPI are experiences that are really gratifying for Lara. She has made new friendships, experienced exchanges with other students, contacts with other realities and cultures, and above all she has grown more independence. This has been a huge personal development experience. What else can we say... thanks to these experiences, Lara lives and breathes creativity!

Mónica Alves (Mãe da Lara)  
Mother of Lara  
Portugal Affiliate

FPS has helped our son, Joshua Anil, to develop his writing, and helped him write in a concise and meaningful way. The FPS process has also taught him valuable skills about how to analyze a problem and develop solutions in a structured manner. These are indeed valuable life skills that will compliment him well in a variety of industry domains and professional streams.



FPS Scenario Writing helped expose him to a different genre of writing and played an instrumental role in developing his story-telling ability. The unique categories of FPS allowed him to explore new ideas in his writing that may have been outside his comfort zone, such as — disappearing languages. In fact, his entry on this related subject for Scenario Writing won him the first place at Internationals.

There is little doubt in our minds that the FPS challenges pushed our son to not only advance his writing skills but also forced him to start thinking outside the box as a process. He truly enjoys it and that alone is a testament of the success of this program.

Anil & Milu,  
Parents of Joshua Anil,  
Texas Affiliate



## That FPS Moment...Becomes a Memory of a Lifetime

Nervous beads of sweat can be a healthy thing? Shedding tears can be a positive? Trembling in your seat can be a sight that brings others to a smile? Typically, all of the above might be related to a series of negative experiences. For Future Problem Solvers around the world, and from my experience as a coach in Kentucky, however, those exact situations and moments have often been linked to some of the most fulfilling experiences for our teams and individual competitors.

Having been a part of our school's successful Future Problem Solving program for over a decade, countless memories and positive experiences come to mind all at once when I try think back to the moments that stand out. Whether it is the experience of being announced as a State Champion for the first time as a team, advancing to Internationals as a Scenario Writer, the preparations at practices, checking the mail in anticipation for the latest results of a competition, or the relationships built with fellow members, one of the images stays consistent over the years, even though it varies in its many forms.

Competitors who flock to one another for support, arm-in-arm as results are being prepared is one of the memorable iconic moments for me as a coach through the years. While to some it appears as if a group of students are readying themselves for a result in that instance, the picture-perfect nature of that scene implies so much more for us as coaches. Many times, a team or an individual in our school's program begins new, learning the ropes on Day One through what will be a fast-paced experience with a steep learning curve. All competitors whether they begin at Junior Division or if they decide to try it out for the first time during their Senior year experience just how big the process is and how huge it is to be a part of something on an international scale. The nervous beads of sweat, the subsequent trembling in the seat, and the tears of joy that well up before any announcement is even made are all frozen moments in time that are a culmination of a year's (or multiple years') worth of dedication and togetherness.

In the time building up to the awards announcements, it is as if every step in the preparation process is playing through the students' heads and through my head as a coach. An entire 13-page team booklet rewrites itself in the minds of all who took part, or a 1500-word scenario leaps back off the page scene-by-scene in that moment. Going back further, a cast of characters who may have not known that much about each other before the team was formed now in that moment standing arm-in-arm, all reading each other's minds and thinking the exact same thing is a symbolic prize in that anticipatory moment. Every laugh at practice, every breakthrough realization, every time a student makes the next stride forward through the season all manifest themselves again in that moment.

There have been wins, and there have been defeats. We have competed at the biggest stage of them all and had the experience of having our names called in front of an international audience in a full auditorium. But, whether it is in the qualifying stages or the grand finale, the memory that remains consistent is seeing the nervous waiting game played during awards that signifies much more than the announcement that is always about to be made.

Brett Reliford  
Future Problem Solving Coach  
Adair County School District  
Kentucky Affiliate  
2004-present



*“The mind is not a vessel to be filled, but a fire to be kindled.”*

*~ Plutarch ~*





Mrs. Kizer's Global Issues Problem Solving teams at the State Bowl in April 2016.



ChiMPS CmPS team at Metz Elementary School where students conducted a Reading Rodeo to help prepare 4th graders for the STAAR test, the Texas State assessment.

### Why I am an FPS-er for Life!

My name is Adrienne Kizer, and I am a 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade science teacher at the Ann Richards School in Austin, Texas. Part of our Mission Statement, which we recite each morning, is to “solve problems creatively and ethically in support of our global community.” I’m lucky enough to teach in a school that really operates under those conditions. If I want to implement a program in my classroom, and it fits into our mission as a school, then I am free to make that choice. So I was thrilled to begin a Future Problem Solving group at our school in 2014.

I knew about the Texas FPS program from my own youth. I started competing in what is now referred to as Global Issues Problem Solving during my 6<sup>th</sup> grade year of school in 1986 in Spring, Texas. Future Problem Solving quickly became my favorite part of the day. I loved the fact that my teachers trusted my group and me enough to allow us to go ‘off the school script’ to conduct independent research in the library, synthesize our ideas into zany and/or workable solutions, and think creatively (and often loudly!) with my group of friends. I think too often in education, we do not give our students enough room to think about tough problems and wrestle with possible solutions. And after all, isn’t this the kind of student we want to graduate?

Given my experience, I started a program at Ann Richards as soon as I got there! I have a group of students that has competed in the Community Problem Solving category for two years, and was graciously invited to present their projects at the State Bowl in 2015 and 2016. This year, I started an after-school Global Issues Problem Solving group, and one of our Novice groups was invited to compete at the State Bowl this spring. I loved emailing them the good news the night I found out the results. I remember exactly where I was standing in my kitchen in Spring the night my teacher called me to tell me we were going to State! I’m so grateful to have the opportunity to pass on this experience.

Adrienne Kizer  
Coach and FPS-er for Life  
Texas Affiliate



“Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere!”  
~ Unknown ~

**Thank you to all of our contributors in this issue and all issues throughout the year! We appreciate your willingness to share your thoughts, experiences, and yourselves with us!**