

Future Problem Solving Program International (FPSPI) Program Evaluation

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Conducted By The Center for Creative Learning

Sarasota, FL (USA)

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Purposes of the Project

The purposes of this project were to survey key stakeholders in the program (Affiliate Directors, Coaches, Students, Parents, and a limited sample of Alumni) to ascertain their views of:

- (a.) the extent to which FPSPI meets its stated goals (i.e., does what it purports to do);**
- (b.) the strengths of the program and areas in which improvement may be needed; and,**
- (c.) the impact of the program on its participants.**

Methodology

Web-based survey for each stakeholder group

Surveys designed by our staff, reviewed with FPSPI leadership, and pilot tested

Affiliate Directors asked to respond and to invite all Coaches to respond, and in turn to ask Coaches to have all students and parents respond.

Small alumni group contact information provided by FPSPI

Data gathered during January and February, 2011

Sample

Responses Received From:

34 Affiliate Directors

48 program Alumni

220 Coaches in 33 Affiliates

633 Students from 27 Affiliates

195 Parents representing 23 Affiliates

General Survey Response Demographics:

Included the United States and several international affiliates.

Responses came from the eight largest Affiliates, 14 of the largest 15 (≥ 100 teams) and 17 of the 27 smallest Affiliates (< 100 teams) based on 2009-10 data provided by FPSPI.

Overall Program Satisfaction

Rated By:	Value (Out of 4.00)	As Percentage
Affiliate Directors	3.76	94%
Coaches	3.46	86.5%
Parents (Their rating)	3.31	(82.8%)
Parents (Est. of Child's)	3.43	(85.8%)
Students	3.34	(83.5%)

Goal Statements Rated

- Fostering creative thinking (thinking of many different and unusual ideas)
- Fostering critical thinking (deciding on the best solution to a problem)
- Using a process to solve a problem
- Working together and cooperating with others
- Helping become a better leader
- Finding information in many different places
- Preparing information and reporting ideas in a clear way

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Goal Statements Rated (continued)

- Using skills from FPS in other situations (at home, in school, or in other ways)
- Learning to listen better and follow directions
- Learning how to make the best use of time
- Learning about topics that will have important effects on the future
- Feeling able to make a difference in shaping the future
- Enhancing and expanding writing skills
- Thinking and researching futuristically

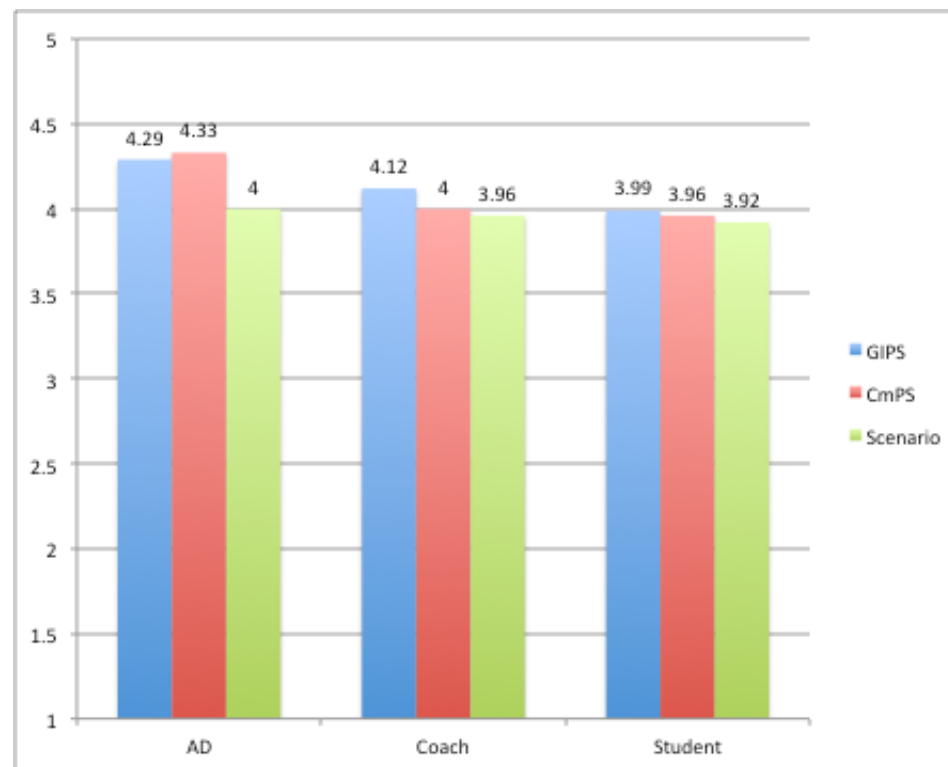
(Note: wording varied slightly by group; not all statements rated for all program components.)

Highest Rated Goals

<i>Group / Component</i>	<i>GIPS</i>	<i>CmPS</i>	<i>SW</i>
Affiliate Directors	1. Complex issues shaping the future 2. Teamwork and collaboration 3. Active interest in the future	1. Teamwork and collaboration 2. Leadership skills 3. (tie) Presentation/communication of ideas <i>and</i> Apply skills in other situations	1. Active interest in the future 2. Complex issues shaping the future 3. Presentation/communication of ideas
Coaches	1. Complex issues shaping the future 2. Teamwork and collaboration 3. Learning a creative problem solving process	1. Leadership skills 2. Teamwork and collaboration 3. Presentation/communication of ideas	1. Enhancing and expanding writing skills 2. Thinking and researching futuristically 3. (tie) Active interest in the future <i>and</i> Complex issues shaping the future
Students	1. Feeling that I can make a difference in shaping the future 2. Teamwork and collaboration 3. Fostering creative thinking	1. Teamwork and collaboration 2. Feeling that I can make a difference in shaping the future 3. Fostering critical thinking	1. Thinking and researching futuristically 2. Developing better writing skills 3. Learning about topics that will have an important effect on the future

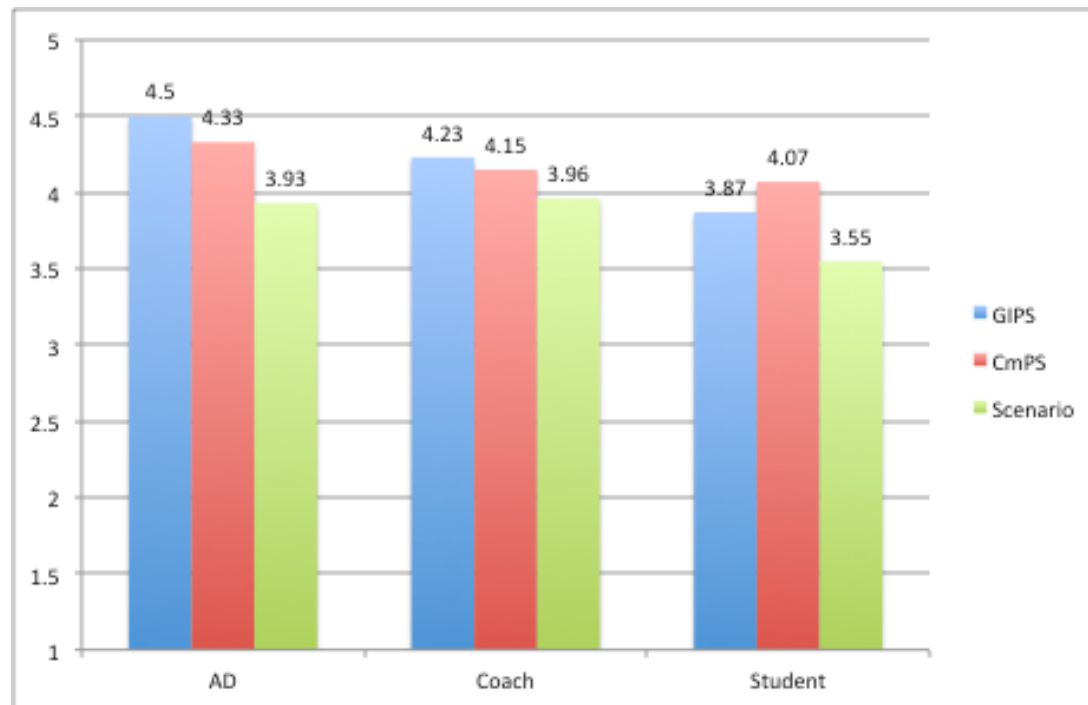
Goals By Component: Creative Thinking

Component	AD	Coach	Student
GIPS	4.29	4.12	3.99
CmPS	4.33	4	3.96
Scenario	4	3.96	3.92



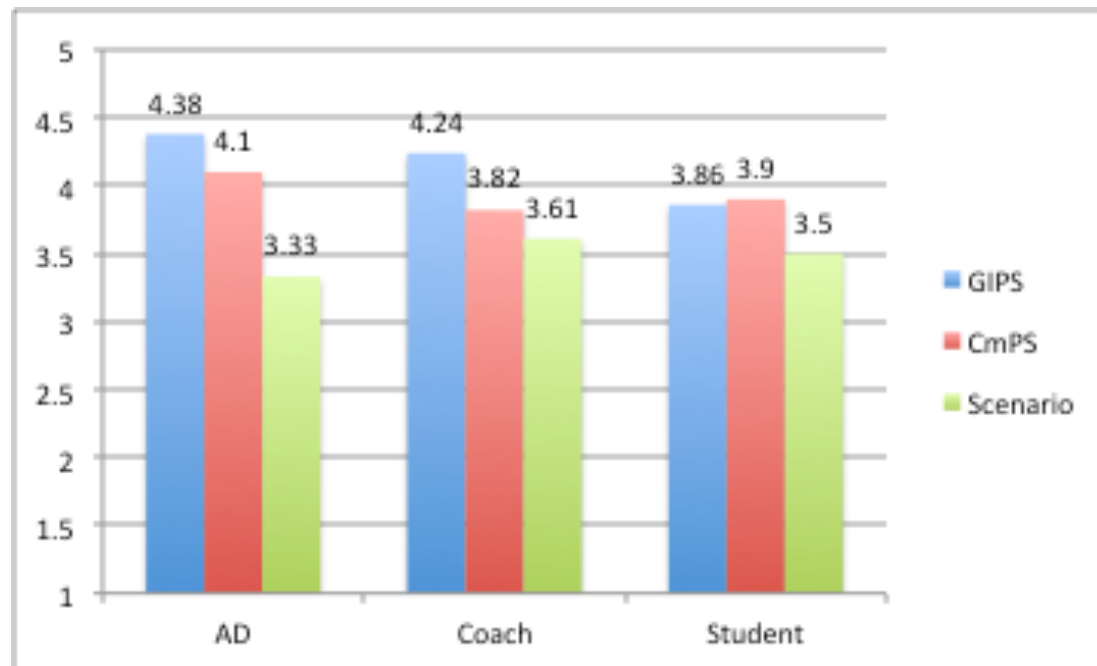
Goals By Component: Critical Thinking

Component	AD	Coach	Student
GIPS	4.5	4.23	3.87
CmPS	4.33	4.15	4.07
Scenario	3.93	3.96	3.55



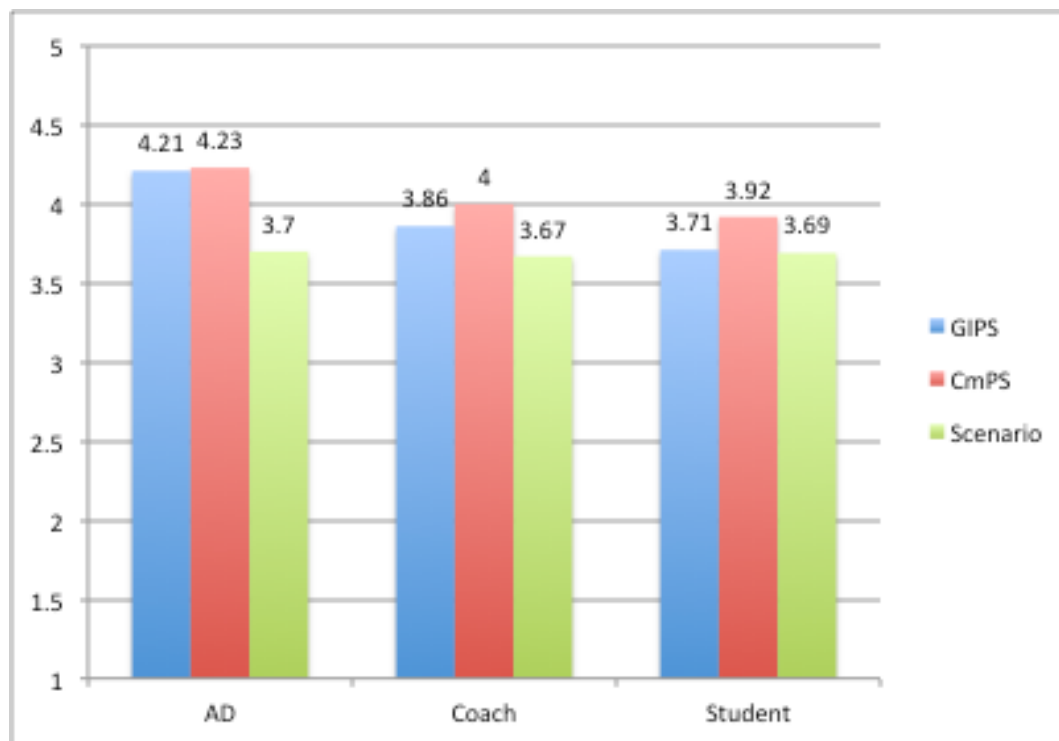
Goals By Component: Problem Solving Process

Component	AD	Coach	Student
GIPS	4.38	4.24	3.86
CmPS	4.1	3.82	3.9
Scenario	3.33	3.61	3.5



Goals By Component: Research and Inquiry

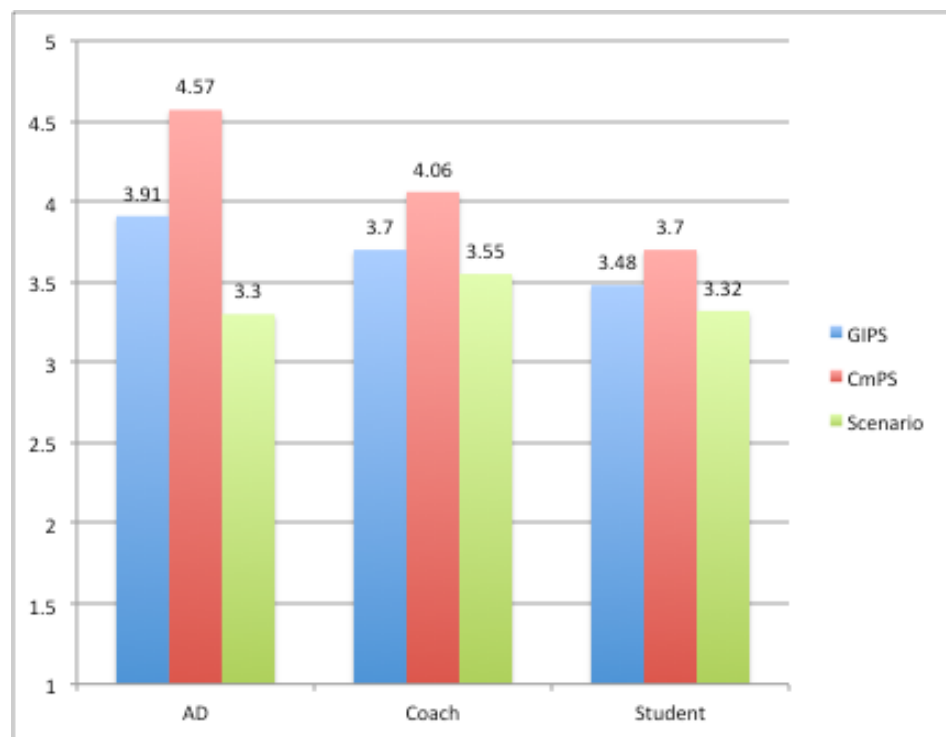
Component	AD	Coach	Student
GIPS	4.21	3.86	3.71
CmPS	4.23	4	3.92
Scenario	3.7	3.67	3.69



Goals By Component:

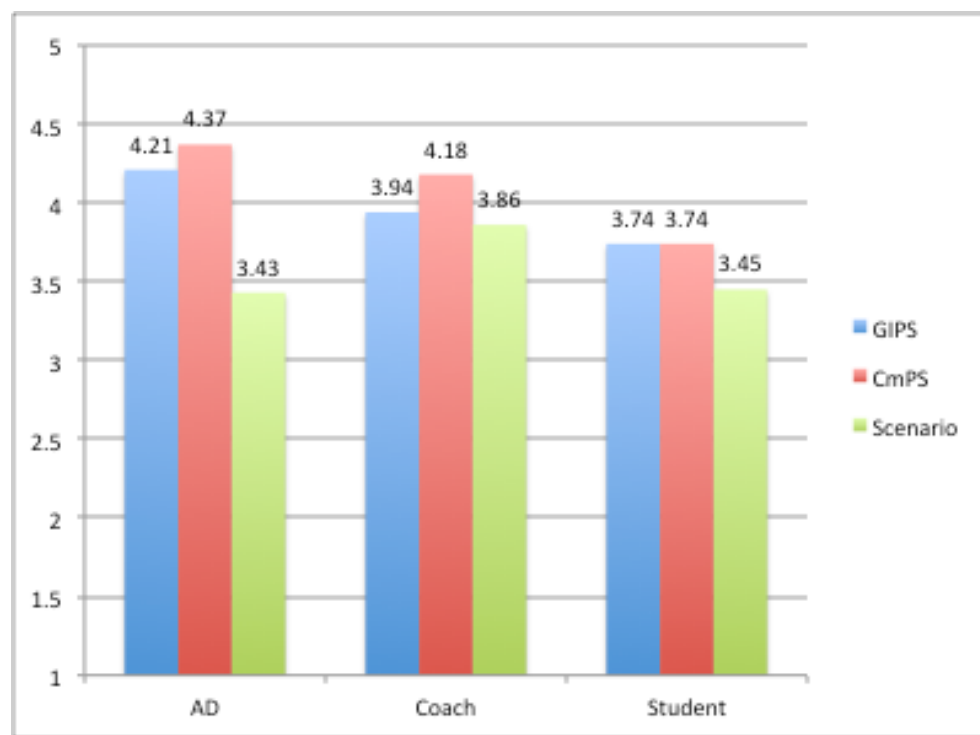
Apply in Other Situations

Component	AD	Coach	Student
GIPS	3.91	3.7	3.48
CmPS	4.57	4.06	3.7
Scenario	3.3	3.55	3.32



Goals By Component: Manage Time Effectively

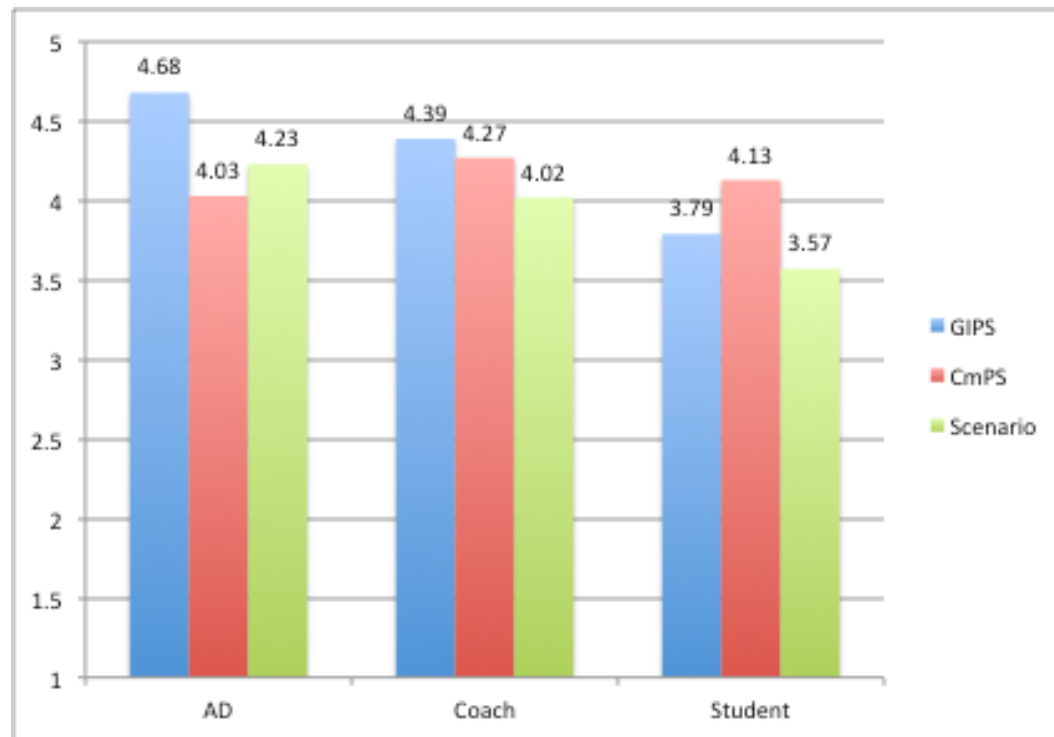
Component	AD	Coach	Student
GIPS	4.21	3.94	3.74
CmPS	4.37	4.18	3.74
Scenario	3.43	3.86	3.45



Goals By Component:

Complex Issues Shaping the Future

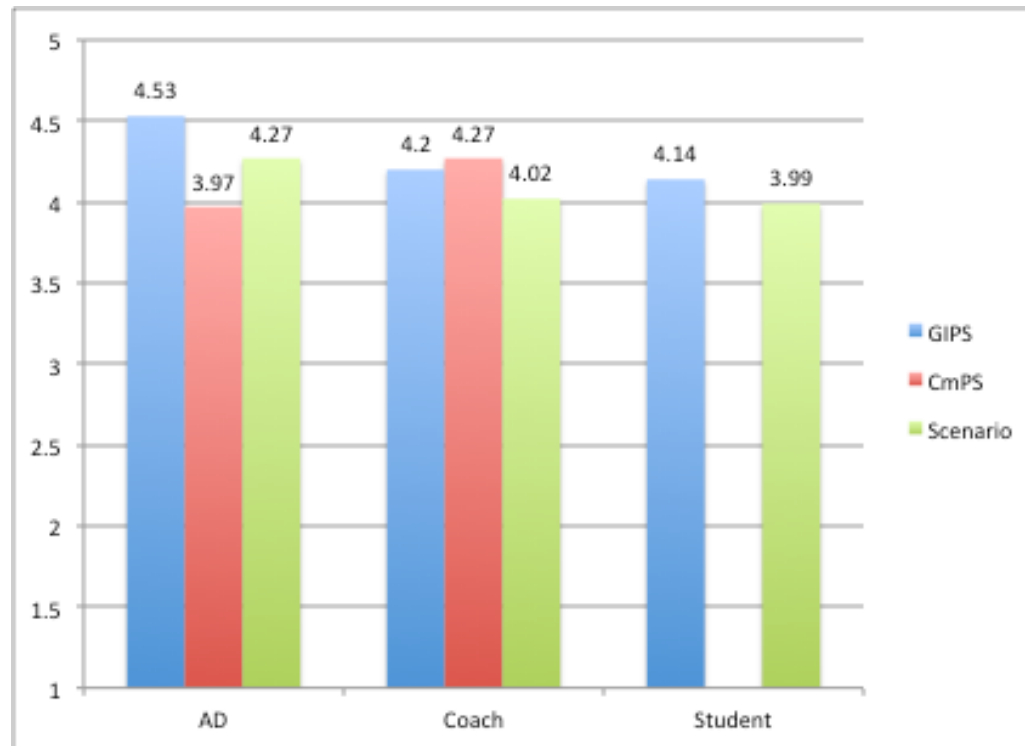
Component	AD	Coach	Student
GIPS	4.68	4.39	3.79
CmPS	4.03	4.27	4.13
Scenario	4.23	4.02	3.57



Goals By Component:

Active Interest in the Future

Component	AD	Coach	Student
GIPS	4.53	4.2	4.14
CmPS	3.97	4.27	(not rated)
Scenario	4.27	4.02	3.99



Personal Benefits of AD Role

Option	N	%
Enjoy watching FPSers grow as creative individuals	31	91%
Learn to think about things more creatively	29	85%
Apply my experiences here to other situations	27	79%
Feel good about how the FPSers pulled together to deal with difficulties that arose	25	74%
Discover that FPSers can do amazing things on their own	23	68%
Learn about team dynamics	22	65%
Gain an appreciation of my own ability as a creative person	21	61%
Learn or improve organizational skills	21	61%
Learn about time management	17	50%

Personal Benefits for Coaches

Enjoy watching team members grow as creative individuals	189	86%
Learn to think about things more creatively	163	74%
Feel good about how the team pulled together to deal with difficulties that arose	152	69%
Discover that teams can do amazing things on their own.	150	68%
Apply my experiences here to other situations	123	56%
Learn about team dynamics	116	53%
Learn or improve organizational skills	102	47%
Gain an appreciation of my own ability as a creative person	93	42%
Learn about time management	89	41%

What Respondents Would Tell Others

- Excellent/great program/ highly recommend (AD, Coach, Parent, Student)
- Teaches important life skills (AD, Coaches)
- Develops problem-solving skills (AD, Coaches, Parents, Students)
- Develops advanced thinking skills (AD, Coaches, Parents)
- Develops creativity skills (AD, Coaches, Parents)
- Makes students think about world around them (Parents, Students)
- Fun program (Students)
- Challenging/hard work (Students)

Does the Program Do What It Purports To Do?

“Taken together, the data from our surveys document broad and strong overall satisfaction with the FPSPI program and perceptions that it serves important purposes effectively for its participants— and is doing what it purports to do.”

Evaluation Report, p. 119

Program Strengths

- The program's goals, rules, and procedures are clear, easy to understand, and fair.
- There is considerable value in traveling to and competing in Program's Bowls.
- Action is underway to expand and enhance applications of technology in a variety of ways.
- Each of the program's major components, Global Issues Problem Solving (GIPS), Community Problem Solving (CmPS), and Scenario Writing (SW), was viewed positively by all respondent groups.

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Program Strengths (continued)

- The program “encourages creative and global thinking, and enforces key techniques for problem solving that are essential to everyday life. As a competitive program, it drives you to constantly learn and progress; as an international program, it broadens your perspective of the world as well as allowing you to meet people from various states and nations.”
- CmPS students have a real impact on their communities, developing community awareness and engaging in authentic service that truly makes a difference. SW also adds unique value to the overall FPSPI offerings, giving students opportunities “to do what real writers do,” and engaging them in real-world application of their own strengths, interests, and passion for writing.

Limitations and Areas for Improvement

These areas are concerns and possible areas of improvement within a program for which the overall evaluation results are very positive. That is, they are “opportunities to improve a strong, positive program,” rather than critical shortcomings that must be addressed in order to attain a basic level of satisfactory performance. They are concerned with enhancing a positive program, not “fixing a broken one.”

Limitations and Areas for Improvement

- Recognizing and capitalizing on the unique characteristics and contributions of each program component.
- Ongoing growth of the program (marketing FPSPI, building knowledge and awareness of the program in order to strengthen support and stimulate growth)
- recruitment and retention of adult volunteers, teams, and team members
- dealing with stress that comes with time and meeting multiple demands (program, home, work)
- Need for more training and ongoing support of coaches, especially new coaches.
- Funding (operational support, enabling student participation, support for Bowl travel)
- Enhancing communications and information flow across the program and with parents
- Technology enhancements in several areas
- IC location and logistics (schedule, logistics, support for travel)

Limitations and Areas for Improvement

- Ongoing attention to quality, timeliness, and consistency of evaluation and feedback
- Topic appropriateness (especially for younger age groups) and evenness of quality, interest, and difficulty
- Logistics and requirements in CmPS and SW
- Absence of a standardized system of participant data gathering and management.
- Need for a clear or uniform approach to the role and deployment of the problem solving process within each of the three components.
- Possible issues surrounding voluntary or required participation
- Unevenness of training and implementation at the local level
- Need for greater parent and alumni engagement

Program Impact

- Many adults wrote about the value and personal satisfaction of observing students' growth and accomplishments and their pride in the outstanding efforts of the participating students
- A coach reports, "being an FPS Coach was the most rewarding volunteer work I've ever done."
- Program responds to student strengths and talents, recognizing and dealing positively with student differences.
- Provides important and valuable international or cross-cultural experiences

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Program Impact (continued)

- Enables young people to learn and apply a structured process for problem solving
- Challenges young people to develop a futuristic outlook and to be forward-looking in addressing global challenges and issues.
- Benefits extend beyond stated program goals— a variety of life skills including: time management, self-direction, self-management, leadership, socialization skills, the use of technology, a broader academic experience that is both challenging and interesting, and community service.
- Life-long value and application: “I still have students I coached ten years ago coming back to thank me for involving them in FPS and telling me that they use the process all the time.”

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Program Impact (continued)

Alumni report positive impact on their academic life, work, and personal lives. One alumnus wrote: “ I have solid, supportive friends from FPS, and I am able to rationally solve a problem due to the FPS training.”

Another added: “I currently work in Public Policy, which requires me to think about the impact of particular scenarios, identify problems, and develop possible solutions that address those issues. Essentially, I use the FPS process on a daily basis to address modern day issues.”

The alumni felt that they had learned confidence when dealing with problems and using the CPS or six-step process. Their efforts in FPS improved their people skills, their ability to plan and manage their time, and their leadership skills. The program helped them as they made their way through high school and to prepare for college and work. One respondent summed this view up as follows: “FPS was the cornerstone to my academic experience. It connected every subject in school in a way that was mind opening, challenging, and rewarding. I believe all schools should offer this program as an option.”

Recommendations

- A. Address the program's needs in relation to funding, marketing, and publicity.
- B. Expand the view and presentation of the program's goals and unique elements as a foundation for program development as well as a tool for marketing and promotion.
- C. Examine carefully the potential tension between required and voluntary participation in the program.
- D. Investigate the need for training, support, and mentoring for coaches and other program personnel.
- E. Examine closely the role and uses of technology
- F. Examine the strengths, concerns, and opportunities relating to program-wide management and administration.
- G. Continuously review and reassesses procedures, rules, and evaluation/feedback
- H. Develop a systematic approach to build and maintain effective relationships with parents.
- I. Develop a systematic approach to build and maintain effective ongoing contact and relationships with students who have participated in FPS ("alumni").

Summary

This evaluation found that FPSPI has been successful in meeting its goals and objectives. As would be expected in any successful program for students, there are also some limitations and areas that can be improved. All things considered, FPSPI provides students with positive, engaging learning experiences that result in individual growth, both academically and socially, and that provide a foundation for future personal and career success.