

PARENT PERSPECTIVES

This issue of *Parent Perspectives* features a follow-up article from last month's issue. The article is written from the perspective of the parent as she journeys to assist her son (as well as herself) to embrace the Global Issues Problem Solving component! Please enjoy this edition from Shafiq's mother, Masyitah Majid, from the Malaysian affiliate.



My experience with helping my son with FPS:

A Malaysian parent's perspective

We found out about the FPSPi program in Malaysia last year. The first time we were supposed to meet with the National Director, Ms. Lalitha, we really didn't know what to expect. Our first impression was like we were talking to a British principal from the 50's. We have never met anyone who spoke like the Queen, what more in Malaysia! After we were briefed about the program, we decided to enrol our son, Shafiq, in GIPS and Scenario Writing. I thought that if this program is run by someone who spoke like the Queen in this day and age, the program must be good - right?

From the moment we started, we began to realise that Shafiq was having so much trouble comprehending the research articles and the scenario. He started to make comments such as "Mom, I really don't understand this," and "What on earth is this?" with coloured pens and markers on the papers that he read. When the drawings became more colourful and elaborate, I started getting worried. He seemed to spend more time colouring and decorating his comments than reading the materials. I knew I had to do something and that I could not let him go through it alone.

So one day, I sat down with Shafiq and told him that I would read together with him so that he wouldn't have to do so many drawings on his paper. By the time I got to the second paragraph, I was stumped and scratching my head. So I read them again and again and again. By the time I read the articles for the third time, I began to appreciate why Shafiq found it so difficult to read. These articles are pretty mature and very technical for a foreigner with English as a Second Language. If an adult finds them difficult, I can't imagine how a ten year old must feel.

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So, I turned to my personal walking encyclopedia aka my beloved husband for help. I showed him what I've read and after much discussion/arguments, we decided that in order for Shafiq to go through the 6 step process effectively, he must have a strong understanding of the philosophy of each topic. He also needed to be able to extract main ideas from the future scenario easily. So, we thought we would just spend about a few hours each weekend going through with him and everything would be ok! But, it was easier said than done. It was actually a very difficult, time consuming and overwhelming process. Our kid was just not



Masyitah and her family.

mature and worldly enough to understand the topics being discussed. He was just not exposed to real life world issues and implications. Sometimes, he could understand things with just one or two discussions, which was a relief. But sometimes, he struggled so hard that it took us even much longer to the point where we had to go through with him line by line. I must admit that those were stressful moments but laughable moments as well because we had no one to guide us and we sometimes guessed about what those articles really meant just to show our kid that we were smart when actually we had no clue! My parents think that I was over my head and that I should just quit and let it be. But, I wasn't about to give up. Call me a crazy tiger mum but I just could not show my kids that I give up that easily.

I decided to buy some guide books from Ms. Lalitha to help me understand what this GIPS and scenario writing was really all about. I figured if my kid had to "suffer" this much, I might as well "suffer" with him just to support him. So there I was burning the midnight oil reading and taking notes just like an overgrown college student. At that time, I really wasn't sure what my kids thought of me. I wasn't sure of myself either! Halfway through though, I was hooked. This, in my opinion, is a really great program to immerse your child with intellectualism. If you want your child to be more exposed to real life global issues that extends beyond the normal academic realm of math, science and English, this is the place to be. I haven't found another program in this country that can test a child's ability to do problem solving in this way before. In fact, I think a lot of adults I know can benefit from this program as well.

I was reading so much that I was able to recite the six steps and comment on Shafiq's essays in my sleep. But let me tell you, reading these books was the best decision that I have ever made. I am really able to help my kid when I know what is expected and what to do. By then, my husband and I were able to tweak and refine our approach when discussing with Shafiq on the whole process. In fact, we looked forward to every new topic so that we could read and discuss the articles and scenario together. It was a full family affair (snacks included)!

We have been in this program for over a year and Shafiq is definitely more confident and experienced now compared to when we first started the program. The icing on the cake was when Shafiq was selected to participate in the International Conference in the United States this year. It was a life changing moment for him. He came back different. There was a certain air of confidence and maturity about him that even his teachers noticed in him. He hasn't just gained a better understanding and appreciation for real life issues; he suddenly became more interested and concerned about what was happening around him. (continued)

Masyitah is a mother of two boys from Malaysia. She studied in Boston, Massachusetts and worked in an oil and gas firm before she decided to leave the corporate world to spend time with her children. She has been a homemaker for the past 10 years and has loved it!!! She has various interests ranging from cooking to traveling to swimming to scrap booking. She enjoys spending her free time with her boys.

Now, his enthusiasm about FPSPI is so infectious that he has even got a few of his friends from school to enroll in the program as well. He even helped out with other new kids. For my husband and I, well, we help Ms Lalitha with her classes every weekend. We even help to motivate other new parents and share our experiences so that they don't drop their jaws just like we did when we were new. We even enrolled his brother as we want him to gain the benefits of this program just like his brother.

I am also proud to say that I am seeing less and less of the "I am confused" remarks in Shafiq's readings. I now see him sit down straight, eyes light up brightly and a smile curve up on his face once he starts his work. I couldn't be prouder and that brings a huge smile to my face.



**Malaysia became
an official FPSPI
Affiliate in Jan.
2011.**

**Share your thoughts
and ideas with us!**

Do you have an FPSPI story to share? Does your child or student have a story to share? Do your FPSPI alumni want to share their experiences? We invite anyone to write an article or testimonial to share with us!

Please send your questions, comments, or articles with a photo to the Parent Committee

via

Deb Woythal at

dwoythal@gmail.com

Let's learn a little about our Malaysian Affiliate!

Malaysia is a melting-pot of races and religions where Malays, Indians, Chinese, and many other ethnic groups live together in peace and harmony. Multiple ethnicities has made Malaysia a cultural paradise and home to hundreds of colorful festivals. As a people, Malaysians are very relaxed, warm, and friendly who enjoy socializing.

Geographically, Malaysia is almost as diverse as its culture. Eleven states and two federal territories (Kuala Lumpur and Putrajaya) form Peninsular Malaysia which is separated by the South China Sea from East Malaysia which includes the 2 states (Sabah and Sarawak on the island of Borneo) and a third federal territory, the island of Labuan.

One of Malaysia's key attractions is its extreme contrasts which further add to the country's diversity. In the major cities such as the capitol, Kuala Lumpur, one can see towering skyscrapers looking down upon wooden houses built on stilts while five-star hotels sit just meters away from ancient ocean reefs.

Outside the city, rugged mountains reach dramatically to the sky while rainforest-clad slopes sweep down to flood plains teeming with forest life. Cool highland rolling hills flow down to warm, sandy beaches and rich, humid mangroves which grow across the rich terrain.

