



# Coach and Parent Newsletter

## May 2016

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### Future Problem Solving Camp

*By Michelle McElmury  
Lake City FPS Coach*

Our Future Problem Solving teams have some unusual challenges: we are not a school-sponsored activity, I am not a full-time teacher in our district, we raise our own funds to support competitions and I volunteer all my time. Despite these challenges, we still strive to compete on an equal level with all other schools and teams.

Last year, I realized that having a practice season (as we had done the past ten years) was no longer practical. When meeting before school once a week with my Middle and Senior Division teams and after school in another building once a week with my Junior Division teams, this left no time for FPS newbies to get a start. Using our problem-solving model, I came up with the idea of running an FPS Camp through our Summer Recreation program.



*Lake City Future Problem Solving students 2015-16.*

The camp ran Monday through Thursday for two hours each morning for two weeks. We were able to pack over twenty weeks of practices into two weeks. Some really amazing things happened. This was the

### FPS Summer Camp at Wayzata

*By Beth Benezra  
Wayzata East Middle School FPS Coach*

Imagine spending an entire week solving the problems of the future! That's what we did during the Intermediate District 287 West Suburban Summer School (WSSS) Program. The class was designed for beginner Future Problem Solvers (FPS) in 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades (emerging 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders) and was scheduled Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. for a group of ten to twelve students.

Part of our time together was spent team-building. After all, team work is a major aspect of the Future Problem Solving process! This involved simple get-to-know-you activities and community-building games. Toward the end of the week the students worked in small groups to play a detective game and used their critical thinking skills to solve a murder mystery.

Of course it can't be Future Problem Solving without the six step process and the presentation of action plan. Much of the week was spent learning the steps while we focused on two separate topics. These were chosen from the list of topics from the previous competition year: Social Media and Propaganda. The *Readings, Research and Resources*, a collection of article summaries, and the *Topics Activity Units*, both from the FPSP Mart, (<http://www.fpspimart.org>) provided plenty of ideas for how to present the steps while concentrating on the topics.

The week culminated with the Presentation of Action Plan (PAP) a skit representing their Plan of Action. The students had a blast creating their skit using odds and ends to create props. Plenty of "stuff" was available at the WSSS storage facility. The students performed the PAP for another WSSS class as well as for their parents who came to the Friday afternoon open house. It was the perfect way to end a

first time that students were not either in the Gifted and Talented program or recommended by a teacher. I was slightly concerned that some may not catch on as quickly or conversely might lose interest. I found that all fifteen students were very willing and able to learn the process. They were engaged and enthusiastic! There is something to be said for students who choose to be involved versus students who are placed in the program. The compact schedule also allowed us to do things we were unable to do before such as delve deeper into team member dynamics, take brainstorming techniques to another level and practice writing a booklet in a two-hour time constraint.

During the course of the school year, our coaching time is always too short. One thing that I was able to add during this Summer FPS Camp was to take the time to introduce criteria rather than to just dive in and start teaching it. I had them come in one day to a dozen pictures from magazines that I'd taped up onto the wall. I then directed them go around and pick the 'best' one. They liked doing that but, as expected, it ended up in an argument of which one was really the best. I then explained that we can ask questions to determine which picture is the best. For example, 'Which picture is the most colorful?' 'Which picture is the most artistic?' This is how I introduced criteria and steps 4/5. FPS Camp gave me the gift of time to start kids out learning how to generate well focused criteria rather than teaching them how to write generic criteria and then teaching them how to develop focused criteria.

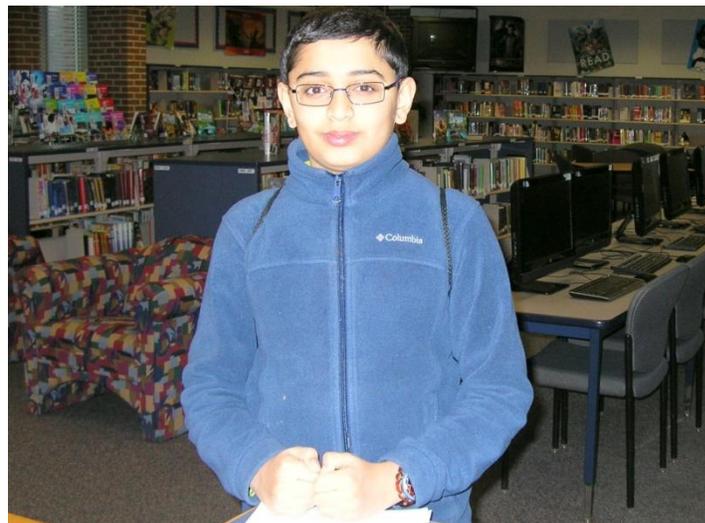
Ten of the fifteen students who graduated from the camp ended up participating in our competitive FPS teams this year. They were very successful! Two of the three teams advanced to the State Bowl and one team placed SECOND at State. This was our highest finish ever!



Lake City 2<sup>nd</sup> Place Junior Team

week of energetic, but focused future problem solving.

Ritvik attended the summer program and enjoyed it so much that he decided to sign up for the competition season. Highlights of FPS at WSSS for Ritvik were:



Wayzata East Middle School FPS student Ritvik

playing the murder mystery game. Ritvik is now part of a Wayzata East Middle school FPS junior team that competed at the State Competition in April.

This coming summer will provide another opportunity for FPS immersion in the WSSS program. Students are already signing up for one of the sessions—two different timeframes are being offered. In addition to the community building activities and the detective game, I plan to add a couple rounds of *Future Thing* to challenge their future thinking skills. Practicing the six steps will center around two new topics: Disappearing Languages and Recovering from Natural Disasters. I'm looking forward to providing the challenge that can benefit students' critical and creative problem solving skills!

Four students, who ten months before, had never heard of Future Problem Solving, made it on stage to accept a trophy!

For our teams, this solution and action plan definitely boosted our Future Problem Solving program. FPS Camp has produced growth in our teams both in size and quality. Another FPS Camp is on the calendar for this June!

FPS IC Topic  Energy of the Future!