

# PARENT PERSPECTIVES

This month's contributions come from Deb Woythal of the Iowa affiliate. Deb is Chair of the Parent Outreach Committee.



## How, When, Where and Why did FPSPI begin?

The most important of these questions is WHY the program started. Dr. E. Paul Torrance and his associates created the Future Problem Solving Program due to two significant reasons.

Dr. Torrance, a pioneer in the field of creativity, had long noted that many of the difficult children he worked with in rural Georgia went on to become very successful adults. These seemingly unteachable students, Dr. Torrance concluded, were more than problem children – they were actually problem solvers.

While conducting research on creativity at the University of Georgia, Torrance also began to be concerned about the overall decline of creativity in America. He was noting, too, that the high school students he was teaching did not have a positive view of the future.

He decided to teach the creative problem solving process along with futuristic problems to see if this curriculum would promote a more positive and creative outlook on the future. And so, in 1974, the curricular program was initiated. By 1977-1978, the first interscholastic competitions were held.

Dr. Torrance believed these three elements were absolutely necessary to the FPS Program:

1. Disciplined, systematic, creative problem solving training
2. Research on problems/issues of the future
3. Teamwork skills

Dr. Torrance and his associates believed then, as we do today, that our children will live in a vastly different world from our world and as such, they need creativity and problem solving to successfully adapt to their ever-changing world.



Deb is the Past President of the Board of Trustees and is currently the mentor to Turkey!

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From its beginning in Georgia to the worldwide program we have today, Dr. Torrance's three elements have not changed. FPSPi involves participants from over 40 states of the USA, as well as participants from eleven different countries with additional countries requesting mentoring all the time.

**FPSPi's CURRENT GOALS are:**

- Develop and apply creative thinking skills
- Learn about complex issues shaping the future
- Develop an active interest in the future
- Develop written and verbal communication skills
- Learn and utilize problem-solving strategies
- Develop teamwork skills
- Develop analytic research skills
- Develop and use critical thinking skills
- Develop ethical leadership qualities



**So... HOW WELL ARE WE DOING IN MEETING THESE GOALS?**

In 2010 the FPSPi board accepted the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Program Evaluation Committee to conduct three program evaluations to assess how we are doing on the mission and goals of the program.



The first evaluation was created by the Center for Creative Learning team under the direction of Dr. Donald J. Treffinger. This qualitative study utilized an in-depth survey with short-response and open-ended responses created for each group: alumni, parents, coaches, student FPSers and Affiliate Directors. Overall, the survey was very positive and it has been subsequently written up in two publications, and a special report has been provided by the CCL team for our constituents. This report can be found on the FPSPi website. Dr. Treffinger has also written a 10-page article published in *The Journal of Creative Behavior*. For a copy of this article, contact FPSPi's Executive Director, Marianne Solomon,

**New Zealand students took part in the study.**  
[Marianne@fpspi.org](mailto:Marianne@fpspi.org), or Deb Woythal, [dwoythal@gmail.com](mailto:dwoythal@gmail.com).

One of the highlights of this study came from the (short) list of recommendations, all very pertinent. The Strategic Plan committee has prioritized these recommendations, and the FPSPi board in conjunction with Marianne Solomon and her staff has taken action to address these recommendations.

The second study, referred to as the GEN 2 study, is a study of our alumni conducted by doctoral students at the University of Virginia under Dr. Carolyn Callahan. This study, with open-ended survey questions relative to FPSPi, was also very positive with regard to the meeting and surpassing of the FPSPi goals.

Please send your questions or comments to the Parent Committee via Deb Woythal at [dwoythal@gmail.com](mailto:dwoythal@gmail.com)

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The researchers decided that they wished to continue the study, gathering more in-depth information with personal interviews. They were especially interested in studying the influence of the program on the professional and personal lives of a randomly-selected number of the original responders. This evaluative study was also very positive and is available through FPSPI or Deb Woythal, who chaired the program evaluations.

The third study was a collaborative longitudinal study with Scholastic Testing Services (STS) and FPSPI, utilizing the Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking. This longitudinal study involved FPSers and non-FPSers from the same grades and same schools with a wait period of three years between the first and subsequent re-testings. In 2011, the students were 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> graders and in the 2014 testing, the same students were in 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> grade. The TTCT, form A, was used in 2011 and the TTCT, form B, was used in 2014. For the final testing in 2017, the TTCT, form A will be used.



Minnesota students participated in the study.

Attrition from the 2011 testing occurred due to many factors: different schools, moving out of the district, original coaches no longer connected with the students, the loss of one Affiliate Program due to that district's voluminous school wide testing schedule. STS and FPSPI felt that even with the lower number of participating students, the data would be valid for the 135 students in the 2014 testing.

The 2014 results showed that the FPS students scored higher on ALL aspects (mental characteristics) assessed by the TTCT from the first year's testing AND the 3<sup>rd</sup> year's testing. These mental characteristics include: Fluency; Originality; Titles; Elaboration; Closure. Statistical tests were run on the results and the t-tests validated the testing data.

**Arizona students participated in the study as well.**



It was good to see that BOTH groups had increased scores as 8/9<sup>th</sup> graders, but it is significant to see FPSPI students showing higher increases on each of the standard scores and creativity indices compared with the non-FPSPI students. It was interesting also to note that in both years' testings the highest score was with ELABORATION.

Student scores have been shared with the FPS contacts in each of the participating Affiliate Programs. These results are available to the students' coaches, their parents, and to the students themselves. We look forward to the third and final testing three years from now. This study is also available from FPSPI or Deb Woythal.

It is very important when assessing an educational program to ask HOW the program is meeting the stated program goals; we are very pleased that our studies have validated **THAT IN THE FPSPI PROGRAM WE DO WHAT WE SAY WE DO!**

