

FLUENCY FRIDAY! 2001

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A special day of intensive fluency training for children was held at the University of Cincinnati Speech and Hearing Clinic on October 26th. Twenty six children with fluency problems ranging in age from five to fourteen participated in individual and group treatment activities developed by 25 graduate students from the University of Cincinnati and Miami University. Three teen mentors who are in treatment shared their experiences with the children and their parents. Approximately 25 parents participated in group discussions, watched treatment or utilized an Internet web search program coordinated by the university.

This program was initiated and developed by a group of clinicians in the community who felt the need to provide children diagnosed with fluency problems with intensive practice and an opportunity to deal with the emotional and attitudinal aspects of fluency problems including opportunities to talk to others dealing with stuttering difficulties. Situational skill practice was also an important component of the day.

Another important aspect of the program provided graduate students with the opportunity to work in a well-supervised situation with children who have fluency problems. This mentoring component was accomplished by having the graduate students dialogue with the child's coordinating clinician in the community and by interviewing the parents prior to the treatment day. The graduate students were encouraged to meet the child prior to Fluency Friday. Each graduate student was supervised by an experienced clinician on Fluency Friday and received feedback from them on techniques and ideas for treatment.

The children participated in small group activities learning about the speech helpers, information about stuttering, discussing feelings and making situational hierarchies for practice. Individual treatment focused on target practice. An art room provided opportunities for drawing, trying on costumes and playing with puppets. Video taping and telephoning was also available throughout the day. Open microphone opportunities provided entertainment during lunch as the children, parents and graduate students told jokes and discussed various parts of the morning program. The closing ceremony provided an opportunity for the children to successfully participate in a group activity in front of all attending.

The coordinators of this program at the university level were Phyllis Breen, University of Cincinnati and Jim Malott, Miami University. Hamilton County Office of Education supervisors included Susan Givler and Ann Slone. Tricia McConnell-Stephen, from HCOE, coordinated the parent component of the day. Community Speech-language pathologists from Hamilton County who supervised on Fluency Friday included Beth Huber, Judy Songer, Patt Zurlinden and Kelly Monchai. Irv Wollman coordinated the fluency team from Children's Hospital Medical Center including supervisors Karen Padgett, Heather Helinski, Karen Rizzo, Leah Wineman and Staci Maddox. Irv also provided in-service training to the students from the University of Cincinnati. Patricia Fisher, Tri-County Speech Associates, coordinated the lunch and snacks for the day and provided supervision and development ideas throughout this process.

A project of this magnitude needed financial support, which included a donation from the Southwestern Ohio Speech, Language and Hearing Association. In addition, the following companies provided free materials to the program: Super Duper, Speech Bin, Thinking Publications and LinguSystems. Hours of volunteer time were given by the coordinating team for this project in addition to donations of snacks and money to make this project work.

The bottom line was an exciting, fun day for the children, the graduate students, their parents and the supervisors! All learned a great deal about fluency!