

FLUENCY FRIDAY PLUS 2002

By Diane C. Games, M.A.
Coordinator, FFP

The Fluency Friday Plus was completed on November 8th and 9th, 2002 and planning is underway for continuation of the program in 2003. The mission of **Fluency Friday Plus** is to provide a program of intensive treatment for children with stuttering problems; to mentor graduate students in speech-language pathology in the treatment of fluency disorders through training programs and through direct supervision provided by master clinicians in the community; to educate and support parents and extended family members concerning issues related to fluency treatment and the disorder of stuttering.

Children with stuttering disorders often do not receive the type and frequency of treatment needed to facilitate recovery from this problem. In addition, they feel isolated as the incidence of this disorder affects 1-2% of the population. Parents and extended family members need support and training to deal with the difficult issues that occur in the child's communication environment. Many universities are struggling to find appropriate clinical training programs to offer to graduate students in fluency training. Community speech-language pathologists report continuing education in fluency disorders as a high priority. As a result of all of these factors, Fluency Friday Plus was developed.

Fluency Friday Plus (FFP) is an intensive treatment program for children with stuttering (CWS) disorders, K-12th grade. The event has been held at the University of Cincinnati from the last two years. This project is a collaborative effort involving speech/language professionals in the greater Cincinnati area including university, private practice, hospital and educational work settings. Community speech-language pathologists from each of these settings provide direct supervision of the graduate students from Miami University and the University of Cincinnati who provide the direct treatment during the program. The students receive training from the organizational team of FFP in addition to completing a course on stuttering and/or fluency disorders at the graduate level. In addition, a continuing education program has been developed for community professionals for continuing education credit hours. A comprehensive parent program is developed for the event including speakers, group discussions and a teen panel. Special events have included a play by Miami University students who are currently in treatment for stuttering problems, Sycamore High School thespian students who provided support for role-playing and skit development and coverage of the event by Channel 5 news.

The 2002 Fluency Friday Plus event generated the following numbers:

- 43 children/young people (CWS) received treatment (K-12)
- 4 university students attended the second day
- 39 graduate students from Miami University & The University of Cincinnati provided the direct treatment
- 10 members of the Fluency Friday Plus organizational team coordinated various aspects of the event
- 16 community Speech-Language Pathologists provided direct supervision
- 8 Sycamore High School Thespian students facilitated role playing & skit development

- 60 parents & extended family members participated in educational programs
- 10 volunteers

Children/teens received three hours of individual and three hours of group treatment during the day and one-half of programming. Fluency Friday Plus Activities included:

- Individual and Peer Group Treatment – CWS attended both individual and peer group sessions. In addition to practicing speech targets, issues such as attitudes about speaking and the emotional aspects of dealing with a stuttering disorder were addressed.
- USA Group Treatment – The CWS were divided into four heterogeneous groups containing students from all ages. These groups were designed to provide mentoring support for the younger children and to offer leadership opportunities for the teens.
- Role Playing/Skits – Opportunities were designed for CWS to “act out” various situations concerning feelings, difficult speaking situations and dealing with comments or teasing.
- Computer Access – A computer laboratory was set up with a selected list of web sites dealing with stuttering. Parents and students were encouraged to visit the lab throughout the event to research information or to review educational materials.
- An Open Microphone event was scheduled during the lunch hour of the first day. CWS were encouraged to speak to the participants in an auditorium setting using a microphone. In this supportive environment, a number of students felt free to tell jokes and stories.
- Saturday morning was kicked off with a Conversational Breakfast where opportunities to practice social conversation were provided. CWS target goals such as making introductions or meeting someone new in this event.
- Special rooms were set aside for videotaping and telephoning practice.
- In a special project developed by Amy Lyons, Miami University graduate student, CWS received a few cards with Affirmations such as “I am special.” or “I can speak fluently” in their registration packet. In addition, supervisors receive several cards with additional affirmations. The CWS negotiated for cards throughout the first day by communicating with adults and other students for the best cards to describe their positive attributes. These cards were worn proudly throughout the first day.
- At the 2002 FFP, four students from Miami University provided a special play discussing their personal journeys through life dealing with stuttering. Viewpoints concerning attitudes and emotions about improving communication skills were shared with the audience.
- An educational program for the parents and extended family was an important part of the event. The Parent Support Group program provides opportunities for parents to enter into discussions on topics of interest. In addition, lectures by experts in various fields are scheduled. Last year, Donna Cooperman, Ph.D. spoke on “Parenting a Child with a Fluency Disorder”. On the second day, Jim

Meyers, Ph.D. discussed “How to Handle Teasing and Bullying.” In addition, parents were encouraged to observe treatment throughout the program.

- Teen Panel –A group of teens were scheduled to meet with the parents and to answer a variety of parent-generated questions. This forum enabled the teens to speak freely about their experiences as young people who stutter to a large, “listener-friendly” group audience who respect their courage and maturity and value their own unique insights.
- A series of seminars for graduate students were scheduled by the FFP organizational team to address the specifics of treatment during the Fluency Friday Plus project. Sessions were held over the summer and fall at the University of Cincinnati and at Miami University.
- The graduate students were responsible for learning to administer a Standard Speaking Sample, a collection procedure developed specifically for FFP. This sample included a word count, a timed sample, disfluency analysis and severity rating scale. The graduate students also sampled fluency levels during the program utilizing Minute Speaking Samples.
- Graduate students were assigned to one or two CWS. Prior to FFP, the graduate students were responsible for contacting professionals, the parents and the child. The graduate students develop treatment materials in each of the three treatment domains of Speech Targets, Attitudes & Emotions and Environmental situations.
- Graduate students received feedback from supervisors throughout the event, in written form and in discussions.
- Supervisors were recruited from all practice settings. Prior to FFP, supervisors participated in training sessions to familiarize them with the procedures, activities and forms utilized at FFP. During FFP, each supervisor was assigned two or three graduate students. Last year, supervisors received .5 (five hours) of Continuing Education units for attending the special training sessions and the lectures scheduled in this program.

Objectives for this program include: 1) providing intensive practice of speech targets for children with fluency problems, 2) providing exercises for children designed to deal with the emotional/attitudinal aspects of stuttering, 3) providing opportunities for CWS to practice targets in safe speaking situations, 4) providing students in graduate training with an opportunity to work in a well supervised situation with children who have fluency problems, 5) providing parents with an opportunity to learn about therapy and to dialogue with other parents concerning stuttering, 6) providing graduate students with diagnostic tools and treatment approaches that will transfer to a variety of work settings and age ranges and 7) providing continuing educational opportunities to community speech-language pathologists.

Currently, the FFP organizational team is meeting to plan the 2003 version. The majority of the activities listed above will be continued with minor changes in such areas as speaker’s topics, training session formats and group dynamics. Graduate student training will begin this summer and continue through the fall. Facilities are being explored for the increasing numbers expected at the next event.

The following professionals have comprised the Fluency Friday Organizational team over the last two years and will be active in planning the 2003 event.

Diane C. Games, M.A., CCC-SLP
Board Certified Fluency Specialist
Tri-County Speech Associates, Inc.

Irving Wollman, M.A., CCC-SLP
Board Certified Fluency Specialist
Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center

Jim Malott, Ph.D., CCC-SLP
Board Certified Fluency Specialist
Miami University

Phyllis Breen, M.A., CCC-SLP
Clinical Coordinator
University of Cincinnati

Susan Givler, M.S., CCC-SLP
Supervisor
Hamilton County Educational Service Center

Ann Slone, M.A., CCC-SLP
Supervisor
Hamilton County Education Service
Center

Tricia McConnell-Stephen, M.A., CCC-SLP
Speech-Language Pathologist

Patricia Fisher, M.A., CCC-SLP
Speech-Language Pathologist
Tri-County Speech Associates

Judy Luebbe, Speech-Language Pathologist from the Cincinnati Public Schools, attended meetings and provided support throughout the 2002 experience.

Diane C. Games and Irving Wollman presented the results of this project at the national Special Interest Division Leadership Conference held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, May 8-11, 2002. Data from the first Fluency Friday event was also published in the national newsletter for this organization, Perspectives. Multiple requests have been honored for speaking and training programs sharing insights learned from the Fluency Friday projects.