

“Create Your Future!”

Fluency Friday Plus - 2005! SWOSHA Kicks off FFP with Nina Reardon Workshop!

Speech-Language Pathologists in the Cincinnati community along with graduate students from Miami University and the University of Cincinnati attended a workshop November 3rd on “School Age Stuttering Therapy: Becoming More Confident, Comfortable and Effective” given by Nina Reardon, M.S. CCC-SLP, Board Recognized Fluency Specialist. This workshop “kicked off” the fifth Fluency Friday Plus project held on November 4th and the morning of November 5th.

Ms. Reardon presented “The Assessment and Therapy Triad: PBS – Pragmatics, Beliefs/Feelings & Support System, and Speech! Pragmatic skills are important for children who stutter due to issues of turn taking, maintaining eye contact and handling time pressure in conversations. She also discussed strategies for dealing with Belief Systems and Feelings. Among the approaches discussed were journaling, role playing, problem solving, and positive self-talk. She further discussed the use of Graphic Organizers and Effect Circles which lead the students to describe what happens during moments of stuttering (i.e. Fear will lead to physical tension which will lead to stuttering) and to develop potential solutions (i.e. ease of tool use will lead to less tension/stuttering to confidence).

The Speech portion of the Triad started with ideas for treatment such as making a “Speech Man” (Bennett & Ramig, 1997) to learn about sound/word production. She encouraged exploration of different aspects of stuttering including “playing” with stuttering moments and secondary behaviors in contrast to fluent speech. Empowering children/teens to manage stuttering should include educating them about stuttering and emphasizing the value of each portion of the treatment plan.

On November 4th & 5th , the graduate students provided individual and group treatment sessions for fifty four children/teens with stuttering ages 5 through 18 at the Fluency Friday Plus project held at Mercy Healthplex in Fairfield, Ohio. Experienced speech language pathologists in the Cincinnati area supervised treatment sessions. This year, each graduate clinician and supervisor received a manual containing diagnostic and treatment ideas developed by the Fluency Friday Team. The manual also included handouts from guest speakers at FFP and ideas/forms for use with parents and teachers.

Fluency Friday Plus focuses on having fun while speaking in a number of situations that are often difficult for the child/teen who stutters. The theme this year was “Create Your Future” using characters from Star Wars to help teach concepts. Darth Vader and members of the Sith were contrasted to Luke Skywalker and the Jedi Knights. Short videos and PowerPoint presentations provided background for the children/teens on the importance of practicing, learning dexterity and finding inner resources to overcome adversity. The Jedi Knights were used as role models for these achievements. All children/teens received light sabers to find the “force” within them. The life of James Earl Jones was highlighted using information from his novel, “Voices and Silences”. His struggle with stuttering led to several years of silence during his childhood until he was able to find his voice!

Attitudes and Emotions group sessions were held to discuss the difficult aspects of dealing with stuttering including teasing, embarrassment and anxiety. The children/teens participated in games and role playing to evaluate emotions and generate solutions to deal with difficult speaking situations related to stuttering.

To practice their skills, the children/teens developed skits at the end of Friday to perform in front of the entire group. They told jokes during Open Microphone during lunch on Friday. On Saturday morning, they participated in a Conversational Breakfast where they visited 10 Talking Stations earning raffle tickets for gift baskets sponsored by the Southwestern Ohio Speech Language & Hearing Association. Local speech language pathologists donated items to the baskets. The Fluency Team from Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center donated items signed by Bengal’s player, Chris Perry.

Sessions were scheduled for the parents while their children/teens were in the treatment program at Fluency Friday Plus. The parents listened to sessions led by Nina Reardon, Donna Cooperman & Rod Gabel. These sessions dealt with the role of parents as counselors, dealing with fears and suggestions to integrate the school, family and friends into the treatment process. A panel of members of the FFP planning team discussed such issues as obtaining school services, insurance resources, handling difficult situations and what to expect from treatment. Parents shared their personal questions and concerns which generated discussion. A Teen Panel answered parents' questions and gave opinions on various issues concerning stuttering. On Saturday, Adults with Stuttering shared painful and positive experiences/reactions to their stuttering from parents, teachers and friends. This panel was led by Rod Gabel who shared his personal story growing up with stuttering.

This year, a special session was held on Saturday morning for the siblings of the children/teens who participated in FFP. A PowerPoint presentation was utilized to educate the siblings about stuttering and to generate discussion. Role playing of "Time Pressure" situations provided the siblings with "hands on" practice of how interruptions can impact stuttering. The siblings asked questions, discussed their concerns and wrote letters or made drawings for their brother or sister who stutters.

Fluency Friday Plus is a combination intensive treatment for children/teens who stutter along with a training program for graduated students. Experienced clinicians from the community participate to learn more about stuttering and to support the graduate students. This program was financed in part by funds from the Southwestern Ohio Speech Language and Hearing Association, the Ohio Speech Language and Hearing Association and the Procter & Gamble Company. SWOSHA's financial support of the 2005 project allowed special training for the graduate students participating in this program. The entire team of speech language pathologists who participated in FFP-2005, the children/teens who stutter and their families and the graduate students from the University of Cincinnati and Miami University would like to thank SWOSHA, OSLHA & P&G!