STUTTERING: A TEACHER'S GUIDE

This handout is a guide to help teachers understand stuttering—what it is, how teachers can help, and an inside perspective of the impact of stuttering.

WHAT IS STUTTERING?

Stuttering is a disruption in the forward flow of speech that may be accompanied by physical tension, secondary behaviors, negative reactions to speaking situations, and difficulty communicating.
Disfluency (a component of stuttering) is merely a disruption in the forward flow of speech. While all speakers have disfluencies, about one percent of the population stutters.

Common types of disfluencies include:

1. Repetitions: This is when a person repeats part of a word (a sound or syllable), the entire word, or a phrase.

Some things you may hear include:

Part word repetition: W-W-W-When do you want to play baseball?

(ASHA, 2013).

Syllable repetition: When do you want to play base-base-base-baseball?

Entire word repetition: When-when-when do you want to play baseball?

Phrase Repetition: When do you want-when do you want to play baseball?

2. Prolongations: This is when a person "stretches out" a sound of a word (ASHA, 2013).

This may sound like: "SSSSSSSSam helped me with my homework."

3. Blocks: This is when a person gets completely "stuck" and no sound comes out. The person's mouth may look "stuck" in the position for the sound, but it may

take many seconds for the sound to be produced (ASHA, 2013).

For example: "I …(with his face in the position for "W" for 3 seconds) …went to soccer practice."

4. Interjections: This is when a person adds extra words or "filler words" to the message, such as "umm," "uhh," "like," and "you know" (ASHA, 2013).

An example of this is: "I…like…went to…ummm, you know…soccer practice."

5. Revisions: This is when a person begins a speech production, but then revises the phrase before it is finished (Dewey, 2005).

For example—"I need some milk…I need some money for the store."

I STUTTER SOMETIMES TOO...

Disfluencies that are "red flags" for a fluency disorder

- Whole word repetitions of words that are one syllable (man man man) (three or more repetitions)
- Sound or syllable repetitions (B-b-b-baseball or base-base-base-baseball) (three or more repetitions)
- Prolongations that are audible and inaudible
- Blocks
- Broken word
- Tense pause

(Yaruss, 1997a)

Another "red flag" is if the student has other physical behaviors accompanying the disfluency, such as head nodding, blinking, twitching, or tapping; these are called **secondary behaviors** (Coleman, 2013).

Disfluencies that are typical students who do not stutter

- Whole word repetitions of words that have more than 1 syllable (baseball baseball)
- Phrase repetitions (I went I went)
- Interjections
- 2 or fewer whole word repetitions with one syllable or part-word repetitions with no tension
- Revisions/incomplete phrases
- Hesitations

(Yaruss, 1997a)

Stuttering Behavior Type	Stuttering (What may constitute a fluency disorder)	Normal Disfluency (What may constitute a normal disfluency that is not a disorder)
Syllable repetition (ba-ba-ba-baby)	More than two per word	Less than two per word
Syllable repetitions from 100 words	More than two	Less than two
Rate of speech	Faster than normal	Normal rate
Airflow during speech	Often interrupted	Rarely interrupted
Prolongation length (e.g. SSSSSSSam)	Longer than one second	Less than one second
Prolongations from 100 words	More than 1 per 100 words	Less than 1 per 100 words
Silent pauses	May occur within words or after a disfluency	Absent
Frustration with speech	May be present	Absent
Eye contact during speech	May waver	Normal

(Van Riper, 1982)

WHAT TO DO IF SUSPECTING STUTTERING

If you have a student who is disfluent and may have a fluency disorder, it is best to notify your school's speech-language pathologist (SLP). The SLP can screen the child to see if a fluency disorder exists, and then the SLP can fully evaluate the child if there is a concern. If therapy is warranted, the SLP can work with the child to promote communication, develop strategies for more fluent speech, reduce the child's negative attitudes pertaining to their speech, and strive to eliminate additional physical reactions or secondary behaviors. Education and counseling are crucial aspects of speech therapy for fluency disorders (Coleman, 2013).

Do not feel that it is too early to refer a child to an SLP for a screening, as early intervention is shown to be very successful in children ages three to six years old.

Teachers play an essential role in the treatment process for school-age children (Manning, 2010).

TIPS FOR THE CLASSROOM

- Reward the child for his effort—for participating and not avoiding. Don't focus on fluency, focus on content!
- Remain calm and be patient. Give the child as much time as he needs to communicate.
- Encourage the child to participate by setting the tone for the class that others will not make fun of his stuttering.
- Do not finish sentence, interrupt the child, or tell him to "slow down" or "stop and think about what you want to say."
- When having the class read aloud, try to avoid going down the rows in a set order. A more random style of turn taking may help minimize the anxiety associated with this difficult speaking situation.
- Encourage turn-taking for the entire class. Limit verbal interruptions and try to not reward quick callout answers in class.
- Treat the child who stutters no different than the other children in class. Most children who stutter want to be like their friends, and if they are singled out because of stuttering this can contribute to the sense of stigma and isolation they may feel.

Useful Websites:

National Stuttering Association:

www.westutter.org

Stuttering Foundation of America:

www.stutteringhelp.org

Stuttering Home Page:

www.stutteringhomepage.com

Friends

www.friendswhostutter.org

Marshall University Stuttering Clinic

www.marshall.edu (search "Stuttering Clinic")

Virtual Stuttering Center

www.virtualstutteringcenter.com

Stuttering Specialists

www.stutteringspecialists.org

American Speech-Language Hearing Association

www.asha.org

Bullying and Children Who Stutter

"Bullying is a learned behavior in which there is a difference in power between those being hurt and those doing the hurting" (www.bullying.org). Bullying can take many different forms, including verbal bullying, such as making threats and name-calling, psychological bullying, such as excluding children and spreading rumors, or physical bullying, such as hitting, pushing, or taking a child's possessions (Kuster, 2011).

Most people are teased about differences. Research shows that 81% of children who stutter (CWS) are bullied (Langevin, 2001). This is not surprising, since the children's behaviors associated with their struggle to speak provides an easy target for bullies, and interferes with their ability to verbally defend themselves. Bullying often causes children who stutter to feel ashamed of their speech, and thus withdraw from social situations (Manning, 2010, p. 461).

Bullying leads to emotional challenges (lowered self esteem, depression, loneliness, and anxiousness), academic challenges (negative feelings about school, school dropout, and social failure), and physical challenges (Manning, 2010, p. 461). Since children spend the majority of their time in the schools, it is important for all of us to educate and provide students with necessary resources to combat this growing issue. Teachers can help to prevent or address bullying by implementing some of the techniques below:

Steps for Teachers to Address Bullying in the Classroom

1. **Identification**- Know what is happening. This can be accomplished using resources such as "Teasing Inventories" to provide documentation of events and to enable the teacher to get a more in-depth understanding of the problem and the experiences in the child's life. Inventories can be adapted to the child's age level and specific situation. While older children may be able to fill them out independently, younger children may need these scales to be read to them and explained.

The following sources provide bullying inventories to help children express their experiences with bullying and helps teachers establish an understanding of the student's situation and perspectives.

Dugan, Connie (2004). "Teasing Inventory." Retrieved from:
http://www.mnsu.edu/comdis/kuster2/therapy/teasinginventory.html

KSDE School Counseling, & Kent & Reed consultant. "School Wide Bullying Survey" Retrieved from:
http://www.ksde.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=DHpX%2BFb03DM%3D&tab_id3912F

2. **Education**- Allow the child who stutters to educate his or her fellow classmates on stuttering. As a teacher of a child who stutters, it is also crucial for you to understand what stuttering is, so that you can help other students in the class better respond to the student who stutters.

3. **Role-Play**- Engage in role-play with the students to give them a safe place to practice appropriate responses to bullying, and express frustration and anger that co-exist with being bullied. Responses such as crying, ignoring the bullying, and reverting to physical violence are often not effective in stopping bullying because the bully will continue to try to get a response from the child. Children who stutter find more success in overt acceptance of their stuttering when being bullied. For example if a bully is teasing a child about his/her stuttering the child can say, **"I know I stutter, but I'm working on it"**, **"broken record"**, **"so"**, or **"so what."** One to two-word responses may be easier for the child to communicate if they stutter (manning, 2010, p. 462). Additional responses children can practice are listed below.

4. **Change the environment**- Create an environment that has no tolerance of bullying and promotes respect, acceptance, and support.

Suggested Child Responses to the Bully

- Ignore the bully or pretend the bully is not bothering you.
- Tell your teacher.
- Walk away, but hide your fear.
- Look right through the bully — give him a stone-faced look.
- Do not give the bully an emotional payoff.
- Be assertive, but do not resort to physical confrontation.
- Say something unexpected.
- Talk to the bully: Say calmly or forcefully, "I don't like it when _____. Please Stop."
- Be friendly with everyone.
- Stay with a group.
- Leave valuable possessions at home.
- Tell someone. Get a counselor, teacher, or SLP involved. (Langevin, 2001)

Specific Resources You Can Provide to a Child Who Stutters to Deal with Bullying

- The Stuttering Foundation. "Trouble at recess." Retrieved from:
  http://www.stutteringhelp.org/Portals/English/book0034.pdf

This is a free downloadable book about stuttering and being teased.

- "What do I do or say when I get teased about my speech." Retrieved from:
  http://www.mnsu.edu/comdis/kuster/kids/teasing/howanswer.html

 This website is a list of responses to bullying and suggestions on dealing with teasing created by children who stutter, and it can serve as an important resource for exploring alternatives with other children who stutter.

- www.bullying.org.

This is an award winning Internet resource that is great for students, parents, and teachers. It provides many useful definitions and explanations regarding bullying and also provides methods of intervention at a personal and community level. It gives you access to resources, such as handouts, books, and lesson plan ideas.

Strategies to Change the Environment

1. **Educate yourself**: Educate yourself about stuttering and bullying. Know the signs of bullying because the child may not feel that they can come to an adult with this problem. Signs include: complaints of headaches or stomachaches, damaged or frequently lost belongings, depression, anxiety, fear of school or the school bus, avoidance of recess or school activities, bullying of other children or siblings, unexplained bruises, difficulty sleeping, or sudden poor grades.

2. **Promote sensitivity to differences**: Teach the children in your classroom that all people are different and to be sensitive to differences. Facilitate empathy for the victim of bullying. This can be built into the curriculum and accomplished through educating your class about stuttering, individual differences, socioeconomic status differences, or other differences targeted by bullies. Engage children in classroom activities that celebrate differences.

3. **Bullying education**: Teach students what bullying is and how it hurts others. Key concepts to teach children include encouraging bystanders to stand up for victims and helping children understand the difference between tattling and reporting bullying. For older elementary school students, encourage change in behavior through student-authored skits, role-play, and group problem solving.

4. **Establish good peer relationships**: Engage all children in group and team building activities. Encourage children that are more outgoing to make friends with shy and more reserved children.

5. **Community involvement**: Include members of the school and home community in intervention, such as the speech-language pathologist, counselor, other faculty members, and parents to provide the student with support, facilitate change, and create a safe environment for all students.

Other Resources

Q&A for Teachers	http://www.isastutter.org/CDRomProject/teasing/teasing_main.html
Useful Workbooks for Teachers & Administration	http://www.westutter.org/who-we-help/minimizing-bullying-for-children-who-stutter/
"Minimizing Bullying for Children who Stutter"	http://www.stutteringtherapyresources.com/
Tips for Educators	http://www.stopbullying.gov/what-you-can-do/educators/index.html
Presentations and Online Courses for Educators	http://bullying.org/
WV Anti-Bullying Laws and Policies	http://www.stopbullying.gov/laws/west-virginia.html
Prevention activities & Lesson Plans	http://www.pacer.org/landing/bullying-in-elementaryschools/?gclid=CKCanee95LYCFccw4AodCF0AwQ
Variety of Resources for Educators	http://www.stutteringhelp.org/resources-teachers

References

- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (2013). *Stuttering.* Retrieved from
  http://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/stuttering/
- Coleman, C. (2013). *Lectures from CD 623.*
- DeTommaso-Kleinert, D. (2005). "Building a classroom community and bully free zone." Retrieved from:
  http://www.pbs.org/parents/itsmylife/lesson_plans/bullies_classroom_communityhtml,
  This website includes a detailed lesson plan pertaining to introducing and combating bullying in the classroom. It also provides links for other resources including articles, videos, lesson plans, and more.

- Dewey. (2005). *My experiences with cluttering.* Retrieved from
  http://www.mnsu.edu/comdis/isad8/papers/dewey8.html
- Kuster, J. M. (2011). "Internet: Teasing and Bullying." *The ASHA Leader.* Retrieved from:
  http://www.asha.org/Publications/leader/2011/110607/Internet--June-7   2011 Teasing-and-Bullying/, on April 22, 2013.
- Langevin, M. (2001). Helping children deal with teasing and bullying. Retrieved from:
  http://www.mnsu.edu/comdis/isad4/papers/langevin.html, on April 22, 2013.
- Manning, W.H. (2010). *Clinical decision making in fluency disorders.* Clifton Park, New York: Delmar Cengage Learning.
- Van Riper, C. (1982). *The Nature of Stuttering.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Wingate, M. (1964a). A standard definition of stuttering. *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders, 29,* 484-489.
- Yaruss, J. S. (1997a). Clinical measurement of stuttering behaviors. *Contemporary Issues in Communication Science and Disorders, 24,* 33-44.