

Review of the book and video
Stuttering: Straight Talk for Teachers
and associated websites

Reviewed by
MaryAnn Byrnes

A Technology Review Published in

TEACHING Exceptional Children Plus

Volume 2, Issue 1, September 2005

Review of the book and video
Stuttering: Straight Talk for Teachers
and associated websites

Reviewed by
MaryAnn Byrnes

This article reviews:

Handbook: Scott, L. (2005). *Stuttering: Straight talk for teachers*. (2nd Ed.).
Memphis, TN: The Stuttering Foundation of America.

Tape: The Stuttering Foundation of America (Producer). (2002). *Stuttering:
Straight talk for teachers* [Tape]. (Available from The Stuttering Founda-
tion of America, 3100 Walnut Grove Road, Suite 603, P. O. Box
11749, Memphis, TN 38111-0749.)

Websites: www.stutteringhelp.org
www.tartamudez.org

SUGGESTED CITATION:

Byrnes, M. (2005). Stuttering: Straight talk for teachers: A technology review. *TEACHING Ex-
ceptional Children Plus*, 2(1) Article 5. Retrieved [date] from
<http://escholarship.bc.edu/education/tecplus/vol2/iss1/5>

Stuttering is a speech disorder that can have a significant impact on a child's education and social interactions. Approximately 20% of children experience stuttering at some time. Although most children regain fluency, 5% will experience a period of stuttering lasting 6 months or longer. Stuttering can influence a child's participation in class as well as a teacher's perception of what that child knows and can do.

Although teachers may not encounter many children who stutter, good information on this topic is essential when it is needed. *Stuttering: Straight talk for teachers* is a 20 minute tape (or DVD) and handbook resource that belongs in the library of every district. Together, these two deliver vivid, pertinent, useful information to increase the knowledge and responsiveness of teachers and guide the special educators who support them.

Highlighted in *CEC SmartBrief*, and produced by The Stuttering Foundation of America, these materials are augmented by an extensive website (www.stutteringhelp.org). In addition, all are available in Spanish versions (www.tartamudez.org).

Shared Information

The handbook and tape present a core of common information. Each defines and discusses the three types of stuttering: repetition, prolongation, or blockage of sounds, syllables, or words. While the handbook provides written examples, the tape showcases the faces and voices of students who stutter.

Each delivers general information about stuttering, emphasizing that the impact of stuttering can vary, depending on the reaction of the child; the demands of the environment; and the stress of a situation. A number of myths are debunked. Famous people who stutter are profiled.

The tape and handbook both note that while speech-language therapy does not "cure" stuttering, it can "make speaking easier" and "develop healthy attitudes toward speaking". No single therapeutic method is advocated.

Both resources respond to common teacher inquiries about ways to speak with a student who stutters and strategies to address the rest of the class about the stuttering and their own reactions, including teasing. Teachers are provided with techniques for making oral presentations easier and dealing with "a bad speech day".

The Handbook

The handbook contributes additional, unique information. Its first section is addressed to teachers who are concerned about a child's speech or who have been contacted by a parent who is concerned. Guiding questions help a teacher think through whether the behavior they see is "probably normal dysfluency" or "probably stuttering". Suggestions are provided for working productively with speech-language pathologists and with parents.

Speech-language pathologists are the audience for the second section of the handbook. Excellent outlines for professional presentations offer structures for sharing the tape with teachers and advice for leading large group discussions about children who stutter. A parallel set of guidelines includes ideas for discussing stuttering with a class and for helping a student make his/her own presentation. The ideas presented are sensitive to the needs of the different audiences and adaptable to a range of student ages and situations.

The handbook (and the website) contain bibliographies of additional resources.

Some are targeted for educators; some for parents; and others for children.

The Tape

“Let me know my stuttering does not bother you.” “Don’t finish what I am trying to say.” “Don’t call on me when I’m having a bad speech day.” “Don’t treat me any differently because I stutter.” “Just act normally.” “Tell me you are glad that I’m talking in your class.”

The words, faces, and voices of these students who stutter represent the distinctive contribution of the tape. Aply supported by speech-language professionals, children who stutter are the stars. Boys and girls, elementary through high school age, talk about their stuttering, and how it makes them feel. Responding to questions teachers might ask, they are open with suggestions about how adults can help them be full participants in the class, even when they are having “a bad speech day.”

While the children speak, viewers can not only hear variations in stuttering, but also see the physical behaviors that can accompany stuttering: facial stress, tongue and lips struggling to be fluent. The children vary in

their ages; the types of stuttering they exhibit; and their success using the “speech tools” that help them.

While they listen, viewers can hear that students have different opinions on almost every issue. Some reflect on how they have conquered their fears about speaking; others are working hard to do so. Some want teachers to use accommodations for them; others prefer to rely on themselves.

Although the students differ in many dimensions, they are clear about one point. Each wants to collaborate with teachers to decide what strategy works best. Through their stuttering, they clearly and distinctly communicate their readiness and willingness to be an active member of their team.

By presenting a range of perspectives, *Stuttering: Straight talk for teachers* can build a shared dialog and a strong educational partnership that includes the therapist, teachers, parents, and student. Its sensitive, supportive suggestions respect the information that each person contributes. I certainly will be using this multi-faceted resource in my Language Acquisition class this fall and recommending it to my colleagues in schools.

About the author: MaryAnn Byrnes, Ed.D., is Associate Professor at the Graduate College of Education, University of Massachusetts Boston.