**Professional Development Journal**

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As I reflect on the two professional development sessions I attended, I can sum up how I am feeling: overwhelmed. This semester has been difficult for me as I have struggled to keep up with the pace of the courses, especially all the literacy content. It is a lot of new material and new ideas for me. The weight of its importance weighs heavily on my mind. Since working in the school district for the last two years, my exposure to literacy has consisted of ABC songs, journal writing, Secret Stories, and some Heggerty. The ideas throughout Speech to Print seem great. I intend to use them, but I felt like I had no idea of what that would look like in a classroom or, honestly, where I would start. I carefully selected Webinars that I thought would help me gain some confidence in how I would use this new information in my future classroom. I signed up for two EBLI Webinars put on by Nora Chahbazi. The first one was called “Speech to Print vs. Print to Speech”.

The main takeaways I had from the session is the importance of interleaving, teaching sounds in the context words, not saying to students, “What does this letter say?” and focusing on patterns, rather than “rules”. Something that blew me away from the presentation was the statistics on how long it takes a struggling reader to improve when they are taught using the “Print to Speech” method versus Linguistic Phonics. Based on research, it showed Linguistic Phonics as being far superior to the “Print to Speech” method. It is confusing as a teacher candidate to see statistics like that and wonder why teachers were not taught how to teach children to read based on strategies that are backed up by science. I have heard the saying, “Teaching is political,” and I am starting to get a glimpse into why that saying has been circulating for years.

Nora Chahbazi also ran the second Webinar I attended, and it was all about different phonemic awareness games to play with students. I wanted to participate in this one to give me some ideas and inspiration on how I might incorporate phoneme practice and awareness into my future classroom. She did not disappoint! I was able to get a plethora of ideas that I will be sharing with my peers and incorporating into my time spent in the schools right away. My favourite game Nora shared is “Sound Catch,” and I recently played a round with my partner. The game involves throwing a ball and saying a word that begins with the last sounds of the previous word. For example, if someone starts the game by saying “tough,” whoever catches the ball next could say “phone.” It is amazing practice and forces players to think about sounds rather than spelling. The “Sound Catch” game is excellent because it is about what you’re hearing, not about what you are seeing when you picture how the word is spelled. Nora mentioned, “reading is an auditory process first, not visual.” This quote stuck with me because the idea seemed strange yet true.

Overall, both sessions put on by Nora through EBLI were an excellent use of time, and I would highly recommend them to my peers and coworkers in the future. I feel more confident about the “Speech to Print” content now, having had more exposure to the content and more practical ideas for incorporating it into a classroom.