**Nora Chahbazi (EBLI Creator/Founder):** Welcome to this conversation with Wendy Crick and her daughter Hailey. Part of Wendy’s story is much like mine in that it started with her desperation to help her own daughter with reading. Wendy has been a middle school teacher in northern Michigan for 27 years. She discovered EBLI in 2002 while searching for a way in which to teach her oldest daughter to read. After being tutored by an EBLI-trained teacher, her daughter learned to read in just a few months. Wendy was so moved by this seemingly miraculous event that she paid for training and began using EBLI strategies within her English classroom. As of today, Wendy has assisted hundreds of non-readers turn into readers by teaching them EBLI. Along with her dedication to using EBLI in her classroom for 13 years, Wendy has published a book entitled *From Learning Disabled to Enabled* that shares her story and some of the amazing literacy transformations she has witnessed. So welcome, both of you, Wendy and Hailey!

**Hailey Crick (daughter of Wendy Crick):** Thank you.

**Wendy Crick (Parent/Middle School ELA Teacher):** Thank you, Nora.

**Nora:** Yeah, you’re welcome! I’m so happy to have you here, and I know, Wendy, we share that passion for literacy and Hailey, your story is phenomenal. So I’m excited for you guys to share with us. So, first I’d like to start – Wendy, if you could tell us about Hailey’s experience with literacy before EBLI, and what it was – what you did with that – and what it was that led you to search for a solution.

**Wendy:** Ok. Well, Hailey being our oldest, we thought we were doing everything that we needed to in order to have her grow up to be a reader. We read to her every night, we had books all over our home and in her bedroom, and reading was part of our everyday lives. So, I was surprised when she came home from school in 2nd grade and she was crying because the other students in the classroom had made fun of her and said she was reading a baby book. We had...at this time her teachers were sending home leveled books with her every week and we would read them with her. Hailey would read them – and I use that term loosely – because she actually had just memorized them.

**Nora:** Mmhmm.

**Wendy:** And was not reading them; was just telling a story. And, so, I just kind of supported her and the teacher had never said anything that she had some really big deficiencies in reading or anything, so we just continued on with our reading every night and reading what the teachers had sent home and supporting her in that way. And then when she got into 3rd grade, in the fall of 3rd grade, her teacher came to me and said that Hailey was struggling in reading, and that she was really behind the other kids, and the teacher thought there was something else going on. And she was very concerned. And wanted to get her tested by our Intermediate School District staff to see if she would qualify for extra services; if she was learning disabled. And I agreed with that, being a teacher. I wanted to get more information, because the information that I had – to me – wasn’t enough to try and find answers for Hailey. And so I thought by doing some of the testing that we could find some answers. So they did the testing and they found out that Hailey qualified – or was – they gave her the label of learning disabled in reading.

**Nora:** Mmhmm.

**Wendy:** And so she was put into a Special Ed. classroom and given extra support through the Special Ed. teacher and our on-staff Reading Specialist. At that point I wanted more answers. Nobody seemed to give me answers. It was things like, ‘Well, her brain’s just wired differently.’ And nobody could really pinpoint some things that I wanted; more details. So I took her to the Michigan Dyslexic Institute in Harbor Springs, MI and had them do an evaluation to see if they could give me more information. Because I thought if I had more information, then I could find a solution. And I could do my own research; I could just dig deep and figure this out for Hailey and help her. I mean, I am an English teacher and I’m really good at it. So, I figured, I could help her out. When we were there, they ran her through a number of tests. That was back in, it was like in 1999. And when they were done with their report – I didn’t – they explained it to me; I really didn’t understand what they were saying at that…I mean, I didn’t understand what they said. The conclusion that they had drawn was that she was dyslexic.

**Nora:** Uh huh.

**Wendy:** And with being dyslexic, they didn’t know if she’d ever be able to read, but that we could hire a tutor that was trained in the Orton Gillingham method to tutor her. And so in 2nd grade and in 3rd grade, she continued, we continued with the school. During school – support and pull-out programs. And we also continued with private tutoring through the Orton Gillingham Institute 2 nights a week. And so, that went on – I don’t know – 8 months. Maybe more. And I was not seeing any difference at all in her reading. Hailey was not…the teachers, none of the teachers – regardless of who was working with her – noticed that many differences. When she took any…when they did any assessments on her, she had, in about a year’s worth of tutoring, she’d only come up a half a grade. If that. I don’t know. So basically, in 4th grade we did the same program. We went to summer school. The school suggested summer school for her; we did summer school. We did Orton Gillingham. We did in class/in school support. Out of school support. Support at home. Practicing reading at home. And in the spring of her 4th grade year, we went to spring conferences. I was really excited because her teacher had said, ‘Oh, she’s working so hard. She’s making such progress.’ This was in 2001. And when I sat at spring conferences, across from her teacher and her Special Ed. teacher, they informed me that Hailey would probably never be able to read past the 4th grade level, and that her brain was just wired differently. ‘She’s a sweet girl, and she tries really hard, but she’s probably never going to read past a 4th grade level.’

**Nora:** Hmm.

**Wendy:** And so, at that point, because she had made no gains. She was still at about a 2nd grade…I mean, she’d made a little bit, she might have been at a 2nd grade…she was somewhere at a 2nd grade reading level. But now it’s 4th grade. And I’m a middle school teacher. And middle school’s coming up quickly. So I wallowed in self-pity for awhile. And I was really heartbroken at the opportunities that Hailey wouldn’t have in her life because she couldn’t read past a 4th grade reading level. Especially that she probably would never be able to go to college. So, in 4th grade, when 5th grade started we went with – to help her; to support her academically – we would get books on tape. From the Michigan School of the Blind. But, at that point, at the end of 4th grade, I had stopped all Orton Gillingham tutoring because I’d spent probably thousands of dollars in tutoring and in testing for this poor child of mine. And that had really yielded no significant gains. And I also refused to have her pulled out of her academic classes.

**Nora:** Mmhmm.

**Wendy:** Her self-esteem had plummeted; this vibrant, loving young girl of mine had turned into this…not feeling very good about herself. And not having confidence at all in herself in any aspects of her life, really.

**Nora:** So I’m going to stop you there, Wendy, and I want to ask…so Hailey, if you would share – from your perspective – from where your mom started in 2nd grade or when reading started to be difficult up through the end of 4th grade; can you tell us a little bit about what that was like for you?

**Hailey:** Yes. So, I was struggling with reading. And I could notice that my peers were advancing much faster; at a much faster rate than I was. It was noticeable to a child of that age. So I was kind of being isolated, in that respect. We’d sit down with groups and you were either with the group that was very good at reading or you were with the group that really struggled. There was definitely a difference there. You were kind of segregated. And then we did a lot of training – I’m sorry, not training – testing, rather, in 3rd grade as my mom had mentioned, at the Orton Gillingham Institute in Harbor Springs. They did a lot of in-depth testing, and at the end of the day they took a burlap piece of cloth and unraveled it and pulled out two pieces of string. And proceeded to tell me that I was missing something. My brain wasn’t designed or developed like everyone else’s. There was something missing; a part of me that was missing. And that’s why I couldn’t read. To a kid – I didn’t really understand at that point what that really meant. But looking back now, that really angers me. That teachers/instructors/people that are supposed to be helping children would tell a child that there’s something missing. That there’s something wrong; they’re not normal.

**Nora:** Wow.

**Hailey:** A couple of years went by and I was still struggling heavily. I was being taken out of – I think there was some tutoring; there was a lot of tutoring, actually. Which I hated.

**Nora:** Did you notice a difference, Hailey? Did you notice a difference with the tutoring? What did you notice with that?

**Hailey:** I did not notice any kind of a difference. I still was struggling with reading. All of my friends, at this point in 4th grade, they were reading chapter books. It was so interesting. I remember the feeling of seeing all these interesting books that my peers were reading, and I couldn’t do it. I was not able to read those kinds of books. And it was such a frustrating feeling and it was an isolating feeling to not be able to do what they were doing. That was really challenging. That really played a lot into my self-esteem issues at that time. Yeah, it was very frustrating.

**Nora:** How did you feel about school? In general?

**Hailey:** Oh goodness. I really didn’t like school at all. And I think that was just the confidence level. I couldn’t read – I thought I couldn’t read. I thought I was dumb. And everything that the teachers – no fault to the teachers or anyone; there’s no blame there – but they were given all the tools to basically support that, yes, you are not really of the intelligence of everyone else. You can’t compete. Or you can’t maintain the school work that everyone else can maintain. That’s a really difficult idea to swallow. I became really…I didn’t have very many friends. I just felt very, very unintelligent.

**Nora:** Listening to you just makes my heart hurt, with all of that. That’s just…I really, I can almost just feel your pain. That’s pretty intense. So, Wendy, from there you stopped the instruction and all of that. Tell us what happened next.

**Wendy:** So 5th grade came and went. Hailey would get really sad because she could never make the principal’s list or the superintendent’s list because she couldn’t read at grade level and all of her friends had that. That was really hard every year when they would put the little things up on the lockers…

**Nora:** Yeah.

**Wendy:** Summer between 5th and 6th grade…well actually it was the spring of her 5th grade year. We were at a horse show, and I happened to run into an old friend that was a teacher who had retired from teaching. She was a Special Ed. teacher; I had worked with her a couple of years. She and I were acquaintances. She said, ‘Hey. I just found out about these amazing reading strategies; they’re just blowing me away. And I’m doing private tutoring, so if you know anybody who could use some, here’s my card.’ And at that point, I was believing the information and the stories that all the professionals were telling me.

**Nora:** Mmhmm.

**Wendy:** That Hailey would never be able to read. I kind of just put it away; I put it in my bag. I didn’t even think about Hailey. It did not even dawn on me to have Hailey tutored. And then there came a day at some point where I just had this epiphany and I started thinking about all the kids that enter my 6th grade classroom that can’t read at grade level. Who are 2 or 3 grades below reading level. And how many kids that I have who are labeled learning disabled or ADHD and they can’t read. And then I started just asking a lot of questions of things and reflecting and I thought, ‘You know what? This is not about the kids. This is about the system. This is about the system in which I work. These kids, like Hailey, can carry on conversations. Are totally intelligent, amazing little beings. And yet they can’t read. Now, this is an amazing world we live in, and there are extremely intelligent people, so there has to be somebody out there who has found the answer. There has to be.’ And from that moment on, that’s when I started looking in other places. And then I remembered; I came across my friend – Lynne Zimmer – her business card, and so I called her up. And so the summer between Hailey’s 5th and 6th grade year, she tutored 2 days a week for only an hour. Maybe an hour and 15 minutes; not long. It wasn’t every single week consistently because sometimes we’d go on vacation and things in the summer. As I watched Lynne working with Hailey, I really liked what she was doing. And she was doing EBLI. I mean, the beginnings of your EBLI, which has morphed into something unbelievably amazing, but that was the beginning when you had just started.

**Nora:** Right.

**Wendy:** And Lynne had gone to a training. And so I really was intrigued and I watched very quickly how she could read multi syllable words within one hour. Or two hours. It was just amazing. And she had never had those skills before.

**Nora:** I’m going to stop you there a second, because Hailey I want to hear from your perspective. And I want to tell you, I appreciate you pausing from your wedding preparation to come and do this.

**Hailey:** Not a problem. Anything for you, Nora.

**Nora:** You are a sweetheart. But I would like to know – and I don’t know if I’ve ever heard this from you; I don’t think I have – what it was like when you were first taught by Lynne. How that felt, and how that was different, and how quickly you noticed a difference. Can you tell a little bit about that?

**Hailey:** Yeah, absolutely. I want to back up just slightly and just add that at this point, before EBLI, before the EBLI training, I was at a point in my life that, as young as I was, I was quite confident that I was not going to go anywhere. With my life. My parents never ever gave up on me, but my teachers…they understood this was where I was, this was what I was supposed to be doing, and I could never get above or beyond that. So that was the whole mindset and that does something for someone’s self-esteem, of course.

**Nora:** Right.

**Hailey:** Anyways, we start with the EBLI strategies and it’s completely different than anything remotely close to what I’ve ever done. It’s actually, in my opinion it was much more interesting because it’s not just…you don’t just work on reading, you work on spelling. You work on how to pronounce things. How different letters make sounds. So this is all incorporated into these strategies and there’s just so many different elements to it. It was not boring to me.

**Nora:** Mmhmm.

**Hailey:** And of course we did it in the summer and I was in 6th grade or going into 6th grade, so it wasn’t amazing, but it wasn’t the traditional tutoring that I had been used to. So I go into it and we slowly started off and within the first few sessions, I noticed a difference. Then we proceed – and I apologize, I don’t remember it super in detail – how it proceeded…

**Nora:** Yeah. It’s been awhile.

**Hailey:** …but I remember by the end of the summer, that was it. It clicked, and everything changed. Literally my life changed. I could see the world from other peoples’ perspectives because I was able to read. I was able to just open my world and open my eyes. It was just amazing to me. I had never been able to do that before. I’d never been able to dive into stories and to understand things and, ‘Oh my gosh, Mom, I’m just going to go in my room and learn about different stuff because I can do that now that I can read.’

**Nora:** Wow.

**Hailey:** It really…it opens your eyes. To so much. Because when you can’t read, so many doors are closed for you. So this…just imagine how many doors have opened now. And my confidence is up. I gained a few grade levels I believe.

**Wendy:** A few! Like 4.

**Hailey:** A few. At that time I was at a 6th grade reading level with all of my peers. I was confident and I was able to do everything that they could do and that was amazing. That was so empowering that I could do that. I believed in myself again and I didn’t feel broken anymore.

**Nora:** Oh, wow.

**Hailey:** Yeah, it was quite incredible.

**Nora:** That’s pretty profound.

**Hailey:** Yeah.

**Nora:** Can you tell me, too, two questions I want to know. I want to know what you noticed with your spelling and your writing. Because I know that often with – especially with people who have a dyslexia diagnosis – they’re told they’ll never be good spellers or especially not great spellers. So I want to know that. And I also want to know what you first read and what that was like. So, if you can talk about the spelling and then about what you read.

**Hailey:** Yes. Along with the reading, because the EBLI strategies focus on reading and also spelling, because the strategies are set up the way they are, you also learn spelling with that. So you learn how to segment words and to blend them and to realize and understand and identify the many different sounds that words make and that letters combine to make. I was able to, from that perspective, really chunk it out and break down spelling into fragments and that really enabled me to spell much, much, much better than I ever could. It helped all the way around. It helped me with reading and spelling, absolutely.

**Nora:** So, how are you as a speller now?

**Hailey:** I think I’m a pretty good speller, actually. Yeah.

**Nora:** So, let’s go back and talk about your…what you read. And how that went, that kind of thing.

**Hailey:** Oh, ok. It’s still one of my favorite books. The book that I first started to read was *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* which is the Chronicles of Narnia series by C.S. Lewis. I love fantasy still, to this day. It was so amazing to be able to dive in to a different world of fantasy and to really just see that and not just see this book with blank words on a page, but for it to mean something, and for me to get involved in the story. It was just amazing. And I read all 7 books and they were…in fantasy, it has a tendency to be more of a difficult read just because of the names and things like that. It definitely wasn’t an easy read at that time. But I was able to get through it with flying colors just because I was so excited. I really was so excited.

**Nora:** That is so awesome. Now, before I go back to your mom, I want you to talk about what happened with Special Ed., what happened with school, what happened when you graduated from school. Just take us quickly through that whole part of your life. After you went into 6th grade.

**Hailey:** I went into 6th grade, and that was the first time that I really cared about school. I told myself, ‘I can do this. I’m a smart person, I can do this. I now have the skills to go forward in every single subject.’ And I did. I was very successful. I think in 6th grade I got A’s and B’s and then in 7th grade it continued with all A’s. 8th grade all A’s. All the way through high school; I think I got a few B’s in high school, but mostly I maintained A’s and I got involved in extra curricular activities to the extent of…well there was no extent, it was just a lot.

**Nora:** Were you still in Special Ed.?

**Hailey:** Well, I believe I stayed in Special Ed. in 7th grade. 7th grade I exited out of it; at that time I was more than willing and ready. From 6th to 7th grade it was only an hour of basically study hall for me. So there was no interaction or anything.

**Nora:** Mmhmm.

**Hailey:** It was just for me to do homework, and be dedicated to do homework. And that was kind of a crutch for me. And so going into 8th grade I was nervous, but there was no doubt that I did not need that at all. I was able to perform just as good as anyone else, if not better.

**Nora:** Did you get the principal thing on your door? On your locker?

**Hailey:** I did, I finally did it. Actually, superintendent, which means all A’s.

**Nora:** Oh, yay!

**Hailey:** Yeah! Looking back, truthfully, if my parents didn’t believe in me…

**Wendy:** Wow.

**Hailey:** Truthfully, think about the kids whose parents don’t have this education or this knowledge. They get left in the dust, and that’s just such a tragedy. It really…I just wrote this thing. I just think that if these strategies aren’t taught to every child in the world…really, truthfully. This is a gift that should be given to everyone. What a gift that we can show or teach people to read. That unlocks the world to them. And spelling, and all of this. It just creates such an amazing, amazing thing for people. I went on to college, and I kicked butt in college. I played softball. I was involved in many different things. I got all A’s, or basically all A’s. There were a few classes I got B’s in. I’m really proud of that. So I’ve come a long way and it’s just been an amazing experience. If it was not for EBLI, I don’t know where I would be.

**Nora:** Aww. Tell me about your degrees. I know that…do you have two degrees?

**Hailey:** No, I don’t. I triple minored. I majored in History and then I triple minored in Art, Leadership, and Business.

**Nora:** Wow!

**Hailey:** Yeah.

**Nora:** Well, bless your heart.

**Hailey:** And so, History is a lot. I’d have stacks and stacks and stacks of books of things that I had to read on a weekly basis. Just huge chapter books. Reading was very heavily involved. Reading and writing and spelling in the History degree.

**Nora:** I remember the picture of the books in one year of your college that were stacked up almost as tall as you.

**Hailey:** Oh my goodness, yes. I think that was just for two semesters, actually.

**Nora:** That was awesome. Well, I have tears in my eyes listening to you, my darling.

**Hailey:** Aw, thank you. Thank you, Nora.

**Nora:** It’s just really profound and you’re amazing and that’s impressive. And I really appreciate you sharing all that.

**Hailey:** Absolutely. You have to share the story so people can be touched.

**Nora:** Yeah, this is true. What did you notice as far as your confidence, your self-esteem…anything else besides reading that were different?

**Hailey:** Oh, yeah. Coming into 6th grade, I just was able to engage with my friends in my grade level and build more relationships with them and not feel like I was a lesser person. Not feel like I had to seclude myself, because, well I really can’t do these things that they do because I’m not smart enough. There was no more segregation there, of well you’re smart and I’m dumb. That played a role throughout my whole life. A lot of people get put into that role and its just a repetitive cycle of, ‘Oh, I can’t do this because I can’t do this and I’m not smart enough and I can’t read.’ It’s very sad and I was just thankful enough to be able to learn the strategies and then beam with confidence and go on and do what I need to do in this world.

**Nora:** Yeah! Hooray for you, my dear. Hooray for you. Now, back to you, Wendy. So, tell me about how you got to become trained and EBLI more from your teacher’s perspective, too. If you have anything to finish up with Hailey, you can do that, too.

**Wendy:** All I wanted to say was that once Hailey had hit the 6th grade, and once those couple of months of tutoring were done, she never looked back. We never ever had to address spelling, reading, or writing. Ever again. It was done, it was fixed, and she was moving on. The girl could not get enough books in her hands. We would go to the bookstore and she’d want to buy *The Grapes of Wrath* and I’m like, ‘Ok!’ She’d go, ‘No, I heard this was a really good story!’ ‘Ok!’ So she was just devouring books and gaining knowledge and living in the literate world.

**Nora:** Yeah.

**Wendy:** You know, John Corcoran talks about that.

**Nora:** Yeah.

**Wendy:** Living in the literate versus illiterate world. And the differences. And that’s what she was doing. For me, my husband, when she walked in my classroom and she said, ‘Mom! I found a book that I love and I’m reading it.’ And it was *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe*, I said, ‘That’s great!’ And then when she walked out, I sat down and bawled.

**Nora:** Aww.

**Wendy:** Because that is…that’s not a baby book.

**Nora:** Nope.

**Wendy:** So that was it. We were done. That was a phase of our life that we had moved through and we were moving on to bigger and better things. Once I witnessed that metamorphosis in Hailey, I absolutely had to go to the training. I talked to Lynne about it and you guys were still doing trainings and perfecting and changing things and making the strategies even stronger and more profound. I think it was the next year, the next summer. I know it was; the next summer. I just called up Cricket there on the telephone and I said, ‘Do you take plastic?’ Because my school was like, well we can’t afford it. And I didn’t have that kind of money just sitting in my bank account. So…I didn’t even talk to my husband, I just did it. In that time of my life, I had never charged anything that significant on our credit card. And I just went from there. I knew I had to do it, because I had to learn straight from you; I needed to learn it all. I just drove down…they said it’s in Hart, MI, and I said, ‘I don’t even know where Hart, MI is, but I know how to read a map.’ I just showed up and within the first half day, I’m like, ‘Oh my gosh, this is it! This is it!’ I knew it, with all my heart and soul, that this was it and I haven’t stopped since.

**Nora:** Yeah, you have been to dozens of different things.

**Wendy:** I just keep learning and learning and perfecting and getting better and sharing my knowledge with the kids in my classrooms and integrating it.

**Nora:** Talk a little bit about that – with your kids in your classroom and some things that you’ve seen with that and even if you want to go through to your school or district. What the impact of EBLI on that is.

**Wendy:** Well, I just went in and I told my principal, ‘I’m trained in these EBLI strategies and they’re amazing.’ And he’s like, ‘Wait a minute, how did you do that?’ And I said, ‘I just put it on a credit card and I did it.’ And then I just started using them in my classroom in a reading class that I had and the results were so powerful and so quick. We were moving kids 2 and 3 grade levels in half a year. I had other teachers come on board. I’d teach them a couple of strategies and say, ‘Ok, this is what you need to do.’ We set up centers. And we just moved kids in and out, in and out. We would just bring them in and fix them up and teach them the strategies and then they were good to go. As that progressed – we did that for a year – and then I had you guys come up. I don’t even know how many years ago. But you did a training; I brought you up in the summer. Got a lot of other teachers involved; some different districts. Had you guys do a training. And then trained a few more teachers in my building. Eventually, I just told my principal…because I had to piecemeal everything. I had to beg, borrow, and steal…

**Nora:** Yes you did!

**Wendy:** …to get money to have it happen. I walked in my principal’s office and said, ‘That’s it. We’ve got enough data. We have enough kids and parents that have seen the light with reading and no longer are trudging around a label of learning disabled or reading disabled or dyslexic. I’m done. We’re going for the big bucks. We’re going to write grants. I’m going to write grants to several different places and we’re going to get some serious cash to train our whole staff.’ And he’s like, ‘Ok. Go for it.’ And I did!

**Nora:** Yes you did.

**Wendy:** As of today, I’ve written grants and brought in over $50,000 in grant money to our district to have teachers trained and supported by you and your people. It’s amazing. The first year I had all my teachers trained – math, science, social studies, language arts teachers – all trained. We were all on board. We were all using the strategies. They could come in my classroom and watch or I would go in their classroom and do some modeling; some strategies. Because I’d been using the EBLI strategies 3 or 4 years by then. Maybe 5. That first year, our MEAP scores went up 37%.

**Nora:** Uh huh.

**Wendy:** All we did was integrate EBLI. Some of my teachers…my social studies teacher next door, I remember him saying, ‘You know, Wendy, I’m not really that good at this.’ And I go, ‘You don’t have to be. You just tell the kids: break it down! Segment it like Mrs. Crick tells you.’ And he said, ‘That’s all I needed to do! And they knew what to do.’ And I said, ‘Oh yeah. Let the kids teach you.’ We would have amazing discussions of kids and teachers about words and how words are put together and the different spellings for the different sounds. Kids would run up and teachers would run up to me and say, ‘Did you see the spelling for /w/ in suede? It’s so weird!’ We would talk about words. So there was this big energy that was just so exciting in our building and everybody was caught up in it.

**Nora:** Mmhmm.

**Wendy:** We just all supported each other and it was a safe environment. It was ok if people didn’t know or weren’t great at it because we had other people that supported each other and everybody grew. Students and staff. That went on for a couple of years, until we got new administration. And then different things.

**Nora:** Yeah.

**Wendy:** Kinda fell apart. During that time, I just had to get the word out. So that’s when I started writing my book about Hailey. It started with Hailey’s story. And then the story of just a handful of kids; amazing stories. Parents would call me up or see me in the grocery store and tell me. And I’d go, ‘Oh my gosh.’ There were just stories of changing children’s lives in a profound way.

**Nora:** So, you tutored beyond your classroom? Is that what you’re saying? Kids in the summer?

**Wendy:** Yes, sometimes, yep. I did. I tutored kids in the summer, in after school. I was just working all the time teaching EBLI strategies and helping kids learn how to read. I’ve had from 2nd graders all the way up to adults. I’ve tutored some adults, too. I have one student right now who’s in my classroom and his mom brought him to me because he was struggling with reading and wasn’t making any gains. I can’t get that kid out of books now. I’m like, ‘You have to put the books down! I’m glad you’re reading, but we have to work on some other skills here.’ So he’s totally engrossed in reading now. And he struggled.

**Nora:** Mmhmm.

**Wendy:** Lots and just beautiful stories about beautiful children.

**Nora:** That’s good. And tell me about your writing. What have you noticed with your writing?

**Wendy:** Well, the writing – their spelling has improved leaps and bounds. And the kids can see right away…because they’re so used to going, ‘Oh, that’s a really long word Mrs. Crick. I can’t spell that.’ So we’ve done so many words on our boards that they can see that really those bigger words, those 5-syllable words, are way easier to spell than some of the smaller ones.

**Nora:** Yeah, some of the weird ones. Yeah.

**Wendy:** Some of the weird spelling words. Their spelling has been so much better. And with that, they are willing to take risks in their writing and go for those multi syllable, more powerful vocabulary words because they have a strategy to use to spell the words accurately.

**Nora:** That’s pretty awesome. So, tell us a little bit more about your book, *From Learning Disabled to Enabled*. Like, what’s in it and also where people can get it. That type of thing.

**Wendy:** So, the book just starts off as a narrative telling Hailey’s story and my story. And then, it talks about the reasons why EBLI works and what makes it different. It goes over a little bit about the English language and how it’s put together. And how traditionally across the United States reading is taught and some of the pitfalls that reading is taught, and why it’s not working consistently for 40% of the people on the planet. Then, also, why it’s not allowing children to reach their highest potential in reading. Which is a much different place or school of thought to come from than hitting benchmarks.

**Nora:** Mmhmm.

**Wendy:** It’s just a different place. Using EBLI allows you to give the kids the knowledge and the tools they need to reach their highest potential. And the sky’s the limit. The potential is…I don’t know. It’s not grade level, it’s not, ‘Oh, they’re in 6th grade, they have to read the 6th grade level.’ No. It’s: here are your skills. Go forth and prosper. And read. So, it talks about those. And then it tells some really beautiful, fun stories about children I’ve had in my classrooms over the years. And stories that their parents have told me. Like, one of the kid’s mom came up to me one day and said that they went into Walmart. And he had been in Special Ed. for years and I got him…gosh, I didn’t get my little beady hands on him until he was in 8th grade. He always struggled to read. So, one day they were in Walmart and they’re like, ‘Come on, come on, what’s taking you so long? Let’s go! We’ve got to get through here.’ And he’s like, ‘Mom. I’m reading all the signs. I could never read them before.’

**Nora:** Wow.

**Wendy:** She just cried. She said, ‘You don’t understand.’ I said, ‘Yes I do. That’s why I’m doing what I do.’ Just beautiful stories about a variety of different kids. And everybody has a story that has been changed by having EBLI in their lives.

**Nora:** That is true. So, when you think about this, what other ways do you say – over these past 14/15 years – that EBLI has impacted you, personally?

**Wendy:** Well, it’s made me a much better teacher. I can teach reading and writing much more explicitly, but also quickly. I can spend the first few weeks of school teaching the strategies and then from there on, we are engaged in novels and we are using the strategies everyday in order to comprehend the text. And in order to respond to text with writing. It’s done that. EBLI has made me a much stronger person, in regards to…sometimes people don’t like change. Let’s just say most of the time people don’t like change. And I come from the mindset of whatever’s best for children, I will do it. I’ve been surprised at some of the push back that I’ve had from educators not wanting to learn EBLI or use EBLI.

**Nora:** Now, I want to interject here a second because with life in general, but also with education, there’s constant change in education. Now we’re doing this program. Now we’re doing that program. So, teachers in education are used to always having to have new stuff coming along the pike. Why do you suppose or why do you think that it’s different or more resistance with EBLI from your experience?

**Wendy:** I think it’s because it’s so different from what they’ve ever been taught, exposed to, or learned. It’s just so different. And many people, I’ve found out, that have given the most push back, are the ones that aren’t really strong readers, themselves. And so they have to do a little soul searching and come to terms with the fact that yes, they’re a teacher, but they aren’t the strongest at reading. And that that is a weakness that maybe they’ve hidden for many years because of many different reasons. Like Hailey said, self-esteem. Or it’s their big secret. So that’s been some of it. In my own district, some of it was – and I didn’t realize this for many, many, many years – but the people that gave me the most push back and were the most angry at me were the ones that Hailey had as teachers.

**Nora:** Oh.

**Wendy:** And so, with all loving respect to all of them, I know they were doing the best they could with what they knew at the time. But it had to do with ego. Gosh, I’m sure they felt…no teacher goes into education to try and harm students or hurt them or cause them pain or suffering. Maybe…that’s a hard pill to swallow. I know personally, once I learned the EBLI strategies, I had a mental list of all the children who I never could teach how to read better. As a middle school teacher. And that mental list has always been with me. And I’ll tell you what, I’d like to call them all up. And they’re all in their 30s right now. And I’d like to say, ‘Come back. I figured it out. I have a way to teach you and we can do it quickly.’ Yeah, that’s hard. That’s hard when you invest all that time and money into a college degree and you think…you assume that you’ve learned the best practices and the best ways to teach children and that’s not the case. There are so many different factors that are involved. I believe it’s helped me be a very strong advocate for children and putting children first, above all else.

**Nora:** Well that’s awesome. For sure. So, what would you say to the “15 years ago you” – what would you have wanted someone to say to you that you would say to others either as a parent or an educator as far as literacy? Or if you are in this distress from your own child’s suffering as well as your own students’ suffering, what would your advice be? Besides, of course, do EBLI.

**Wendy:** Do EBLI. That would be it. Do EBLI and you’ll fix it! I would encourage people to ask questions and search in many, many different places. When I found EBLI, it was not in the education world. And I think if you ask questions that God will lead you to your answers.

**Nora:** Hmm.

**Wendy:** That’s what I think. Because there was a plan and there was a design and there was divine intervention in this whole grand adventure that Hailey and I have been on.

**Nora:** Yes.

**Wendy:** There are many times where we sit down in those quiet moments, and we go, each of us, ‘Wow.’ It’s been, I mean, wow. We’ve been a long way. And…imagine if. Imagine if. Imagine if we didn’t find EBLI. Imagine if. I can’t imagine because I knew in my heart there had to be something. So you’ve got to keep the faith and keep looking. Because you’ll find it.

**Nora:** So, where do you see yourself going from here? I know you’re almost finished with your master’s degree. What are you going to do with yours?

**Wendy:** Oh my goodness. I’m not sure. No, what I’d like to do – woo, I don’t know if I have the energy for it – but we’ll see. I’d like to tackle the universities.

**Nora:** Did you say tackle the universities?

**Wendy:** Yes I did. Tackle the universities. I’d like to get my hands in on a university level and teach teachers.

**Nora:** Wow.

**Wendy:** Teach teachers EBLI. So that they have the skills from day 1 when they walk in the classroom and they can begin the adventure of changing children’s lives in a very positive way.

**Nora:** Well that would be a great place to be, for sure. For sure. Indeed. It’s kind of the core of where it all begins, so that is good. So, anything else – I’m going to ask this of you and of Hailey – anything else you want to share about this whole journey or any other insights you want to give?

**Wendy:** Nope, I don’t think so. I think we’ve kind of talked an awful lot tonight.

**Nora:** Yes we have. Now Hailey, what about you? Anything else you want to share?

**Hailey:** I don’t believe so. Nothing comes to hand right now. I’m very grateful. I’m forever grateful of what I’ve learned and then I’m very grateful of my parents and how they’ve supported me and of Nora – you – for helping me out and really guiding me in different directions like that. All wonderful things.

**Nora:** You know what I have to thank you for? When you came for your ACT prep…I think it was you. You taught me that tines were not just the pokey parts on a fork, miss hunter girl, you taught me that they were the…what are they called? On the deer?

**Hailey:** Antlers! The antlers.

**Nora:** Yeah, the antler prongy things. Yeah, they’re tines. Yeah! So thank you for teaching me that.

**Hailey:** Well you’re welcome.

**Nora:** I always remember. And I share it all the time when I’m teaching that word. So there you have it. Well I want to thank both of you guys so much for taking the time to share this really profound, amazing story that I think will be helpful to a whole lot of people. And also very interesting along with moving and helpful. And I thank you, too, for your dedication to this mission that we’re all on to make literacy the happening thing for everybody. I appreciate that.

**Wendy:** Well thanks, Nora. Thanks for being the fearless leader of all these crazies.

**Hailey:** Thank you, Nora.

**Nora:** You are welcome. Well, I will talk to you guys again soon.

**Wendy:** Ok! Bye Nora.

**Nora:** Bye guys.

**Hailey:** Bye.