Summary from the Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology Canada Conference from April 28-30, 2016

***Text Comprehension: Scaffolding Active, Strategic Learners – presented by Teresa Ukrainetz, Ph. D., S-LP (C):*** Dr. Ukrainez shared an informative presentation surrounding effective instruction in improving text comprehension in struggling students. She initially outlined the background research and explained the normal developmental process of reading (i.e., emergent, learning to read, reading to learn). She then specifically outlined ways that the school speech-language pathologist was able to make a difference with students who are struggling readers. She emphasized the importance of good oral language skills for reading success (an area within which we play a major part). She emphasized the strong evidence surrounding intensive, explicit, individualized treatment by trained specialists. She reviewed and highlighted some specific reading strategies to teach the students to help improve academic success. This was a useful presentation for my role as a school speech-language pathologist

***Planting Two Trees with One Seed – AAC Supports for Problem Behaviour in Children with ASD – presented by Pat Mirenda, Ph. D., BCBA-D***: Dr. Mirenda shared an informative presentation focusing on problem behavior in students with ASD. She reviewed the basic concepts and importance of beginning any intervention with students with problem behavior with a functional behavior assessment (FBA) with the student’s school team. She outlined the primary purpose of any FBA – that is, to identify the problem behavior of concern, relevant setting events, antecedents, and consequences. She also emphasized needing to identify the functions of the behaviors. Once the function is identified, she outlined many strategies to be used to help these students progress. She outlined functional communication training and the use of Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) to help meet the communicative needs of these students who may not have functional communication skills. This presentation was very relevant and useful for my role as a speech-language pathologist.

***Tools for Supporting Reading Development: Focusing on Building Blocks of Language – presented by S. Helene Deacon:*** This presentation focused on the importance that oral language plays in the development of reading and writing. Specifically, the presenter focused on the importance that good morphological awareness (specifically knowledge of derivational morphemes) have on reading skills and reading comprehension. She outlined current research being conducted in this area surrounding how roots and affixes impact how well we read and spell words. She discussed the usefulness of teaching morphological awareness to struggling readers as an alternative to phonological instruction, especially for those students who are not responding to phonological instruction. This was an interesting presentation that will have an impact on how my current practice as a school SLP.

***Making a Difference: Best Treatment Practices for Preschool and School-Aged Children’s Speech Sound Disorders – presented by Debra Goshulak, M. H. SC. S-LP (C):*** This presentation outlined typical motor speech development, and the importance of taking into account the motor speech hierarchy when working with students with motor speech disorders. She outlined the importance of making therapy functional for these students by choosing intervention targets in collaboration with the family and school team to make more rapid progress using frequently used words and phrases. She outlined specific things to consider when choosing targets focusing on the motor speech skills of the individual student. She provided a very practical presentation with many tools and strategies to be used within regular practice with our students with motor speech difficulties.