Spring 2003

Investigating High and Low Fifth Grade Urban Readers Through Reading Autobiographies

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INVESTIGATING HIGH AND LOW FIFTH GRADE URBAN READERS THROUGH READING AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

By

JEFFREY S. STANLEY

A Thesis submitted to the Department of Education And Human Development in partial fulfillment Of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Education

Degree Awarded:

Spring Semester, 2003
Abstract

The push for higher standards and increased performance for children in the United States, has led to many different strategies being used to assist teachers in improving their students’ scores. The subjects in this study were from five fifth grade classrooms in an urban school district in Western New York. The eighty-four students consisted of fifty-five females and twenty-nine males. The students were given lessons in reading and writing autobiographies for Readers’ Workshop. At the end of the week the students were asked to write an autobiography about how they learned to read. The results of the study yielded sixty-four autobiographies. The top and bottom readers were determined by the Diagnostic Reading Assessment Test (DRA’s). The accomplished readers had more family support throughout school, could name several books read to them when young and all had read to a person or family member while growing up. Family did not support the struggling readers when they started school. They felt that reading was harder because of larger and bigger words. Most of the poor readers did not name more than one book or any book at all. The main point for the struggling readers was the lack of influences for their reading.
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CHAPTER I

Statement of Problem

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate what high and low urban fifth-grade readers are saying about learning how to read through the use of reading autobiographies.

Introduction

In a time when students are required to pass rigorous state mandated tests and perform to higher standards, educators are trying to change and develop new strategies to provide the best possible chance for their students to perform to the utmost of their abilities. This study tries to get children to think about how they learned to read. Getting students to think about themselves is the first step to help teachers understand how the students are learning. In many professional development courses, we usually concentrate on comprehension. There are countless ideas and strategies that work, but we always seem to refer back to assessing comprehension. How do we know if the student really understands what they are reading? What a reader is thinking before, during and after reading is the only measure of what that student understands and learns.
Need for the Study

It seems that if we as educators are to develop different strategies for our students, then we must first look at how these students learned how to read. Harvey states in her book, *Strategies that Work* (2000), "The only way we can confidently assess our students' comprehension is when they share their thinking with us. Readers reveal their comprehension by responding to text, not by answering a litany of literal questions at the end of the chapter on rocks and minerals. Personal responses to reading give us a window into the students' minds. We connect with their thinking when we know what's going on for them as they read." The more we understand about the student's thinking, the better we understand their ability to read and comprehend information.

We are often taught to reflect on the day's events, or to reflect on how or why a lesson went wrong. Educators use this self-reflection as a tool to better understand our teaching and ourselves. Many times the reflection will show us how to adjust or modify our lessons so that they might be more effective. In all essence, we are learning by our mistakes. This in itself seems relatively unimportant, but it is helping us to build a broader schema and a wider base of background knowledge. Our students also need to develop background knowledge. The way to help them to start thinking about their learning is by the use of reading
autobiographies. The most difficult job as an urban educator is trying to get the students to start thinking, not only about their studies but also about their world that surrounds them. We need to tap into their background knowledge. To begin the process we can let them reflect on themselves and how they learn. Helping them to think about how they learned to read and letting them reflect on that information will help them build a solid foundation for further knowledge. As new information is learned it is then synthesized with the background knowledge to create a deeper understanding. Keene and Zimmermann (1997) state that we must reorganize and create our own explanations for what we are learning, our own definitions of our lives at any particular juncture. The work in progress that is our lives must be synthesized along the way. When we pause long enough to reflect-- to consider the synthesis of our lives-- we are also bestowed with the gift of better knowing and understanding ourselves and what we care about.

The use of reading autobiographies has been employed in many colleges. It has helped the freshman in their writing and reading. It has also been used in the higher grades in high schools. In both situations it serves as a vehicle for future growth. With that in mind, I decided to see what I could learn from the reading autobiographies of good and bad fifth-
grade readers in an urban setting. This might also foster future growth and learning by allowing the students to start thinking about their learning.

There also needs to be more information discovered at an earlier age. The studies conducted with upper grade students have revealed much information about how avid readers develop. However, if we look at possible relationships between good and poor readers at a younger age, we might be able to develop intervention strategies earlier, to help all our students become better readers.

**Definition of Terms**

**reading autobiography**—a written account of a person's life, specifically on learning how to read. The influences, problems and memories of reading.

**Diagnostic Reading Assessment Test**—(DRA) this test is given in school, to help determine the reading level of each student. The test itself is composed of several short stories at different levels. The student's reading is assessed by fluency, type of errors, and reading comprehension. The raw score is then converted into a reading level.

**accomplished reader**—for the purposes of this study an accomplished reader has a reading level, which is established by DRA,
that is in the top three percent of the fifth-grade students.

struggling reader— a struggling reader for the purposes of this study, is a student that has scored in the bottom three percent of the fifth-grades in reading, according to the DRA results.
CHAPTER II

Review of the Literature

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate what high and low urban fifth-grade readers are saying about learning how to read through the use of reading autobiographies.

Goals of Reading

In the vast areas of reading, we are searching for the same goal of helping our students become independent learners. Wilhelm (2001) tells us that the reviews of American education show that we spend most of our time teaching students information, filling them with declarative knowledge (the what), instead of assisting them to enact new and more proficient ways of reading, problem solving, and making meaning (the how). This goes along with the theories of Vygotsky. Vygotsky has different zones of development.

The first zone he refers to is the Zone of Actual Development. At this stage the child is given a task and the child can accomplish this task without any support. In this zone the child does not learn because the child already knows how to do a task. Wilhelm (2001) adds that some
researchers believe that up to half of school time is spent teaching things that most of the kids already know and can do.

The next zone that Vygotsky suggests is the Zone of Proximal Development. In this stage, the child cannot do the task alone but can accomplish the task with a more expert person’s help. It is this stage that learning is taking place. Wilhelm (2001) said that Vygotsky argued that we can teach students something new only when the task is within their zone of proximal development. In this stage a more expert person models the task to the child, then the child and expert do the task together, followed by the student doing it on their own while the expert watches. This leads to the student internalizing the task and becoming an expert. When internalized the task becomes a new zone of actual development. With reading Vygotsky's zones become apparent while reading. Children have the ability to read the words on the page but it takes a teacher to help develop the inferential thinking needed to understand and decipher the meaning in between the words. The goal is stated by Wolf (1971):

You know the saying, the old Chinese proverb: 'If you walk down the road with three men, one of them will be your teacher,' Similarly, if you and I walk with a boy, with a girl, and we find out things about him that he perhaps wishes to tell no one else, if we go with him week by week and lead him to express his deepest thoughts, his incandescent moments, his moments of joy and hope and despair, his moments of deep truth, certainly he will be our teacher, because at some point in a revelation of himself he will reveal to us a new insight into the nature of man. How far can man reach? How far can a child reach, in your room
or mine? No one yet knows, least of all in the power to write. (p.65)

**Writing to Reading**

The writing of autobiographies has opened many opportunities for educators teaching college. According to Spires, Williams, Jackson, and Huffman (1999) an autobiography is a fertile context for students to develop a facility for reading and writing and for defining and constructing themselves within an academic setting. The research shows that there is a steady decline in the abilities of college freshman in reading and writing. Spires et al. (1999) tell us that instructional approaches have been shaped by Bartholomae and Petrosky, who focused on adolescent development as a theme through which students draw on their lives as the content of a course they taught. Spires et al. (1999) continued by saying that even students who are reluctant writers approach autobiographical writing with genuine interest. The students will naturally take a greater interest in what they take ownership of. When students write autobiographically, it is not enough for them to just write their stories; they must reflect on and derive meaning from their words if they are to reap intended academic benefits (Beach, 1990). Autobiographical writing before, during, and after reading has long been used to enhance student engagement and understanding of literature. When students are encouraged to write honestly and openly
about their feelings in relationship to literature, they connect on a personal level with the text (Spires, Williams, Jackson, and Huffman, 1999). Eakin (1985) suggested that autobiography involves not only living and retelling the past, but also that the very act of recreating the past is an attempt to discover and invent the self. Spires, et al. (1999) believe that as students derive a sense of self through autobiographical readings and writings, they have the opportunity to create a foundation on which to build as they continue to develop their academic voices in conjunction with other academic reading and writing endeavors. We know that all of the students are involved in on-going self-reflection about who they are both personally and academically. We also know that most students make considerable progress with their reading and writing (Spires, et al. 1999).

In an eighth grade classroom the students read and express each other’s autobiographies as a way to drive the instruction. A lesson the study of Autobiography teaches concerns the reason we study literature, that is, to learn about humankind, to participate in its crises, dilemmas, and victories (Dow, 1996). Dow (1996) continues, their stories teach the students that they all possess a depth and range of shared experience they had never imagined. They enter each other’s lives and as they do so, they laugh, they sit silent in wonder, and they wipe away tears because they recognize themselves in stories they hear.
One of our goals and missions as educators is to help our students connect reading and writing. One of the many ways that teachers attempt this goal is to have students write in journals. The journals are used as a tool to connect what they are reading to something the student already knows. The children must use their own knowledge, experiences and feelings to help them connect to what they read. Fountas and Pinnell (2001, p.459) say, “The use of various types of journals enables students to write their way to thoughtful reflection.” Goodman, Watson and Burke (1996) suggest that students need personal time to digest their reading. They need time to wonder, daydream and ideate about their reading. Having time to reflect provides opportunities for readers to expand on the meaning they are building. The meaning that is built upon continues to form the base for further learning. Goodman et al. (1996) also stated that the response log entries do not have to be the same, some may be open-ended, or they may be responses that a group has planned, or that a teacher has suggested. The overall response should reflect the growth and the changes of the students as they learn.

Chamblee (1998) suggests that reading and writing both carry out the same processes in which the reader or writer has to construct or
reconstruct meaning. Accomplishing this, both reading and writing follow similar steps. Both have stages of planning, drafting and revising. In the planning stage reading or writing is selected, prior knowledge is used, purposes are made and predictions are made. Drafting includes self-monitoring of understanding, reactions take place, new information is synthesized with old, vocabulary is expanded and details are separated into important and non-important. In the revision stage meaning is made through the reading or writing and changes are made by rereading or rewriting. Then alternative meanings are considered. Chamblee (1998) states,

Research has suggested that when students make connections between the literature they are reading and their own lives, they are able to understand the text at a deeper level. Research also suggests that when students are asked to write about their own autobiographical experiences evoked by the text, they become involved in the act of defining the point of that experience. This point, in turn, may then be used to help them better understand the point of the text. (p. 533)

Discussions are also an important aspect to helping the students connect the text to their lives. This scaffolding occurs in the literacy classroom when classmates have opportunity to discuss various text interpretations. As a result this encourages others to see different viewpoints and to rethink their own prior knowledge and process, which may lead to a new understanding (Chamblee, 1998). A study by Hickman,
Quick, Haynie and Flakes (2000) looked at reflective journaling in middle school students. The purpose of the study was to determine the value of reflective writing in each of the four content areas, language arts, math, science and social studies, to see if it helps develop a deeper understanding of the content presented in each area. Hickman, Quick, Haynie and Flakes (2000) found that reflective writing could be tailored to fit any classroom subject. It is a useful tool for encouraging students to become effective communicators, critical thinkers, and active participants in their own education. Barlow (1999) agrees with the research, "Journaling is a way to deepen comprehension." (p.44) He goes on to say that children can respond in many different ways, from responding to colorful imagery to how they would like to change an ending to a story. One thing that Barlow looked at was an "Anything Goes" journal. Barlow (1999) suggests that this type of journal could be a way for an educator to tap into a student's mind.

Werderrich (2002) found the use of a dialog journal in the reading program helped direct the needs of each of her students. She discovered that different categories emerge from the journals. The four that she mentions are: student interest, personal discoveries, setting challenges, and teaching strategies. According to the responses an educator can ask significant questions that would encourage students to
make personal discoveries. Teachers would also be able to personalize
reading instruction according to the needs of the individual reader. Spiegel
(1998) begins by breaking reading into four areas or assumptions. The
first assumption about a response is that it depends what the reader is
reading for, either for enjoyment (experience the text) or to gather
information. The better response came from when a student read for
enjoyment. The second assumption is readers make meaning. Spiegel
(1998) stated, “The making of meaning is a dynamic, reflective,
introspective process.” (p. 42) He adds that the reader doesn’t get “the”
meaning in the text; “the” meaning comes from the reader. The way that
the reader interprets the text is what makes the meaning. Allen (2002)
also reports on the subject saying,

Journals can take the form of essays or poetry or the “non-form” of
stream-of-consciousness fragments. They can emphasize nature, family, spirituality, reading, or just muddle along with no particular emphasis at all. In some cases, journals are the wellspring of great works of art; in others, they are simply a way for one’s mind to cope. (p. 19)

There is a process that runs throughout the research. Responses of
readers provide insight into what the reader is feeling, thinking, and
understanding. An educator armed with this information can better
develop and design specific programs for each and every student. By
listening to students through their autobiographies, educators can become
more sensitive and responsive to students' needs (Carolsue and Gayle, 1991).

**Reflections and Comprehension**

There was a time when three year-olds constantly asked, "Why?"

This is what we want our readers to accomplish while they are reading. According to Keene and Zimmermann (1997), research shows that children who struggle as readers tend not to ask questions at any time as they read. This is what is hoped for through journals, a chance to respond and question as they read. Hancock (1993) reports that the use of a response journal is an appropriate way of responding to reading as well as linking the writing process with the reading process.

Looking at the effects of autobiographical writing before reading, White (1995) found that students who had written about personal experiences before reading were more engaged in discussion and understanding the characters at a more abstract level. Each reader brings his or her own ideas and emotions into a book. This means that the responses will differ just as much as the students. White (1995) agrees that the background and perspectives that they bring to their texts guide readers' memories and understandings. In his study the students that did
the writing tasks before reading seemed to have the opportunity and time to explore their own internal thinking, which seemed to increase their ability to look past the textual information and use higher thinking or more abstract think about the text.

The habit of reflective thinking takes time and depends on a number of cognitive, contextual, and ethical issues. One model that Brown (1999) looked at was the use of a literacy autobiography to encourage reflective thinking, a model that provides strategies for literacy teaching. A critical element in reflective thinking looks at the experiences, goals, values and social implications a student brings to their writing and reading. According to Harvey and Goudvis (2000), "reflective thinkers are the readers who are strategic about their thinking" (p17). The readers are able to use a variety of strategies depending on their goals and purposes for reading. The knowledge of comprehension strategies, combined with the ability to know when to utilize them ensure that a reader will construct meaning as they read. The way to help readers arrive at these is to get then to think about their thinking. Reflective learners reflect on their thinking, think about it and revise thinking to create meaning (2000).

Student journals have the potential of providing teachers with a personal, practical connection with their students that may facilitate teaching and learning (Masse, 1999). " What students write to them-
selves, and about themselves, as they journey through the academic curriculum may provide feedback needed to reach individual students (Masse, 1999, p45)." Goodman, Watson, and Burke (1996) identify the crucial element in a reading program as self-evaluation. Self-evaluation gives students the ability to take charge of their own learning, helps them identify goals, and also helps them to understand their development as readers (1996).

**Autobiographical Studies**

"Autobiography derives its power by speaking in twos: by creating a dialog between the writer and the reader about their lives" (Harner and Romer, 1992, p18). The dialog promotes the discussions of similarities and differences between the children we teach and the children we have been (1992). The connection made to our personal meaning and our experiences will ultimately become knowledge and the unconnected meaning will quickly fade from the students' minds. This is the importance of autobiographies, the personal connection, and meaning making process that helps promote learning. Charged with the responsibility of helping children learn, teachers will only be successful if they know how their students experience the world in which they live (1992). Xu (2000)
said that the cultural values, life experiences and the home and school literacy experiences that a student has affects how each student learns. The awareness of this information helps teachers adapt different strategies to help each one. Cope looked at the autobiographies of high school seniors to determine the factors that go into the development of lifelong readers Cope (1997) stated, “The voices are individual in their memories, but most of us reading them will time and time again find ourselves, recognizing our own development as readers in the stories they tell” (p19). Cope (1997) also suggests that the findings in his study are consistent with research but reading autobiographies are an effective way to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching on your students. “Autobiographers often chronicle their struggles and successes”, says Gazin (1990). This gives students a powerful tool for self-reflection. It also provides an educator a chance to peer into a student’s thinking, in order to get a deeper understanding of a child’s learning style.

Lurcock (1997) states that the large number of studies conducted in this genre make drawing conclusions less stable. Recent critics believe that the writer will actually create his life as he writes it. Although this is possible, we still may be able to disseminate information from this type of genre. As teachers, the ability to create, when relating to writing is our
goal. Whether the autobiography is “created” or not, it is still enabling the student to do some sort of self-reflection of their life.

A majority of the studies in autobiographies dealt with teachers. It is a tool that seems to help the prospective teachers reflect on themselves as learners and also about the students they will soon teach. Curtis (1998) says, "I found the writing of my multicultural autobiography very cathartic" (p.29). The tool encourages self-reflection on one’s own life and on others. (1998). Sanders (1994) contends that the autobiography moves towards the end in different variations of progression and identity. The real meaning is found within the story.

The overall research has self-reflection in almost every study. This is what I am looking at from a teacher’s perspective. I need to understand the students at a grass roots level, to see if they are telling us that they need help with reading early on. Is there a factor that is so straightforward, we cannot see it, unless we look through another person’s eyes? Are there things that upon reflection we say to ourselves, “why didn’t I see that earlier?” These are some of the questions I hope to have a clearer picture of at the end of my study.
CHAPTER III

Design of the Study

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate what urban fifth-grade readers are saying, about learning how to read, through the use of reading autobiographies.

Research Questions

The research questions investigated in this study were:

Question 1: Are there any consistencies apparent in accomplished/struggling readers' reading autobiographies?

Question 2: Are there any patterns that may emerge that accomplished readers have in their autobiographies that struggling readers do not have in theirs?

Methodology

Subjects

The subjects used in this study are from four fifth-grade classrooms, three regular education classes and one inclusion classroom. The eighty-
four students range in age from ten to twelve years old and consist of fifty-five females and twenty-nine males. All the subjects attend classes at an urban school district, located in Western New York.

**Materials**

- model of personal autobiography (written by teacher)
- examples of autobiographies
- tape recorder (optional)

**Procedures**

The fifth-grade students were given examples of autobiographies to read during readers’ workshop, to familiarize them with the genre. Readers’ workshop is an hour and fifteen minutes, consisting of fifteen-minute mini-lesson, and one hour of reading and responding in reading journals. During this week mini-lessons focused on student generated discussions about the autobiographies. The students were asked to make connections to their own lives after each reading period. At the end of the week the students were asked to write their own autobiography about how they learned to read. The mini-lesson for the last day was an autobiography about how the teacher learned something. Any subject was acceptable.
Each of the four fifth-grade classes were asked to write the reading autobiographies, from the ninety fifth-graders, the top three percent and the bottom three percent were picked according to the students' Diagnostic Reading Assessment scores (DRA's). Scores ranged from a level sixty to level thirty-eight. Level sixty is reading at the sixth grade level and Level thirty-eight is reading at the fourth grade level.

**Analysis of Data**

The data were analyzed qualitatively. The researcher, and a social worker, read the autobiographies, to determine if there are any patterns or consistencies in each group's autobiographies.
CHAPTER IV

Results of the Study

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to investigate what urban fifth-grade readers are saying, about learning how to read, through the use of reading autobiographies.

Analysis of Responses

This study explored the use of autobiographies to determine if there were any patterns that emerged from comparing the accomplished readers and struggling readers. The results varied in style, length and mechanics. A total of sixty-four autobiographies were turned in to the researcher. The top ten percent, along with the bottom ten percent totaled fourteen autobiographies. The top seven entries yielded six females and one male. The bottom seven consisted of five male and two female.

The autobiographies revealed a great deal of information. The information was broken down into four main categories. The first is early memories, which consisted of reading memories before starting school. The next category was school years. At this point the students were
talking about their reading experiences in school. The next category was influences in their reading. This was influence either from family or school. The last category was books that the subjects remembered reading. We found that these areas were addressed in both sets of autobiographies.

EARLY MEMORIES

   The accomplished readers stated in this area, they read to their family everyday. The family members mentioned in this area were brothers, mothers and grandparents. One subject said, "My earliest memories of reading before I started school was I read with my family everyday." Another stated, "I would listen to the tape (books on tape) everyday and read along." All seven subjects had some indication that they read everyday.

   In the area of early memories, there were no reports that the student read to someone. Two subjects said that their mom taught them how to read, one stated that her mother made her read, and the last four said that their moms read to them. One subject wrote, "....I didn’t like it that much but my mom made me read it."

   The comparison here was that the accomplished readers were doing the reading and the struggling readers were doing the listening. The
struggling readers seemed to be forced to read, whereas the accomplished readers read for enjoyment.

**SCHOOL YEARS**

In the school years area the accomplished readers wrote that some changes in their reading habits had occurred. Five subjects said that they started reading more and all seven wrote that they practiced "bigger" words everyday after school. One subject mentioned that playing with the computer changed her reading habits. One subject stated, "When I started school, I started reading more chapter books." Another response was, "Reading would cheer me up when I'm upset." All seven subjects also reported that they would read "over and over" until they got it right.

The struggling readers during the school years were very different from each other and the accomplished readers. A subject said that when she could not figure out a word, she would get mad and the teacher would tell them the word. Two wrote that in school the words were harder to read and longer. One stated that school made reading easier. Another subject said that her reading was good because in first grade she received an "A", in second grade they received an "A", and the other teachers gave them the same thing. Three of the subjects wrote about their grades. Only one subject mentioned a computer. They stated that America On-Line helped
them learn new words and that they read the play station book so they would be able to play the games better.

**INFLUENCES**

In the area of influences, all fourteen subjects mentioned their mothers at some point in their autobiographies. In the accomplished reader group, five subjects mentioned specific teachers, one had no influences and the last subject did not mention any teachers. One wrote about his father as an influence. Aunt and uncle were found in three autobiographies. Brother, cousin and family were stated by one. Teachers, mentioned without names, were stated on two other subjects' autobiographies.

The struggling readers had very few influences compared to the accomplished group. They all mentioned their mothers, three mentioned teachers by name, and one mentioned grandmother, dad and aunt as influences. The item that is unique for influences is that the three that mentioned a teacher’s name all named the same teacher.

**BOOKS**

In the area of books, thirteen of the subjects could recall a specific book. Seven of the accomplished readers reported two or more specific
titles. In the struggling group, one mentioned more that one, four only recalled one and the last two could just recall a story.

The main books read early on and that were mentioned in both groups were Dr. Seuss. The one title that seems to be on most autobiographies was, One Fish, Two Fish. Then there were other Seuss tales. The other books that were mentioned were Sesame Street series and the Clifford series. The stories that were mentioned were the Three Little Pigs, Little Red Riding Hood and the Ant and the Grasshopper.
CHAPTER V

Conclusion and Implication

Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate what urban fifth-grade readers are saying, about learning how to read, through the use of reading autobiographies.

Summary

In this study, the researcher had fifth-grade students write about their experiences in learning how to read. The information that was gathered in this study was informative and interesting. The first question asked about consistencies with accomplished readers and struggling readers. According to the autobiographies there were some consistencies apparent. The first was that the higher group of readers all seemed to start reading at an earlier age, at around three years of age. They also read to someone instead of having someone read to them. This group appeared to have the opportunity to read more books. Many mentioned having the opportunity to go to the library when they were younger. The autobiographies that were written by the accomplished group were much
neater, had fewer spelling errors and were generally two or three pages in length. The exposure to reading has given these students an advantage with their abilities in school. One of the higher readers went to HeadStart, a program that helps students prepare for school. The student did so well that the subject skipped a grade. The overall sense from reading these autobiographies was that these students enjoyed reading; they even approached some of the challenges of reading with a positive attitude.

The struggling readers also had consistencies. They seemed to have a negative view of reading due to being forced to “repeat” words until they got them right. The ones that did not have a negative view seemed to think reading was all about grades, and making your mom happy. One subject stated that when he or she started school the mother stopped reading. This would indicate that the parents seem to stop helping when the students begin school. This is consistent with the lack of influences in their autobiographies. They also seem to be the ones that know how to manipulate the teachers into helping them read by giving them the words and not the strategies to help themselves.

The second question asked about patterns that the accomplished readers have that the struggling readers do not. The pattern that emerges from this study is about family support. Though all students had some support, the quality and kind of support was different. The accomplished
readers had families that listened to their reading and helped when necessary. The struggling readers had support but the support that was given was different. The families thought they were helping by reading to the student, but this seems not a way to promote decoding skills. The support also ended when students started school. The information would suggest that continued support throughout the early school years would be beneficial.

Implications

Classroom

The first implication for the classroom is that the teacher has to provide more strategies for decoding words, rather than being influenced by the student and giving them the word. Another suggestion for the classroom is to promote listening to your children at home. At an open house let the parents know how important it is to listen and continually help their child throughout school. One other suggestion for classroom teachers is to use the autobiography to see what their children’s backgrounds are. This may help identify different problems in reading, such as attitude towards reading. If the student was forced to read too much, perhaps he or she may need to start slower, or show a purpose for reading that will help them become better readers. The autobiography give
you a lot of information that you can use to help assess where your students are coming from, in addition with trying to identify problems from reading tests. I am going to use autobiographies at the beginning of every school year as a baseline assessment and continue to have the students reflect in journals throughout the year. I want them to be reflective about their education. This I hope will help them become better thinkers as well as better readers.

Future Research

In the area of future research, I feel doing a reading autobiography of fifth-graders in a suburban school district and comparing them to an urban district, would give more information. It would be interesting to see if the same trend exists. If this study revealed the same results, we should look and promote allowing children to read to adults more often.

It would be an enlightening experience to try an autobiography in your classroom. We are reflective by nature. Our job demands that we reflect on the events of the day, so it would only seem natural that we would also promote this with our students.
REFERENCE LIST


