Statement of Purpose  
Aimee Schiavo

Students are expected to know and understand many different concepts that stretch across a wide range of subjects. By incorporating the use of non-fiction informational science books in with the existing textbooks used in the classroom, teachers will be able to better meet student’s needs as well as the standards that are required by the state. In a third grade unit on simple machines (ex. levers, pulleys, wedges, etc.) students are expected to learn and understand why simple machines are important, what qualifies an object as a simple machine, how simple machines are used, and why simple machines are important in everyday life. By using non-fiction books in conjunction with the pre-existing science textbooks available, teachers will be able to provide a more authentic text and visual print that enables students to read and see a more accurate depiction of not only what simple machines are but also a more accurate portrayal of different races, sexes, and ethnicities using simple machines.

Although it may seem that non-fiction trade books may be the cure all and science textbooks should be abandoned, textbooks do play a critical role in helping students learn not only science, but also reading and writing. Students are expected to read and write, throughout their entire lives, text that is technical based, informational, and descriptive. Textbooks, usually, are written in more of a technical voice than non-fiction trade books. Students need to be exposed to this type of voice so that have the experiences that are needed to understand other forms of print. Also, in writing, students are expected to answer questions in a very descriptive and detailed oriented fashion. Textbooks can provide students with more in-depth questions that provide for answers that are more descriptive and detailed.
It has also been hypothesized that using science textbooks and nonfiction books in the classroom could improve standardized test scores. In a study done by Nell K. Duke (who is the associate director of the Literacy Research Achievement Center at Michigan State University) he suggested that poor scores in reading and writing may have more to do with lack of experience in reading informational text than in actually not knowing how to read and write. Duke believes that since reading and writing test questions have become so informational based, a lack of experience with informational text may be one reason test scores in reading and writing are low (Duke, 2000).

Using non-fiction informational trade books in correlation with textbooks will provide a more relevant and accurate way to teach science that is developmentally appropriate, standards based, and more useful in regards to the knowledge students need to acquire about how the world works.