# BOOK REVIEW

# NYSTCE: CST Physics 009 (2nd Edition) by Sharon Wynne, published by XAMonline Inc., Boston, Massachusetts (2008), xv+306 pp., $59.95 (paperback) ISBN 978-1-58197-042-5. <http://www.xamonline.com/browse/NewYork/>

Reviewed by: Joel Harden, Department of Physics, SUNY-Buffalo State College, Buffalo, New York 14222 < joel.r.harden@gmail.com>

Wynne’s book entitled *NYSTCE: CST Physics 009* (2008) is designed to be a teacher certification study guide for the New York State Content Specialty Test (CST) in physics. Successful completion of the CST is required for professional certification in physics (7-12) in New York State. The 306 page paper bound study guide retails for $59.95. I used the guide as a resource to prepare for taking the Physics CST in February of 2009, in addition to various online resources, two college level physics texts and the State’s free online preparation guide (New York State Teacher Certification Examinations: Preparation guide: Physics CST (09), 2006).

Wynne's study guide begins with brief generic non-physics sections (study tips and test taking tips), then follows the same topical outline as the Physics CST test framework (New York State Teacher Certification Examinations: Field 09: Physics test framework, 2003), and closes with a practice exam. The book (and exam) are divided into five sub-areas, and then further into twenty-three competencies with roughly four to eight specific State-prescribed skills. While this style of organization makes it easy to find information on a specific topic and is a logical form for the table of specifications for the examination, it is not a logical flow for the content. The organizational shortcomings are most pronounced in a handful of instances when a specific skill is introduced before the required prerequisite knowledge is presented.

The study guide is also plagued by editorial quality issues, particularly poor quality or inaccurate charts and figures. For example, on page 99 a figure has text written directly over it and on pages 28 thru 30 several (apparently Excel-generated) graphs are rendered so that the scales hide the data trends the author is attempting to emphasize. Additionally, some sections have mathematical expressions and text that are pixilated and difficult to read (e.g., page 52). I found that the erratic quality levels were often confusing and distracting (even annoying) during my review.

I found that the study guide content was generally accurate and (ignoring the editorial issues) was written at an appropriate level for the intended audience. The guide content and included practice exam was also very well aligned with the State’s February 2009 exam, the exam that I sat for. One glaring difference was the difficulty level of the text’s only sample free response question did not compare well with the actual exam question that I encountered. I found the actual exam question to be much easier; however, this observation is based on a single exam.

While the guide is potentially a good study resource, I found that the high cost, counterintuitive organization, and low editorial quality made it a disappointing choice for students and professionals preparing for New York State’s physics CST. I recommend saving your money, passing on this guide and instead using free online resources, such as those listed on the (free) web page by MacIsaac and Gosling (2004), which include textbooks, websites, and past American Association of Physics Teachers Physics Bowl exams.

# Acknowledgments

The author would like to thank Dr. Dan MacIsaac from SUNY-Buffalo State College, Physics Department, for his comments and encouragement.

# References

MacIsaac, D., & Gosling, C. (2004, July). *Study Tips for the New York State Physics Content Specialty Test*. Retrieved March 14, 2009, from http://physicsed.buffalostate.edu/programs/pgmdox/cstfolder/cst.html

*New York State Teacher Certification Examinations: Field 09: Physics test framework.* (2003). New York State Education Department.

*New York State Teacher Certification Examinations: Preparation guide: Physics CST (09).* (2006). New York State Education Department.

Wynne, S. (2008). *NYSTCE: CST Physics 009* (2nd ed.). Boston: XAMonline, Inc.

# Autobiographical Sketch:

Joel Harden is a student at Buffalo State College in the graduate program in physics education. He has a B.S. in environmental science from the University of Rochester and an M.S. in environmental engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. He worked for five years as an environmental engineer and consultant and is now pursuing a career in physics education. He can be contacted via email at joel.r.harden@gmail.com, via phone at (716) 908-1839, or via mail at 8740 Wenner Road, Williamsville, NY 14221. He recently took the NYSED Physics 7-12 CST.