

## *Book Review:*

### **NYSTCE: CST Physics 009**

Joel Harden

Department of Physics, SUNY-Buffalo State College  
Buffalo, NY

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, along with 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 review book topics are organized using the CST test framework. This makes topics easy to find, but sometimes leads to problems. For instance, there are a handful of instances when a specific skill is introduced before the required prerequisite knowledge is presented.

The study guide is plagued by editorial lapses, particularly on charts and figures. On page 99, there is text written directly over a figure. On pages 28 through 30, several graphs are rendered so that the scales hide the data trends the author is attempting to emphasize. Some mathematical expressions and text have a very low graphical resolution and are difficult to read (e.g., page 52). Most of the editorial lapses were only distracting and annoying, but I did find a few of them confusing.

Editorial issues notwithstanding, I found that the study guide content was generally accurate and written at an appropriate level for the intended audience. The guide content and included practice exam were very well aligned with the State's February 2009 exam, which I sat for. One glaring exception concerns the text's only sample free response question, which required a calculus-based solution. I found the actual February 2009 exam question, a simple graphical analysis, to be much easier than the review book's example. A similar basic graphical analysis question is provided as an example in the State's preparation guide (2006).

While a study guide for the CST is potentially a good resource, the high cost, counterintuitive organization and low editorial quality make this study guide a disappointing choice. I recommend saving your money and passing on this guide. I found a combination of textbooks, Physics Bowl exams and online resources, such as those listed on the free web page by MacIsaac and Gosling (2004) or the free online review guide offered by Kaplan Inc. (2009), far more helpful than this study guide.

### **Acknowledgments**

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

### **References**

Kaplan, Inc. (n.d.). Physics study guide. Retrieved March 25, 2009, from [http://www.kaptest.com/Education/NYSTCE/Practice-for-the-NYSTCE/EDN\\_nystce\\_cstguides.html](http://www.kaptest.com/Education/NYSTCE/Practice-for-the-NYSTCE/EDN_nystce_cstguides.html)

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/pgm-dox/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. <<http://www.xamonline.com/browse/NewYork/>>

*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 recently took, and passed, the NYSED Physics 7-12 CST. He can be contacted via email at [joel.r.harden@gmail.com](mailto:joel.r.harden@gmail.com), via phone at (716) 908-1839, or via mail at 8740 Wenner Road, Williamsville, NY 14221.*

