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STAAR MASTER® Student Practice Book—Science, Grade 8

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Selected pages from

STAAR MASTER®

Student Practice Book
Science, Grade 8
for the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness
Teacher Guide

ISBN: 978-1-60539-747-4

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STAAR MASTER® Student Practice Book, Teacher Guide—Science, Grade 8

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What’s Inside the Student Practice Book?

The STAAR MASTER® Student Practice Book provides practice and review material for the Grade 8 Science portion of the State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR®).

- Authentic practice items reflect the content students are expected to know.
- The practice items focus on the updated STAAR-eligible Science Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) [Texas Education Agency, 2018] standards.
- The practice items cover a broad range of topics and ideas of interest to eighth-grade students.
- Practice items are grouped according to reporting category.
- Some practice items address multiple standards/expectations, thereby assessing in a more rigorous and authentic manner.
- More than half of the practice items incorporate investigation and reasoning skills, as appropriate.
- Each question is labeled for easy identification of the TEKS-based standard and expectation addressed in the question.
- Practice items that test investigation and reasoning skills include labels to identify the specific standard and expectation addressed in the item.
- Selected items are “griddable items,” which reflects the format used randomly throughout the actual STAAR assessment.
- Charts, graphs, and diagrams are integrated within practice items when relevant to the standards.

Items in the STAAR MASTER® Student Practice Book address the following science concepts:
- Matter and Energy
- Force, motion, and Energy
- Earth and Space
- Organisms and Environments

Practice-Item Skills Tags

Each practice item is labeled with a "skills tag" (see Figure 1) for easy identification of the TEKS-based standard and expectation addressed in the item. The tag also notes the complexity level of the item. (For more information about complexity levels, refer to “Descriptions of STAAR MASTER® Complexity Levels,” page 5.)

Griddable Items

In addition to multiple-choice items, STAAR Science assessments will include open-ended questions known as "griddable items" (Texas Education Agency, 2017b). This type of assessment item allows students to determine an answer without the influence of given answers/choices. The eighth-grade STAAR Science assessment will include four griddable items. The answer grid will have seven columns with one column designated for a fixed decimal point (see Figure 2, below). Correct answers are positive numbers that range from 0 to 9999,99. To indicate their answer, students must appropriately enter the number in the boxes and then fill in the corresponding bubbles. Students will not grid the units (e.g., liters). It is acceptable to grid extra zeros that do not affect the value of the correct answer.

Figure 1: Practice-Item Skills Tag

Figure 2: Griddable Item for Eighth-Grade Science

This Teacher Guide includes—
- an overview of the Student Practice Book and key characteristics of the STAAR
- descriptions of STAAR MASTER complexity levels
- a master list of STAAR-eligible standards and expectations addressed in the Science TEKS
- strategies for test preparation and science instruction
- a complete answer key (with corresponding complexity levels for the practice items)
Readiness vs. Supporting Standards
The eligible, or tested, TEKS are divided into “readiness standards” and “supporting standards,” with greater emphasis on the former. Readiness standards address broader, deeper ideas and are deemed more critical for students to know. Supporting standards address more narrowly defined ideas and will still be assessed, although not emphasized. The STAAR MASTER® Student Practice Book mirrors this balance of readiness and supporting standards to provide meaningful, authentic student practice for the STAAR assessment.

Scientific Investigation and Reasoning Skills
For the STAAR, scientific investigation and reasoning skills are not tested in isolation under a separate reporting category. These critical skills are now incorporated into at least 40% of the practice items from eligible TEKS and are reported along with those content standards (Texas Education Agency, 2017a). Similarly, in the STAAR MASTER Student Practice Book, students are asked to demonstrate these important investigation and reasoning skills within the context of practice items for other standards. When one of these skills is incorporated into a practice item, the standard and expectation are identified above the practice item (see Figure 3, below).

Increased Rigor
The STAAR program is described as “significantly more rigorous” (Texas Education Agency, 2010) than the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS). But what does rigor mean in assessment? For the STAAR program, it means the cognitive complexity of items will increase to assess skills at a greater depth. Also, the test will include more griddable items, allowing students to arrive at answers independently through open-ended response. The STAAR MASTER Student Practice Book provides items written at varying levels of complexity to accommodate this increase in rigor. (Refer to the "Depth of Knowledge" section on this page and page 5 for more information about the levels of complexity in practice items.)

Depth of Knowledge
Norman Webb’s (2002) “depth of knowledge” model is currently one of the most influential alignment models in the field of education. “Depth of knowledge” describes the degree of complexity of knowledge a curricular item requires. Webb identifies four levels of depth of knowledge: recall (Level 1), skill or concept (Level 2), strategic thinking (Level 3), and extended thinking (Level 4). Distinct cognitive demands occur during each activity, or thinking process, level. The items in the STAAR MASTER Student Practice Book were aligned to the TEKS using a modified version of the “depth-of-knowledge” model (see “Descriptions of STAAR MASTER® Complexity Levels,” page 5). During the alignment process, the complexity level of each item (designated “Low,” “Moderate,” or “High”) was determined. The level of each practice item can be found in the Answer Key.

Figure 3: Practice Item Testing Scientific Investigation and Reasoning Skills

A. The diagram below represents an energy pyramid.

D
C
B
A

A snake eats a mouse that feeds on grasses and other plants. On which level of the energy pyramid would the mouse appear?

A. Level A
B. Level B
C. Level C
D. Level D
Complexity Levels

The following descriptions provide an overview of thinking required at each level. However, they do not represent all of the possible thought processes for each level.

Low Complexity (L)
Low-complexity items align with the TEKS at Level 1 of the Webb (2002) model. Items of low complexity may involve recalling or recognizing—but not analyzing—basic science concepts. An item may ask students to recognize or use—but not interpret—a well-known formula or simple process for completing a task. Items of this low-complexity item may ask students to recall, identify, recognize, arrange, locate, measure, use, or define basic information and concepts.

Moderate Complexity (M)
Moderate-complexity items align with the TEKS at Level 2 of the Webb model. Items of moderate complexity involve both comprehension and the subsequent processing of information. Students may be asked to make inferences or identify a cause-and-effect relationship. However, students are not required to go beyond the text to determine an answer. At this cognitive level, students may need to identify similarities and differences. Items may involve determining answers by using information (from a chart, graph, or diagram). Items of this complexity may ask students to predict, organize, classify, compare, interpret, distinguish between examples and nonexamples, summarize, identify relationships, select an appropriate process or formula, observe, or collect, organize, and display information.

High Complexity (H)
High-complexity items align with the TEKS at Level 3 and/or Level 4 of the Webb model.* Items of high complexity require students to use strategic, multi-step thinking; develop a deeper understanding of the information; and extend their thinking beyond the page. The items at this level are non-routine and more abstract. Students are asked to demonstrate more flexible thinking, apply prior knowledge, make and test conjectures, and support their responses. High-complexity items may require students to generalize based on patterns. Items may involve interpreting information from a complex graph, table, or diagram. At this cognitive level, students must justify the reasonableness of a solution or an answer when more than one solution or answer exists. Students will use concepts to develop answers and to explain their processes. A high-complexity item may ask students to plan, reason, explain, compare, differentiate, draw conclusions, cite evidence, analyze, synthesize, apply, or prove.

*Note: Although state standards may include expectations that require extended thinking, many large-scale assessment items are not classified at Level 4. Performance and open-ended assessments may require activities at Level 4.
How to Use This Book

Effective Test Preparation
What is the most effective way to prepare students for any science competency test? Experienced educators know that the best test preparation includes three critical components—

- a strong curriculum that is aligned with the content and skills to be assessed
- effective, relevant, and varied instructional methods that allow students to learn content and skills in many different ways
- targeted practice that familiarizes students with the specific content and format of the test

Obviously, a strong curriculum and effective, relevant, and varied instructional methods provide the foundation for all appropriate test preparation. Contrary to what some might believe, merely “teaching the test” performs a great disservice to students. Students must acquire knowledge, practice skills, and have specific educational experiences that can never be included on tests limited by time and in scope. For this reason, resources like the STAAR MASTER® Student Practice Book should never become the heart of the curriculum or replace strong instructional methods.

Targeted Practice
The STAAR MASTER Student Practice Book does, however, address the final element of effective test preparation (targeted test practice). This book familiarizes students with—

- the specific content of Texas’ competency test
- the general format of competency tests

When students become familiar with both the content and the format of a test, they know what to expect on the actual test. This, in turn, improves their chances for success.

Using STAAR MASTER® Products
Used as part of the regular curriculum, the STAAR MASTER Student Practice Book allows teachers to—

- pretest skills students need for the actual test
- determine students’ areas of strength and/or weakness
- provide meaningful test-taking practice for students
- ease students’ test anxiety
- communicate test expectations and content to parents

Much is known about teaching science effectively to learners of all ages.

~John R. Staver

Some Notes on Teaching Science

In 2007, the International Academy of Education published a booklet titled Teaching Science by John R. Staver. The booklet presents several research-based principles for teaching science, as well as practical applications for incorporating these principles into instruction. The eight principles are listed below, but science teachers should read the entire booklet to learn more about each principle and its related practical applications.

Principles for Teaching Science

1. Teaching as a purposeful means to an end
   Think of science teaching as a purposeful means to an important end: student learning.

2. Core scientific ideas
   Concentrate on the core scientific ideas that have the greatest importance.

3. Deep scientific understanding
   Promote deep scientific understanding through teaching that mirrors the nature and characteristics of inquiry in science, the values of science, and the body of scientific knowledge.

4. Complexity of learning
   When designing and teaching science lessons, consider the complex interaction between learners’ biological maturation, prior knowledge and experience, and reasoning abilities, so the lessons challenge but do not overwhelm learners’ cognitive capabilities.

5. Active construction of scientific knowledge
   Teach with strategies and techniques that help learners become active thinkers.

6. Science content and students’ interests
   Connect science content with students’ interests and personal lives, with societal issues, and with other school subjects.

7. Expectations for learning
   For all students, set high expectations for learning.

8. Students’ anxieties and conflicts
   Use teaching strategies that lessen students’ potential anxieties and perceived conflicts when teaching scientific ideas that may be controversial for learners, even though they are not controversial among scientists.
## Answer Key

Note: Complexity levels appear in parentheses. L = Low, M = Moderate, H = High

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### STAAR MASTER® Science References

*All Web sites listed were active at time of publication.*


Texas Education Agency. (2018, May). *Grade 8 science assessment: Eligible Texas Essential Knowledge and
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Organisms and Environments
8.5A (L)  
1. A normal atom is called a neutral atom. A neutral atom has the same number of—  
   A protons and orbitals  
   B neutrons and protons  
   C protons and electrons  
   D neutrons and electrons  

8.5E (M)  
2. Which of the following best explains the Law of Conservation of Mass?  
   A In a chemical reaction, the mass of the products always equals the mass of the reactants.  
   B In a chemical reaction, the mass of the products is usually greater than the mass of the reactants.  
   C In a chemical reaction, the mass of the products is usually less than the mass of the reactants.  
   D In a chemical reaction, the mass of the products cannot be determined from the mass of the reactants.  

8.5B (M)  
3. A chemical reaction occurs when atoms of two or more elements react with each other. Atoms of two different elements react with each other when they have—  
   A neutral electrical charges  
   B unfilled outer electron shells  
   C stable electron arrangements  
   D equal numbers of protons and neutrons  

7.5B; 8.3B (M)  
4. The diagram below represents an energy pyramid.  
   
   A snake eats a mouse that feeds on grasses and other plants. On which level of the energy pyramid would the mouse appear?  
   A Level A  
   B Level B  
   C Level C  
   D Level D  

A snake eats a mouse that feeds on grasses and other plants. On which level of the energy pyramid would the mouse appear?  
   A Level A  
   B Level B  
   C Level C  
   D Level D
1. Two weights are attached to a spring scale, as shown in the diagram below.

The spring scale should show a reading of—

A 0 N  
B 15 N  
C 30 N  
D 150 N

2. Jake is driving a car. The table shows the velocity of the car over a six-second period of time.

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<td>6 s</td>
<td>30 mph, North</td>
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Based on information in the table, which of the following best explains what is happening as the car moves?

A The car is stopping.
B The car is accelerating.
C The car is slowing down.
D The car is changing direction.

3. Marco was using a new bottle of ketchup but became frustrated when the ketchup would not flow from the bottle. He turned the ketchup bottle upside down and hit the bottom of the bottle, but the ketchup still did not flow from the bottle. Which of the following best explains Marco’s experience with the ketchup bottle?

A For every action, there is an equal but opposite reaction.
B The acceleration of an object by a force is inversely proportional to its mass.
C An object at rest tends to stay at rest unless acted on by an unbalanced force.
D An object in motion tends to stay in motion unless acted on by an unbalanced force.

4. The diagram below shows a pendulum’s bob at a certain point in its swing.

Which of the following would create the greatest potential energy of the pendulum’s bob?

A Pulling the bob back to Point A  
B Pulling the bob back to Point B  
C Pushing the bob forward to Point E  
D Pushing the bob forward to Point C
Reporting Category 3
Earth and Space

Exercise 1

8.7A (L)
1. Earth completes one rotation on its axis about every 24 hours. Because of this rotation, the planet experiences—
   A periods of extreme weather
   B regular solar and lunar eclipses
   C daylight and darkness every day
   D four different seasons every year

8.7B (L)
2. Over the course of 27.5 days, the Moon’s shape appears to change in the night sky. These apparent changes in the moon’s shape are called—
   A orbits
   B phases
   C revolutions
   D rotations

8.9C (L)
3. In what way is a topographic map different from other kinds of maps?
   A Only a topographic map shows natural features on Earth.
   B Only a topographic map shows manmade features on Earth.
   C Only a topographic map shows the shape and elevation of land.
   D Only a topographic map shows all four compass directions.

In the diagram below, the Moon and the Sun are at a right angle to each other. Use the diagram to answer questions 4 and 5.

4. What kind of tides occur on Earth when the Moon and the Sun are positioned as shown in the diagram above?
   A Lunar tides
   B Neap tides
   C Solar tides
   D Spring tides

5. Which of the following best describes the tides that occur on Earth when the Moon and the Sun are positioned as shown in the diagram above?
   A Lower than normal high tides and lower than normal low tides
   B Higher than normal high tides and lower than normal low tides
   C Lower than normal high tides and higher than normal low tides
   D Extremely high tides and extremely low tides once during the day
Reporting Category 4  
Organisms and Environments  

Exercise 3

8.11C (M)

1. About 1.4 billion pounds of trash enter the oceans each year. Other kinds of pollutants also enter the oceans’ water. The majority of pollutants going into the oceans result from—
   A. oil spills
   B. activities on land
   C. natural processes
   D. changes in the water cycle

2. Which of the following would most likely affect the breeding and nesting times of migratory birds like those described in the paragraph above?
   A. Changes in the amount of daylight hours
   B. Warming trend that cues birds to nest earlier
   C. Yearly increase in the number of migrating birds
   D. Overall decrease in available habitat choices for nesting

Bird Habits
Scientists have observed that some birds are breeding and laying their eggs earlier and that some migratory species have changed both their wintering and important stopover habitats. For example, 28 migrating bird species now nest noticeably earlier on the east coast of the United States than they did 50 years ago.

Source: United States Environmental Protection Agency

3. A bird’s beak is a specialized tool that the bird uses to catch and eat food. The picture below shows the head and beak of a finch.

Based on the structure of the finch’s beak, which of the following does the finch most likely eat?
   A. Fish
   B. Insects
   C. Nectar
   D. Seeds

4. Which two systems of the human body work together to allow a person to move?
   A. Skeletal and muscular
   B. Skeletal and respiratory
   C. Circulatory and nervous
   D. Muscular and respiratory
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