

Executive Summary: Junior High Science Curriculum and Assessment Proposal

This proposal recommends a comprehensive update to the Meridian Junior. High School science program by adopting OpenSciEd as our core curriculum and InnerOrbit as our assessment platform. This strategic combination is designed to align instruction with the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), improve readiness for the Illinois Science Assessment (ISA), and maintain fiscal responsibility through the use of open-source materials. This proposal was discussed at the Education Committee meeting on January 26th.

Core Components of the Proposal

1. Curriculum: OpenSciEd (Grades 6–8)

OpenSciEd is a nationally recognized, open-source curriculum that is free to use.

- **Instructional Approach:** The curriculum is phenomena-driven and student-centered, encouraging students to ask questions and build models based on evidence.
- **Alignment:** It is fully aligned with NGSS and integrates Science and Engineering Practices (SEPs), Disciplinary Core Ideas (DCIs), and Crosscutting Concepts (CCCs).
- **Equity:** The materials use universal design principles to support English learners and diverse learners.

2. Assessment Platform: InnerOrbit

InnerOrbit is an online platform designed to evaluate three-dimensional learning and provide data-driven insights.

- **ISA Readiness:** The platform mirrors the Illinois Science Assessment by utilizing Claim-Evidence-Reasoning (CER) items and modeling tasks.
- **Data Utilization:** Teachers receive instant reports to guide differentiation, reteaching, and small-group instruction.
- **Versatility:** It includes diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments for all units.

Strategic Alignment

This proposal directly addresses state mandates and district goals:

- **NGSS Compliance:** Both the curriculum and assessment platform are explicitly designed around the "three-dimensional" learning model required by the NGSS framework.
- **State Assessment (ISA):** OpenSciEd provides daily opportunities for ISA-style reasoning, while InnerOrbit provides rigorous practice with ISA-style question types.

Financial Impact

The adoption of OpenSciEd significantly reduces curriculum expenditures as the units and teacher guides are free. The primary costs are associated with the assessment platform and annual laboratory consumables.

Category	Item	Estimated Annual Cost
Curriculum	OpenSciEd Units & Guides	\$0.00 (Free/Open Source)
Assessment	InnerOrbit License (350 Students @ \$8.00)	\$2,800.00
Lab Materials	Lab Budget (\$1,000/teacher)	\$3,000.00
	Total Estimated Cost	\$5,800.00

Recommendation

I recommend the Board of Education consider the adoption of OpenSciEd and InnerOrbit for junior high science instruction and assessment. This robust pairing offers a high-quality, equity-focused science experience that prepares students for high school while empowering teachers with necessary data-informed tools. This approach ensures Meridian Jr. High maintains instructional excellence while acting as a responsible steward of district funds.