

Meridian Jr. High School Proposal to Adopt OpenSciEd Junior High School Science Curriculum

[OpenSci Ed Link](#)

Overview & Purpose

This proposal recommends adopting OpenSciEd, a nationally recognized, open-source junior high science curriculum. OpenSciEd is completely free to use, fully aligned to the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), and directly supports the Illinois Science Assessment (ISA).

By implementing OpenSciEd, Meridian Jr. High will strengthen NGSS-based instruction, enhance student engagement through hands-on investigations, and ensure consistent alignment across all grade levels.

Key Benefits for Science Instruction

- **Free, High-Quality Curriculum:** OpenSciEd provides comprehensive units, teacher guides, and student materials at no cost—significantly reducing curriculum expenditures.
- **NGSS Three-Dimensional Design:** Lessons integrate Science and Engineering Practices (SEPs), Disciplinary Core Ideas (DCIs), and Crosscutting Concepts (CCCs), promoting deeper understanding through real-world phenomena.
- **Phenomena-Driven & Student-Centered:** Each unit begins with an engaging anchoring phenomenon, encouraging students to ask questions, build models, and construct explanations based on evidence.
- **Support for Equity & Access:** Designed with universal design principles, the curriculum provides embedded scaffolds for English learners and diverse learners.
- **Data-Driven Learning Progressions:** Learning sequences build conceptually across grades 6–8, ensuring students are prepared for high-school level science.
- **Professional Learning Resources:** OpenSciEd offers free teacher training materials and opportunities for state-sponsored workshops to support successful implementation.

Alignment to NGSS

OpenSciEd was developed with direct guidance from NGSS writers and science education experts. Each unit explicitly aligns to NGSS performance expectations and includes assessment tasks that measure students' ability to apply SEPs, DCIs, and CCCs. This ensures instruction remains consistent with the three-dimensional learning model required by the NGSS framework.

Alignment to Illinois Science Assessment (ISA)

The Illinois Science Assessment evaluates student mastery of NGSS-aligned standards using tasks that require evidence-based reasoning and application of science practices. Because OpenSciEd emphasizes the same three-dimensional sensemaking approach, it provides daily opportunities for students to practice ISA-style reasoning, modeling, and explanation skills—making it a powerful preparation tool for the state assessment.

Cost and Implementation

Category	Description	Cost
Curriculum Materials	OpenSciEd Units, Guides, Assessments	Free (Open Source)
Professional Learning	Optional PD or district-level workshops	<i>Varies (many free options)</i>

Summary & Recommendation

Adopting OpenSciEd will provide a free, NGSS-aligned, ISA-ready science curriculum that supports hands-on learning, critical thinking, and equity in access to high-quality science education. This adoption will align all junior high science instruction with current state standards while maintaining fiscal responsibility and instructional excellence.

Meridian Jr. High School

Proposal to Adopt InnerOrbit Assessment Platform

[Inner Orbit](#) link

Overview & Purpose

InnerOrbit is an NGSS-aligned online assessment platform designed to help science teachers evaluate and support three-dimensional learning. This proposal outlines how adopting InnerOrbit will enhance data-driven instruction, align with the Illinois Science Assessment (ISA), and provide measurable value for our junior high science program.

Key Benefits for Science Instruction

- Phenomena-based, three-dimensional (3-D) NGSS assessment items tagged by Performance Expectation (PE), Science & Engineering Practices (SEP), Disciplinary Core Ideas (DCI), and Crosscutting Concepts (CCC).
- Ready-to-use diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments for all units.
- Variety of question types (multiple-choice, open response, modeling, and claim-evidence-reasoning).
- Instant data reports to guide reteaching, small-group instruction, and differentiation.
- Customizable assignments for warm-ups, exit tickets, quizzes, or full tests.
- Professional learning support for building and interpreting 3-D assessments.

Alignment to NGSS

InnerOrbit directly supports the three dimensions of the Next Generation Science Standards—Science and Engineering Practices, Disciplinary Core Ideas, and Crosscutting Concepts—through sensemaking around real-world phenomena. Each assessment item is tagged to specific performance expectations, providing transparency and precision for both teachers and students.

Alignment to Illinois Science Assessment (ISA)

The Illinois Science Assessment (ISA) measures mastery of NGSS-aligned standards, emphasizing reasoning, modeling, and evidence-based explanations. InnerOrbit mirrors ISA's structure and expectations by incorporating three-dimensional tasks and Claim-Evidence-Reasoning (CER) items, making it an ideal preparation and practice tool for junior high school students.

Cost for 350 Students

License Model	Annual Cost per Individual	Total Estimated Annual Cost
School License (350 students)	\$8.00	\$2,800.00
Lab Budget (3 teachers)	\$1,000.00	\$3,000.00

Summary & Recommendation

Adopting InnerOrbit will provide teachers with immediate access to high-quality, NGSS-aligned assessments that mirror state expectations, empowering data-informed instruction and improving ISA readiness. This investment of \$2,800 will strengthen science instruction across grades 6–8 and support consistent, standards-based assessment practices throughout Meridian Jr. High School.