

Q-C Area

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The Dispatch and The Rock Island Argus
Friday, February 21, 2003

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School goals downgraded

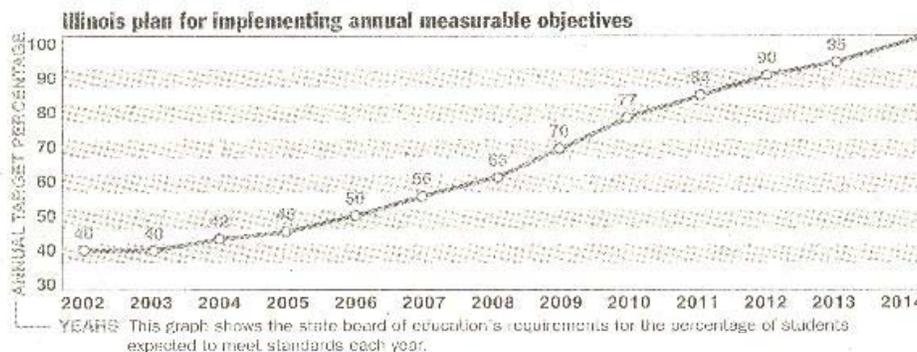
Easier start now means a tougher slope later

By Robin J. Youngblood
Staff writer

The Illinois State Board of Education has lowered its early expectations in setting a timeline for failing schools to show improvement.

The board voted Wednesday to give schools more time to implement programs aimed at boosting academic achievement.

Under the federal No Child Left Behind Act, signed into law in January 2002 by President Bush, states must ensure that all students — 100 percent — meet the state's academic standards in reading and math by



Nathan Williams / staff

the 2013-14 school year.

Until now, schools where less than 50 percent of students do not meet state standards landed on Illinois' Early Academic Warning or Watch list. In the Quad-Cities area, those schools include United Township High School in East Moline; Rock Island High School, Edison Junior High, and Lincoln, Hawthorne-Irving and Grant elementary schools, all in Rock Island; and Westmer High School in Mercer County.

Under the new regulation, schools where less than 40 percent of students meet state standards would end up on the warning list.

Academic achievement is measured by the Illinois Standards Achievement Test. Students take the test in the spring, and results come back during the summer.

The federal government suggested that schools start at 50 percent and improve by 5 percentage points each year until 2014. Illinois, however, has de-

cidated on a different timeline that lowers expectations in the early years, but forces schools to play catch-up later.

The starting point for Illinois students has been set at 40 percent in 2002 and remains at 40 percent in 2003. Improvement of 2 percentage points is expected in 2004 and 3 points more in 2005, for a total of 45 percent of students hitting the standard that year.

In 2006, half of students will be expected to meet the standard. For 2007, the requirement

rises to 56 percent. A 7-percent-age-point increase will be required each year after that until 2012, when a 6-point increase is required, to 90 percent. In 2013 and 2014, a 5-point increase will be required, bringing 100 percent compliance.

"I think it will help," said Jay Marino, assistant superintendent of curriculum for the Rock Island-Milan School District. "We are in the process of really getting our latest innovative programs working in our district. Any sustained change takes several years. It's not something you can do overnight."

"That additional time will enable us to put into place those strategies we think will make a difference."

Had the new, 40 percent guideline for the 2002-03 school year been used last year, three area schools — United Township and Rock Island high schools and Edison Junior High — wouldn't be on the warning list.

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