A $3.5 million federal grant will fund the pilot program nationwide. More than 1,000 schools are using the program without federal assistance.

In Illinois, the state board of education chose 10 Illinois schools based on the school's "willingness and wiredness." Six of the schools are in the Rock Island district, including Thurgood Marshall Learning Center, Washington Middle, Edison Junior, Andubon, Lincoln and Longfellow elementaries. They were the only district schools to express interest in participating in the program, said assistant superintendent of curriculum Jay Marino. He gave the school board a presentation about Project Achieve at the Oct. 22 board meeting.

The other four schools in Illinois to participate are in the Leepertown and Virginia school districts. The state board of education isn't releasing the names of the schools until Monday.

"Follow the leader got started from the Education Leaders Council in Washington, D.C.," Ms. Boyd said, "to help states implement on the ground the new federal legislation (No Child Left Behind)."

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), signed January, 2001, requires every U.S. child to meet state academic achievement levels by 2014.

Four schools in the Rock Island-Milan district are on the state academic watch list for not meeting standards.

Ms. Boyd said those schools were part of the reason Rock Island was chosen for the program. The schools' leaders also were "willing and committed" to participate in the program.

Please see Project Achieve, C4