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## Loy recommends closing Grant, restructuring Lincoln

By Robin J. Youngblood, [ryoungblood@qconline.com](mailto:ryoungblood@qconline.com)

ROCK ISLAND -- Grant Elementary School should be closed, and Hawthorne-Irving and Lincoln elementaries restructured into "sister" campuses of the new Rock Island Academy, superintendent Rick Loy told the Rock Island-Milan school board Tuesday.

His recommendations cap months of debate about the future of the three schools. The board is expected to vote on them Jan. 25. A public forum, where community members can ask questions about the proposal, is set for 5 to 7 p.m. Tuesday in the Rock Island High School auditorium.

"The time for change has come for 600-plus students in Rock Island," Mr. Loy said.

His proposal would set the new boundaries of the Rock Island Academy to encompass those of Grant, Lincoln and Hawthorne-Irving. Each of the new campuses would be used by four grades.

The suggestion to close Lincoln and Grant elementaries came from a



**Photo: John Greenwood**

During a meeting of the Rock Island-Milan School Board Tuesday evening, superintendent Rick Loy addresses a question as board president Elma 'Mooch' Gay listens. Because of recommendations made by the District Facility Study Report, superintendent Loy made a recommendation to close Grant School in Rock Island. The school board will meet at 5 p.m. Tuesday to discuss questions raised by the public regarding the closing or restructuring.

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facilities study conducted over several months by a school board-selected committee. The committee's findings, released in late Septemeber, also suggested closing Thurgood Marshall, moving its students to Lincoln, and making Hawthorne-Irving into a choice school, similar to Horace Mann Elementary.

A recommendation for Thurgood Marshall wasn't mentioned Tuesday, but may be made in the future.

The facilities committee's recommendations were based on the physical conditions of the schools.

Since then, administrators have suggested the closures and reorganization as a way to also address looming federal No Child Left Behind Act sanctions.

The act requires all schools to make "annual progress" on standardized tests. This year, the minimum requirement for that progress is going up, making it more likely that Lincoln, Grant and Hawthorne-Irving may not meet the minimum.

Lincoln has failed to meet the standards at least two years, meaning parents must be offered the chance to send their children from there to other district schools. Grant and Hawthorne-Irving have failed to meet the standards for at least four years, meaning they're in a corrective action phase that can include new curriculum, scheduling and staff.

Mr. Loy said the academies will have a new approach to learning and be "full-service community schools" -- which means requiring a parental-involvement agreements, establishing workshops for better parenting, and having themed intersession and after-school classes. The details of those new concepts are yet to be established.

Another difference for these schools would be weekly checkups, or assessments, said assistant superintendent of curriculum Jay Marino. "The intent is to give every student the opportunity to experience success," he said.

The school district also would save money with this scenario, said district

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comptroller Mike Oberhaus.

The most money saved -- about \$264,427 -- would come from closing Grant and not re-opening it for other programs and services. Another \$427,000 could be reallocated, he added, if the schools get off the state academic "warning" list. That is money set aside each year for tutoring services and transporting kids from the three schools in trouble to other campuses.

One person, the Rev. Don Johnson, seemed to object to Mr. Loy's recommendation. He said a person from the state department of education told him the district wouldn't be targeted for restructuring.

"According to NCLB," said board president Elma "Mooch" Gay, "this is the step we're at. Up until now we have not done anything they have not instructed us to do. That's why we're moving forward legally. At this point there is no other option."

Superintendent Rick Loy's recommendation:

- Close Grant Elementary and restructure Hawthorne-Irving and Lincoln elementaries.
- Create one school boundary by merging the three schools.
- Open Rock Island Academy West at Hawthorne-Irving for pre-kindergarten through second grades.
- Open Rock Island Academy East at Lincoln for third through sixth grades.

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