

## E. Rochester school board weighs choice

### District considers benefit of Urban-Suburban program

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STAFF WRITER

The Webster school board will learn more about the Urban-Suburban program Thursday, while the East Rochester school board is already considering its potential benefit for that district.

The program allows minority Rochester students to attend suburban schools if they are selected through a competitive application process. Nearly 600 students take part in seven districts, and the program, run through BOCES, is looking to expand as it celebrates its 50-year anniversary.

The East Rochester school board had a presentation in October from program director Theresa Woodson and West Irondequoit Superintendent Jeff Crane, one of the program's most vocal advocates. At its meeting Tuesday, Interim Superintendent Dick Stutzman laid out his reasoning of why adopting the program would help students who already attend school there.

While much of the countywide debate about the program deals with diversity, Stutzman's main concern has to do with

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**Dick Stutzman**

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### Program

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maintaining the number of students in classrooms.

As in most local districts, enrollment in East Rochester has been declining. It had 1,108 students on campus in 2013-14, down 9.4 percent from 1,223 in 2007-08. The fewer students a district has, the less state funding it gets and the fewer programs it can offer.

In that context, Stutzman said adopting the Urban-Suburban program would be "a way to stabilize our enrollment, and to maintain and enhance our programs." The students, possibly 15 of them the first year, would be accepted in grades where there are relatively few students. The school board has not voted on the topic — that likely wouldn't come until at least Feb. 24, the next regular board meeting. But Stutzman characterized the conversation Tuesday as "extremely positive." "(The board members) realize what the implications may or may not be if they do nothing, and they know what the benefits will be to the district," he said. "But they want

more time to reflect upon it and see any comments.” A letter to residents, along with Stutzman’s presentation, will be posted on the district website soon. Stutzman will also address the town/village board on the topic at its Feb. 12 meeting. Webster is not as far along with its consideration process, but it will hear a presentation by Crane at 5:30 p.m. Thursday at the district office, 119 South Ave. School board president Mike Suffoletto has said the district won’t make a decision in time for the 2015-16 school year, but will consider it for 2016-17 or later. The question of adopting Urban-Suburban has been extremely contentious in Spencerport; the school board will have its next public forum on Feb. 3. Hilton has also expressed an interest and will meet next Jan. 27.

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