

Honeoye Falls-Lima considering Urban-Suburban

JUSTIN MURPHY

@CITIZENMURPHY

The Honeoye Falls-Lima Central School District is considering joining the Urban-Suburban program, with a decision likely coming within the next few months. The district is one of the few in Monroe County not currently participating in the 52-year-old voluntary desegregation plan, where select students from the Rochester City School District are enrolled in suburban schools. There are 831 such students enrolled in 2017-18, the most in many years, and the demand is significantly higher than that.

HF-L formed a committee earlier this year to study the question and has had two public meetings, one in June and one earlier this month.

“There certainly wasn’t consensus,” Superintendent Gene Mancuso said. “There were varied points of view, and a lot of deep questions for the board to consider.” Some of those regarded the financial implications of the program and transportation and afterschool activities. Other speakers, Mancuso said, raised questions about “the readiness for the cultural (connection) on both sides.” That topic became more pointed this summer after a recent graduate of Honeoye Falls-Lima High School was among those who marched with torches in Charlottesville, Virginia, protesting the removal of a statue of Robert E. Lee. “There’s no varying points of view that our students are 93 percent white – that’s pretty clear,” he said. “How we deal with preparing our students for a world that isn’t 93 percent white is a different question.”

As in other participating districts, HF-L would bear little to no financial burden for the additional students, who bring state funding with them and are transported by RCSD. The district gets to choose which students, and how many, it accepts. In a FAQ posted on its website, it noted that “generally, students who are enrolled in more costly special programs are not enrolled in Urban-Suburban.” If HF-L were to participate beginning in 2018-19, it would start with six to 10 students per year in grades 2-6, based on class space. The committee is also looking more generally at ways to increase cultural competency within the district, including through curriculum or field trips, Mancuso said.

“We recognize the Urban- Suburban program ... isn’t going to shift the demographics dramatically very quickly or give our students a drastic change,” Mancuso said. “If it’s not right for the district, that’s fine, but I want to make sure we thoughtfully examine what we can do to ensure our kids are properly prepared for the future.” The committee’s report and recommendation is due by the end of October.

JMURPHY7@Gannett.com



Samari Brown, a seventh-grader at Barker Road Middle School, has been in the Pittsford School district since first grade as part of the Urban-Suburban program. MAX SCHULTE/@MAXROCPHOTO/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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GENE MANCUSO

HONEOYE FALLS-LIMA CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT

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