

URBAN- SUBURBAN

## District joins despite rancor

### Spencerport to add 18 students from city

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STAFF WRITER

About 18 Rochester first-, second and sixth-graders will attend school in Spencerport in the fall after the school board voted Tuesday to adopt the Urban- Suburban program.

The vote was unanimous. Many audience members greeted it with applause; others shouted warnings about this spring's school board vote.

The incoming Rochester students will make up about 1 percent of the 1,700 combined students at Bernabi and Canal View elementary schools and Cosgrove Middle School. The question of

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their presence, however, has stirred intense emotion for district residents.

In December and February, the school board hosted two well-attended, combative public hearings. Many residents said the Urban-Suburban program is racist because it excludes white city students and argued city residents should move to Spencerport if they want their kids to go to school there.

Superintendent Michael Crumb, Spencerport teachers and residents in favor of the program said it would bring a needed influx of both diversity — Spencerport currently has 13 percent non-white students — and cash, in the form of state per-pupil aid that follows students to the suburbs.

The school board members spoke Tuesday of the benefit Spencerport students would receive from a more diverse student body as well as the opportunity the district could provide to Rochester students in need.

"We're not talking about social engineering or any other nonsense that's come out of this discourse," board member Gary Bracken said. "We're talking about a small group of kids that wants a chance for a better education. ... We talk about Spencerport being special. If we're special, we can give that opportunity to these kids and be part of the bigger solution down the road."

Spencerport joins Brighton, Brockport, Fairport, Penfield, Pittsford, West Irondequoit and Wheatland-Chili in the program, and is the first new district to join in a decade. Urban-Suburban, run through Monroe 1 BOCES, is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year.

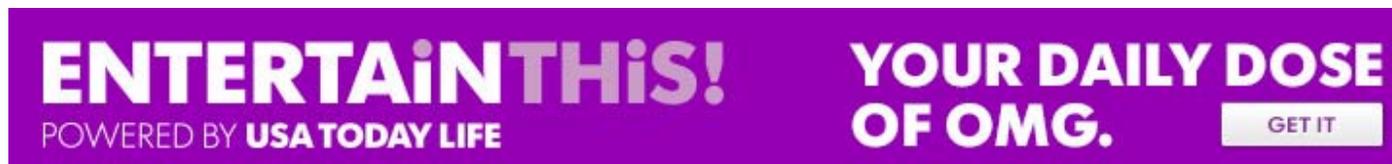
The East Irondequoit, East Rochester and Hilton school boards also discussed adopting the program at board meetings Tuesday, and votes there are expected in the coming weeks. Webster is considering adoption for the 2016-17 school year.

Nearly 600 minority Rochester students currently participate after being selected through a competitive process that weeds out about 90 percent of applicants. Districts are able to use those students to prop up sagging enrollment and, in some cases, get significantly

more state per-pupil aid.

“If this gets through tonight, I hope the community gives it a chance,” board member Janet Tyler said before the vote. “These are kids — they’re just kids.”

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