

## Webster schools to take city kids

### Webster

### 13th district to join Urban-Suburban

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The Webster Central School District will begin accepting Rochester students in the 2016-17 school year after its board voted unanimously to join the Urban- Suburban Program.

It will be the 13th district to participate in the program, which allows poor city students — traditionally, though no longer exclusively, minorities — to attend school in the suburbs free of charge.

Webster will take in up to 30 students in grades 2-4 next fall, Superintendent Carmen Gumina said. That will

See **WEBSTER**, Page **12A**

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Continued from Page 3A

mean about four or five new students per building.

“This program allows students the chance to experience an educational journey that is so different from the one their brothers and sisters have experienced,” Gumina said at the Nov. 19 meeting before the board’s vote. “Not only do the participants benefit, but certainly the host community and schools do even more so from all the diversity the program brings.”

The district’s current student body is 87 percent white, according to state data.

Like other suburban districts throughout Monroe County, Webster has seen its enrollment fall over the last several years. An infusion of Rochester students is a way to prop up class sizes and maintain its program offerings.

Because Rochester students get more state funding per pupil than Webster ones, the Webster school district will also gain about \$6,300 in revenue for each student it accepts.

“The fact there’s some revenue that comes with it is fantastic, but that really wasn’t the main driver,” Gumina said. “It was more that we can do it and the program doesn’t cost the taxpayers any additional funds.” Board members Mike Gustin and Tom Nespeca both voiced concerns about whether students whose family move into Webster just before the beginning of the school year will lose their spots in local elementary schools at the expense of Urban-Suburban students. Both, however, voted in favor of the proposition.

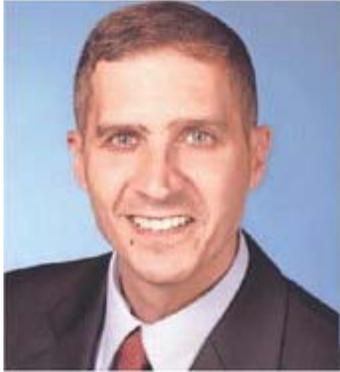
There is no plan yet for enrollment beyond 2016-17, Gumina said.

The Urban-Suburban program, now in its 51st year, will have a slightly different look by next fall. Its by-laws are being amended so white students can participate as long as they meet income guidelines; but that is

unlikely to have much practical impact, as many more minorities than whites are living in poverty in Rochester. Also starting next fall, suburban students will be allowed to enroll in select city programs, including career and technical programs at Edison High School.

The remaining Monroe County districts that do not participate in Urban-Suburban are Churchville-Chili, Gates Chili, Greece, Honeoye Falls-Lima and Rush-Henrietta. Of those, Rush-Henrietta is most likely to follow Webster's lead in adopting it for 2016-17.

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**“The host community and schools (benefit) from all the diversity the program brings.”**

**CARMEN GUMINA**

WEBSTER SCHOOLS SUPERINTENDENT (AT LEFT)