

Report of the Superintendent of Schools

March 2025- New Salem/Wendell School Committee

New Salem/Wendell Updates -

Negotiations for the successor Collective Bargaining Agreement between the Swift River Education Association and the New Salem/Wendell School Committee. Caitlin Sheridan, Kelley Sullivan and I will serve in an advisory capacity as requested.

Swift River School hosted a union wide parent engagement night with Dr. Stuart Ablom. Dr. Ablom is a leading expert in child psychology and teaches parents, teachers and clinicians about a different approach around troubling childhood behavior with a focus on skill building. The event was funded through Title grants and had an in person and virtual option.

Swift River Physical Education Teacher, Sadie Graham will be recognized with the Excellence in Teaching Award on April 30, 2025. Sadie is everything we want in an educator; she is student focused, creative and fosters a true sense of excitement in the learning environment. We are so proud of her!

Union 28 Updates-

The Union 28 Efficiency Advisory Group has concluded meetings and will present their recommendations to the JSC on March 17th.

Erving Elementary School will begin their search for a permanent principal.

The roll out of the online absence management Frontline is underway across all union schools.

At the upcoming JSC meeting on March 17th, the superintendent will share two reports: Report of Entry Findings, Mid Cycle Evaluation Update.

I was invited to be a panelist for a DESE sponsored roundtable to discuss equity, rural leadership and transitioning into a superintendency. The audience is candidates enrolled in DESE's Influence 100 leadership program.

Legislative Updates -

Upcoming MA legislative actions - Bill SD 2178

An Act to provide a sustainable future for rural schools - Rural schools face many structural challenges, including declining enrollments, stagnating local tax bases, disproportionately

high transportation and special education costs, and a state funding formula that favors schools with dense populations and larger enrollments. Bill SD 2178 bill addresses these and other issues by providing funding for regional schools, school building construction and renovation, and exceptional transportation and special education costs; supporting shared services among regional schools and looking for ways to reduce their health care costs; and establishing commissions to review and update special education regulations and funding to better support rural schools. The bill also ensures representation from western Massachusetts on the state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education so that our communities have a voice in the state's decision-making body.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education recently voted to expand some charter school programs that could impact our Union 28 systems. The Pioneer Valley Chinese Immersion Charter School in Hadley has received permission to add 100 seats to their school enrollment across grades K-12.

The Massachusetts Association of School Superintendents has partnered with several state legislators and have identified their priority focus areas for 2025 which include: special education funding reform, establishment of the Promise Commission, student discipline policies and revisions to the education funding formula.

Respectfully Submitted,

Shannon White-Cleveland

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Superintendent of Schools