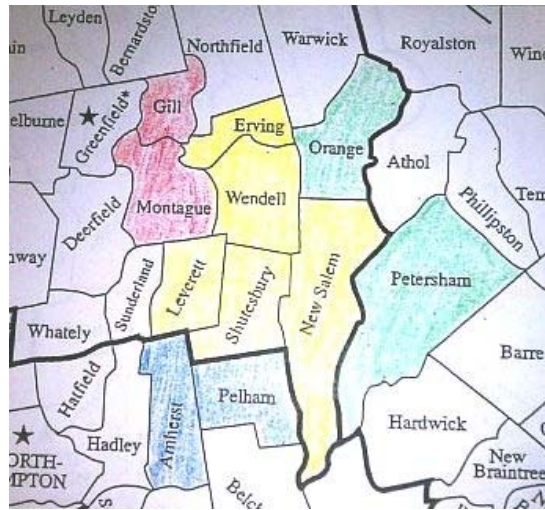


Union 28 ... What it is and what it does for your community. Learn more at [www.union28.org](http://www.union28.org)

**History of Erving School Union 28**

In 1901, the towns of Erving, Leverett, New Salem and Wendell voted to form a superintendency union. The town of Shutesbury was voted into the union in 1902, thus forming the current Erving School Union #28 District. The five towns came together in the early 1900s for cost-sharing purposes, which continue to strongly tie its four elementary (PK - 6) school districts together. These districts include Erving Elementary School, Leverett Elementary School, Shutesbury Elementary School and the Swift River School (a school that serves students from the towns of New Salem and Wendell). Each district is autonomous and elects its own school committee which oversees the overall educational program and determines its own policies, as well as its own budget for its elementary school. Together, the Union 28 communities share the cost and oversight of the superintendent, as well as its central office which includes a director of special education, a director of finance and operations and administrative support staff.



Union 28 communities in yellow. Affiliated secondary schools in red, green and blue.

Red = Gill-Montague Regional  
 Green = Ralph C. Mahar Regional  
 Blue = Amherst-Pelham Regional

**Recent Changes in Union 28**

Even though Union 28 has been in existence since 1902 it is a dynamic organization that is constantly changing to meet the needs of its students and communities. Since 2006 the following initiatives, instructional practices, memberships, shared personnel, etc... have been instituted under the leadership of Superintendent Joan Wickman:

- The Union 28 Administrative Team now meets twice a month to collaborate and share information and address common concerns.
- All staff has been trained in Research for Better Teaching and this evidence-based model is used for teacher supervision.
- Job Alike sessions were created so that teachers could collaborate across school districts on best practices and curriculum.
- There is a collaborative selection of professional development speakers/programs to maximize funds.
- A Curriculum Coordinator was hired to assist principals and staff in curriculum development and implementation.
- U28 had a Policy Committee that reviewed and recommended 30+ policies to the local school committees.
- U28 created a Strategic Development Committee to address common interests among the 4 school districts.
- Through the special education department, assessments have been purchased and shared across school districts.
- Representatives from each school collaboratively improved Induction and Mentoring Programs
- An Inclusion Specialist was hired to benefit students and staff in all four schools.
- Each school joined the Collaborative for Educational Services to increase capacity.
- A new accounting system was purchased that allows the schools to have access to their financial information in real time.

**Benefits of Union 28**

A superintendency union offers towns local control over their elementary public schools. Each school district

- Maintains a local school committee with all of its powers.
- Maintains control over its local school budget.
- Selects and controls all resources and programs for its school district .
- Controls placement of its teachers and administrators. No one can be moved to another school or district.
- Continues to bargain with its local teachers' union and employees. Locally, staffing patterns are determined and staff salaries negotiated.
- Has a school committee that works with administration to create a budget. During fiscally tight times they control where cuts will be made.
- Has curricula and programs that are selected locally and matched to its community needs / culture within the parameters of state regulations.
- Has equal membership within Union 28.
- Has a comprehensive and individualized special education program.
- Creates its own policies affecting the operations of its school.
- Controls the use of the school facility and determines the capital improvements.
- Establishes its grading and assessment systems.
- Selects the vendors with whom it will contract.
- Manages its revolving accounts/programs (e.g. Food Service, After-School).
- Participates in the Community Network for Children Program which services families of young children.
- Determines whether it wants to be a School of Choice.

For more information contact Dr. Joan Wickman, Superintendent of Schools at [u28supt@erving.com](mailto:u28supt@erving.com) or 413-423-3337

**UNION 28**



Erving Elementary School



Leverett Elementary School



Shutesbury Elementary School



Swift River School



### **Enrichment**

The four elementary school districts contained within Union 28 offer numerous enrichment opportunities. Some of these include the following:

- Integrated pre-school programs
- Full-day kindergarten programs (in place since the 1980s)
- Class sizes range from 13 to 24 students
- Many larger classes supported by paraprofessional staff
- Full-time nurses
- Paid librarians (3 certified)
- Technology Coordinators
- A full complement of art, music and P.E. programs
- Fully equipped computer labs
- Music programming – three schools have instrumental music programs; one has a music/movement program

### **21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills**

The school districts within Union 28 foster numerous 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills through their programs and instruction. Some of these include:

#### **Technology**

- Fully equipped labs
- Computer instruction for students
- Interactive White Boards in many classrooms
- Blogs for certain programs
- Assistive technology for students with special needs (e.g. MP3 players, iPods/iPads, Advantage Lite)
- School websites

- Staff email accounts
- Connect Ed. (reverse 911)

#### **Environment**

- All schools have had an energy audit
- One school has solar panels
- Enthusiastic recycling efforts
- Atlantic Salmon Egg Rearing Programs

#### **Science**

- STEM-RAYS programs (research academies for young scientists)
- One school has a science lab teacher and a Greenhouse instructor/coordinator
- Some host Science Fairs

#### **World Connections**

- High-speed Internet
- One school has an international pen pal program
- Most schools have enrichment programs that focus on world cultures (e.g. field trips, artists)

#### **The Arts**

- Full arts programs
- All schools have student performance nights
- Artists in residence programs
- Field trips that involve learning about the arts

#### **Problem Solving**

- Done throughout the curriculum
- Adventure Program in one school
- Social curriculum in each school



### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **Q - What is the structure and function of the Union 28 Joint Supervisory School Committee?**

- The Committee's primary responsibilities are: hiring the superintendent of schools; evaluating the superintendent of schools; establishing salary schedules, benefits and other conditions of employment for the shared staff; establishing and overseeing a central office budget, apportioning the shared costs among the member towns, and establishing policies for the Union. Each of the 5 Union 28 communities elects 3 members from its local school committee to serve on the Joint Supervisory Committee.

#### **Q – How is Union 28 funded?**

- Each town / school district pays a portion of Union 28's annual central office budget. This portion is calculated based upon the school's enrollment as of October 1<sup>st</sup> in the previous fiscal year.

#### **Q - How are curricula chosen in the schools?**

- This process is somewhat different in each of the schools. Typically the principal has a discussion with the staff about a curriculum in the context of the school's goals, mission and alignment with state standards. The staff reviews different programs with the assistance of the Curriculum Coordinator. When they come to agreement on a program that has effective outcomes, then it is presented to the school committee. If additional funding is needed to purchase the program, a school committee vote is needed.

#### **Q – How are personnel hired?**

- Once again this depends upon the school. Each school has a slightly different process. However all procedures comply with MGL Ch. 71 sec. 59B which authorizes the principal to be the hiring authority in a school, subject to the approval of the superintendent. All of the schools have screening/interview committees

that work with the principal to select one or more finalists to send to the superintendent. After the candidate(s) completes an interview process with the superintendent, the superintendent consults with the principal and together they determine whether this is the best candidate for the position. 96% of the time, the candidate sent forward to the superintendent has been offered the job.

#### **Q – What are some ways that the Union 28 schools differ?**

- Committees vote their own budgets and within those budgets they endorse programs that reflect the interests of their communities. Below are some of the different programs/staffing patterns in the schools:
  - o Movement and Music
  - o Adventure Program
  - o Science Lab
  - o Greenhouse instruction
  - o Math coach
  - o Staffing to meet individual needs
  - o Certified librarians
- Also see back panel identifying benefits.



#### **Q – What is the enrollment in the Union 28 schools?**

- Currently all schools have between 137 and 159 students.

#### **Q – Where do Union 28 students go after 6<sup>th</sup> grade?**

- After 6<sup>th</sup> grade Erving Elementary students go to the Gill-Montague School District. Leverett and Shutesbury send their secondary students to Amherst-Pelham Regional, and the New Salem and Wendell students attend the Mahar Regional School District.