



Vermont Learning Collaborative Announces Selection of Regional Facilitators for Act 170 Merger Study Committees

The Vermont Learning Collaborative (VTLC) – the organization statutorily assigned to lead the project management and facilitation of Vermont's district merger process under Act 170 is pleased to announce the selection of seven Regional Facilitators who will support school districts across the state as they navigate the merger process.

The regional facilitators join Lead Facilitator, Dave Younce, whose appointment was announced earlier, completing the facilitation team that VTLC has assembled to carry out this critical work.

A Historic Opportunity for Vermont's School Communities

Act 170 (H.955), signed into law in 2026, establishes a statewide framework for school district merger study committees, bringing all of Vermont's school districts together in regional groups to engage in structured, data-driven conversations about the future of public education. The process is designed to be community-centered, evidence-based, and facilitated by neutral professionals with final decisions resting with local voters.

The Facilitation team plays a pivotal role in this effort; providing neutral, professional facilitation to assigned school district merger study committees operating under the statute requirements of Act 170 and ensuring that every community has access to a rigorous, trustworthy process regardless of geography or district size.

A Competitive and Rigorous Selection Process

VTLC conducted a comprehensive, competitive search to identify the strongest possible candidates for these roles. The interview process drew 15 applicants from across the greater New England region. VTLC conducted initial interviews with 13 candidates, from which 8 finalists were selected for a final round of interviews. Candidates were assessed through interviews and professional portfolio submissions demonstrating their experience leading complex, multi-stakeholder facilitation processes; managing conflict and dissent in politically sensitive environments; and applying knowledge of public education systems.

Seven individuals were ultimately chosen to serve as Regional Facilitators. Those selected bring a combination of deep educational experience, extensive knowledge of public school systems, proven facilitation skills, and a demonstrated commitment to equitable outcomes for all students.

Dave Younce, Lead Facilitator stated: *It has already been exciting work engaging with highly-skilled facilitators from across the Northeast as we worked to build a strong team to guide Vermont communities through the Act 170 process. The members of this team bring proven credentials and deep understanding of education systems and the communities that they serve. Most importantly, they bring balanced perspectives and experienced facilitation to this critical work for the future of Vermont education. The work ahead for Vermont will not be easy, but it will certainly be intentional and thoughtful.*

Meet the Regional Facilitators

The seven Regional Facilitators and their regional assignments are:

Craig Aarons-Martin | Chittenden Central Region:

Craig Aarons-Martin is an experienced public education leader and facilitator who has served as a teacher, principal, executive director/superintendent, and statewide commissioner. He brings more than two decades of experience leading complex educational change, including districtwide strategic planning, school improvement, and multi-stakeholder processes involving educators, families, community partners, and public-sector leaders. While serving in Boston Public Schools, Craig contributed to districtwide strategic planning and Public Education Leadership Project work with Harvard, helping shape a Theory of Action focused on equity, resource alignment, leadership, and implementation. He has also provided technical assistance through Abt Global to multiple Massachusetts communities, facilitating needs assessments and strategic action planning within a state-funded initiative. Through his leadership with the Massachusetts Commission on LGBTQ Youth, Craig has supported statewide strategic planning and facilitated conversations involving Commissioners, state agencies, community partners, and communities with differing geographic and resource contexts, including rural communities. He brings this experience to Vermont's Act 170 work with a commitment to neutral, transparent, student-centered facilitation that helps communities work productively through disagreement and make informed decisions.

Dr. Heather Bouchey | Northeast Region:

Dr. Heather Bouchey is an experienced education leader, facilitator, researcher, and strategic advisor who has worked across Vermont's PreK–16 education and government systems. She previously served as Vermont's Deputy Secretary of Education, following leadership roles at Lyndon State College. Throughout her career, she has brought educators, families, students, community members, policymakers, and organizational leaders together to address complex issues and build practical paths forward. A first-generation college graduate from a rural community, Heather is deeply committed to expanding opportunity for all students. Her work is grounded in careful listening, inclusive engagement, objective analysis, and respect for differing perspectives. She looks forward to supporting Vermont communities through the Act 170 process as a regional facilitator.

Dana Brown | South East Region (Vermont Learning Collaborative):

Dana Brown brings forty-six years of experience in education, including classroom teaching at the middle, high school, and graduate levels, sixteen years as a building principal, and senior district and state committee leadership roles. A former Massachusetts Principal of the Year, Dana has led in demanding educational environments, including district and state-receivership settings, developing the skills to navigate complex, high-stakes situations with clarity and steadiness.

Throughout his career, Dana has convened diverse stakeholders, managed sensitive and politically complex issues, and translated educational, operational, and fiscal considerations for school boards, community members, state agencies, and policy leaders. He currently coaches and mentors principals, assistant principals, and district leaders, focusing on leadership development, collaborative teams, and organizational change.

Dana also served as an elected city councilor in his hometown outside of Boston, bringing firsthand experience in public-sector governance and community accountability. He approaches the Act 170 facilitation process with a commitment to neutral, transparent, community-centered conversations focused on what matters most: positive outcomes for students.

Dr. Luvelle Brown | Southwest Region:

Dr. Luvelle Brown is an accomplished educator, author, and national thought leader who has served as a teacher, principal, school CIO, and Superintendent of Ithaca, New York Schools and is the Founder and CEO of Love2Achieve LLC. Named the 2017 New York State Superintendent of the Year, Dr. Brown has received numerous national honors, including AASA's Dr. Effie H. Jones Humanitarian Award and the National School Boards Association's "20-to-Watch" and "Difference Maker" recognitions. He earned four degrees from the University of Virginia and serves as an adjunct faculty member at SUNY Cortland and St. John Fisher University. A nationally sought-after speaker and leadership facilitator, Dr. Brown has engaged thousands of educators and leaders through professional learning, strategic planning, community engagement, and initiatives including the Courageous Leaders network. He is the author of Culture of Love and The Call to Courage, works focused on transformative leadership, organizational culture, and expanding opportunities for young people.

John Everitt | Champlain Valley North Region:

John Everitt is a retired Vermont educator serving students as a teacher and administrator including as superintendent in Montpelier and South Burlington. After retirement John worked with the Snelling Center for Government as faculty in their three leadership programs and consulted with several supervisory unions studying mergers under Vermont's Act 46. John's purpose in serving as a regional facilitator is to assist study committees in making decisions with the most complete and accurate information available and with analysis that considers positive outcomes for Vermont's children within an effective and efficient governance structure.

Brad Morgan | Winooski Valley Region:

Brad Morgan is an accomplished educational leader with more than three decades of experience serving Massachusetts public schools as a superintendent, principal, assistant principal, classroom teacher, adjunct professor, and educational consultant. Throughout his career, Brad has built a reputation for developing strong school leaders, fostering positive organizational culture, and creating systems that improve teaching, learning, and student success.

Brad currently serves as the Superintendent of the North Middlesex Regional School District, where he leads a PreK–12 district serving more than 3,200 students across six schools. Since assuming the superintendency in 2018, he has guided strategic planning, school improvement initiatives, collective bargaining, district culture transformation, major capital projects, and instructional improvement while maintaining a steadfast commitment to students, educators, and the communities they serve.

Before becoming superintendent, Brad served as Principal of Essex North Shore Agricultural & Technical School, where he helped lead the successful merger of three high schools into one nationally recognized regional vocational-technical-agricultural district. Earlier in his career, he served as principal in Waltham, assistant principal in Andover and Marblehead, and began his educational journey as a social studies teacher.

Bill Olsen | Champlain Valley South Region:

William (Bill) Olsen is an educational consultant based in Rutland, Vermont, with a proven track record of driving institutional growth and academic excellence. Throughout his career, he has successfully guided schools and his district through vision setting, strategic planning, curriculum alignment, and data-driven instructional improvements. Bill's experience includes serving 29 years as an educator and administrator in the Rutland region. Known for his collaborative approach, he builds strong relationships with administrators, teachers, community members, and school boards to foster positive learning environments. In addition to his work in education, Bill volunteers actively in the Rutland community.

What the Regional Facilitators Will Do:

In their roles, Regional Facilitators will be responsible for:

- Confirming and organizing merger study committees within their assigned regions in consultation with the Lead Facilitator;
- Supporting transparent, consistent communication with communities throughout the process in conjunction with their committees;
- Facilitating structured merger study conversations;
- Monitoring committee engagement and adherence to Act 170 timelines;
- Drafting final merger study reports and recommendations in cooperation with their committees.

Jill Graham, Executive Director for Vermont Learning Collaborative stated, *“We are proud to introduce this exceptional team of experienced professionals who will be working directly with communities across Vermont. Each facilitator brings deep knowledge of public education at the local, regional, and state level, and a genuine commitment to Vermont’s students and their future. With these appointments, VTLC has met the first major milestone of Act 170, and we are ready to move forward.”*

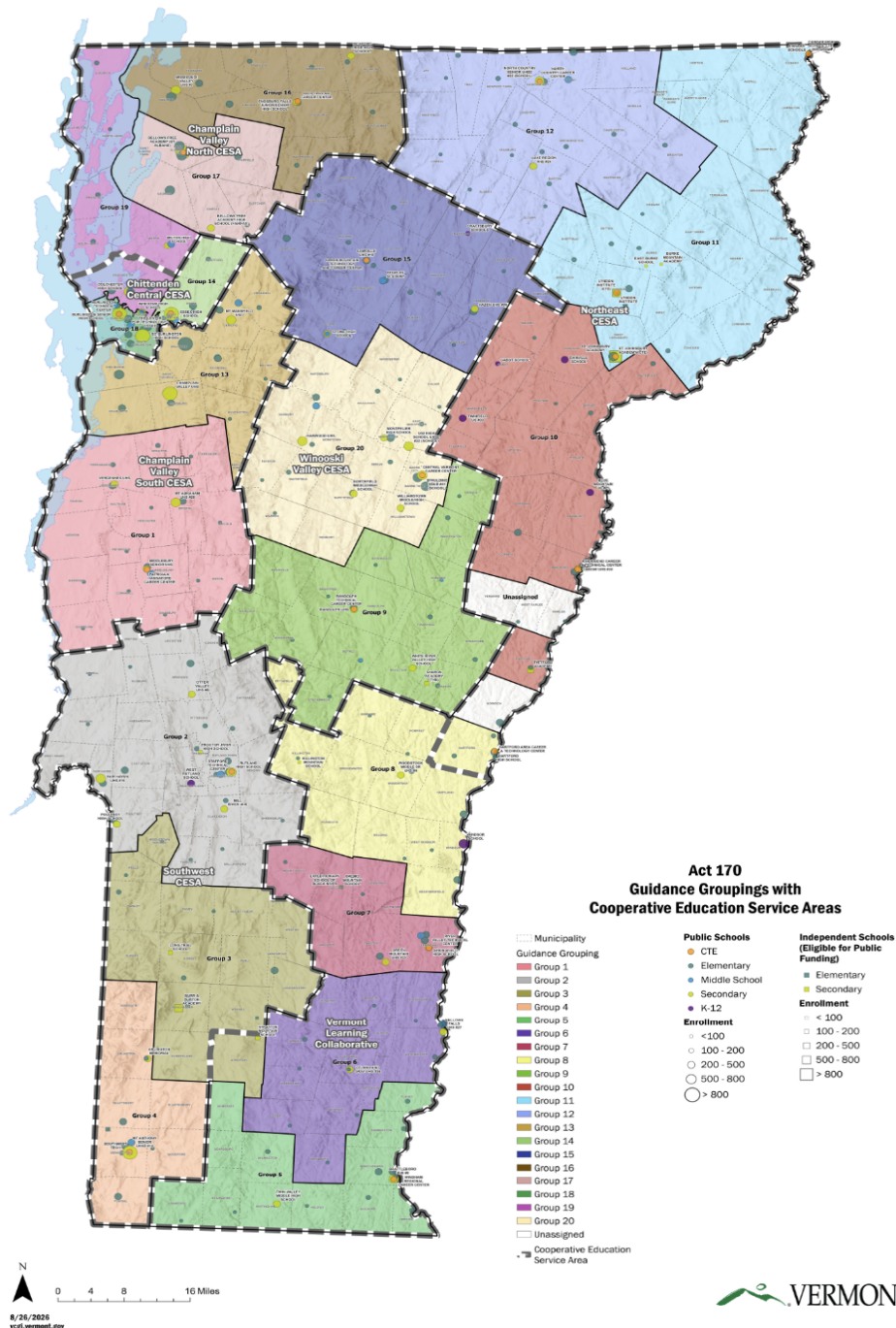
[Vermont Learning Collaborative](#) | 54 Main Street, Suite 200 | Windsor, VT 05089 | 802-428-6789

Key Milestones Under Act 170:

The following milestones reflect the statutory timeline established under Act 170:

September 1st, 2026:	Lead Facilitator and Regional Facilitators contracted
October 15, 2026:	First merger study committee meetings convene
September 1, 2027:	Final merger study committee reports due
December 2027:	Agency of Education / State Board of Education approvals occur
March 2028:	Possible community votes on proposed merged districts

Act 170 Merger Facilitation Groupings by Region:



About the Vermont Learning Collaborative

Vermont Learning Collaborative is a non-profit cooperative educational service area (CESA) supporting supervisory unions and school districts in the southeast region through shared, cost-effective programs and services. VTLC provides educational programming, evaluations, therapeutic services, professional development, and regional staffing solutions that expand access, strengthen educator capacity, and promote equitable outcomes across the region. For more information, please visit <https://vtlc.org>.