



Vermont Learning Collaborative Announces Selection of Lead Facilitator for Act 170 Merger Study Committee Process

The Vermont Learning Collaborative (VTLC) is pleased to announce the selection of Dave Younce as Lead Facilitator for Vermont's Act 170 school district merger study process. Younce will begin work in August 2026, leading a team of seven Regional Facilitators and overseeing approximately 20 merger study committees across the state.

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 Vermont's 119 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 Lead Facilitator plays a pivotal role in this effort: building and supervising the regional facilitator team, ensuring consistency and fidelity of process across all study committees, serving as the primary liaison to the Vermont State Legislature, Vermont Agency of Education and State Board of Education, ensuring that every community has access to a rigorous, trustworthy process regardless of geography or district size.

A Rigorous, Multi-Stage Selection Process

The selection of the Lead Facilitator followed a competitive, multi-stage hiring process designed to identify a candidate with the depth of experience, professional judgment, and Vermont-specific knowledge required for this consequential statewide role. Candidates were assessed via interviews and through professional portfolio examples regarding their skills and experience including; program management, government liaison experience, good-faith determination framework design, leading complex multi-stakeholder facilitation processes, managing conflict and dissent in politically sensitive environments, designing facilitator training programs, and knowledge of Vermont's public education system.

Dave Younce

A resident of Arlington VT, Dave Younce brings more than twenty years of experience serving as a Superintendent of Schools, School Principal, Private Sector Executive, Nonprofit Executive Director, and Educational Consultant engaged in support for Vermont schools, districts, supervisory unions, and other educational organizations. Recognized for expertise in governance, strategic planning, district reorganization, merger implementation, organizational redesign, leadership development, and facilitation of complex public processes, Younce has experience working with school boards, communities, associations, and state-level stakeholders to address governance challenges, organizational change, and long-term strategic priorities. Younce was named Vermont Superintendent of the Year in 2021.

Younce stated, "The future of Vermont public education matters to everyone in our state, because the work of our schools impacts lives in tangible ways regardless of location or stage of life. I am humbled and honored to facilitate the process that the Vermont Legislature designed to lead our communities as they explore important considerations and decisions for the future. Vermonters deserve an Act 170 process that is fair, thorough, transparent, and leads to quality and informed decisions. It is a privilege to be a part of the team that will deliver on that commitment."

What the Lead Facilitator Will Do

In this role, Younce will be responsible for:

- Recruiting, onboarding, and supervising seven Regional Merger Study Committee Facilitators across Vermont;
- Developing and delivering a comprehensive training program that equips regional facilitators with the Vermont education knowledge, facilitation skills, and documentation standards required under Act 170;
- Ensuring consistency and fidelity of process across all merger study committees statewide
- Serving as liaison to the Vermont State Legislature, Vermont Agency of Education, State Board of Education;
- Overseeing the good-faith participation determination framework and managing escalations from regional facilitators;
- Ensuring the quality and completeness of up to 20 final merger study committee reports due December 1, 2027
- Participating as needed through school board comment periods, State Board of Education proceedings, and community merger votes through early 2028

Jill Graham, Executive Director for Vermont Learning Collaborative stated, *"We could not be more pleased to welcome Dave Younce as the Lead Facilitator. This is consequential work. Vermont's communities are being asked to have honest, sometimes difficult conversations about the future of their children's education. Dave's experience, judgment, and deep respect for local communities make him the right person to guide that process. We are grateful for his commitment to Vermont's students."*

Key Milestones 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
March 2028:	Community votes on proposed merged districts

About the Vermont Learning Collaborative

Vermont Learning Collaborative is a non-profit cooperative educational service area 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>.