



Orange Southwest School District

24 Central Street Randolph Vermont 05060

Telephone (802) 728-5052

Michael J. Clark, Superintendent

Robin Pembroke, Business Manager

Kayla Link, Director of Special Education

Mindybeth Pike,, Director of Curriculum and Student Achievement

Proudly Serving the Towns of Braintree, Brookfield, and Randolph

1 October 2026

Dear Members of the Orange Southwest School District Community,

As the Orange Southwest School District representative on the Group 9 ACT 170 Voluntary Merger Study Committee, I want to provide a brief overview of what this process means for our school communities.

ACT 170, passed by the Vermont Legislature in 2026, establishes a statewide process for school districts to study the potential benefits, challenges, and advisability of forming larger unified union school districts. The purpose of the Group 9 study is not to predetermine that a merger will occur, but rather to carefully examine whether a unified district could provide educational, operational, and financial benefits while also considering the potential disadvantages and impacts on our communities.

Group 9 includes the following school districts:

- Echo Valley Community School District
- First Branch Unified School District
- Granville-Hancock Unified District
- Orange Southwest Unified Union School District
- Rochester-Stockbridge Unified District
- Sharon School District
- Stafford School District
- White River Unified District
- Lincoln School District

The study will look at a number of important considerations, including educational opportunities, financial implications, operational efficiencies, governance, staffing, transportation, geography, enrollment trends, and the long-term sustainability of the participating districts. The committee will also consider the advantages and disadvantages of remaining as separate districts compared with forming a unified union school district.



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Importantly, this process is intended to provide communities and school boards with information upon which to make future decisions. ACT 170 requires districts participating in an assigned merger committee to participate in good faith, but the study itself is not a vote to merge.

The Group 9 committee's work will ultimately contribute to a report on the results of the merger study process. ACT 170 also provides funding to help participating districts with the legal and other services necessary to conduct the study.

As the Orange Southwest representative, I look forward to participating in this process, asking questions, listening to the perspectives of our communities, and making sure that the interests and needs of Orange Southwest students and families are represented.

I encourage members of our community to stay informed and engaged as the study develops. This is an opportunity to learn more about how different district structures might affect our students, schools, employees, taxpayers, and communities.

The first meeting of the Group 9 ACT 170 Voluntary Merger Study Committee is scheduled for October 13, 2026 at the Randolph Union High School Media Center from 4:00-6:00 p.m. The meeting will include introductions of members, overview of committee roles, merger committee organization, good faith standard review, public input, 170 overview presentation, proportional representation determination, committee interest, and agenda planning for the next meeting.

The meeting is also accessible by google meet at: Video meeting link:

meet.google.com/xwk-oyoq-qox or dial (US)+1 513-438-0049 /PIN: 334 548 024#

Sincerely,

Anne Kaplan
Orange Southwest School District Representative
Group 9 ACT 170 Merger Study Committee