

Vermont Act 170

Act 170 of 2026 is a Vermont law focused on strengthening public education through regional collaboration, improved efficiency, and long-term planning.

The law asks school districts and communities to study ways they may be able to work together more effectively, including shared services, new governance structures, and possible district mergers. It also establishes Cooperative Educational Service Areas (CESAs) to support regional planning.

The goals of Act 170 include improving educational opportunities, expanding access to programs and student supports, reducing duplication of services, supporting long-term financial sustainability, and promoting greater equity across communities.

Act 170 does not automatically merge school districts or close schools. It sets up a process—called merger study committees—where regional groups explore voluntary merger possibilities. These potential mergers must be approved by member towns later in the process (March 2028).

WNESU districts (including Athens-Grafton, Bellows Falls Union High School, Rockingham, and Westminster) are currently assigned to Group Seven in the Southeast/VTLC region. Group Seven's initial meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 13, 2026 at Bellows Falls Union High School at 6 pm.

At WNESU, we are committed to keeping our communities up to date with the workings of our merger study group by sharing meeting agendas, minutes, and related resources. Additional information and opportunities for public participation will be provided as the process moves forward.