

# Collaborative Learning in Vermont: Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts

## Vermont Stories Discussion Guide

### Overview

As important as any of the innovations that make up personalized, proficiency-based learning is the fact that teachers are joining together in cross-district collaboratives to provide each other with support, resources, and conversation. This video was filmed at the 2017 Middle Grades Collaborative Conference, which brought together approximately 150 teachers and students from across the state.

### Definitions

**Act 77:** A policy passed by Vermont in 2013 to encourage flexible pathways to secondary school completion. It is intended (1) to encourage and support the creativity of school districts as they develop and expand high-quality educational experiences that are an integral part of secondary education in the evolving 21st Century classroom; (2) to promote opportunities for Vermont students to achieve postsecondary readiness through high-quality educational experiences that acknowledge individual goals, learning styles, and abilities; and (3) to increase the rates of secondary school completion and postsecondary continuation in Vermont.

**Action Research:** A form of research in which teachers pose a question of practice, develop hypothesis, and a research plan, and then test that hypothesis through work in their own classrooms or schools.

**Collaborative:** A dedicated group of educators intentionally gathered to address problems of practice in education. A collaborative can exist within a school, across a district, or across multiple districts.

**Collaborative Learning Groups (CLGs):** In Vermont, an enduring group of educators committed to working with each other to engage in guided conversations and protocols focused on improving teacher practice and student achievement.

**Middle Grades Collaborative:** A Vermont-based organization providing support for middle level teachers through the annual Middle Grades Institute. Since 1991, the Middle Grades Collaborative has offered an annual institute for middle-level educators.

### Discussion Questions

- What impressed you about the collaborative aspect of the work being done by these VT educators?
- Why is it important for them to leave their schools for a day and come together in collaboration?



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- How would you describe your school's environment? Strongly collaborative? Mildly collaborative?
- Does your school or district collaborate with any other schools or districts? Describe the impact this has on practice. What makes it work (or not work)?
- What challenges and opportunities do you envision in implementing collaboratives in your school or joining larger collaboratives across the state?

