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At Vergennes Union High School, advisors team with school counselors to support student growth throughout high school. This partnering permits students to reap equitably the benefits of constant educational support both practically and emotionally. I spend 100 minutes of time with students in morning meeting per week. Taija, Tyrell, Josh, Nicole, Korbin, Tyler, Jaymee, Jeb, Xavier and Shawna know that I will chastise them for lack of effort, support the development of self-advocacy, explain their successes and learn from their struggles. This week we will talk about course selection for next year, what budget cuts will mean, dual enrollment opportunities, how their games went and what to expect on their exams that start tomorrow and how all of it relates to their future. In brief, our advisory program aims to know students well over time so that we can help them grow into the types of engaged, literate citizens who will be prepared for college or career. These students will capably make informed choices and maximize their educational experience. We want these relationships to occur because they support student transformation.

This system's genesis took root locally. The staff and school knew this potential existed. The support of the Rowland Foundation made it possible. The Rowland Foundation's transformational partnerships predicate that in order to have growth that there must be a positive, effective relationship between the school administrative team and the teacher leader facilitating the change. This partnering structure keys the likely effectiveness of any growth on the part of the change model. When students walk into school buildings, this partnership must also be inherent between school personnel and students. From community to community this looks differently. School culture and climate must be considered when forging relationship-building between teachers and students in order to maximize the learning that takes place.

The dichotomous interplay between reducing per pupil expenditures and best practice often forces schools and districts to choose between effective relationships that further educational aspirations and what tax-payers will support as a percentage increase from last year's budget. Although grit and perseverance are desirable skills in students, mandates at the federal, state and local level require educational institutions to constantly adapt with fewer resources. Instant gratification, rapid change and political whims must not undermine efforts present at the secondary level. Schools increasingly must augment their effectiveness to intervene with a multitude of initiatives from online bullying to sub-par, sub-group test performance with either level funding or less-than inflation rate increases of growth. The economy cannot predicate how schools interact with students. Budget cuts under consideration at Vergennes threaten our school community - erasing innovative programming such as increased summer opportunities, performance based graduation requirements, many electives that spark creativity and the moral fiber of the teachers and staff who work to keep our school a place where students excel in a safe, welcoming environment.