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Because Dr. Wagner's keynote speech focused on the need to foster innovation in our schools, I wanted to share two short stories about how teachers and students at Rutland High School are devising their own solutions to challenges – small and large.

In 2012, the Freshman Interdisciplinary Team embarked on their very first Maple Sugaring Unit. During this unit, the freshman core teachers collaborated and rearranged the traditional schedule to allow for student learning.

Since the inaugural unit, teachers have made changes to further increase engagement, relevance, and interdisciplinary connections. One change is an enrichment opportunity for current sophomores that asks them to design more effective sugaring taps using their knowledge of sugaring and engineering. Local maple producers will judge these designs when they are complete. The best taps will be printed on a 3-D printer and tested during this year's Sugaring Unit.

The second story is about a student in the Global Studies Capstone Seminar. The goal of the class is to research and take action on a global issue. One student began by researching social media, but over time, she narrowed her focus to cyberbullying.

She knew the vision for the project and had the freedom to design her approach. She decided to take local action to address cyberbullying and started a club at RHS to effect change. Throughout the semester, she was given time to research, find where her passion lay, and revise her thinking. It was only through this time to reflect and feedback on her work that she was able to find her best solution.

I find both stories instructive as to how we can create the conditions in our classes and schools to foster not just creativity, but innovation, in our students. In both, teachers and students had a chance to collaborate with others – locally and globally. In both, teachers and students were supported as they pursued new ideas. And, in both, the teachers and students continually revised their thinking, learning, and action.

The Sugaring Unit and the Capstone Class are just parts of larger projects that exist because of the Rowland Foundation and the RHS administration.

The Rowland Foundation provided the financial support as well as the time for two RHS teachers to dream big and implement the Freshman Interdisciplinary Team and a Global Studies Concentration.

The RHS administration provided the framework for the Rowland Fellowships and all of our other school change to succeed, for they supplied teachers the three most important ingredients needed to innovate: time, support, and a clear, consistent vision.

This morning you heard all about the need for students to become innovators. So, the question is how can we get students, teachers, AND schools to innovate? I think that a large part of the answer to this question is that politicians and policy makers need to treat schools the way we want teachers to treat students.

Students need to learn the importance of the iterative process in creating, of persistence and collaboration with their classmates, and of thinking differently about global challenges. They can only do this with time and space to try new ideas, get feedback, and improve their ideas. If this is what students need, why wouldn't we afford the same things to teachers and schools? If we do not, how can we expect them to innovate, collaborate, and change?

Therefore, politicians and policy makers must provide schools and teachers with the resources and encouragement they need to collaborate, experiment, and innovate toward an articulated vision for educational change. When this happens, schools across the state will have students doing the authentic learning to solve our pressing challenges; they will be inventing more efficient sugaring taps and working to eliminate cyberbullying. You never know, they might also propose improvements to education funding or devise solutions to end opiate abuse.