



# Letter to Fellows

Democracy & School

January 2024

Dear Rowland Fellows,

I hope that your new year is off to a great start.

Several years ago, when schools and society felt much steadier, an administrator told a teacher I know, “Jeez, I’d hate to be a social studies teacher nowadays—you can’t say anything!” At the time, I remember thinking this person lacked the moral courage to be an educator, but given our current circumstances, I have to admit that he was a little bit right. It is really hard to share serious conversations in school right now.

When I was in high school, we debated extremely controversial topics in class: abortion, the death penalty, the nuclear arms freeze, and freedom of speech (including inappropriate t-shirts in school). Later, when I was a teacher at CVU, some of my colleagues taught a well attended course called *Holocaust & Human Behavior*. Looking back, I wonder what happened.

Most of our schools’ mission statements say something about our students becoming “contributing members of democratic society” and many schools have Citizenship as a transferable skill or as part of their Portrait of a Graduate, but how will this learning take place if educators withdraw from challenging topics because they’re deemed too political?

That’s why I’m so glad to announce that [Dr. Jill Lepore](#) will be the keynote speaker for the Annual Rowland Conference this year on the theme of *Democracy & School*, to take place at UVM's Davis Center on Thursday, Oct. 24, 2024.

Special thanks to Abby here, who recommended Dr. Lepore to me! You may know Jill Lepore's New Yorker essays, her podcast [The Last Archive](#), or [These Truths](#), her history of the United States which included the narratives of many people who are often written out of history, notably women and people of color. Most recently she has been leading the [Amend project](#) which will form the basis of her next book, due out in 2025.

In a time of great polarization and with a historic presidential election ahead, I’m glad that we will be engaging our students and teachers in thoughtful conversations about our democracy.

Take care and see you soon,

Mike

P.S. Thank you for sending me your news, celebrations, photos, and courtesy postings!

## Rowland Foundation Updates



The 13th Annual Rowland Conference will take place on Thursday, October 24, 2024 on the theme of *Democracy & School* with keynote speaker Jill Lepore.

### **Rowland Fellowship Applications**

Thanks for spreading the word about Rowland Fellowships! We will be conducting interviews with candidates starting this weekend, and I'm looking forward to meeting with these innovative Vermont teachers. Our application numbers still haven't recovered to pre-pandemic levels, so please recruit promising candidates!

### **Rowland Women's Leadership Retreat**



Congratulations and sincere thanks to Angela Bauer (RF15), Ellen Berrings (RF13), and Abbie Bowker (RF17)! They are the Planning Team for the 2024 Rowland Women's Leadership Retreat, seen here on a call with Mike. They will be getting together soon for initial planning and then reserve a retreat venue for the spring. Stay tuned for more details in the months ahead!



The 2023 Cohort of Rowland Fellows met in Middlebury recently to share ideas and spend time together, where they were joined by some friends and colleagues. Seen here (left to right) Trustee Caitlin Steele (RF09), Carrie Gilman (RF23), Adam Murray (RF23), Lindsay McQueen (RF23), Edmunds MS Steering Committee Member Jordan Funke, Chris Sheehan (RF23), Senior Rowland Associate Jean Berthiaume (RF09) & Elizabeth Placencia (RF23).

## Gratitude



During the holidays, Gretchen Muller (RF17) also celebrated her birthday with loved ones.

## Celebrations



Congratulations to Kathy Cadwell (RF16) whose article *Student-Driven Learning in Vermont* was recently featured in [The American School Board Journal](#). Kathy continues to support teachers and students learning the Harwood Harkness method around Vermont.

## Courtesy Postings

Camels Hump Middle School is looking for a school guidance counselor for the remainder of the school year. If you know of anyone that might be interested, please contact Gretchen Muller ([gretchen.muller@mmuusd.org](mailto:gretchen.muller@mmuusd.org))



Luke Foley (RF19) is leading an upcoming professional development course to Nepal over February break through the graduate course *Investigating Climate Change from the Roof of the World, a Field-Based Climate Experience in Nepal*. Trek through the highlands of Helambu and the Langtang Valley to witness first-hand the impacts of climate change at the earth's third pole! Course Dates: Feb. 23 - Mar 5, 2024 Cost: \$4600 + \$145/credit  
[Register here!](#)

Do you identify as a woman? Are you looking for a mid-year retreat? Tara Cariano (RF18) is co-leading TWO beautiful upcoming retreats for individuals who identify as a woman: **Hygge Weekend Hideaway: A Soul Sisters Retreat**, January 12th-14th in the woods of New Hampshire and **Disconnect to Reconnect : a Goddess Women's Rejuvenation Retreat** February 24th-March 1st in Ocotal, Guanacaste, Costa Rica. Invest in YOU for your February break! More information can be found [here](#) or reach out to Tara directly for more information at [taracariano@gmail.com](mailto:taracariano@gmail.com)

### **Building Authentic Performance Assessments for Learning**

**Audience: Curriculum Directors, Principals, and Grades 9 – 12 Educators**

The Agency of Education in collaboration with Great Schools Partnership is seeking 9th through 12th grade teachers interested in working with a cohort of educators to develop, pilot, and refine [content-specific performance assessments](#). In January 2024, cohorts will form to develop performance assessments that align with the Priority Performance Indicators outlined in the [Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirement Hierarchies](#). Educators will work within their preferred content area to develop performance assessments, facilitator guidelines, and supporting rubrics. If you are interested in developing assessments that will be made available statewide, please complete this [brief form](#) providing an overview of your preferences and

experiences. **Contacts:** Pat Fitzsimmons at [pat.fitzsimmons@vermont.gov](mailto:pat.fitzsimmons@vermont.gov) and Erica Wallstrom at [ewallstrom@greatschoolspartnership.org](mailto:ewallstrom@greatschoolspartnership.org)



Join colleagues from around the state at the beautiful Woodstock Inn for the **VPA 2024 Winter Symposium**, [Learn More & Register Here](#). Discounted Room Reservations now open to book.



The annual conference **School Reform In Action (SRIA)** will take place March 25-26, 2024 in Providence, Rhode Island with keynote speaker Dr. Jamila Dugan. The deadline for workshop proposals is November 15th. [Click here](#) for more information.



The Georgia Teachers of Tomorrow Program (TOT) is a program funded by the US Embassy in Tbilisi, Georgia, implemented by Waitsfield-based PH International ([www.ph-int.org](http://www.ph-int.org)), an organization co-founded by Kathy Cadwell (RF16). A group of 9 Georgia university professors and deans will travel to the US for two weeks of curriculum and educational leadership training. Their time in Vermont will run from March 23-29, 2024. The goals of the program are to:

- Enhance the professional capacity of teacher educators in Georgia and provide them with practical strategies to accommodate change in their teaching practices and in the content of their programs.
- Improve the efficacy of pre-service practicum training at three leading Georgian universities to benefit future teachers and partner schools.
- Increase collaboration and networking among teacher educators to develop joint efforts and collectively solve problems.

If you would like to collaborate with this program, or have any questions about it, please contact Drew Diemar at [Drew.Diemar@ph-int.org](mailto:Drew.Diemar@ph-int.org) or (802)338-5403.