



The
ROWLAND
Foundation

Investing in
Vermont's Teachers

Letter to Fellows

The Power of Teachers

September 2024

Dear Rowland Fellows,

I hope your school year is off to a good start.

Have you noticed that our political leaders are talking about teachers a lot these days? To be clear, I don't just mean [debates about education policy](#), but talking about teachers as real-life people who play a key role in our democracy.

"Never underestimate a public school teacher. Never," Governor Tim Walz recently said at the Democratic National Convention (DNC). He was talking about himself, of course, but it's still inspiring to think that a social studies teacher might be our next Vice President! It was also pretty cool when, the night before, the Vermont DNC delegation yelled out, over the strains of a Noah Kahan tune, "Vermont knows the value of public education! We even have a teacher as our congresswoman," to whoops for Becca Balint.

So imagine my excitement when I heard our **Rowland Conference Keynote Jill Lepore** say the following recently on [John Stewart's podcast](#),

...the place where people still gather together, talk about ideas, disagree with one another, is actually the K-12 classroom. And if Walz could usher in an era of young people committed to public school teaching—which is the most important job in this country or any other—this would really change how people are trained up in the art of being a democratic citizen.

I was like, *is Dr. Lepore thinking about her upcoming Rowland Conference appearance here?* After all, it's exactly what this year's conference is all about. (By the way, [this is worth watching](#), if only for John Stewart's facial expression and reaction to Jill Lepore's comments.)

It makes me hopeful to hear powerful people talk about the power of teachers lately, especially when they seem to be saying that the future of our country depends on teachers. Michelle Obama, whose DNC speech was the best of the convention, talked about teachers when she described how the American Dream passes from one generation to the next, saying,

So, my mother volunteered at the local school. She always looked out for the other kids on the block. She was glad to do the thankless, unglamorous work that for generations has strengthened the fabric of this nation. The belief that if you do unto others, if you love thy neighbor, if you work and scrape and sacrifice, it will pay off. If not for you, then maybe for your children or your grandchildren. You see, those values have been passed on through family farms and factory towns, through tree-lined streets and crowded tenements, through prayer groups and National Guard units and social-studies classrooms. Those were the values my mother poured into me until her very last breath.

This incredibly moving passage reminds us of how much our society depends on the hard work of teachers in schools, and that it's oftentimes our teachers—dedicated people doing hard work in classrooms with children—who have the power to transmit our values to the next generation, both by word and example.

Bernie said recently that “we need to strengthen public education” and “raise teachers salaries”. Trump has said that he will abolish the U.S. Department of Education. Trump also wants to make it easier to fire teachers and radically expand school vouchers and privatization under a new “Parents Bill of Rights,” because “We can't have pink-haired communists teaching our kids,” as he explained.

No matter your political beliefs, the fact that nearly all of our national leaders are talking about teachers is significant. In fact, the way people are talking about teachers this election season points to something that many of us have known all along: teachers are powerful. In a tricky moment when teachers don't especially *feel* powerful, it's worth taking a beat to notice that very powerful leaders are fighting tooth and nail over our schools and teachers. Let's face it—if teachers weren't so crucially important to our country, they wouldn't be a topic of debate.

When I think of the power teachers *think* they have most days, as opposed to the power they *actually* have in their work with young people, it reminds me of that famous Alice Walker quote, "The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any."

I'm awfully tired of this neverending election season, but I'm glad to see teachers at the heart of the big debates about our country's future. We all know that teaching is a tough job that rarely gets the respect it deserves, so I'm happy to notice this recent shift in the discourse. Honestly, it's about time teachers were recognized as important people doing critical work everyday—the hard work of showing up for young people and preparing the next generation to be contributing members of a democratic society.

Take care and see you soon,

Mike

P.S. The recent coverage of [cell phone bans in Vermont](#) and [other states](#) has reminded me of the importance of [Digital Wellness](#). Thank you, Carrie, Lissa, Sarah & Anne for your important Rowland Encore Grant Team work on this topic!

P.P.S. Thanks to everyone for sending their personal, professional & family news! It's important to celebrate these big life changes, and it's helpful to use our network to share professional learning and other opportunities.

Rowland Foundation Updates

REGISTRATION OPEN!

The 13th Annual Rowland Conference

Democracy & School



[Register here](#) for the 13th Annual Rowland Conference on Thursday, October 17, 2024. The theme is *Democracy & School: Cultivating the Habits of a Democratic Culture* with keynote speaker Jill Lepore. Dr. Lepore writes for *The New Yorker* and teaches at Harvard University. She is the author of [These Truths](#), a one-volume history of the United States that was a *New York Times* bestseller.

If your school pre-registered via **earlybird** last spring, your school contact will receive a notice that it's time to enter your attendees, preferred workshops, dietary restrictions, and accommodations into the UVM registration portal.

In addition to this tremendous keynote, we also have a record number of Rowland Fellows presenting at this year's conference, including: **Katherine Cadwell (RF16)**, **Jess DeCarolis (RF09)**, **Bryan Dickinson (RF22)**, **Becky Ebel (RF22)**, **Carrie Gilman (RF23)**, **Emily Gilmore (RF17)**, **Gabe Hamilton (RF15)**, **Andrew Jones (RF15)**, **Michael Martin (RF09)**, **Jeanie Phillips (RF14)**, **Chris Sheehan (RF23)**, and **Michael Ruppel (RF17)**. We are also pleased to announce that **Rowland DEW Scholar Infinite Culcleasure** will also be leading a workshop. Check out the [conference agenda and workshop descriptions](#) here.



This year's conference will close with a mini-dance party led by Guagua! If you've never heard their *psychotropical jazz* before, or known what a Cuban tres sounds like, check out this track from the band called [En Siete](#).

All Fellows Retreat & Social

New Format, New Venue, New Merch



RF Tote – Natural



RF Tote – Black



RF Big Tote – Multi

[Register here for the All Fellows Retreat](#) on Wednesday, October 16th (1:00–4:00pm) at 47 Maple St., Burlington in the Kestrel Gallery Space. In the [registration form](#), attendees can choose from a variety of colors and sizes and take home a custom Rowland Foundation tote, tee, *and* hoodie when they RSVP. At this year's retreat, **Mike McRaith (RF13)** will lead a discussion of Vermont's new [Educational Quality Standards](#) with a focus on instructional strategies, which include for the first time: restorative practices, universal design, and culturally responsive teaching. Complimentary sparkling water, coffee, cookies & macaroons will be served at the All Fellows Retreat.



The **All Fellows Social** (4:00–6:00 pm) will follow immediately afterwards in the same gallery space with live piano jazz performed by Randall Pierce. The only agenda item is to share some laughs and good stories with fellow Fellows. Complimentary beer, wine, charcuterie & hors d'oeuvres will be served for the All Fellows Social.

All Rowland Fellows are warmly invited to join both of these annual gatherings, with the understanding that it's okay to just attend one—and that it's okay to arrive late or leave early if need be. [But please do RSVP!](#)

Fellowship Info Sessions

2025 Rowland Fellowship Applications

Do you have a teaching colleague who might be interested in becoming a Rowland Fellow? The next Fellowship Info Session **with Executive Director Mike Martin** will be on Sept. 19 at 4:00 pm. To attend this online meeting, interested teachers should [sign up here so they get the meeting invite](#).

Also, do you have any Fellowship-curious colleagues attending the Annual Conference? If so, tell them to go to [The Rowland Fellowship: A Shared Vision for Your School's Culture & Climate](#), a special workshop offered by **Senior Associate Jeanie Phillips** at this year's Rowland Conference. And later, they can join Mike Martin for the last Fellowship Info Session

of the year, to take place immediately following the conference in the Boulder Room at 4:00 pm.

Leadership Opportunities for Veteran Fellows

Rowland Women's Leadership Retreat

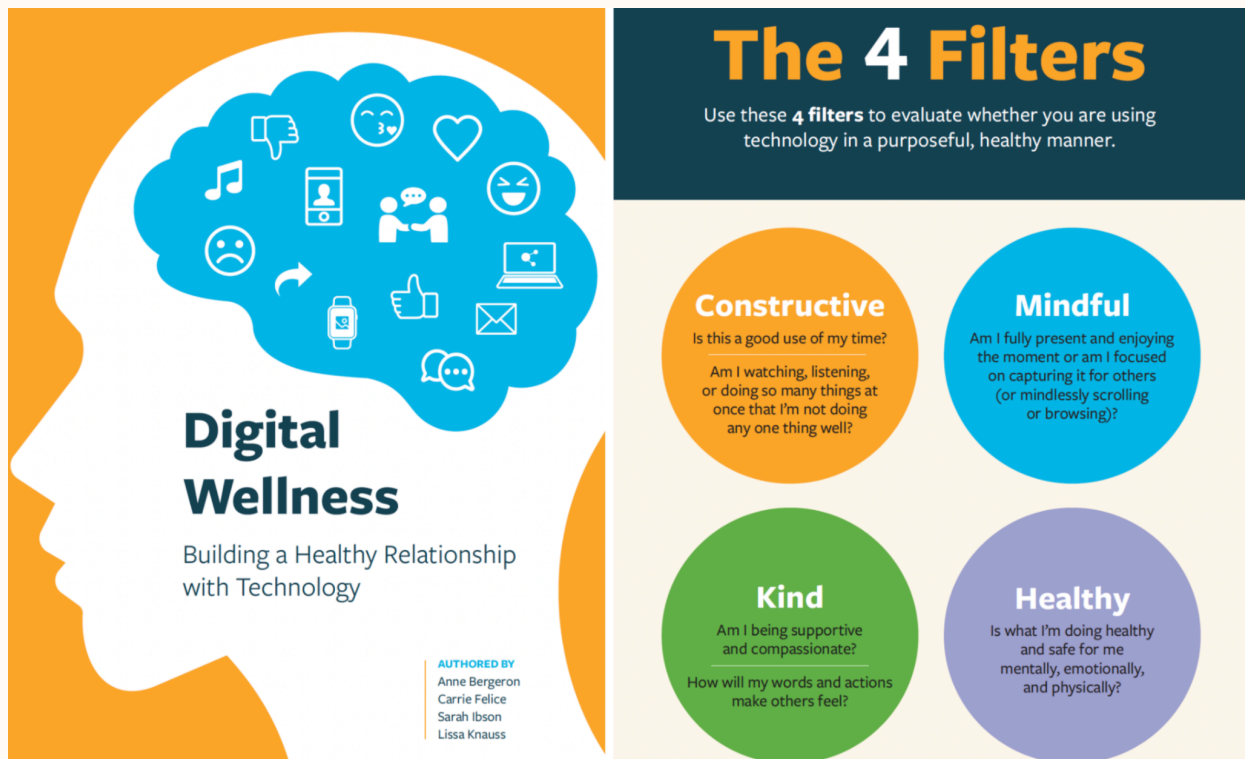


The deadline to [submit your Planning Team proposal](#) for the next **Rowland Women's Leadership Retreat (RWLR)** is **November 15th**. RWLR Planning Teams are made up of three veteran Rowland Fellows who are women. Each receives a \$1,500 stipend for their work to plan and host this annual event. Feel free to contact Mike Martin or any of our past Planning Team Members to find out more!

RWLR24: Angela Bauer (RF15), Ellen Berrings (RF13) & Abbie Bowker (RF17)

RWLR23: Tara Cariano (RF18), Marsha Cassel (RF14) & Gretchen Muller (RF17)

Rowland Encore Grant



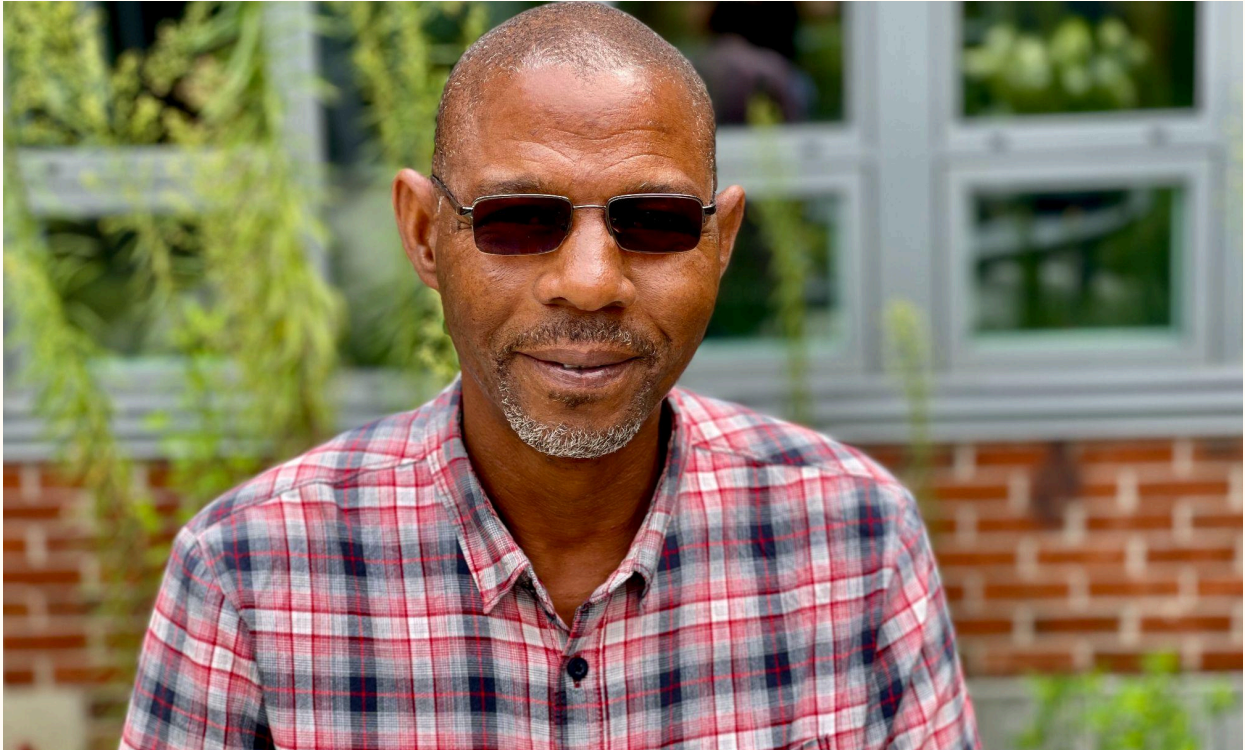
The application window for **Rowland Encore Grants (REG)** is **November 1st – December 31st** each year. Check out the guidelines, develop a proposal with some Rowland colleagues, and [submit your application](#)! REG Teams are usually made up of four veteran Rowland Fellows, often from different school districts, who come together to do work with a regional or statewide impact. Each team member receives a \$3,000 stipend upon completion of their final product (e.g., white paper, curriculum framework, action research summary, researched resource guide, short film, limited series podcast, etc.). REG Teams typically do the bulk of their work together during a weeklong retreat (e.g., Cape Cod, Maine). [Digital Wellness: Building a Healthy Relationship with Technology](#) is a great example of a final work product from the REG22 Team. Feel free to contact Mike Martin or any of our past REG Team Members to find out more!

REG23: Jess DeCarolus (RF09), Gabe Hamilton (RF15), Andrew Jones (RF15) & Michael Ruppel (RF17)

REG22: Anne Bergeron (RF11), Carrie Felice (RF13), Sarah Ibson (RF13) & Lissa Knauss (RF18)

Please note: All grant information and applications are available year-round in the [Fellows Login section](#) of our website. You can also contact abby@therowlandfoundation.org with any questions.

Diversifying the Educator Workforce



Executive Director Mike Martin was grateful to meet with **Mohamed Diop** last month to discuss multilingual learners and strategies for diversifying the educator workforce. Mohamed currently serves on the Vermont State Board of Education and works as Program Director for Multilingual Learner Programs in Winooski School District. In Mauritania where he grew up, he worked as a school principal and French instructor for the U.S. Embassy. He has also worked for the Washington Post and United Nations as an interpreter and translator.

Supporting New Teachers

Middlebury New Teacher Welcome Bag



As part of her fellowship work to develop a strong new teacher mentor program, **Elizabeth Placencia (RF23)** has been overwhelmed by the positive response from new teachers at Middlebury Union Middle School. Each new teacher found this warm message and gift bag (above) with products donated from local businesses.

Professional Learning at Shelburne Farms Collaborative Practices for Equity Course



The **2024 Rowland Fellows Cohort** enjoyed three days together at beautiful Shelburne Farms for the graduate course *Collaborative Practices for Equity* with instructors Jeanie Phillips & Aimee Arandia Østensen. Seen here (left to right) Melissa Bushey, Brad Miller, Melissa Wyman, Beverly McCarthy, Sarah Marcus, Bill Prue, and Sandy Celauro.

Jill Lepore in Vermont!

VT Digger Event in Manchester



Rowland Foundation Board Chair Heidi Lynn, Executive Director Mike Martin (RF09), and Burr & Burton Academy Teacher Jillian Joyce (RF20) recently attended *Democracy, News*

& History: Unprecedented Times with Jill Lepore, a talk at the Manchester Community Library sponsored by VTDigger. Seen here (left to right) Jill Lepore, Heidi Lynn, Jillian Joyce & Mike Martin.

Celebrations

New Assistant Principal



Congratulations to Tim O'Leary (RF20)! Tim is now serving as assistant principal at Charlotte Central School. Here's an [article about Tim](#) in the press.

Gratitude



Bill Prue (RF24) is grateful for his newest grandson Finley Thomas Prue, son of Chandler and Angela Prue, born on August 23, 2024. Bill shares that Finley was a healthy 7lb 2oz when he was born and has already gained some weight.



Lori Lisai (RF15) is grateful for a recent trip to Costa Rica with her friends and collaborators Johanneke & Maggie (*above*). They will be hosting a retreat together in March 2025 called Wild Women by Design for midlife women.



Gretchen Muller (RF17) and her family are grateful for an incredible trip to Italy together this summer, seen here in Sienna.



Mike Martin (RF09) is grateful for his friendship with Rajnii Eddins, a generous and talented poet, actor, educator & hip hop recording artist.

Courtesy Posts



Anja Pfeffer (RF21) is teaching the well-loved graduate course [Dare to Be Me: Teaching and Learning with the Heart, Body & Mind](#) again this fall at Vermont State University. You can [register here](#).



Upper Valley
Educators Institute

Earn a Stipend, Collaborate, and Explore Equity-Centered Deeper Learning Within Schools Throughout Vermont and New Hampshire

The [Upper Valley Educators Institute](#) (UVEI) is seeking educators to participate in a year-long study of EQUITY-CENTERED DEEPER LEARNING IN SCHOOLS THROUGHOUT VERMONT AND NEW HAMPSHIRE starting this fall.

RECEIVE A STIPEND of \$500 - \$2000 depending on your role in the work, which includes [researchers](#) as well as [site-leaders](#) who help coordinate work at and across school sites.
Benefits:

- Join a team of educators working on identifying and addressing problems of practice related to equity-centered deeper learning in schools throughout our area.
- Collaborate with UVEI faculty, Barnes Fellows, and other field-based educators.
- Design new approaches and tools related to equity-centered deeper learning.
- Make an impact in your school and the field.
- Contribute to an original study.

Learn more about the Barnes Initiative for Collaborative Learning [here](#) or by contacting Adam Norwood, Ed.D., Coordinator of the Barnes Initiative for Collaborative Learning & Program Faculty Upper Valley Educators Institute: anorwood@uvei.org