



The
ROWLAND
Foundation

Investing in
Vermont's Teachers

Letter to Fellows

The New Teacher Fund

November 2024

Dear Rowland Fellows,

I hope this letter finds you well. Special thanks to all of you who found the time to participate in the All Fellows Retreat & Social and/or the Annual Rowland Conference this year.

As you already know, [Vermont's teacher shortage](#) is a serious challenge for our state. According to the Agency of Education and Vermont Regional Education Collaborative (VREC), only Alaska has a higher percentage of unfilled teaching positions in the nation. Looking ahead, the Vermont State Workforce Development Board reported the following earlier this year:

"The occupation with the most 10-year projected openings that also meets the aforementioned definition is K-12 teachers with 7,850 expected openings and median annual wages of about \$61,000." ([Draft Combined Plan for the Workforce Education and Opportunity Act of 2014 for the period July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2028](#))

Vermont's teacher shortage negatively impacts the work of the Rowland Foundation in the following ways:

- Superintendents and principals are less likely to support Rowland Fellowship applications because they fear “losing a teacher” from the classroom.
- The shortage of teacher substitutes makes it harder for Principals and Rowland Fellows to bring teams to the Annual Rowland Conference, the Shared Leadership Retreat, and other important gatherings.
- Rowland Fellows report that it is harder to convene their Collaborative Work Groups (formerly “Steering Committees”) because of a lack of available substitute teachers.

In light of these challenges, I am pleased to announce that the Rowland Foundation has established **The New Teacher Fund**, a donor advised fund with the [Vermont Community Foundation](#) to support the recruitment and retention of Vermont teachers. The New Teacher Fund will help mitigate Vermont’s teacher shortage, which is an impediment to our work, and will also allow the Rowland Foundation to meet the required distribution rule for private foundations and avoid related tax penalties.

Working with the Vermont Community Foundation and regional partners, we have awarded two grants so far from The New Teacher Fund: *A Vision for Growing and Sustaining a High-Quality Educator Workforce in Vermont* ([Vermont Rural Education Collaborative](#)) and *Strengthening Supports for New Teachers and Diversifying the Educator Workforce in Vermont* ([Great Schools Partnership](#)). Each of these major initiatives includes specific strategies to grow and support aspiring educators in our state.

On a personal note, as I have had the privilege to work with our [Rowland DEW Scholars](#) in recent years, it has been humbling to learn more about the challenges that aspiring educators currently face in our state, including but not limited to: tuition costs; PRAXIS exams; the lack of available information about licensure pathways; and the variability of Vermont schools’ grading, assessment, and curriculum practices across our “local control” state education system.

We face some serious challenges in growing and supporting Vermont educators, which is why I am so proud of the generous support the Rowland Foundation is providing. By helping to strengthen the Vermont educator workforce, The New Teacher Fund will help our school communities around the state, and also advance our mission to *invest in Vermont teachers to positively change the culture and climate of schools*.

Take care and see you soon,

Mike

P.S. If you see “message clipped” at the bottom of this newsletter, please click through! Depending on how many photos we have, Gmail will sometimes truncate this newsletter.

P.P.S. Thanks, as always, for sharing your news, celebrations, courtesy posts, and gratitude with our Rowland Foundation network.

Rowland Foundation Updates

The 13th Annual Rowland Conference

Democracy & School



Sincere thanks to everyone who helped make this year’s conference such a success. Over 460 people attended our 13th Annual Rowland Conference, *Democracy & School: Cultivating the Habits of a Democratic Culture*, including 52 Rowland Fellows, 6 DEW Scholars, and 2 Trustees. Over 30 schools sent teams to the conference this year, including 55 students, 18 principals, and 11 superintendents. Special thanks to Executive Assistant Abby Paige for her logistical prowess and Senior Associate Lori Lisai (RF15) for her photography skills! Sincere thanks to Senior Associate Jeanie Phillips (RF14) for offering our first-ever workshop for prospective Rowland Fellows, and to Luis Bango (RF17), Janis Boulbol (RF21), Tara Cariano (RF18), Sandra Mings-Lamar (RF16) & Kat Robbins (RF21) who helped run the registration table with grace, warmth, and efficiency.



You can see some [photos from the day here](#) and we'll be posting some conference resources to our website soon too.



And check out this [related article from VT Digger!](#)

All Fellows Retreat & Social

The New Vermont Educational Quality Standards



Special thanks to **Mike McRaith (RF13)** for leading a discussion of Vermont's new [Educational Quality Standards \(EQS\)](#) at this year's [All Fellows Retreat](#). The legislative mandate of [Act 1 of 2019](#) led to our state's educational quality standards being updated for the first time since 2013. The new standards' [instructional strategies](#) include for the first time aspects of restorative practices, universal design, and culturally responsive teaching. For more information, check out [Mike's EQS Implementation slideshow here](#). You can see more [photos of the All Fellows Retreat here](#).

Now Accepting Fellowship Applications!

Pro Tips for Applicants

The Rowland Foundation seeks candidates who demonstrate:

- a capacity for shared leadership and innovation
- a commitment to supporting meaningful and lasting change in their school
- a willingness to take risks and adapt to emerging challenges
- the ability to work collaboratively and develop key partnerships with others
- a sincere commitment to their school, their chosen discipline and their students
- a deep curiosity and ongoing enthusiasm for professional learning
- the strong desire to improve the culture and climate of their respective schools.

The Rowland Foundation seeks proposals which:

- lead to systemic change to improve their school's culture and climate
- are innovative and schoolwide (i.e., benefit many students)
- are sustainable after the Rowland Foundation completes its funding
- are exportable to other schools. The Rowland Foundation is keenly interested in affecting change throughout Vermont.
- have the complete support of the principal or head of school. This will be a key element of the interview process by the Executive Director prior to selection.

Please tell any interested colleagues that we're **now accepting 2025 Rowland Fellowship applications!** We're trying out a new *application window* this year of November 1st – December 31st to encourage candidates to avoid the holiday crunch. As you know, the Rowland Foundation puts out an open call for proposals each year and doesn't promote any given framework or program. That said, if you have a colleague who is looking for ideas about how to improve the culture & climate of their school, there are plenty of ambitious ideas put forth in the new [EQS Instructional Strategies](#), any of which could lead to powerful cultural shifts for your school.

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
Get your team together!



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

Rowland DEW Scholars



Congratulations to Rowland DEW Scholars Tessie Sakai & Lijuan Merkel! Both recently obtained educator licensure and accepted teaching positions in Vermont schools. Tessie (*above left*) is working at Hunt Middle School in Burlington as a special educator. Lijuan (*above right*) is teaching Chinese at Grand Isle School. Thank you both for your hard work with students!

Rowland Short Films

Filming Around the State



Production is underway for Rowland Short Films! This series of short videos will include interviews and footage from Rowland schools across the state. The purpose of the series is to introduce the Rowland Approach to the public at large through the lens of specific themes, for example: shared leadership, student voice, collaborative practices, and community-based learning.

Celebrations



Congratulations to Tim O’Leary (RF20) & Charlie MacFadyen (RF20)! Their Rowland Fellowship work to close the gender gap in computer science continues to grow in their school district. It’s great to see young coders at work and gratitude for the Rowland Foundation in the [Hinesburg Elementary School](#) and [Charlotte Central School](#) newsletters.



Congratulations to Devon Karpak (RF22) on his Rowland Fellowship work to develop Career Preparation Pathways (CPP) at Otter Valley Union Middle & High School. At this meeting with the CPP cohort and Casella Waste Management Talent Acquisition Partner Michelle Rawls, students asked questions about her role at the company and about the over 180 positions that the company currently offers—with over 300 currently open positions. Devon is thankful for Otter Valley’s community partners. Students found this to be a very enlightening experience as they continue charting a course to their futures.



Congratulations to Sam Bromley (RF22) and his students at Montpelier High School, seen here with U.S. Senator Peter Welch. Sam's Rowland Fellowship work with food systems, building on Tom Sabo's (RF11) earlier fellowship work, is described in greater depth in this nice feature from last month: [*Farm to School Education in Montpelier is Building Resilience.*](#) Educators interested in community-based or service learning should also check out last June's Montpelier feature: [*Montpelier's Soulful Soup: Uniting the School Community Through Food.*](#)

Gratitude



Sandy Celauro (RF24) is grateful for her opportunity to participate this July in an Advanced Learning Seminar: Journey Through Poland with Echoes & Reflections and Yad Vashem. This experience provides educators with the tools, resources and opportunities to provide effective instruction of the Holocaust while making connections to resonating current themes. This learning experience included visits to Warsaw, Lodz, Krakow, Auschwitz–Birkenau, and Treblinka. The photo above is of Janusz Korczak’s memorial in Warsaw’s Jewish cemetery. Korczak was a Polish educator, pediatrician, and children’s rights advocate. When the children under his care were deported from the Warsaw Ghetto, he traveled with them to Treblinka where he was murdered.



Devon Karpak (RF22) recently celebrated on his first-year wedding anniversary with Kaitlyn at the Lilac Inn in Brandon.

