



The
ROWLAND
Foundation

Investing in
Vermont's Teachers

Letter to Fellows

Take Care

December 2024

Dear Rowland Fellows,

I hope this letter finds you well as we head into the bustling, sometimes hectic, holiday season.

We are sitting with a lot of questions since the recent election. I don't mean the Democratic party's self-doubt and finger-pointing, but rather big questions like: *When will the United States have its first woman president? What is the future of reproductive rights for women if there are no checks and balances across the branches of our government? What are the prospects for climate justice in the next decade? Are we still a democracy or becoming an oligarchy? What will happen to school if the U.S. Department of Education is abolished? What is the future of public education in our country?*

It's all a bit overwhelming.

So, in this time of great uncertainty, I've been thinking lately about how to manage my own feelings of fear, dread, and helplessness. I've also been thinking about how much we're all juggling nowadays with work, family, and the noisy political chaos that surrounds us. And when I think of teachers, who are still working so hard to take care of their students, it's sort of amazing that they don't just give up or check out, just put their heads down and teach the textbook like robots.



All this reminds me of a school motto that Principal Val Gardner had when I taught at CVU, and that my friend Adam Bunting brought to Montpelier he was principal there:

Take care of yourself.

Take care of each other.

Take care of this place.

Super simple, right? But there's also a sort of order of operations in this motto, similar to the famous oxygen mask allegory for teachers, the one that says, in order to be able to take care of others, you first need to take care of yourself. So, friends, please take good care of yourselves this holiday season. Maybe turn off the notifications on your phone, or find a quiet spot, or blast the music for a 30-second dance party, or go outside and stand in awe of nature, or try to slow down when talking with loved ones, or just seek out any wholesome experience at all that will make you sweat, laugh, cry, or breathe deeply. *Take care of yourself.*

Civility and civics are not the same thing, but they do connect. It's plain to see how politicians benefit from our polarization and anger towards our fellow citizens. And it's clear to us now how social media's ubiquitous scolding and trolling have frayed the fabric of our democracy. Sometimes it feels like we've forgotten how to even live in community with each other. So now is probably a good time to reconnect with an ethic of care. ["Defend the vulnerable and speak the truth,"](#) conservative columnist David French wrote last month. Similarly, Great Schools Partnership (GSP) Executive Director Paulina Murton issued a [post-election statement](#) that called on educators to remain steadfast in their defense of equitable, inclusive educational practices. (GSP also provided educators [resources for how to talk about the election with students.](#)) Along the same lines, President Obama gave a speech this week on the [power of pluralism](#), which he said, "is not about abandoning your

principles when things get tough.” All that to say that living in democracy is hard work, and it’s probably going to get harder. *Take care of each other.*

You probably know about the importance of [student stewardship in Japanese schools](#), which connects to their value of *souji*, a concept that emphasizes cleanliness and tidiness. However, this is more than just maintaining a nice school campus. This practice also reinforces the idea that we respect ourselves and each other when we work together to tend to our school, and by extension, our neighborhood and countryside. I think this makes sense to us Vermonters who don’t like to litter and have a strong sense of place. This might seem like a small gesture, but I think this is a deep practice that provides a sense of connection...which can lead to happiness. *Take care of this place.*

If you’ve read this far, you might be a little disappointed. After all, the mantra of *Take care of yourself, Take care of each other, Take care of this place*, might seem small in the face of the challenges that await us in the months and years to come. But when I think about the many things behind my control, and the few things that I can influence or change—in other words my *locus of control*—this simple saying holds a lot of power for me.

As teachers working in schools, there are a multitude of things beyond our control. However, we still hold more power than we think — to help our students and families, to contribute to our communities, and to model our values by the way we show up for each other. This is what I’m going to be hanging onto as we head into the holidays and a new year.

And also that Alice Walker quote, “The most common way people give up their power is by thinking they don’t have any.”

Take care and see you soon,

Mike

P.S. Jill Lepore’s recent New Yorker article [“The Artificial State”](#) is excellent reading for anyone interested in how technology and democracy intersect in this moment.

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

Rowland Foundation Updates

Holiday Party

Open House at the Rowland Foundation Office



Please feel free to join us for an informal holiday party next Friday! Abby & Mike will host an open house on **Friday, December 13th (4:00 – 7:00)** at the Rowland Foundation office at 47 Maple Street, Suite #200, in Burlington. Snacks, adult beverages, and convivial chats with Rowland Fellows are what this event is all about. It's also an excellent opportunity to pick up a complimentary Rowland Foundation t-shirt, hoodie, or tote bag before the holidays! Feel free to swing by with a friend or family member to take a break from your holiday shopping.

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.

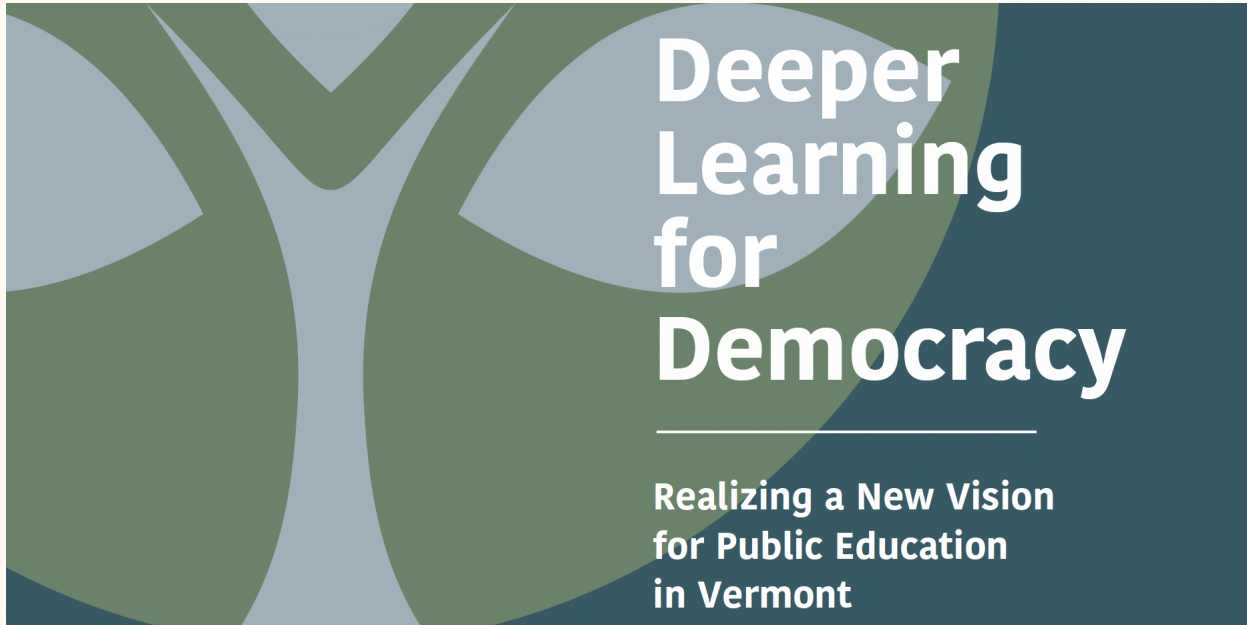
A Rowland Fellowship is an amazing professional growth opportunity for your teachers, and also increases capacity for positive change in your school. From Principal Chris Young, "Supporting teachers to become Rowland Fellows has been an investment in North Country's collaborative culture and capacity to distribute leadership among teachers, students, and community members. Our Rowland Fellows' efforts to build a collaborative work group has resulted in a road map for others to follow to gain insight and invaluable perspective on what works best for our students and school community."

[Please share this flyer](#) and encourage the Vermont teachers you know to apply.

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 in your school.

Rowland Encore Grant

Deeper Learning White Paper



Congratulations to our 2023 Rowland Encore Grant Team! Jess DeCarolis (RF09), Gabe Hamilton (RF15), Andrew Jones (RF15) & Michael Ruppel (RF17) have just published [Deeper Learning for Democracy: Realizing a New Vision for Public Education in Vermont](#). At a time when so many educators suffer from “initiative fatigue” these Rowland Fellow authors make helpful connections between different education policies to strengthen the coherence of our school change work. Definitely check out this white paper, if you’re interested in improving how we teach transferable skills, cultivate inquiry-driven learning, foster community, or prepare students for citizenship & careers in the Age of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

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](#) now! 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](#) and [Deeper Learning for Democracy: Realizing a New Vision for Public Education in Vermont](#) are great examples of a final work product from Rowland Encore Grant Teams. Feel free to contact Mike Martin or any of our past REG Team Members to find out more! **REG23: Jess DeCarolis (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.

Rowland Women's Leadership Retreat 2025

Congratulations Planning Team



Congratulations to Angela Bauer (RF15) and Samantha Mundt (RF21) who will serve as the planning team for the 2025 Rowland Women's Retreat! Stay tuned for details to come early next year.

The 13th Annual Rowland Conference

Exit Survey & PD Certificate



If you attended the Rowland Conference this year, please be sure to [give us your feedback on the exit survey!](#) Even if you presented, helped with registration, and/or didn't attend the full day, we'd love to hear about your conference experience this year. Also, a **certificate of completion for PD hours** is automatically emailed to everyone who completes the survey.

Diversifying the Educator Workforce

Rowland DEW Scholars



Congratulations to DEW Scholar Andrew Becker who is continuing to support students through his role as Library Media Technician at South Burlington High School, even as he pursues teacher licensure through the Teacher Apprentice Program (TAP) at Champlain College.

2023 Rowland Fellows

Cohort Meeting at Middlebury Union Middle School



The 2023 Cohort of Rowland Fellows met in Middlebury to share school change strategies and milestones in their second year of Fellowship work. They are seen here working together here on a collaboration-driven design challenge from Senior Associate Jeanie Phillips.

2024 Rowland Fellows

Cohort Meeting at North Country Union High School



The 2024 Cohort of Rowland Fellows met at North Country Union High School to refine work with their Collaborative Work Groups (formerly Steering Committees) from the Shared Leadership Retreat this fall. Seen here (left to right) Bill Prue, Beverly McCarthy, and Sarah Marcus.

Hartford Teachers at Shelburne Farms

**Melissa Wyman's Collaborative Work Group
Retreat**



Melissa Wyman (RF24) (seen here on left) prepared and led a retreat at Shelburne Farms for the Hartford colleagues who make up her Collaborative Work Group, with support and inspiration provided by Senior Associate Jeanie Phillips.

CVU Teachers at Hula Lakeside

Brad Miller's Colleagues Honing Harkness Skills



Brad Miller (RF24) (seen here on right) prepared and led a half-day work session at Hula Lakeside in Burlington with CVU teachers who are using Harkness in their classrooms on a regular basis now. The day's work focused on defining the "magical discussion" and how to balance authentic learner engagement with assessment strategies. Even before becoming a Rowland Fellow, Brad had the opportunity to work with Harkness expert Kathy Cadwell (RF16).

2022 Cohort Meets in Burlington

Still Collaborating After the 2-Year Cycle



The 2022 Cohort of Rowland Fellows have decided to keep collaborating and meeting on their own now that they've finished the Two-Year Cycle. They recently reserved the shared work space at the Rowland Foundation Office in Burlington and got lunch together. If you're interested in scheduling a cohort reunion, feel free to contact Abby or Mike to reserve this space. We love to share it with Rowland Fellows!

Celebrations



Ry Bright and Eli Feldman, both 8th graders at Northfield Middle School, joined **Carrie Gilman (RF22)**, José Bou of Great Schools Partnership, and Quin Gonell, author of *Little Book of Restorative Justice*, in hosting a webinar called “More Than Just Circles”. Both students had the opportunity to lead a circle for educators, superintendents, administrators, and guidance counselors and hear their thoughts about belonging and pressures on youth today. As a Senior Associate for Great Schools Partnership and the Rowland Foundation, Jeanie Phillips (RF14) was a formidable guest and offered her appreciation for student leadership.



Lauren Parren (RF12) recently gave a talk on a one-room schoolhouse in Monkton, and looked at the history of education in Vermont through the lens of this one isolated little school. She spent a year researching it, and then connected her new learning to statewide

and national trends for her enthusiastic audience. After reading the new Rowland Foundation white paper [Deeper Learning](#) (Jones, DeCarolis, Hamilton & Ruppel, 2024), Lauren has been wondering what “joys and virtues we could still learn from this ‘old vision’ of public school”. [Check out Lauren’s excellent talk here](#) Passcode: !txyb9Q1



Executive Director Mike Martin (RF09) was [recently interviewed on the VTCLA podcast](#) where he discussed the work of the Rowland Foundation, the current need to support the democratic mission of public school, and the benefits of having a Rowland Fellow at your school.

Gratitude



Abby Paige's son Robertson was rocking our new Rowland Foundation merch at Edmunds Middle School when he saw his school counselor Brady Lozier was doing the same! Brady has been serving as a steering committee member with **Lindsay McQueen's (RF23)** Fellowship work, which has focused on strengthening advisory and Switch it Up Days (SUP) at EMS.



Bianca McKeen (RF16) was fortunate to be a member of a delegation to Hanamaki, Japan as a part of a 35th Sister City Anniversary (really 38 years but delayed due to COVID). She spent 3 days in Hanamaki, including time in a junior high school and preschool, and was also able to travel to Tokyo, Kyoto, and Hiroshima. She is seen here in a traditional kimono, and (above) with the Mayor of Hanamaki, Superintendent Bill Olsen, and RCPS School Board member Charlene Seward.

