



The
ROWLAND
Foundation

Investing in
Vermont's Teachers

Letter to Fellows

On Boredom

June 2025

Dear Rowland Fellows,

I hope this letter finds you and your family enjoying this humid start to our Vermont summer.

When I was a kid growing up in Essex Junction, boredom was a palpable thing. After the giddy rush of freedom on the first days out of school, boredom would begin to creep in, growing in strength, sometimes entirely overwhelming. My siblings and I would start drift-moaning around the house, zombie-like, and sort of swirl around my mom telling her over and over again in the most keening singsong complaint, "I'm boARRRRed!" I remember it was a bone-aching boredom so painful that it seemed like it was in my nerve ends. It was a boredom that sort of washed over me in waves. It stirred me up, but also sapped my energy somehow. And it was always close by. Back then, once morning swim team practice was over at 7:00 am, it sure was a long time until sunset, when kick-the-can with the neighborhood kids would begin. When I was a kid, boredom was a formidable thing.

Now it's a little different for kids because of technology. According to a [recent Pew Research study](#), nearly half of 13-17 year-olds report that they are online "almost constantly", and 95% have smartphones. Back in my day, parents worried about kids watching too much TV, but very few parents left their kids with the electronic babysitter for four hours or more everyday. So boredom for kids looks different now—in fact, [when kids say](#)

[they're bored](#) nowadays it may be symptomatic of something else: they may be looking for an alternative activity, or your undivided attention, or experiencing screen time withdrawal.

There are a host of resources to help parents [head off kids' boredom](#) or [better understand it](#), but some research also links the experience of periodic boredom to creativity, problem-solving, and even wellbeing. In an age when we're almost never left to our own devices, when we're never really alone because, you know, Tik Tok, this makes a lot of sense. Even as our brains cry out, "What's next?!", we still need time for our minds to lie fallow for a moment.

In *The Book of Delights* (2019), Ross Gay celebrates the beauty of apparent inaction—and also questions our modern need to appear busy and fill our days with frenetic activity. "Loitering", "Inefficiency", "Blowing it Off", and "Among the Rewards of My Sloth" are all essays from this collection that poke fun at our modern obsession with productivity, and also question the cultural assumptions we may have about what it means to be busy or bored. Above all, Ross Gay shows us how much beauty can be found when we step off the hamster wheel of our daily schedules, slow down, and look around carefully. "Pay Attention!" is the reminder he has written himself on his notebook cover.

Don't get me wrong—I'm not wishing you and your families a boring summer. On the contrary, I hope you have a summer full of discoveries, adventures, and rich experiences. It's just that all of those things sometimes emerge from the unplanned, unprogrammed moments in our lives. So I hope that you and yours will have wonderful quiet, slow times this summer, times when the noise subsides and you may even find your mind wanting to jump to the next thing. Those are just the moments to pay attention like Ross Gay to see if something new, beautiful, and surprising may emerge.

Have a great summer.

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.

Rowland Foundation Updates

The 14th Annual Rowland Conference

UVM Registration Opens on September 3rd



34 school teams have already pre-registered for the conference! It would appear that this year's theme, *How to Citizen: Engaging Students in Democracy*, is resonating with Vermont educators. Stay tuned for a preview of the complete conference program and its list of amazing workshops. **UVM registration will open on September 3rd.**

We are thrilled that Baratunde Thurston will be our keynote speaker for the **14th Annual Rowland Conference, Thursday, October 30, 2025** at the University of Vermont's Davis Center. His [How to Citizen](#) framework invites us to rethink what citizenship should be in our day and age. A prolific writer, comedian, and podcaster, Baratunde is the author of the New York Times bestseller *How to Be Black* and the host of the podcast [Life with Machines](#), focused on the social impacts of AI. He previously wrote for *The Daily Show* and *The Onion* and hosted the PBS series [America Outdoors with Baratunde Thurston](#).



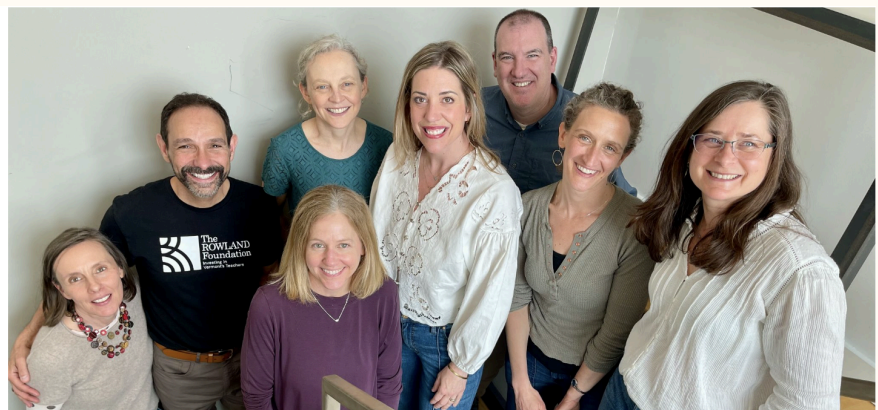
Do You Know Future Rowland Fellows?

Summer is the time to dream.

Prospective Rowland Fellows have often found that the fall is a busy time to pull together their Rowland Fellowship proposal. So, thanks to an idea from **Senior Associate Jeanie Phillips (RF14)**, we now encourage teachers and principals to begin brainstorming early. [We send this flyer](#) with online resources to every principal in Vermont—feel free to share it! We encourage Rowland Fellows to “pay it forward” by spreading the word and encouraging colleagues to apply. Interested teachers can also register to meet with **Executive Director Mike Martin (RF09)** at an upcoming Fellowship Info Session on June 18th at 4:00 pm. To sign up and receive the Google Meet invitation, teachers just need to [fill out this form](#).

2023 Rowland Fellows

Last (Official) Cohort Meeting



The 2023 Cohort of Rowland Fellows met in Burlington for a day of reflection and celebration as they come to the end of the Two-Year Cohort Cycle. They were joined by Senior Associates Jean Berthiaume & Jeanie Phillips, Executive Assistant Abby Paige, and Executive Director Mike Martin.

DEW Summit in Killington

Diversifying the VT Educator Workforce



As efforts continue to diversify the educator workforce in Vermont, Great Schools Partnership (GSP) convened school and community leaders, higher education partners, and policymakers to a daylong summit to share effective strategies and consider changing systems to improve the recruitment and retention of educators of color in Vermont schools. This work was led by GSP's Danielle Pierre (*on right above*), who has been leading the VT DEW Coalition in recent years, and made possible in part with support from the **New Teacher Fund**, a Rowland Foundation donor-advised fund at the Vermont Community Foundation. Rowland DEW Scholar Esther Charlestin (*above on far left*) was an important contributor and led a panel discussion during the event.

Annual Dinner & Reception

Celebrating Our New Fellows





The Rowland Foundation joyfully welcomed its new 2025 Cohort of Rowland Fellows at our Annual Dinner and Reception in Manchester, seen above with Mike Martin (*left to right*), Danielle Berg (Spaulding HS), Jana Fabri-Sbardellati (Hunt MS), Becca Osborne (Hartford MS), Jonah Ibson & Matt Henchen (Harwood Union HS), Julia Beerworth (Charlotte Central School) & Anne Koplinka-Loehr (Brattleboro Area MS). The 2024 Cohort returned to Manchester to share updates on their first year of Fellowship work, seen here (*above left, left to right*) Brad Miller (CVU), Beverly McCarthy (Barnet), Sarah Marcus (Proctor), Melissa Wyman (Hartford), Bill Prue (North Country), Sandy Celauro (Proctor) & Melissa Bushey (Barnet). The Rowland Foundation Board of Trustees met earlier in the day and heard a report from GSP Executive Director Paulina Merton & Senior Associate Emily Gilmore (RF17), seen here (*above middle, left to right*) Dan Rowland, Carter Rawson, Heidi Lynn & Jim Mooney. Harwood Superintendent Mike Leichliter attended this year's Annual Dinner & Reception, seen here (above left) with his wife Mary Edith and former Harwood teacher and Senior Associate Jean Berthiaume (RF09). You can see more [photos from this year's Annual Dinner here](#).

Fellowship Launch

New Fellows & Principals Meet in Rutland



The Fellowship Launch took place at The Hub CoWorks in Rutland this year. This annual event allows new Rowland Fellows & Principals to plan the Fellowship work ahead, connect with Vermont colleagues across schools, and practice shared leadership to change the culture and climate of schools. Seen here Hunt Middle School Principal Melanee Alexander and new Rowland Fellow Jana Fabri-Sbardellati. You can see more [photos from this year's Fellowship Launch here](#).

CVU Harkness

Collaborative Work Group at Hula



Brad Miller (RF24) continues to work with CVU teachers to make Harkness method an integral part of their strategies for teaching and learning. He recently led another daylong session with his Collaborative Work Group at Hula in Burlington.

Listening Leadership

Better Conversations Training for School Leaders



As Associate Executive Director at Vermont Principals' Association (VPA), Mike McRaith (RF13) leads [Better Conversations Every Day](#) trainings for leaders around the state, with support from the [Waddington Leadership Initiative](#). He is seen here with VPA colleague Erica McLaughlin at a training that Rowland Foundation Executive Director Mike Martin (RF09) recently participated in.

Celebrations



Congratulations to Melissa Wyman (RF24)! Melissa has just earned her doctorate of education, seen here with her daughter Athena at the hooding ceremony. You can read here Melissa's dissertation, [*The Space Between: The Story of a Rural School District Implementing Trauma-Informed and Equity-Centered Practices.*](#)



Northfield Middlehigh School

Double Congratulations to Carrie Gilman (RF23)! Carrie has been named to serve on the Board of The Vermont Association for Middle Level Education (VAMLE) and recently

published [this essay](#) on their website. Carrie has also just accepted a position as SEL Coach at Union Elementary School in Montpelier.



Congratulations to Tara Cariano (RF18)! Tara has just opened The Sanctuary, a community wellness space in Northfield, VT! The Sanctuary offers a blend of various community wellness aspects including an eclectic movement & yoga studio, co-working space, and various one-on-one and group wellness services. Learn more [here](#) and consider stopping by to check out the space or co-work for the day! Questions? Interested in sharing your gifts at The Sanctuary? Contact Tara at tara@thesanctuarynorthfield.com



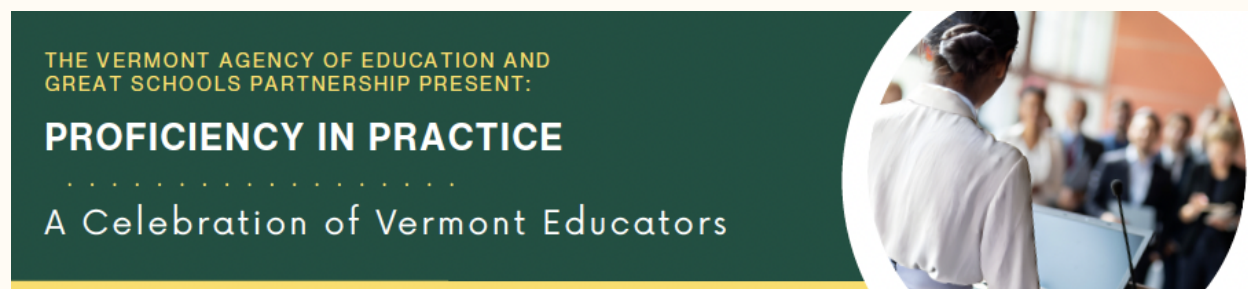
Congratulations to Executive Assistant Abby Paige! Tonight is her opening night of [The Revolutionists at Lost Nation Theater in Montpelier](#), in which she plays Olympe de Gouges, a French playwright and political activist best known for authoring *The Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Female Citizen*. Abby is enjoying collaborating with an energetic cast and crew on this fast-paced comedy set during the French Revolution. The play tops off a busy spring for Abby, who is grateful that her work with the Rowland Foundation is flexible enough to allow her to continue her artistic practice. [You can read all about her work on her website.](#)

Courtesy Posts



Collaborative Practices for Equity

Sign up now for this amazing course taught by Jeanie Phillips and Aimee Arandia Østensen! This unique course offers school leaders the opportunity to design impactful agendas, engage in feedback sessions, practice collaboration strategies, and apply their learning to the work they are doing in their schools. A fierce commitment to educational equity and excellence will be at the core of all the learning participants will do. Priority is given to new Fellows and their Collaborative Work Group members, so space is limited. [More information here.](#) [Register here.](#)



Vermont Proficiency in Practice

The Vermont Agency of Education & Great Schools Partnership are hosting a full-day celebration & professional learning experience designed to highlight the incredible work happening across Vermont in support of proficiency-based learning, personalized pathways, and community-connected education on June 27, 2025 at Lake Morey Resort in Fairlee, VT. [Register here for this free event!](#)



Social Protest & Popular Music Course

Vermont-based jazz musician, composer & educator Geoff Kim is teaching an online graduate course called [Social Protest & Popular Music](#) through Castleton University

Center for Schools this summer June 24 – August 5. Geoff’s Cuban music septet Guagua closed out the Annual Rowland Conference last fall. The course is especially well-suited for educators in Social Studies, Language Arts, Music, and Humanities. [Register here!](#)



Sound Recordings as Primary Sources

Vermont Folklife is hosting a free one-day professional learning workshop for educators about teaching with audio from Vermont Folklife collections on Wednesday, June 18, 2025, 10:00 am – 4:00 pm at St. Johnsbury School, 257 Western Ave, St. Johnsbury, VT. [More information here.](#) [Register here.](#)



Wholehearted Schools Graduate Course

Looking for an immersive and supportive graduate course for next school year? Join Onward: A Yearlong Emotional Resiliency Immersion for Educators! In this immersive graduate course experience, educators will be provided the structure, knowledge, and guidance from August – May to reflect on their professional journey, contemplate change, practice new ways of being, and co-create a community of support.

Throughout the school year, we will learn strategies and apply mindset shifts to manage stress and overcome the challenges of the teaching profession.

\Pre-Registration now open [Click here!](#) Learn more [here](#) and/or contact Tara Cariano

(RF18) directly at info@wholehearted-schools.com
