

OUR FOURTEENTH ANNUAL STATEWIDE CONFERENCE

How to Citizen

Engaging Students in Democracy

October 30, 2025

The Davis Center
University of Vermont

REGISTER NOW! therowlandfoundation.org



The
ROWLAND
Foundation

Investing in
Vermont's Teachers

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Baratunde Thurston

"I care about the diversity of the mindset of the people creating our future, and the windows through which we see it, and the tools we use to build it."



Conference Schedule

8:00	Registration, Coffee & Breakfast
9:00	Welcoming Remarks Michael Martin, Executive Director
	Land Acknowledgement Abby Paige, Executive Assistant
9:30	Keynote Address Baratunde Thurston
10:30	Break
10:45	Morning Workshops
12:00	Lunch
12:45	School & District Team Time
1:20	Student Presentation
1:45	Afternoon Workshops
3:00	Conference Ends

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Baratunde Thurston

Baratunde Thurston is an Emmy-nominated host, writer, public speaker, and proud Earthling. His newest creation is *Life With Machines*, a YouTube podcast focusing on the human side of the A.I. revolution. He is also host and executive producer of the PBS TV series *America Outdoors*; creator and host of the *How To Citizen* podcast; a founding partner and writer at Puck; and author of the New York Times best-selling comedic memoir, *How To Be Black*.

SPECIAL WORKSHOPS!

From Me to We, A Story of Interdependence

(Morning Session Only)

There are too many crises: climatological, technological, democratological? Even the use of the word 'crisis' has reached crisis levels. While there are policies and investments and direct actions needed in response, there is also a story. What we tell ourselves about ourselves shapes how we show up in these times. Baratunde has been finding stories across our relationships with the natural world, with our fellow humans, and even with the machines that provide strong hints of where we need to go and how to get there. From traditional indigenous worldviews to A.I., a new story is being born based on values of interdependence, which is actually the oldest story of them all.

Presented by **Baratunde Thurston** (he/him),
Writer, Podcast Host & Proud Earthling

Beyond Community Service: Citizenship at the Heart of the Curriculum

(Afternoon Session Only)

Citizenship that is participatory, grounded in relationships, and centered on the welfare of the collective is at the heart of the public school endeavor. But it is not something that can be taught in episodic units of study, a single civics course, or through occasional acts of community service. It demands that core curriculum be planned with the basic needs of students and the community in mind. But this is often not easy – and this sort of work requires the investment of school leaders, teachers, students, and all stakeholders. It involves slowing down, listening to the needs of the students and community, and reaching out to actively work on solving problems related to resources, power, and injustice. A framework for planning such a curriculum will be provided, and participants will engage in a hands-on simulation of planning curriculum grounded in core pillars of citizenship.

Presented by **T. Elijah Hawkes** (he/him),
Director of School Leadership Programs, The Upper Valley Educators Institute

RESTORATIVE PRACTICES

These workshops may be taken together or individually.

Restorative Practices: Restorative Justice in Education

(Morning Session Only)

Even in schools with a 1:1 device-to-student ratio, our young people report that they do not feel connected. The purpose of this workshop is to reboot connectivity in school communities and deliver a framework about the relational aspects of Restorative Practices as the foundation of school culture. In this session, participants will engage in discussions about the history and application of Restorative Justice in Education (RJE), explore tools and strategies for implementation and experience student-led circle conversations. Participants will leave with a foundational understanding of RJE and some tools for implementation.



Restorative Practices: From Pulse Check to Action Planning

(Afternoon Session Only)

How can schools move from discussing Restorative Justice in Education (RJE) to fully embedding it into their culture? This workshop will guide educators and leaders through actionable steps to implement and sustain restorative practices in their schools. Participants will engage in interactive activities, including a self assessment pulse check, stream-of-consciousness reflection, team action planning, and exploration of initiatives' impact. Participants will leave with recommendations for mentoring programs, training opportunities, listening sessions, and reading recommendations. Participants will work to develop practical strategies and a clear roadmap to foster restorative practices, strengthen school communities, and create lasting change.

Presented by **Carrie Gilman** (she/her), *SEL Coach, Union Elementary School & 2023 Rowland Fellow*; **Erica Wallstrom** (she/her), *Senior Associate, Great Schools Partnership & 2014 Rowland Fellow*; **Darthula Mathews** (she/her), *Coaching Associate, Great Schools Partnership*; **Erin Conley** (she/her), *Senior Associate, Great Schools Partnership*

Workshops

Each of the following is offered in the morning and afternoon



Implementing the Updated Education Quality Standards (EQS)

Where is your learning community on the road to implementation for Vermont's updated Education Quality Standards (EQS)? This workshop will provide practical strategies for implementing these standards to create more inclusive, student-centered learning environments. Participants will have access to the latest updates from the state level, including political considerations and implementation efforts in districts around the state. Leave with actionable steps to meet you where you are at on your EQS implementation journey no matter your role or level of experience with EQS.

Presented by **Mike McRaith** (he/him), *Associate Executive Director, Vermont Principals Association & 2013 Rowland Fellow*

Unmuted: Reclaiming Your Voice and Power at Work and Beyond

In challenging work environments, it's easy to feel isolated, unseen, or pressured to shrink to fit. This workshop invites participants to explore strategies for maintaining authenticity, building resilience, and reclaiming their voice in professional spaces that may feel unsupportive or inequitable. Through storytelling, reflection, and actionable frameworks, participants will examine the costs of "dimming their light" and gain practical tools for navigating adversity with courage and clarity. Grounded in principles of equity, leadership, and personal empowerment, this session offers a space for honest conversation, community-building, and renewed commitment to one's purpose. Participants will leave with new language, strategies, and inspiration to advocate for themselves and others — without apology.

Presented by **Esther Charlestin** (she/her), *Founder & Principal Consultant, Conversation Compass & 2023 Rowland DEW Scholar*

Weaving the Strands Together: The Integrated Curriculum for Vermont Educators

The new Vermont Education Quality Standards provide a roadmap for Vermont educators to create more equitable, inclusive, and culturally-responsive learning opportunities for their students. How can we creatively and joyfully take advantage of this opportunity to meet content requirements while also "enabling each student to achieve or exceed the performance standards approved by the State Board of Education"? How can we combine the best of Universal Design for Learning, Restorative Practices, Social Emotional Learning, Trauma-Informed Learning, Proficiency-Based Learning, and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy to improve outcomes for all learners? Join the Integrated Curriculum for Vermont Educators team to explore sample unit plans, gain lesson plan inspiration, and take away some tips and tricks for creating an inclusive and equitable learning environment for each and every student.

Presented by **Emily Gilmore Hurwitz** (she/her), *Senior Associate, Great Schools Partnership & 2017 Rowland Fellow*; **Camilla Thomassen-Tai** (she/her), *Middle School Social Studies Teacher, Winooski School District*

School Reform or Revolution

We will discuss a short history of student movements and the possibility of democratizing public education. Have the school reforms done enough? What part can we play in creating lasting change to benefit all students? We will engage in the processes of mapping (the context of where you are), examining a timeline (drawing), small and large group discussions (where the opportunities are). We will walk away with the ability to see our participation in the system reform or revolution more clearly and actions we can take toward our larger goals.

Presented by **Mikaela Simms** (any pronouns), *Director of Equity, WSESU/Spark Teacher Education Institute & Infinite Culcleasure* (he/him), *Elementary Building-Based Substitute, Burlington School District*

Daily Acts of Democracy: Small Innovations for Community and Connection

Hear from and collaborate with Vermont educators making small innovations in place-based education to engage students in daily acts of democracy. From building telescopes so that students understand that space can be accessible to any citizen, to developing media production skills through podcasting to connect with community, to student-led civic action projects that address local issues, to building an outdoor classroom for the whole community, K-12 educators in the Northeast Kingdom will share developing pilot projects based on the premise that small innovations can result in big changes for student learning. After a short “boom” session by each presenter, participants will be able to connect with presenters in a “speed-dating” format to make connections and share ideas.

Presented by **Jess DeCarolis** (she/her), Consultant, Vermont Rural Education Collaborative & 20009 Rowland Fellow; **Liam Gannon** (he/him), Middle School Science Teacher, Newport City Elementary School; **Emily Robarts** (she/her), 2nd Grade Teacher, Waterford Elementary School; **Sarah Pickering** (she/her), Director of Learning Design, North Country Union High School; **Bobby Walls-Thumma** (he/him), Government & Economics Teacher, North Country Union High School; **Denise Wood** (she/her), Business/Computer Teacher, Canaan Schools.



Using the New EQS Instructional Strategies in the Classroom

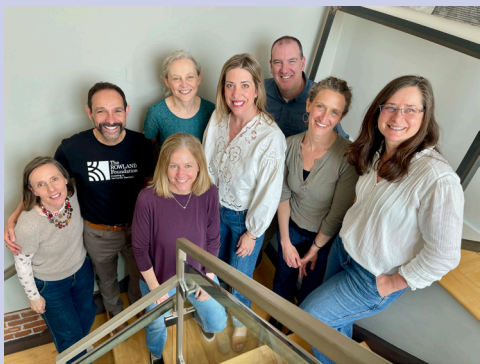
Classroom educators operate at the nexus of policy and practice and are therefore well situated to effect change that can benefit historically-marginalized students through their daily teaching practices. The 2024 Vermont Educational Quality Standards (EQS) mandated by Act 1 (2019) provide specific evidence-based instructional strategies that aim to ensure all students are provided culturally responsive, inclusive, anti-racist, and equitable classroom instruction. Using real life examples, collaborative conversations, and personal reflection, session participants will learn how to incorporate the EQS instructional strategies into their daily practice, in addition to understanding ways to navigate potential implementation challenges.

Presented by **Andrew Jones** (he/him), EdD., Assistant Superintendent of Mount Mansfield Unified Union School District & 2015 Rowland Fellow

The Rowland Fellowship: A Shared Vision for School Change

The Rowland Foundation's mission is to invest in Vermont teachers to positively change the culture and climate of schools. Each year, we award up to six Rowland Fellowships of up to \$150,000 to Vermont teachers working in middle grades and high schools. Do you have a compelling idea for how to improve your school's culture and climate? In this workshop, teachers will articulate their vision and begin to craft a Fellowship proposal for the Rowland Foundation's upcoming application window: November 1–December 31, 2025.

Presented by **Jean Berthiaume** (he/him) & **Jeanie Phillips** (she/her), Senior Associates, The Rowland Foundation & 2014 Rowland Fellow



Consider Applying for a Rowland Fellowship! What is your vision for change at your school?

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Each year we award up to six Rowland Fellowships of up to \$150,000 to Vermont teachers working in middle grades and high schools. By providing time, funding, and collaboration structures, we help teachers pursue change-making ideas that improve the lives of students and make positive change possible. The Fellowship grant award pays for a long-term substitute to release the Rowland Fellow from classroom teaching duties so they can work at their school as a **teacher on special assignment**. The grant funds also support research, site visits, and strategies to build community support for the work. Meeting regularly with their Cohort of Rowland Fellows and a Collaborative Work Group in their schools, Fellows learn shared leadership skills and develop their

projects collaboratively in order to make them sustainable over time. Applicants who believe in shared leadership and the democratic mission of school are invited to submit a proposal for a 2026 Rowland Fellowship between November 1 and December 31, 2025. Visit therowlandfoundation.org for details.

To learn more & register, please visit therowlandfoundation.org

THE ROWLAND FOUNDATION IS JOYFULLY COMMITTED TO PROVIDING EQUAL ACCESS TO ALL ATTENDEES AT THE ANNUAL ROWLAND CONFERENCE. Accommodations available upon request include: ASL interpretation, assisted listening devices, special seating, and dietary and other allergen accommodations. UVM facilities are accessible in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Please visit therowlandfoundation.org for more information.