



Letter to Fellows

The Gift of Time

December 2025

Dear Rowland Fellows,

I wish you and your loved ones a joyful holiday season.

With Cyber Monday and holiday shopping in full swing, I found myself thinking about *The Gift of Time* last week. Many Rowland Fellows say that their Fellowship's Gift of Time was the most wonderful part of the experience. When teachers are released from their classroom duties to do the very different work of a Rowland Fellowship, they report that their brainwaves feel different. Many Fellows say that by stepping back from the grind of grading and the steady flow of email gave them perspective, new insights, and a burst of creative energy as educators.

During this season of giving, don't you wish this amazing experience for a Vermont teacher you know? Please spread the word about the incredible, unique opportunity that is a Rowland Fellowship and encourage the teachers you admire to [send us an application before December 31st!](#) Our Senior Associates have been consulting with candidates this past month, and Abby & I are standing by to answer any questions. Feel free to have your Rowland-curious colleagues contact us at: info@therowlandfoundation.org

If you're a veteran Rowland Fellow, looking back on your own Fellowship with nostalgia, you may be wondering where to find the gift of time again—especially during the hectic holiday season.

Well, even though a Rowland Fellowship is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, you can still experience some of the intellectual stimulation, deep collaboration, and travel with colleagues through a [Rowland Encore Grant](#) (Dec. 31 deadline) or [Rowland Leadership Grant](#) (rolling deadline for as long as funds remain). And obviously, some of the same shift in perspective and rejuvenation is available to veteran Fellows at the Rowland Women's Leadership Retreat, "Dark Side" Leadership Retreat, and All Fellows Retreat each year.

That said, please consider giving yourself the gift of time this holiday season. Of course, this is more complicated than just getting a gift certificate—you can't buy the gift of time on Amazon. However, even as you're generously showing up for others this month, here are some ideas for possible ways to give yourself the gift of time. Please note: there's no magic recipe here, and some assembly required, but I hope that one of these ideas may spur you to find a way to give yourself the best gift of all. You deserve it.

1. **Turn off notifications!** Reclaim some of your mental sovereignty by turning off that damn pavlovian chime. The upsetting news of a world on fire will still be there when you come back. Do so in your own time. This is a way to gift yourself some time to think, to breathe, and to be fully present for yourself and others. You deserve it.
2. **Give your phone a time-out.** You've already turned off notifications? Well now you're ready for the next step to show your phone who is really the boss. Just like little kids, our phones can get a little worked up, a little hyperactive sometimes, and they share that energy with us in a way that takes up our days and hours. Help your phone calm down with a little cooling off period. I don't mean cold turkey abstinence, but maybe don't take it to do errands with you, or maybe leave it in the other room when you read, work, or have tea with a friend. When I do this, I sometimes text people back *hours* later. I know this might make me a bad friend, but, amazingly, I still have friends! Your friends and loved ones will forgive you if you need to teach your phone how to settle down and live without you for a few hours at a time, at least.
3. **Do a carve-out.** Many of us are very good at reserving time to *do* stuff (e.g., pilates, financial planning, work projects) but what about time to just *be*? And when was the last time you did some fiction reading, journaling, crafting, music, or other creative pursuits? Remember that cool hobby you used to have time for before? You know, that thing that made you a happier, more interesting human? Time to reclaim it! Carve out the time on your calendar to make it happen. You deserve it.

4. **Take back time at work.** If you're a classroom teacher, you never have enough time. Most years you never get to that favorite unit, or through Chapter 11, for example. Well what if you gave up on that race to "cover" the curriculum and emphasized deeper learning? If you can find a way to emphasize depth over breadth in your instruction, you may find yourself asking more questions and enjoying better discussions with your students. Even though none of us wants to be the sage-on-the-stage, it's still common to go home from school exhausted from too much *instructional delivery*, even though we see diminishing returns when we sit down to correct student work. Less is more when it comes to direct instructional time, so make it count, and then pivot to inquiry-driven, collaborative, hands-on modes as fast as you can! And one more thing—see if you can let each school email sit for 24 hours before you reply. You'll be amazed at how many things work themselves out in the interim. You'll love it.
5. **Remember that time is a social construct.** In Western societies, our main mental model for time is linear. This is why we so often find ourselves in a race against time, and why we so often say we're "behind". However, in many Eastern and indigenous cultures time is understood to be circular and cyclical... which feels very different as you go through the day. Regardless of how we experience time culturally, many of us have to be somewhere in a specific place for most of our work days—so how are we using our "free time"? Is it really free? Or is it already taken up by unexamined bad habits from Tik Tok to doomscrolling? I don't always do well in this area, but with the time I have, I'm going to try to be more intentional. I deserve it.

You only get one life and none of us knows how much time we have. For this holiday season, I wish you many meaningful moments with people you care about, and some time for yourself too. You deserve it.

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. [A short social media detox improves mental health, a study shows. Here's how to do it.](#) Check out this article!

P.P.P.S. Baratunde was awesome! We now have his wonderful [keynote available to you & your school here](#)—with super **Esther Charlestin (DEW23)** introduction included! And if you're

interested in the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, check out this terrific article by Baratunde: [250 Years Since Its Founding. America Needs a Declaration of Interdependence.](#)

Rowland Foundation Updates

Do You Know a Future Rowland Fellow?

New Applications Accepted Until Dec. 31st



As a teacher can you think of anything better than a Rowland Fellowship, when it comes to a professional learning experience? What a gift, right? A Rowland Fellowship is a sort of magical combination of validation, collaboration, innovation, connection, reflection, freedom, challenges, and creativity! Wouldn't you love this opportunity for the teachers at your school? Or your kid's school? Or your friend's school? Well please spread the word and tell the teachers you know to apply. **We are now accepting 2026 Rowland Fellowship applications through December 31, 2025.** For more information, [check out our website](#) or contact us at info@therowlandfoundation.org.

Rowland Leadership & Encore Grants

Still Not Too Late to Apply!

The 2026 application deadline is Dec. 31st for Rowland Encore Grants! If you are a veteran Rowland Fellow interested in teaming up with a few other Fellows to make something that will have a positive regional impact on Vermont education, consider applying for a Rowland Encore Grant. [More information & application can be found here.](#)

If you are a veteran Rowland Fellow with a great idea, consider applying for a **Rowland Leadership Grant**. Applications accepted on a rolling basis for as long as funds remain. [More information & application form can be found here.](#)

2025 Rowland Fellows at Work

Innovation Around the State



2025 Rowland Fellow Becca Osborne has been collaborating with the nonprofits CraftStudies and Community Engagement Lab on a professional development opportunity for teachers at her school and around the Upper Valley. Teachers will meet 5 times throughout the school year, and focus on "Arts-Infused Project Based Learning". Participating educators work with a variety of grades and subject areas. In this class they get the chance to be creative makers themselves through hands-on workshops at CraftStudies, and then develop their own project to bring back to their students. Pictured here are participating teachers making block prints during the first day of class!



2025 Rowland Fellows Matt Hachen & Jonah Ibsen were recently acknowledged in local media and have begun the community outreach phase of their project, which will likely include a community book club focused on the theme of deepening student engagement, as well as a series of deliberative dialogues on the future of public education in their communities. You can check out their press release at the [Waterbury Roundabout](#) or [The Valley Reporter](#) and see [their Fellowship blog here](#).



2025 Rowland Fellow Julia Beerworth's Fellowship is expanding project-based learning in the middle grades at Charlotte Central School, which recently earned her this [nice article](#) in

the Charlotte News. Also, congratulations to **Principal Tim O'Leary (RF20)** for his innovative leadership and enthusiastic support for this important work.

Celebrations



Congratulations to Kathy Cadwell (RF16)! This November Kathy was inducted into the Harwood Hall of Fame for her many contributions to the Harwood school community and Vermont education at large. Kathy's Fellowship work with democracy and student-led dialogue recently garnered a national award for Harwood. You can read her lovely [acceptance speech here](#).

Courtesy Posts

THE SANCTUARY

COMMUNITY WELLNESS

Looking for a quiet, community-focused space in Central Vermont to hold your next meeting or event? At [The Sanctuary in Northfield](#), you'll find a welcoming, versatile gathering space ideal for those seeking a fresh venue for their next meeting or event. From hourly standard rentals to customized packages (including catering), this bright and calming location provides a professional yet relaxed environment at reasonable rates. Plus, you have

access to a studio space and can even add on a yoga, movement, or meditation class, if you desire!

[See the website](#) or contact **Tara Cariano (RF18)** directly at tara@thesanctuarynorthfield.com