

Keynote Address by 2021 Vermont Teacher of the Year Susan Rosato on March 23, 2022

Thank you, Dean Shepherd, and the department of Education for elevating Vermont teachers. I want to begin by saying I'm honored to speak with you and the awardees. Formal recognition of excellence in our profession is not common and can feel uncomfortable. We know that great teaching involves collaboration. I hope you embrace your title as 2022 Outstanding teachers of Vermont. You were made for this moment. The title can help open doors so that you can affect positive change within our systems. Great teachers change. We know that you can do it. Thank you.

For me it's hope. I believe that hope is a discipline. It is a powerful tool that gets me to rise up when I feel all might be lost. We have not all had the same experience during this challenging time. We need to heal and offer our students and colleagues grace. I have spent my career advocating for refugee and immigrant families who have fled unbearable circumstances for the hope of a better life. The dream that America is a place they can call home and where their children can thrive because a free public education levels the playing field and opens doors. They are resilient and brave, and their stories are important. That is my why. I want our communities to see these new Vermonters for the assets they bring to our schools. Diverse perspectives and cultures enhance our classrooms and have the power to dismantle racism and inequalities that exist in our systems.