





You have all been gathered here to formally acknowledge your leadership role in your own unique schools, but I have to insist that this day be more than that for you. This should be a day that inspires you to stand out even further, to begin to take actions that you and others can be proud of. You are now a model of righteousness, a beacon of what is possible. Believe in this, and it shall be so.

We are entering into a phase of the Anthropocene, this era dominated by human development, in which our actions have and will create an irreversible escalation of environmental and social discord and upheaval. Our future generations will create new technologies and jobs, but more importantly, they will be grappling with issues such as rising sea levels, increased desertification, and mass migrations on scales never experienced in all of human history. The time is now, and only now, to prepare our students for this very real future. The only way to get there is to be intentional about standing out. We must be conscious of our efforts to erect this image of an outstanding individual so that our students, colleagues, and fellow citizens can look upon us and

Small steps will inspire larger ones in turn. Write your thoughts out and seek to publish them - as a social media post, as an op-ed in your local newspaper, as a feature in one of the many education outlets you know about. Attend a meeting. Join a committee. Reach out to your local legislator to talk about what it means to be in education today. Maybe even run for office yourself. See yourself as an educational expert, of which you are. And do this, take these steps, with the ultimate goal of disrupting a system that allowed, encouraged, told my student to think that anyone coming from Winooski could never be outstanding. Resist this inequitable, rigged construct of competition and help bring into focus that which was meant for us all along - a democracy of collaboration, where each and every citizen holds and is held up by one another. That is who you are, that is what today means, that is what you must continue to do.

Thank You