FAQs

What is Bravely?
Bravely enables your district team to work with other district teams, skilled facilitators, and content experts to address one or more challenges that, when successfully addressed, will lead to more equitable and/or deeper learning for your students. District teams will learn about, experience, and apply effective change practices to solve one or more self-identified systemic challenges or inequities. Over 12 months, district teams will receive direct support from NGLC, highly skilled facilitators, and content experts organized around three key supports:

1. Two convenings of the Bravely national network (all participating district teams)
2. At least two virtual mini-courses completed as part of a design cycle with other like-minded district teams with content expertise provided by education practitioners
3. Bi-monthly virtual sessions as part of a community of practice with 4-8 other districts that are facilitated by a skilled facilitator.

Participating teams will leave with a change toolbox and a set of practices to implement with their colleagues, a plan, and a concrete idea to transform student learning that addresses the self-identified systemic challenge or inequity.

What are the core elements of the Bravely experience and who is involved?
Teams will get support for this crucial work in high-trust, intensive communities of practice—a different kind of community of practice than most educators typically experience. Each community of practice includes about 4-8 district teams. NGLC fundamentally believes district peers are the best people to learn with and from because of their experience, credibility, and actionable insights on leading change that transforms learning. The only way to solve your biggest challenges is together. The only way to reimagine what schools can be and successfully implement that vision is together.

All teams will focus on a change idea that addresses the systemic challenge or inequity their district self-identifies as important. To help, NGLC offers teams tested practices that leading districts have used to successfully transform the learning experience for their students. We brought these practices together into a framework called Transformation Design and the mini-courses are designed to help you use them in your district.

To bridge the twin goals of equitable and deeper learning, Bravely’s design cycles incorporate the mindsets and practices of National Equity Project’s Liberatory Design.

The Bravely journey was co-designed with educators. An array of content experts and highly-skilled facilitators from NGLC and a small and cohesive set of partners further support district teams.

What is the purpose of Bravely?
COVID-19 and the latest chapter of the social justice movement helped district leaders see the inadequacies and inequities of our K-12 system more clearly than ever. But we know our sector is stretched thin. Given how exhausted many educators feel (teachers and administrators alike), it’s a challenging time for many school districts to act on their vision for student success.

Launching and sustaining the journey toward a big vision at any time is a tough challenge for any school district, and extraordinarily difficult to accomplish alone. Superintendents and teacher leaders need to orchestrate experiences that inspire audacity, inclusion, and follow-through. They need to move from incremental program and project implementation to
the development of a different community-wide mindset—one that mirrors their student-centered, whole-child, 21st-century vision of student success and commits to turning that vision into their operating norms. Because the only way students will broadly develop the attributes we all claim to care about is if the adults—and the systems and operating habits they create—reflect exactly the same attributes.

Who is Bravely for? Who should participate?

Bravely is for future-focused, courageous K-12 school district teams that seek connection and support for their district change idea. It’s for anyone ready to take a brave leap in equitable, deeper learning redesign to meet this moment—when our democracy, our lands, and our communities require dedicated, committed action from K-12 education.

Bravely is open to district teams of 7-8 members focused at any grade span (K-8; 6-8; 9-12; all). We believe in inclusive participation and distributing the change effort to those closest to it and those who will be most directly impacted by it. That’s why we recommend that teams include the following:

- District administration, with at least one senior district leader
- School-based staff: one or more principals, teachers, and students
- Community partners, including but not limited to parents/families, workforce and industry partners, and school board members

We further recommend that teams represent the diversity of their district community by race, gender, and other factors. And we recommend that districts intentionally invite participation from individuals and groups that have historically been “at the margins” or excluded from important district decisions or system changes.

Bravely helps district teams develop their skills for developing the trusting, durable relationships throughout their district community that are essential for their change effort to be effective. Bravely provides tools and processes to scale deep, with constant input and feedback loops with its larger community.

How many districts will be part of the Bravely Network?

For Bravely’s inaugural year (2022-23), we will assemble up to five communities of practice. While the majority of time will be spent in community of practice groupings, each district will have the opportunity to interact with and learn from others in the broader network, including through the self-selected design cycles in the second half of the year. In 2023-24, we are planning to support a significant expansion. Ultimately, we envision Bravely serving hundreds of districts and helping to shape the work of other like-minded initiatives serving hundreds or thousands more.

What is the time commitment?

This isn’t your typical community of practice that meets once a month and never rises past “nice to have.” Bravely is an “absolutely must have” mechanism to drive stronger learning and stronger culture in your district. You’ll get as much out of Bravely as the time you put into it.

Each month, district teams meet with others internally, with their community of practice, and with their community of practice facilitator for coaching sessions. Teams will also perform asynchronous work throughout each month to address their self-identified systemic challenges or inequities.

Each district team member should prepare to dedicate 1-3 hours per week over the course of the academic year to this work. In addition, participants should be ready to engage in several half-day sessions over the course of the academic year.
What are Bravely’s three founding agreements?

Bravely is not for everybody. We are looking for communities that are committed to take action on three founding agreements:

1. To re-envision success comprehensively and equitably, enabling core academic and life skills for each and every student.
2. To transform learning fundamentally, putting students at the center, as the only way to bring our revitalized vision of success to life.
3. To lead, learn, and model our vision of success organizationally, as our operating norms, to ensure that these changes endure.

We believe—and our research bears out—that true transformation is achievable when these principles are embraced and applied.

How is Bravely different from other district professional development programs?

The sector has no shortage of Zoominars, strategic consulting engagements, weekend workshops, executive learning courses, and design institutes. Bravely is not any of these things.

Bravely brings together great people and experts, some of them peers with direct experience, to help district teams solve common challenges, applied to their self-identified purposes. This is FOR practitioners WITH practitioners, because we know you won’t get very far trying to do this work alone. We all need community to do this work. Bravely will feel different because it is different.

The following attributes, integrated holistically, together make Bravely unique:

- **Liberatory, Transformational Design, Oriented Around Student-Centered, Next Gen Learning.** Bravely unites your goals for student-centered, deeper learning experiences with your efforts to develop the organizational culture and set of operating norms and mindsets needed to make those learning experiences a reality for all students.
- **Like-Minded Peers.** Bravely recognizes that the perspectives, advice, and fellowship of district peers doing similar work are the most valuable support for transformation.
- **Culture and Practice.** Bravely addresses mindsets and relationships as well as the practical tactics and policies needed to transform learning districtwide.
- **Strengths-Based.** Bravely is about identifying strengths and building on good work and deep commitments already underway.
- **Community-Centered.** Bravely uses change practices that are inclusive, rely on stakeholder involvement including those most impacted by the change, and listen to those who are historically marginalized.
- **Your Vision.** Bravely doesn’t ask you to start over but gives tools, support, and skill-building to advance your strategic priorities, plans, and vision.
- **Take Action to Learn.** Bravely is professional learning by doing. See short-term wins while creating the conditions for long-term transformation.
- **Grounded in Practice.** Bravely connects you to change practices used in leading districts that have successfully transformed the learning experience in their schools with positive outcomes for their students.
- **Designed for this Moment.** Bravely offers a way to design a path through the pandemic into a new future defined by your community.

What makes NGLC qualified to design and facilitate a district transformation experience?

Deep experience. Over the past decade, NGLC has invested more than $90 million in a range of
innovations and school transformation efforts designed by educators. We began by catalyzing
educators to experiment and develop the central tenets of next gen learning. Over the past four years,
we have learned how some districts have catalyzed enduring transformation of their learning model,
in part by pairing that work with transformation of their operating model. Bravely is the result, our
best idea for how to help the work of transforming districts spread in ways that honor and reflect the
strategies those districts used.

**How much is the annual fee for this year-long experience?**
Please contact Carlos Beato, NGLC co-director, at cbeato@nextgenlearning.org for more
information about the costs for district teams to participate in the 2022-23 pilot year of Bravely.

**What is the yearlong schedule?**
See slides 7-8-9 of the Bravely intro deck, available on the Bravely webpage. The year begins
with a “foundations” course from August and ends by December. Each district team then
selects a Bravely design cycle to address the change idea they develop in the foundations
course. That work begins in January and culminates in a presentation of learning in May/June.

**Where will the Bravely communities of practice take place? Will Bravely be in-person or virtual?**
This decision is customized and largely depends on the nature of each community of practice.
Communities of practice that are based on geography may be able to easily meet in person, while
others will need to conduct most or all of their work virtually. NGLC’s ability to support travel and/or
convening costs for in-person gatherings depends on our success in raising philanthropic funds or
the collective readiness of existing communities of practice to support travel costs for their district
teams. Although districts have become fairly accustomed to asynchronous work during the
pandemic, Bravely will provide some online tools (some via partners) to assist in synchronous and
asynchronous professional learning and collaboration.

**I’m interested in sponsoring a Bravely community of practice or supporting Bravely philanthropically, or in joining the initiative as a partner provider. Where can I learn more?**
We’re glad you’re interested! Potential sponsors should reach out to Andy Calkins, NGLC co-director,
at acalkins@nextgenlearning.org. Potential partner providers should reach out to Carlos Beato, NGLC
co-director, at cbeato@nextgenlearning.org.