FAQs

**What is Bravely?**

Bravely is a new, national network of intensive school district communities of practice, designed to help districts harness an integrated blend of **liberatory** and **transformation** design principles to advance **next gen learning** over a year-long, renewable change catalyzing journey.

Bravely is a new kind of assistance ecosystem for district leadership teams (and, ultimately, for CMO and school-based teams as well). At the core are high-trust, peer-led communities of practice that enable district teams to learn with and from each other. We fundamentally believe district peers are the best people to learn with and from and offer the lived experience, credibility, and actionable insights that can most effectively move the field forward. The only way to solve our sector’s biggest challenges is together. The only way to reimagine what schools can be and successfully implement that vision is together.

Through this intensive, self-driven, immersive initiative, NGLC offers a framework to think about and activate the transformation process in a pragmatic way while allowing each community of practice and school district the freedom to modify their approaches based on local factors. We envision education leaders regarding and using Bravely as a centerpiece and cornerstone of their district, school, and learning transformation efforts.

**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 not only need to shift mindsets but also need to orchestrate sustained 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 agentic, 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.

The Bravely peer-powered change catalyzing journey was co-designed with educators and enlists an aligned array of partner-providers to help education leaders and their communities design and pursue their own transformation journey.

**Who is Bravely for? Who should participate?**

Bravely is for far-seeing, courageous K-12 school district teams seeking connection, support, and transformation for their community. It’s for those who are ready to take a brave leap in equitable, 21st-century learning redesign to meet the moment—when democracy and the needs of our planet and our communities require dedicated, committed action. We believe that inclusive participation by a range of stakeholders is important for districts to undertake this level of transformation successfully. Teams should include a distribution of 5-10 members who are district-based (district leadership), school-based (one or more principals, teachers, and students), and community-based (including but not limited to workforce and industry partners, parents, and school board members).
Bravely operates on principles of inclusion, enabling, and the power of trust and durable relationships. Districts will do this crucial work of transformation within intensive communities of practice—a different kind of community of practice (CP) than what virtually all educators have experienced to date. Each community of practice is comprised of at least three and no more than eight district teams.

Districts are further supported by an aligned set of vetted technical assistance providers that facilitate and personalize the experience in communities of practice as well as self-selected topical interest groups. The “Home CPs” will foster the development of satellite CPs within each district, as the leadership teams catalyze action on the problems of practice that they have prioritized.

How many districts will be part of the Bravely Network?
For Bravely’s inaugural year (fall 2022 to spring 2023), 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 through self-selected topical interest groups. For the following program year (fall 2023 to spring 2024), we are planning to support a significant expansion in the number of CPs and participating districts. 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 participants meet with their community of practice, subgroups, and coaches/facilitators, as well as perform asynchronous work at their district to address problems of practice. 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 school and district leaders solve common challenges, applicable to their district’s highest 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 cultural 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?**

For the 2022-23 pilot year of Bravely, we are working to secure a philanthropic match for up to 20 district teams. NGLC will use the matching funds to cover half of the true cost ($80,000 per district per year), making the cost for 2022-23, $40,000 for each participating district. Districts can elect to secure more personalized supports from NGLC or from any of the Bravely partner providers for an additional fee. (More information on the providers involved in Bravely will become available over the course of the spring.)

**What is the yearlong schedule?**

See slides 7-8-9 of the Bravely intro deck, available at the bottom of the Bravely webpage. The year begins with a “foundations” liberatory design cycle for each community of practice that lasts from late August/early September into November/December. Each CP, on its own customized schedule, then moves into a pilot “applied” liberatory/transformation design cycle focusing on district problems of practice. That work continues into the spring, supported by
various *Bravely* partner providers, and culminates in a presentation of learning in the late spring.

**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. Those CPs that are geographically proximate will be able to easily meet in person, while CPs with district members that are distant from each other will need to conduct most or all of their work virtually. NGLC’s ability to support travel and/or convening costs for CPs interested in gathering in person depends to a large degree on our success in raising philanthropic funds, or the collective readiness of individual CPs to support those travel costs for their teams. Most schools and districts have become fairly accustomed to asynchronous work during the pandemic; *Bravely* will provide some online tools (some through provider partners) to assist in 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.