



Below are a few options for Big Questions Institute (BQI) keynotes and workshops, delivered by BQI Founder, Homa Tavangar.

Note that if you prefer a title that is listed as a keynote for a workshop (lab) we can adapt it for a longer format, and vice versa. And if there is a theme in one session but it is not found in the session title you want to use, we can usually incorporate that theme into the session.

Keynote or Workshop Options:

(Note: Most titles listed below can be offered as a keynote, webinar, half- or full-day workshop)

Leading in Transition: What Are the New Skills, Literacies, and Dispositions for Liminal Times?

A wide variety of experts – from anthropologists to organizational developers, historians to futurists – all agree: we are living through a time of significant transition. Traditional institutions are under duress, whether due to AI, social and political polarization, climate pressures, staff burnout, or other emerging crises and challenges. All of which begs the question, what is the purpose of school in an increasingly volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) world? Crucially, what are the new skills, literacies and dispositions leaders need to guide their communities into the future? And what will students need to succeed?

This session will unpack these big questions, and introduce the tools and strategies that will support school leaders to envision more relevant, just, sustainable (regenerative), healthy, and joyful schools, now and into the future.

Creating Irresistible Futures for Schools: Imagining Harder to Lead and Inspire “Good Ancestors” (this can also be combined at a school with a [Dream Summit](#))

If you had an opportunity to create “irresistible futures” for your school and your students, where would you begin? What outcomes would you love to end up with in 3, 10, or 20 years? How might this vision help shape your school culture and practices today?

These questions might be exciting to consider, but they are also challenging. Pursuing them with honesty calls for courage, clarity, deep empathy, and crucially, imagination. Amidst an extremely volatile and uncertain time for educators and students, we must imagine harder to go into the future with hope. Imagining "irresistible futures" for life on the planet and for the way we educate our children drives us toward creating a healthier, more just, relevant, sustainable (regenerative), and joyful path forward. In this highly interactive session, we'll acknowledge the difficulties, but we'll also identify the new frameworks, skills, mindsets, and lenses that are now crucial to creating the "irresistible futures" we all can aspire to.

Among the frameworks we will consider is that of going beyond a Portrait of a Graduate to consider a Portrait of an Ancestor. This shift, rooted in values and long-term thinking, gets a school to consider the deeper purpose of education, can offer an energizing and inspiring vision to unite around a more inclusive definition of success, and can build a more meaningful sense of community through difficult times.

Join us as we unpack some big questions and work through a practical template for bringing these ideas into your schools and even your personal practice and outlook.

Meeting the Moment with Fearless Inquiry: Using Questions to Design a Relevant, Just, and Sustainable Path Forward

Educators face an epic design challenge. Amidst multiple social, political, personal, climate, and other crises, we must confront the truth that schools have contributed to the dysfunctions and also have the potential to be part of the solution.

As unsettling as these contexts are, the crises also present an opportunity -- to decide what is worth keeping, and what we will leave behind. Students deserve adults who will confront the present and future with radical honesty, radical empathy, and fearless inquiry -- a willingness to interrogate the core of current systems and practices. As educators we need to develop new structures and skill sets that center individual and community well-being, equity, and the new literacies for addressing the confounding problems of our time. This keynote will develop your abilities to make sense of what has changed and help you take concrete steps to begin a process for reinvention - using questions as a guide forward.

"Soulwork Before Schoolwork" - Look In. Look Out. Look Forward

School leaders around the world are struggling to regain their footing after an incredibly challenging and exhausting few years. They need tools and mindsets that will carry them through increasingly change-filled times ahead. This session will introduce the Big Questions Institute framework "Reflect, Reset, and Reinvent," that helps leaders understand what's

changing, what it means for school and education moving forward, and helps build the personal dispositions they need to remain energized and curious for the work ahead.

Creating "Islands of Sanity": Leading Through Challenging Times

We live in truly historic times, at what some would call a “hinge moment” where old narratives of how we experience life on Earth are breaking and new narratives are in the process of being written. It’s a time of great stress and anxiety as the challenges we face are truly existential. Author Margaret Wheatley asks “Who do we choose to be for this time? Are we willing to use whatever power and influence we have to create islands of sanity that evoke and rely on our best human qualities to create, relate, and persevere?” As we all struggle with exhaustion and uncertainty, how might school leaders begin to reimagine their work “to create possibility and humaneness in the midst of increasing fear and turmoil” in our school cultures and in our classrooms?

Guided by fearless inquiry, this session will offer tools and actions for leaders to design their own “islands of sanity” in their school communities, ways of working in the world that focus on developing and sustaining a sense of well-being, justice, and relevance for the children we serve.

The Five Key Lenses to Navigate Schools into the Future

Creating a new future of schooling calls for educators and leaders to see the world as it is, not as it was. It requires understanding new contexts, and building new lenses around vital questions of *world, purpose, change, power and our stories*. Each of the lenses will help you frame new questions and conversations that are fundamental to creating an experience of school for kids that will help them move beyond surviving, to thriving, in whatever future they inherit. This keynote will push your thinking to utilize the new lenses to help schools become more relevant, just and sustainable.

Expanding Leadership Capacity: Lessons from the Future

Leading a school into the future calls for skills, dispositions, and lenses that you likely didn’t learn in graduate school and might not have been on your original job description. In this interactive workshop we will explore some of the capacities, from fearless inquiry to using storytelling and imagination infrastructures that can help leaders be more effective and aspirational. Embracing these new lenses can help restore joy, well-being and professional growth into the challenging role of school leadership.

Building Imagination Infrastructures - Creating Aspirational Futures Together

As challenges to schools and leaders mount, there's no doubt any longer that we're going to have to imagine our way out of the current predicaments we face. And yet time and space for collective imagination about aspirational futures are rare, if not nonexistent in many schools and communities. This session introduces three types of imagination: moral, radical, and collective, and offers a chance to build and unstick our imagination muscles to vision an aspirational future for our schools, our students, and ourselves.

Building Stamina for DEIJB Leadership That's Relational Not Transactional

After a surge of DEI-centered activity around 2020, many schools either experienced backlash, fatigue, division or burn out in their attempts to address the reckoning around racial and social justice. This profound work was approached more like a sprint instead of a marathon. This keynote or workshop will explore the lessons leaders can learn from a "marathon posture" to DEIB and why (and how) to move from "transactional," check-the-box efforts to "relational," long-last commitments that build a culture of belonging.

From Othering to Belonging: Building Psychological Safety, Community, and Joyful Learning Through a Commitment to Belonging

In this session we will explore real examples from various international schools and practical strategies that lead to lasting change through a shared commitment to "belonging" across a school culture. During a time when a combination of letters "DEIJ" can create division or misunderstanding within a community, a path toward "belonging" has been shown to offer shared language, vision, and values that might unite and build community. After examining what is really meant by "belonging," and the design principles that flow from it, we will consider ways to diminish polarization and enhance leadership for equity and belonging, invite parents as partners, listen to and learn from student voice, and ensure "windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors" in a culturally responsive curriculum.

Raising Children to Thrive in a Globalized World: In light of the fact that we are preparing students for jobs that do not yet exist to solve problems we've never heard of using technologies that haven't been invented – how can parents help prepare their children for this uncertain future? And what does it mean to be a global citizen today? Based on lessons from social science, brain science, and rapid technological change, the answers center on what makes us fully human: qualities like deep empathy, a passion for diversity, a sense of belonging, and psychological safety. Together, these contribute to vital new literacies that will help our children confront the challenges of our time.

Additional Leadership Labs (Workshops):

All of these sessions can be offered in two (or three) 2-hour segments, or three sessions, 90 minutes each. As a result of participating in Leadership Labs, you can expect to:

- Develop critical skills for thinking about and designing for the future
- Identify what matters most, what isn't working, and what new opportunities exist
- Build capacity to implement and sustain a long-term, culture-based change process that is iterative and transparent
- Tap into the fundamental questions about mission, vision, and practice in new ways
- Practice the rapid prototyping of ideas

12 Big Questions School Must Answer to Imagine Irresistible Futures

(Workshops, Strategic Design Labs, Leadership Retreats on the Big Questions)

This session offers a guided exploration on 12 Big Questions ([free download here](#)), following the popular *9 BIG Questions Schools Must Answer to Avoid Going "Back to Normal"* (*Because "Normal" Wasn't That Great to Begin With) by Tavangar. The big questions are being used as a provocation by Trustees, leaders, and educators around the world to drive meaningful and fearless inquiry around school change and efficacy in the midst of volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous (VUCA) conditions in the world and in education.

Through probing, interactive activities we will audit and explore questions such as *What is Learning?* *Why Do We _____?* *Who is Unheard?* and *Are We OK?* as well as the three new questions: *What is Your Story?* *What is Success?* and *What is Your Legacy?* Embarking on a systematic interrogation of key questions, our "why" becomes clearer, to unlock new "how's" for steering schools through crisis and uncertainty.

Storytelling for School Change

This session will explore such questions as: How do we use the power of story to drive support for profound school change? What is the connection between great storytelling and great leadership? Who is telling the story? Who is unheard? What is the new story we aspire to tell?

We're in a huge moment of transition, and most institutions are "in-between stories," moving from traditional systems and practices to new, yet to be uncovered ones.

This is especially true in education. The pandemic has forced us to rethink and reimagine in fundamental ways the experience of school for students and teachers. And a new narrative of how we define and become educated is quickly emerging. Change in schools feels more imminent than ever, and if we are to pave the way for real change to happen, we're going to

need to understand the power of story as a driver, and be willing to write and imagine the history of the future.

Meeting the Moment With "Fearless Inquiry": Building a More Relevant, Joyful, and Equity-Centered School

Building on themes in the *Fearless Inquiry* keynote, this deeper dive helps participants build their capacity to:

- See the world and their role in it with a mindset of an explorer
- Develop "courageous practice" to face an unknown future
- Learn the skills and dispositions of "futures thinking"
- Use storytelling as a tool for change and as a leadership practice
- Center equity and inclusion in leadership and pedagogy
- Build literacy skills for a "post-fact" world.