

 **AUDIO**
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Cultivating the Ability to Lead (Part 1)

Ilene Friedman
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Topic TURNING AROUND CHRONICALLY LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS

Practice IMPROVED LEADERSHIP

- Highlights**
- » The New York City Leadership Academy runs a program called the Aspiring Principals Program, which is designed to recruit, train, and place effective leaders in high-need schools.
 - » The Academy selects potential principals based on foundational skills such as the commitment to equity, a desire to improve schools, the ability to lead and be a learner, resilience, and flexibility.

About the Interviewee

The NYC Leadership Academy provides a comprehensive portfolio of leadership support services to the NYC Department of Education and strategic consulting to the NYC DOE and other state and local school systems. Its nationally recognized Aspiring Principals Program is designed to recruit, train, and place effective leaders in high-need schools.

During her 38 years in education, Ilene Friedman has been a teacher, guidance counselor, public school principal, district-level educational administrator, and university instructor. Ms. Friedman was named vice president of the Leadership Academy's Aspiring Principals Program

after serving as program faculty for two years. In her current role, she oversees the development and implementation of standards-based curriculum and a pre-service program that prepares graduates to take on the realities of the principalship and helps other state and local systems adapt the APP model.

Prior to joining the Leadership Academy she was the principal of P.S. 40, a Manhattan elementary school recognized by the Chancellor as one of the city's top 200 schools and identified as an outstanding school in *New York City's Best Public Elementary Schools: A Parents Guide*. During her tenure, she successfully focused on recruiting and developing a skilled professional staff, which led to increased student performance. Prior to her principalship, Ms. Friedman served as director of school choice, supporting the development of small theme-based New York City public schools, and director of parent education for District Two in Manhattan. She also served as an education field advisor for Columbia University's School of Social Work, establishing internship placements and coordinating internship supervisors.

Full Transcript

Ilene Friedman





00:04 I am Ilene Friedman. I am the vice president of the Principal Preparation Programs at the New York City Leadership Academy.

00:13 The New York City Leadership Academy was launched in 2003, and it was in response to a need for principals to apply and lead high-need schools and make dramatic changes in student improvement. At that time, potential principals were clustering at successful schools, and high-need schools were not getting adequate numbers of strong candidates. So the Leadership Academy was developed to recruit, select, and prepare educators to become principals who would have the knowledge and skills to make significant impact on student achievement and a willingness to go wherever they were needed.

00:55 For our selection theory, what we really started with [was] thinking what does a principal need to know and be able to do to be successful. And then we said what could we teach in our 14-month

program. And when you put those two together, you get at the foundational skills that one needs to have to start the program. In 14 months, we can add value to someone's knowledge and skill set, but we want to ensure that at the end they meet the standards of what they need to know and be able to do to make significant impact. And so based on that, we look for certain characteristics called *foundational skills*, and they are the commitment to equity—as one clear, nonnegotiable—and closing the achievement gap. We are looking for people who want to make school improvement and see this as something that's demonstrated in student outcome.

 **01:50** Finally, the ability to lead. So we are not only looking at youngsters, but we are looking at the adults who impact youngsters' life. And we are seeing everyone as learners, so the ability to be a learner oneself but also to see the adults as well as the students in the building of learners. One key characteristic that we have discovered not only in the selection process but something that runs through all parts of our programs, including the times that people are principal, is the idea of resilience. If there is any one key factor that we think is indicative of success, it's resilience. I can assure you that as a principal, you will make a mistake. I can tell you that I made a mistake on a daily basis when I was a principal. But the thing that distinguishes the successful is the ability to get up and rebound from mistakes, not the ability to avoid mistakes.

 **02:45** In our interview process the other thing I look for is someone who can stay firm to their values but flexible and open enough to listen to others. And it was once described to me as an iron rod. For the rod to stay planted in the ground, it has to be firmly planted but there has to be a little sway, and if you can't have a little sway you break. So staying grounded and committed but open simultaneously, so someone who would take in someone else's idea to enhance their own way of thinking. I would say for the leaders themselves the idea of the resource of networking, changing the way they look at their practice, their unflinching willingness to look at their own work, their discontent with the status quo, and always questioning how can they do it better

are things that I hear from our graduates as common denominators across the years.