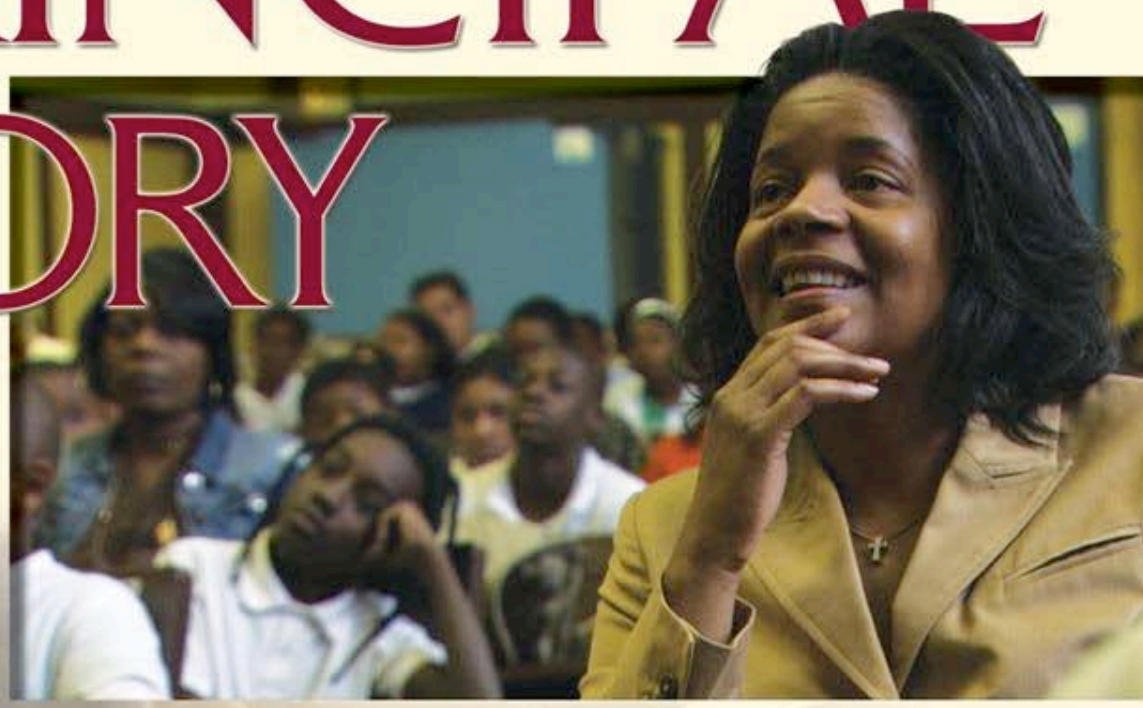





THE PRINCIPAL STORY

CONVERSATION GUIDE
NYC Leadership Academy





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What Is the Issue?

There is great demand for principals who have the skills to turn around low-performing schools, especially in our nation's cities. Public school systems need a new generation of principals who can transform these high-need schools and close persistent achievement gaps. To meet this challenge, we must answer some tough questions: How do we train new principals to turn around underperforming schools? What are the best ways to provide aspiring principals rigorous and relevant development opportunities so that they are prepared to be instructional leaders in high-need urban schools?

This video vignette, available on the accompanying DVD, features the NYC Leadership Academy, an independent nonprofit organization that recruits, develops and supports school leaders. The Leadership Academy's Aspiring Principals Program (APP) focuses on recruiting, preparing and supporting leaders for the highest-need schools in New York City – the nation's largest district. This vignette highlights the Leadership Academy's success in training aspiring principals to improve the culture and instruction in complicated and challenging school environments. Meet Principal Daysi Garcia, an APP graduate, who, in just three years, has begun to turn around an underperforming elementary school where the majority of students are from poor, immigrant families.

Background of the Program

The NYC Leadership Academy recruits, prepares and supports creative and passionate leaders with the skills, capacity and knowledge to lead schools that improve student learning and academic growth. It is recognized as a valuable resource for principal development – a number of school districts around the country have worked with the Leadership Academy as they have designed their own programs. These sites include Chicago; Boston; St. Louis; Buffalo, New York; Rochester, New York; and Louisville, Kentucky. Initially funded by The Wallace Foundation, The New York City Partnership and other private partners, the Leadership Academy is now primarily supported by public dollars.

The rigorous, standards-based Aspiring Principals Program, which is full-time for the first 14 months, uses problem-based and action-learning teaching methods. Program components include:

1. Six-week Summer Intensive, where students work in project teams on a school scenario that reflects actual challenges in New York City schools;
2. Year-long, school-based Residency, with a Leadership Academy-trained mentor principal; and
3. Planning Summer, which assists participants in their transition to becoming principals of New York City public schools.

After completing the APP, graduates can elect to participate in other Leadership Academy programs that offer coaching and other supports. In their first year on the job, new principals can enroll in the Coaching for New Principals program, which provides one-on-one coaching. APP graduates with more than one year of experience can enroll in the Coaching for Experienced Principals program, which offers one-on-one coaching, coaching for school teams and small group coaching with other principals, as well as retreats, guided observations and targeted coaching sessions with budget and data specialists. In addition, the Leadership Academy offers leadership development for principals of new, small schools and, in collaboration with the Council of School Supervisors and Administrators' Executive Leadership Institute, workshops for school leaders in the areas of instructional leadership and accountability.

NYC Leadership Academy Graduates Transform Schools

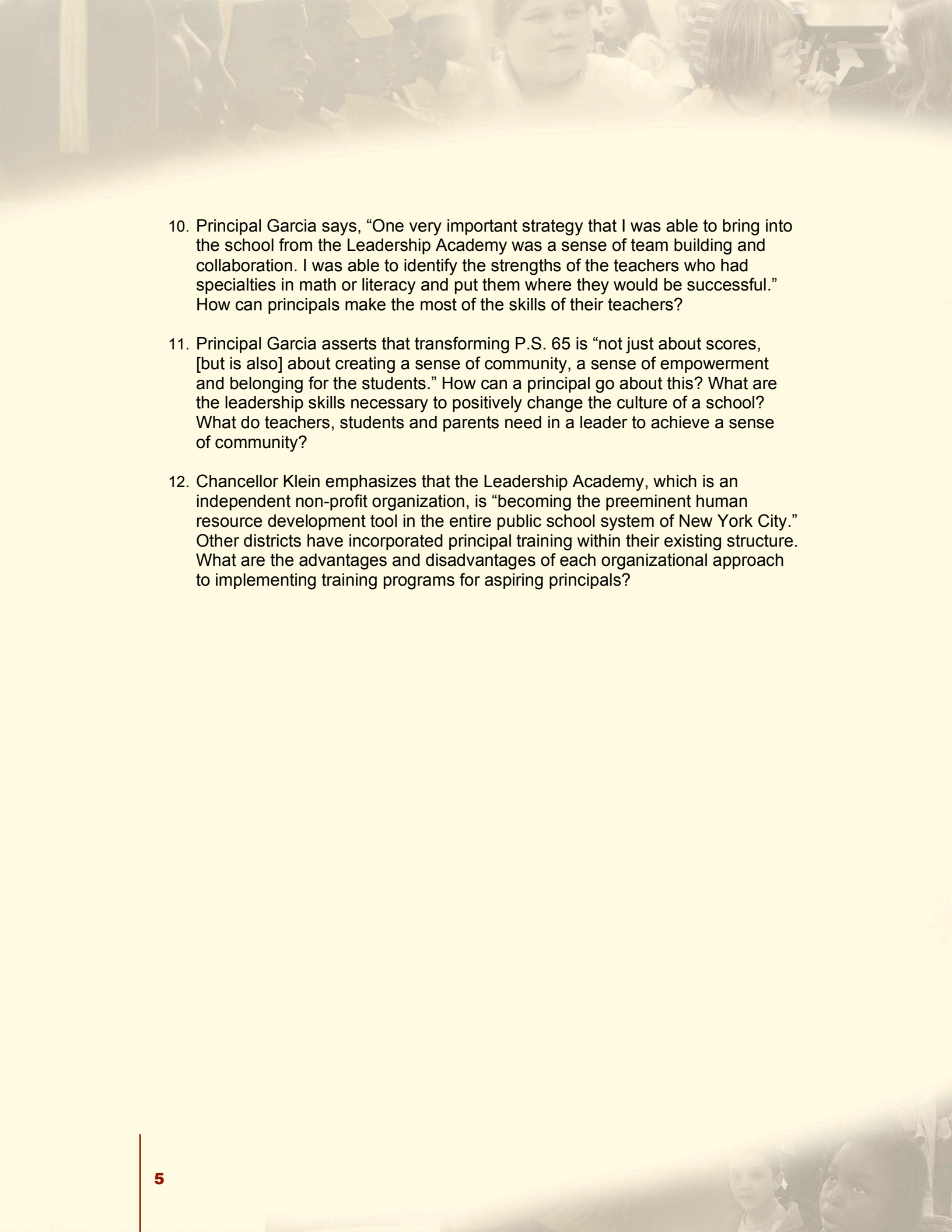
This video vignette begins with an introduction of the Leadership Academy by its CEO, Dr. Sandra Stein, and comments from New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg and Schools Chancellor Joel Klein. We meet Principal Garcia of P.S. 65, a low-performing school in which 99 percent of students receive free or reduced-priced lunch and the majority are from immigrant families. Under her leadership, the number of students reading at or above grade level has doubled over the past three years. Seventy percent of third and fifth graders and 60 percent of fourth graders now read at or above grade level – although Principal Garcia is quick to recognize that there is more to accomplish. We hear a veteran teacher, a student and a parent testify to the positive change in the school's culture and climate since the new principal's arrival. Ms. Garcia emphasizes that APP enabled her to transform P.S. 65 through in-depth data analysis, team building and collaboration and by recognizing teachers' strengths.

Conversation Questions

After watching the video vignette about the NYC Leadership Academy on the accompanying DVD, viewers might discuss the questions below.

1. Chancellor Klein states, "It became clear to me that [New York City] would need a new generation of principals." What should the next generation of leaders look like in your state or district? How might they compare with current principals?

2. One of the key issues for any aspiring leader program is how to select those who will participate. What are good selection criteria and methods? What should be the process, as the training proceeds, of predicting whether participants will become effective principals?
3. We see APP participants in the Summer Intensive throughout the video. What was your first impression when you saw APP participants interacting in the classroom and heard Principal Garcia talk about her learning experience?
4. How do APP teaching methods cater to adult learning? Do you think problem-based and action-learning methods are the most effective in a leadership training program? In your experience, what other instructional methods have been effective?
5. An important part of the APP program is the year that aspiring principals get to spend doing leadership work in schools with the guidance of a mentor principal. Nevertheless, this is expensive, since the participant's salary must be paid, and someone else is doing his/her former job. Some districts include shorter-term residencies in their aspiring leader programs. Does the residency have to be for a full year? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this approach?
6. Some preparation programs offer participants residencies in their own schools, while they continue to work there without a change in position. The APP puts participants in different schools. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each of these approaches?
7. For graduates of the NYC Leadership Academy, "the expectation ... is that they go straight into the principalship the following September," Dr. Stein explains. This is different from many aspiring principal programs that train people for assistant principal positions. What are the advantages and disadvantages of going directly from the APP into a principal position?
8. Once APP graduates become principals, they can receive additional support services from the NYC Leadership Academy, including, in the words of Chancellor Klein, "strong mentoring, colleague support and a venue for ongoing training that is meaningful in a constructive way." How are these supports helpful to new principals? What makes a good mentor? How can mentors connect APP training with the realities new principals encounter? What type of training do mentors need to be effective for principals in their first few years?
9. Principal Garcia says, "One thing that I took away from [the] Leadership Academy was the importance of data and data-driven instruction, [which] ... creates a sense of urgency." How should principals effectively use data with their teachers and students? To what extent do principals have access to relevant data in your state or district? How can data be made more accessible and useful to principals?

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10. Principal Garcia says, “One very important strategy that I was able to bring into the school from the Leadership Academy was a sense of team building and collaboration. I was able to identify the strengths of the teachers who had specialties in math or literacy and put them where they would be successful.” How can principals make the most of the skills of their teachers?
 11. Principal Garcia asserts that transforming P.S. 65 is “not just about scores, [but is also] about creating a sense of community, a sense of empowerment and belonging for the students.” How can a principal go about this? What are the leadership skills necessary to positively change the culture of a school? What do teachers, students and parents need in a leader to achieve a sense of community?
 12. Chancellor Klein emphasizes that the Leadership Academy, which is an independent non-profit organization, is “becoming the preeminent human resource development tool in the entire public school system of New York City.” Other districts have incorporated principal training within their existing structure. What are the advantages and disadvantages of each organizational approach to implementing training programs for aspiring principals?

Additional Resources

- To learn more about NYC Leadership Academy, visit www.nycleadershipacademy.org or contact:

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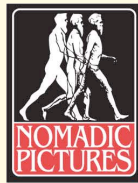
- To view P.S. 65's progress report, go to schools.nyc.gov/SchoolPortals/19/K065/default.htm.
- To learn more about the characteristics of effective principal mentoring programs, see *A Wallace Perspective: Getting Principal Mentoring Right: Lessons from the Field* at: www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter/KnowledgeTopics/CurrentAreasofFocus/EducationLeadership/Pages/getting-principal-mentoring-right.aspx.
- To read more about how the NYC Leadership Academy prepares principals, see pages 10 to 13 of The Wallace Foundation's *REPORT '04: "Surrounding Children with Opportunity"* at: www.wallacefoundation.org/KnowledgeCenter/KnowledgeTopics/AreasofContinuingInterest/PhilanthropicIssues/Pages/WallaceREPORT04.aspx.

This project is part of THE PRINCIPAL STORY outreach campaign, which is made possible by a generous grant from The Wallace Foundation, a source of ideas for improving school leadership. Visit www.wallacefoundation.org/principalstory.



Supporting ideas.
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Expanding opportunities.®

For more information and research about education leadership, visit the Wallace Knowledge Center at www.wallacefoundation.org.



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