

Lillian Schenck



Lily Schenck is the Senior Director of FutureReadyNYC, a program that serves over 19,000 students across 135 New York City public high schools. Lily draws on a career rooted in classroom teaching, instructional coaching, and systems-level leadership. A former student and instructional assistant at the Summer Principals Academy, Lily credits the program with transforming her understanding of leadership and setting her on a path that extends far beyond the classroom.

Impact in Education

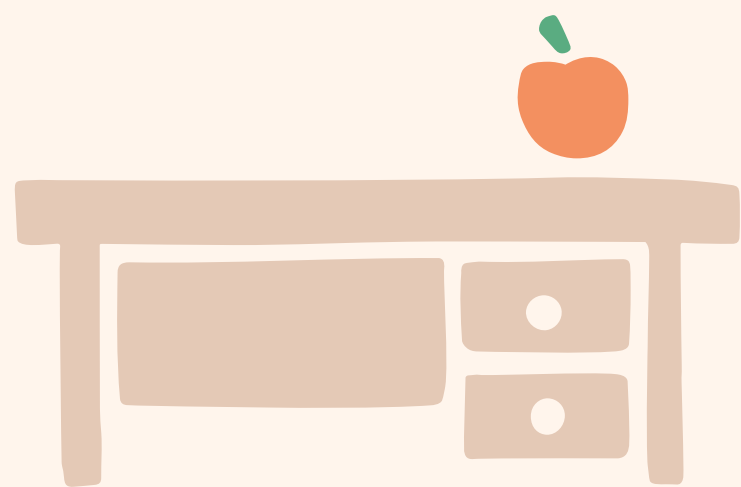
Lily's early work in education laid a strong foundation for her leadership aspirations. She began her career as a teacher before moving into roles as an instructional coach and curriculum specialist in New Orleans, where she led district-wide trainings and authored math curricula adopted across multiple schools.

"Throughout my career—from being a teacher to an instructional coach to an assistant principal and then a systems-wide program director—I've been motivated by building systems where excellent instruction thrives," she reflected. "At every step on my journey so far, I've loved the challenge of figuring out how to expand impact."

Her experiences in these roles also sparked her interest in formal leadership training.

"My early years teaching and coaching showed me how leadership decisions ripple through every aspect of student and teacher success."

She said, "finding a community of other leaders that I could learn from and with was one of the most powerful factors that drew me to apply to SPA."



Learning and Teaching at SPA

Lily chose SPA to build the strategic and organizational skills she knew she needed to lead change on a larger scale. "I was drawn to SPA because I wanted to deepen my impact beyond the classroom and build the skills to lead systems change," she noted. "I realized that to truly scale high-quality learning and equitable outcomes, I needed stronger preparation in organizational leadership, data-driven improvement, and strategic planning."

When reflecting on her experience at SPA, Lily expressed admiration for her former instructors. In particular, she highlighted Dr. Scott Hollinger and Dr. Andra Penny as "legendary educators" and described their classes as "nothing short of transformative."



Their ability to connect research to real school leadership practice, while pushing students to reflect on our purpose and power as leaders, made SPA feel like an incredible place to grow as an educator and leader, as well as an opportunity to think more boldly about where my career might go."



After graduating, Lily returned to SPA as an instructional assistant. She explained her goals in this role: "I wanted to be intentional about creating opportunities for aspiring leaders to wrestle with tough scenarios while also grounding discussions in who they are as people and why they lead." Getting to work alongside the instructors that she had admired as a student allowed Lily to grow as an educator and leader.

"Their example taught me not only how to teach adults but how to design professional learning that is transformational."

Throughout her time learning and working at SPA, Lily broadened her view of educational leadership.

“SPA reframed leadership as building conditions for equity and excellence at scale—through systems, data, and deep engagement with people.”

She realized that this work involves systems leaders, community-based organizations, policymakers, employer partners, and so many other individuals beyond the traditional school setting. This prompted her to rethink her own leadership identity and reconsider the direction of her career.



Leading Opportunity

Upon completion of her degree from SPA, Lily served as an assistant principal, instructional coach, and director of school programs across Louisiana and New York. Currently, she is the Senior Director of FutureReadyNYC, a high school pathway initiative preparing students for careers post-graduation.

As the lead for FutureReadyNYC, Lily has helped guide the initiative through a period of rapid growth, thanks to the shared vision and tireless work of the team behind it. “We’ve doubled the number of school applicants in a year, secured historic funding for pathways work in NYCPS, and next year 1 in every 3 NYC public high schools will be in FRNYC.”

SPA’s impact on Lily is evident in her leadership at FutureReadyNYC.

“SPA built my capacity to design and lead complex initiatives that drive measurable improvement. I rely daily on what I learned about change management, stakeholder engagement, and equity-centered leadership.”

She emphasized the broad applicability of skills like strategic thinking, facilitation, and communication, while also grounding her work in her school-based experience—



a perspective that helps her “build programming that creates real opportunity for students.”

Now working outside the school building, Lily defines educational leadership as “doing the work to make it possible, easy, and joyful for leaders in schools to make it easy for educators to educate and learners to learn.” Whether in schools, policy offices, or nonprofit boardrooms, she sees leadership as aligning people, data, and resources to create opportunity and drive equity.

Looking Ahead

Lily is working on her dissertation for a Doctorate in Education and is looking forward to the continued growth of FutureReadyNYC across NYC Public Schools.

Her advice to current and future SPA students is rooted in humility, growth, and community:

“Stay relentlessly curious and take full advantage of the chance to interrogate your values and beliefs. Also, cultivate your SPA relationships! Your cohort and professors will become not only lifelong friends and connections, but also thought partners who will support you through the inevitable complexities of leadership.”

Above all, she reminds future leaders to be patient and persistent.

“You can't build Rome in a day, but you've got to build Rome every day. Start with small actions to develop your leadership, your team, and your work. If you build that practice daily, you'll be astonished by what you are able to accomplish.”

