

# TRUST IN SCHOOLS AND ITS IMPACT ON SYSTEM CHANGE

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#### ABSTRACT

How can we build trust where vulnerabilities are supported and teacher leadership increases? Albany Park, a Chicago Public School that has achieved and maintained the districts highest rating, journeys through the next steps in the difficult work of school improvement. Learn about this middle school's path using diagnostic assessment tools to focus on the area of principal to teacher trust.

#### INTRODUCTION

Teachers are collaborative and collegial but it's been a struggle to build teacher leadership capacity. They participate in committees and work on projects throughout the year; however, my assistant principal and myself lead the committees and projects. Although the work was completed it was not as successful as I would have liked because teacher leaders do not initiate much of the heavy lifting. The question that will drive my inquiry into the problem is "What systems and structures do I need to put in place to build teacher leaders?

Located in Chicago's most culturally diverse neighborhood, Albany Park Multicultural Academy (APMA) is one of the few junior high schools in the city devoted solely to 7th and 8th graders and is home to just under 300 students. As a neighborhood school, the majority of the students are within school boundaries but additional seats are open to non-neighborhood families.

About 80% of the students are of Hispanic descent, the diversity within Latin America and South America it is what makes the school incredibly unique. The remaining students are almost evenly distributed between Asian, African-American, white and middle eastern students. This includes refugee students from Africa, the Middle East, Mexico and Latin America.

Albany Park has maintained level 1 and 1+ SQRP rating as well as an average yearly attendance of over 97% (See Appendix A). Social and emotional skills are at the forefront of the school, attaining the designation of an Exemplary Supportive School certification for the 2018-2020 school years.

Albany Park follows a block schedule, offering math, science, social studies, literacy, art, and physical education. Students receive SEL instruction weekly and once a month every 8th grader meets with a teacher mentor. Seventh grade students attend monthly SEL workshops offered by community partners.

The overarching goal of our curricular focus is student agency, authority, and identity. Through the use of inquiry and problem-solving teachers are creating opportunities for students to explain their thinking and respond to the ideas posed by others. Reading and Writing workshop have been instrumental in fostering these opportunities in literacy. Twelve of eighteen teachers hold ESL endorsements and three teachers are Nationally Board Certified.

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Our culturally diverse students show a great deal of respect for education and their teachers by coming to school every day. We have a solid academic and SEL foundation and we

want to put structures in place to move teachers to the next level. Based on various data points, teacher to principal trust is low and building on it is crucial to moving the school forward (See Appendix B). This includes increasing collective responsibility where teachers take initiative for school wide improvement. I want to build a safe space for our teachers to be self-aware, reflective and speak out truth instead of having a false sense of accomplishment. As a leader I want to build an environment that increases trust and pushes teacher thinking, reflection and grows them as leaders.

Teacher leadership can have a tremendous impact on both the culture of the school and student achievement. Increasing teacher leadership gives teachers the opportunities to have a voice in school reform, decisions, and inquiry. It allows for self-awareness so that teachers begin to speak our truth and change the culture of "nice". Building the capacity of teacher leaders helps teachers be a part of solutions and not just identifiers of problems. This in itself can boost teacher morale and lead to a shared vision that builds a transformative leadership school culture. Building teacher leadership capacity is an essential element of a successful school. With a shared leadership approach and representatives from a diversity of content areas and programs teams can collaborate effectively, value transparency and engage all stakeholders.

By focusing on this problem, I will experience first-hand the effects of contributing to and creating a shared leadership approach for leading a successful school where teacher leaders take initiative, accept responsibility for school effectiveness, and identify solutions to problems. It is my hope that this experience will further develop my transformational leadership skills. Through building teacher leadership, I will also build teacher trust and develop and coach future leaders.

METHODS

#### ALBANY PARK DATA

Performance	
52 Neutral	
What are these results based on? This school's performance on this Essential is based on the Measures shown below. Click on each row to learn more about this Essential's underlying concepts (measures) and their related survey questions.	
Performance 🚛	Respondent
75 Strong	Teacher
51 Neutral	Teacher
44 Neutral	Teacher
38 Weak	Teacher
	ial is based on the Measures shown be s) and their related survey questions. Performance 1; 75 Strong 51 Neutral 44 Neutral

Based on the 5Esssentials survey for 2016-2017, the essential of Effective Leaders was weak. In 2017-2018 the same area was neutral. This essential has four measures. The 2018 measure of teacher-principal trust, was weak but was an increase of 19 points over the previous year from very weak. When looking at the types of questions where the score stood out, 37% of teachers surveyed disagreed or strongly disagreed that It's to discuss feelings, worries, and frustrations, with the principal.

Another measure within this essential was teacher influence. Teacher influence scored 51 points, a neutral performance score. Of those teachers that took the survey, 53% felt little influence or no influence in determining the content of in-service programs. The same percentage felt that they have no influence or a little influence in setting standards for student behavior.

Within the measure of Instructional leadership, the overall performance was neutral. Of the teachers surveyed, 26% report that a member of the school leadership team has provided them with the support needed to improve their teaching.

Under the essential of Collaborative Teachers, the measures of teacher-teacher trust and school commitment is neutral, with 52 points. This data shows that teachers may not feel as though they are active partners, committed to the school.

The two areas in the 5Essentials Survey that I would like to increase include both the effective leaders and although the area of collaborative teacher is strong, I would like the measures of school commitment and teacher-teacher trust to increase. Having a strong performance in these areas will support the work of increasing teacher leadership.

Using the 5Essentials data we designed survey questions for the teachers. The survey had may open ended questions so that teachers could give specific feedback. When we reviewed the survey results we categorized problems as technical or adaptive. Adaptive changes need to happen to grow trust because technical changes don't necessarily increase trust. Survey responses helped us take a step back and look at adaptive problems. I realized that the trust factor involved changes in beliefs and approaches to solutions that were not going to happen overnight. People can resist adaptive change so we looked for patterns in the responses to select one problem of practice that was important to teachers.

Dr. Young's presentation, "Leading with Spirit" from December guided my ally and I into reflecting on whether our problems of practice were technical and/or adaptive. We began to look into our theory of action: IF we focus on our grading policies then we can question dig into our beliefs around student effort and motivation, as result, we look into our own teaching practices and its effect on student success.

Young's presentation gave us the time to consider our worries and fears which is a great challenge. Teachers can become complacent because the school is in good standing. Any type of change can be seen as negative and not urgent if not well thought out. This in itself can cause resistance.

In addition, during our December institute, Young, discuss the nature of leadership and he specifically said that we must name the elephant. This got my ally in a conversation around announce and acknowledge to my teachers in November that principal to teacher trust was weak. And as we began our work around building trust, we came back to the fact that being transparent with the trust issue would not be enough to create a sense of urgency.

It was at the February Institute with Carolyn Riehl where I realized that we would need to increase trust in a sideway approach. She suggested I remember the concept of reciprocal accountability. I had begun to show transparency and vulnerability in deeper levels throughout the fall, and although there were some positives, it was not enough. She encouraged me to consider something that was powerful: If I ask something of teachers, they should know that they can ask me something in return to support and assist in whatever the need.

I've collected feedback from teachers around new structures that I've put in place to help increase collective responsibility and teacher leadership. Team chairs said having principal directed meeting led by teachers has made the meetings more meaningful. At times, both my ally and I get antsy and concerned that the meetings may not focus entirely around the work of teaching and learning, but we have learned to acknowledge the small strides. We're engaging our staff in a way that we haven't engaged them in previous years and we are building confidence and commitment. This year we have engaged our PPLC in planning professional development for teachers. The chairs of the PPLC have taken additional steps to create surveys around the needs of teachers and they have increased their agenda items this school year to topics that are geared towards instruction, curriculum and student learning.

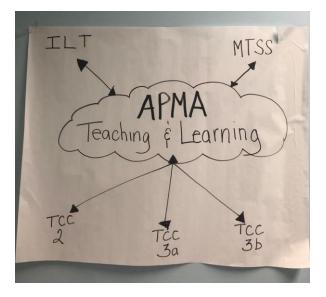
Visiting schools, two of which are Cahn fellows allowed both my ally and I to collect information focusing on how leaders build and sustain their teams. For example, we visited my wonderful advisor, Stacey Steward's school, Belmont-Cragin. We spent a large portion of our visit discussing how she has built a sense of urgency around supporting students and meeting their needs. We collected a lot of information around her teaming structures and the specific ways she built urgency with areas of need. During the February study session, Stacey reminded me to give teachers what they are ready to take and guide the work around our collective vision, embracing a problem of practice such as grading practices and collaborating to come up with a plan of action. She helped me see that the work is messy but creating a supportive, safe culture will help guide the work. Study sessions with Ellie have helped me develop a better understanding of how trust is personal and differs with every human being by looking at it through a developmental lens and my teachers' or team's "ways of Knowing". At the March study session with Ellie that focused on feedback and collaboration, my ally and I practiced utilizing our new learning by identifying a problem we faced, identifying the teachers' ways of knowing, particularly the supports and challenges and using that information to guide our feedback and next steps. By the end of our activity, we not only had an "aha moment" but we also felt cognitively challenged and drained.

Since March, I have been very thoughtful when engaging in feedback, particularly to teachers that have been resistant to change or whom have been defensive when receiving feedback. I am better able to identify my own way of making meaning of the world and can identify my teacher's "way of knowing" and the implications this may bring to the results of feedback. My last several conversations have been very intentional. I consider what type of knower they are and use "Ways of Knowing" supports and challenges to differentiate my feedback. Along with considering the supports and challenges of my teacher's ways of knowing, I also utilize my feedback meeting to hone in on one area of growth and I offer the opportunity for my teachers to communicate what they need from me to help support the work.

#### ACTIONS

### Beginning of the school year

 Set new structure for principal directed preparation period and ILT/MTSS committees Focus on teacher directed meetings focusing on teaching and learning Teams would be heterogeneously grouped by student team Teams would be a two-way communication and collaboration effort



- Sent a group of teachers to a professional learning session titled, "Effective & Productive Teaming Structures"
- Teacher teams collaboratively selected their team chair
- Analyzed 5essentials survey to better understand responses and select target area for growth
- Utilized Lily Woo's presentation on Organizational Change by using data to build a sense of urgency

Fall

- Created and administered teacher survey utilizing 5Essentials open ended questions focusing on principal to teacher trust
- Shared the 5Essentials Survey results with all staff
- Shared all responses from self-created survey with teachers including responses which portrayed myself negatively
- Identified and shared trends from responses
- Met with teacher chairs and set collaboration schedule to meet monthly
- Facilitated planning meetings with staff and experienced difficult conversations and teacher feedback (honest and transparent)
- Collaboration with ally discussing adaptive vs technical change
- Identified teacher leaders that would take the role of chairs (Considered Lily Woo's presentation on Organizational Change on promoting team building and commitment)
- Teacher teams/MTSS/ILT met continuously

Winter

- Began PLC titled, "Let's Explore Grading"
- Teacher teams/MTSS/ILT met continuously
- Collaborated with Chairs to develop leadership. Read various articles: "Effective Teams: The Key to Transforming Schools" by Elena Aguilar
- Courageous conversations with teaches with WOK strategies
- Utilized Carolyn Riehl's feedback during February study session around using a trust rubric to purchase and read Trust in School's by Bryk and Schneider

### Spring

- Continued "Let's Explore Grading" PLC
- Developed student survey as a result of grading PLC
- Collaborated with a team of teachers to gather input for DL professional development learning
- 90% of Teachers took 2019 5Essentials Survey
- Administered student survey
- Met with literacy team to hear their ideas for SY20 changes
- Shared student survey with PLC
- Shared grading PLC learning with teachers including student survey results and collaborated on next steps
- Collaborated with Chairs to discuss areas of growth for SY20 with an emphasis on teaching & learning
- Courageous conversations with teaches with WOK strategies
- Administered teacher survey to measure results of action steps for the year around increasing trust
- Shared post-survey results with teachers and shared future goals (In June)

### RESULTS

At the beginning of the year, structures were put into place to allow for teacher ownership of various teams and committees. This included having teachers volunteer to serve as chair for teacher teams, ILT and MTSS committees. The outcome of having teachers facilitate these meetings has resulted in trusting not only the process but trusting that teachers will make good decisions when I am not in charge. Inviting explicit feedback through the fall survey and sharing all the responses resulted in showing my vulnerability and transparency to staff. In addition, it showed how I valued building trust.

Through collecting different kinds of data such as teacher observations, teacher statements, and student surveys I have begun to create emotional connections. For example, teachers read the results of a student survey and noted that student motivation is tied to how they feel about themselves and how they are perceived by others. The teachers recommended that we try a strategy of small wins. As a result of viewing the student responses teachers noticed that students feel similar to how they feel regarding connecting learning to real life experiences, using effort as part of a grade, and giving zeros to students who do not turn in

work. Teachers realized that students may sometimes not do the work either in class or at home because they don't understand it. The student survey opened deep conversations around teaching and learning.

At meetings, especially during those with difficult conversations, I have made it a point to hear all voices in an honest and clear manner. In addition, I have been clear and honest with my own feedback. For example, after a literacy observation walk through, teachers were not very happy with the feedback that was given by the assistant principal. A few days later, during a planning session with all the literacy teachers, I gave them time to voice their concerns and I also took the time to voice my own concerns. Caroline Riehl's presentation on the change levers helped me consider how reciprocal accountability, vertically and horizontally is crucial to building a sense of urgency and shared accountability that lead to change.

Trusting a struggling teacher to lead professional development has resulted in the teacher feeling more connected to the school and willing to reach out for support. Another impact of teacher facilitated meetings has been the teachers identifying areas of concern connected to the mission of the school and not just their own classroom. Teachers are better able to articulate areas of concerns with other teachers. This has created a larger space for teachers to make meaning of the learning and apply it in their classroom.

During my project I have recognized that there is a need for student voice. Although there is a lot of impact on my teachers based on my actions, it will result in student impact; however, I know there is a lack of student voice and this is an area that needs to be further explored. In April, we survey our students using questions that were co-authored by the Grading PLC. The goal was to gather data around student motivation. In May we looked for patterns with the data and will be sharing it with teachers. My goal as a leader, is to use the data to capture hearts and minds and build an emotional connection that leads to the change.

A result that I want to highlight relates to using Ellie's Ways of Knowing to drive conversations and help teachers be open to feedback. For example, my art teacher is an instrumental knower. It's very difficult for her to identify areas of growth. She gets very defensive with feedback but at the same time wants to do the right thing. After a lowperforming evaluative observation, I asked to meet with her to discuss it. I planned out my meeting using "Ways of knowing," and strategies learned from Ellie's session in March. I planned intentional language based on her ways of knowing. I was strategic in using the pronoun "we" instead of I to foster a connection. When I left the meeting, I felt accomplished and thought the teacher was very receptive and reflective, something I had not experienced with this teacher. A week later, she invited me to her classroom (something she had never done) and asked for feedback.

#### REFLECTIONS

My Cahn journey this school year can be summed up in three words: growth, reflection, energy. All three have allowed me to look at my leadership style and provides the tools to support the work of leading a school community.

The summer study session focusing on emotional intelligence is something that I have come back to often throughout my Cahn journey. The work of a school leader is difficult but rewarding. As I've continued my work, I've put myself in a vulnerable state with my teachers. This in itself has created a place of higher stress levels and at times, frustrations. I've worked on managing my emotions and giving myself the time away from work to focus on my family and do the things that relax and de-stress me. Having a group of trusting principal friends that live my work and feel my stress is important. Through my Cahn year I have gotten to meet and interact with a group of highly intelligent, purposeful and passionate leaders that have helped me with the work. My Cahn advisor has been instrumental in helping me reflect and has become part of my network of colleagues that support my work and emotional leadership.

As I began to look into a problem of practice, I looked for data that would help me identify a problem that was inhibiting system change. Data that stood out included the number of teachers that participate in committees and/or serve as teacher leaders. Previously, I led the work and had a difficult time getting complete teacher buy-in. This resulted in a minimum number of teachers participating and less accountability and engagement. As a result, my Cahn project focus was a no-brainer; let's focus on increasing teacher leaders to support the work around teaching and learning. My theory was that if I made some adjustments, set some structures and entice teachers through a stipend to serve as teacher chairs, there would be an increase in teacher accountability and ownership. Boy, was I wrong. As my Cahn learning continued and my ally and I focused on our project, we both began to go through a shift. I began to ask the question, "Why are teachers not owning the work?". I began to go back to data that would eventually turn my entire project around--the 5Essentials Survey results.

My aha moment appeared when I began to move away from the idea that the lack of teacher leaders was halting our school's improvement and began to internally consider how I may be part of the problem. This realization was very difficult to digest. However, as I worked through activities during the fall study sessions I came to a realization that my theory of action needed adjustment. Carolyn Riehl's "When the Question is the Answer and the Learning Drives the Action," along with the activities of "Looking at my theory of action with the goal in mind," and Ellie's "Feedback Through Listening" prompted both my ally and I to consider what WE needed to change in our own practice. We looked at how a change in our leadership style might help teachers get to place of change and see urgency in areas of teaching and learning.

During our fall session, I heard many of my peers express how the Cahn sessions supported how they felt and how deeply immersed in reflection they were in just a few months. I listened to various fellows talk about feeling vulnerable but open to it because they felt supported and were in a safe place. I remember flying back to Chicago and doing my own reflections of the session, my project, and my next steps. I knew I had to share my Cahn journey with my staff, be completely transparent and ask them for feedback. According to the 5Essentials data, the principal-teacher trust measure of effective leaders was weak. I created an open-ended survey with the intention to show my own vulnerability and ask my own teachers how they felt and allow them to give me specific feedback on my areas of growth. I turned the agreement scale questions from the 5Essentials into open ended ones that allowed teachers to give this specific feedback. I personally urged them to give me honest feedback I could utilize in order to grow. The average time that teachers took to fill out the survey was about 45 minutes. I have to admit that reading their responses was one of the hardest tasks I have undertaken as a school leader. It was very difficult to not take it personally but I knew that the results would support my growth in some way. It was at this specific moment that I sent my Ally a message that read, "my Cahn project has just changed". That weekend, I realized that there were trust

issues that were hindering teacher leaders to rise to the challenge and more importantly, it could be the reason that embracing change was difficult.

Carolyn Riehl's presentation from February focusing on change leadership and phases of whole-system change made me reflect on how I have moved back and forth in my Cahn journey from the various change levers: prepare, envision and enact. In addition, her feedback on using a trust rubric to look at my work, helped shape the remaining of the year. I was able to identify that my focus area was within Bryk and Schneider's trust considerations of respect and personal regard for others. My ally and I broke down each section and aligned evidence to each. It was easy to identify our areas of growth. In planning for next steps, both my ally and I have taken the considerations and discussed our approach to help build the social trust levels needed for systemic change.

One of the most impactful experiences has been around considering my teachers Ways of knowing--looking at it from a different view point. It has changed how I've had conversations with teachers. I've been very intentional on preparing and sharing data that creates an emotional connection based on how they see the world around them. This helps those challenging conversations, helps channel all the frustrating energies into something that can lead to change, and allows me to not get "stuck" but find opportunities. My last conversation with a teacher was completely different than any other conversation I have ever had with this particular teacher. The outcome of my intentional planning using her way of knowing was an invitation to visit her classroom and a self-assessment of the lesson. The teacher came up with her next steps without my prompting and more importantly, she showed ownership.

During the Cahn journey my ally, Marie Garza has been my support and my equal partner in the work. We both had many "aha" moments and we pushed each other to deeply reflect on our own practices, our areas of growth and challenges. I consider her my co-leader and she has helped shaped my own growth because we are honest and open with one another. I look forward to seeing her be the leader of a school in the coming years.

I look back at my decision to apply for the Cahn Fellowship as one of the best decisions of my professional career. The journey is far from over but I know that I am a better leader than I was when I started. My goal is to use the learning to continue to positively impact my current school community and those that I will seek in the future.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The opportunity awarded to me this school year from all the Cahn staff and faculty at Teachers College is one that I want to mention. The program has been instrumental in helping me push myself to new levels of leadership. I also want to profoundly thank my advisor, Stacy Stewart. She has been my mentor, think partner and go-to person on all things Cahn and not Cahn. Her wisdom, spirit, advocacy for children and leadership is contagious. My ally, Marie Garza has been my co-partner, and collaborator throughout not only this Cahn journey but in the last 6 years of working at Albany Park. We balance each other and push each other to be better leaders and humans. Finally, I'd like to thank all my Cahn Fellow peers. I have not only gained a new network of intelligent professionals, but I have connected with them on personal levels.

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#### APPENDIX A: CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS 2018 SCHOOL PROGRESS REPORT



# 2018 School Progress Report

#### Albany Park Multicultural Academy

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#### School Quality Rating

Level 1 Level 2+ Level 2 Level 3 Not: Enough Data

Level 1+

This school received a Level 1+ rating based on the CPS School Quality Rating Policy (SQRP). More information about what this rating means and how it is calculated is available at cps.edu/sqrp.

#### Accountability Status: Good Standing

This school is in Good Standing, based on this and last year's SQRP ratings. This means that the Local School Council (LSC) will oversee this school's funding allocations and Continuous Improvement Work Plan (CIWP). More Information is available at cps.edu/LSC

#### Student Growth



Student Growth at this school was far above average, which means the change in NWEA test scores between Spring 2017 and Spring 2018 was much greater at this school than at other schools nationally with the same pretest score.

#### Student Attainment

ABOVE AVERAGE Student Attainment at this school was above average, which means NWEA test scores in Spring 2018 were higher than the national average score



National Average

#### School Culture & Climate



This school is "Organized for Improvement" which means that the school has a strong culture and climate with only a few areas for Improvement. Results are based on student and teacher responses to the My Voice, My School 5Essentials survey. For more information on this survey and additional measures of school culture and climate visit https://www.5essentials.org/cps/5e/2018/.



This school does not have a preschool program.

# Creative Schools



This school is Excelling in the arts. It meets the goals and priorities outlined in the CPS Arts Education Plan, including Staffing & Instruction, Partnerships, Community & Culture, and Budget & Planning. To learn more, visit http:// www.cpsarts.org/creative-schools-categories/.

#### Leaders NEUTRAL Supportive Environment NEUTRAL NEUTRAL NEUTRAL Teachers STRONG STRONG Instruction VERY STRONG Involved Families NEUTRAL STRONG Student Participation Rate: 95% Student Participation Rate: 95% Student Participation Rate: 95%

# Healthy Schools



HEALTHY CPS STATUS: NOT ACHIEVED

Students learn better at healthy schools! This school is working towards achieving Healthy CPS. Schools must earn four badges to become Healthy CPS. Learn more by visiting www.cps.edu/healthycps.

#### **Supportive Schools**



This school has strong commitment and robust systems to support social and emotional learning (SEL). Documents, observations, and interviews demonstrate that SEL is a core part of students' experience and the learning environment meets CPS School Climate Standards.

You can find more detailed information about school progress and the measures used in this report at cps.edu/findaschool.

#### School Stats

School Type: District - Traditional

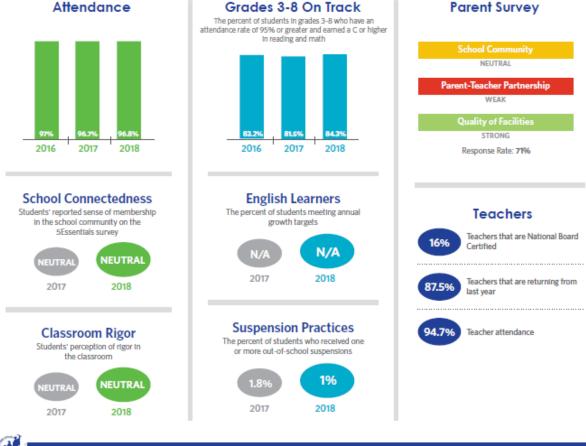
Enrollment: 290 Grades Served: 7-8

ADA Accessibility Level: Unknown

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#### Neighborhood Map

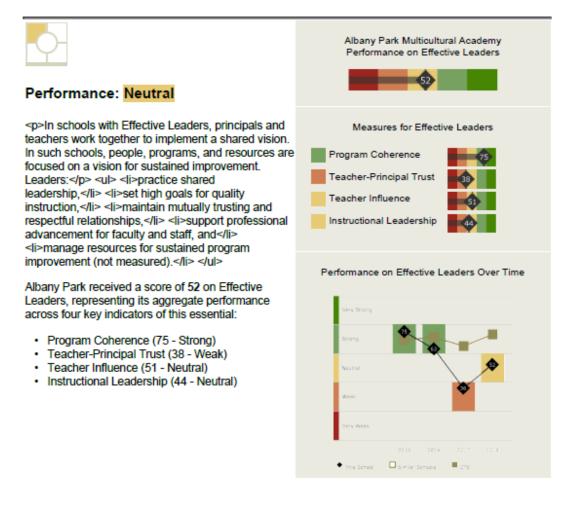




You can find more detailed information about school progress and the measures used in this report at cps.edu/findaschool.

2018 CPS 5Essentials Survey

#### Effective Leaders



# **Collaborative Teachers**



#### Performance: Strong

In schools with strong Collaborative Teachers, all teachers collaborate to promote professional growth. In such schools, teachers are:

Albany Park received a score of 65 on Collaborative Teachers, representing its aggregate performance across four key indicators of this essential:

- Collaborative Practices (84 Very Strong)
- Collective Responsibility (71 Strong)
- Quality Professional Development (67 Strong)
- School Commitment (52 Neutral)
- Teacher-Teacher Trust (52 Neutral)

Albany Park Multicultural Academy Performance on Collaborative Teachers





#### Performance on Collaborative Teachers Over Time

