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Building Assets, Reducing Risks (BARR) is a strengths-based approach that leverages strong relationships and data-driven decisions to boost achievement for all students.

## OVERVIEW

BARR's mission is to create equitable schools so that every student, regardless of race, ethnicity, or economic status, has access to a high-quality education where adults know them, recognize their strengths, and help them succeed. The BARR system transforms both the student and staff experience. Cohort-based classes, social-emotional learning (SEL) time, and personalized support are the markers of BARR for students K–12. Through these offerings, students develop personal relationships with peers and staff, feel understood as individuals, and become more connected in the school environment. Student support teams, a whole child focus, and response to intervention (RTI) are the respective complementary components of BARR for staff. BARR's multi-tiered system of support enables teachers, staff, and administrators to utilize insights from relationships to design individually targeted interventions that address the academic and non-academic reasons why students may struggle in school.

The BARR system is implemented through BARR's 8 Interlocking Strategies: [BARR's 8 Interlocking Strategies](#)

- Focus on the whole student
- Providing professional development for teachers, counselors, and administrators
- Using BARR's SEL curriculum to foster a climate of learning
- Creating cohorts
- Holding regular meetings of the cohort teacher teams
- Conducting Community Connect meetings
- Engaging families in student learning
- Engaging administrators.



BARR is shown to be effective in urban and rural schools alike, driving higher math and reading scores, decreased failure rates, improved student experience for all students, and narrowed opportunity gaps for students traditionally underserved. [▶Explaining BARR](#) [BARR Model One Pager](#)

## What Makes This Model Innovative?



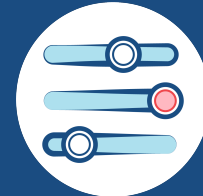
### Whole-Child Focus

BARR believes student success is about more than just academic outcomes. The model uses a strengths-based approach to meet the cognitive, social, and emotional needs of all learners.



### Connection & Community

From student-to-student, student-to-staff, and staff-to-staff, every aspect of success in BARR begins with strong, intentional relationships.



### Customization

BARR's emphasis on real-time student data enables teachers, staff, and administrators in the student support system to develop interventions that address the real needs of the individual student.

## DESIGN

### Goals

BARR works toward results in academic and non-academic areas of student life.

<b>Strong Relationships</b>	Students feel understood and supported academically, socially, emotionally, and physically. They have strong, intentional relationships with fellow students and staff.
<b>Academic Progress</b>	Students make academic progress, as measured by higher math and reading scores.
<b>Social-Emotional Development</b>	Students exhibit positive social-emotional development and overall well-being, as evidenced by decreased disciplinary issues.
<b>Deeper Engagement</b>	Students are more deeply engaged in school, as measured by increased attendance and higher expectations and support from their teachers.
<b>Equity</b>	The BARR system has stronger effects on students of color and below the poverty line, and thus closes the opportunity gap.

## Experience

BARR's relationship pillar is the guiding principle of the student experience. The BARR system ensures that every student feels understood, cared about, and supported by fostering and leveraging strong relationships amongst students and staff.

Cohort-based learning and I/U (SEL) time focus on building community in the classroom, while expanding the focus of students' in-class experience beyond academics. With a foundation in strong, authentic relationships, students develop a positive perception of their school environment and benefit from well-informed, personalized supports in and outside the classroom.

### Cohort Learning

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Students and teachers in BARR are grouped into cohorts to support student-to-student, staff-to-staff, and student-to-staff relationships. Students take courses together with their cohort. This structure promotes strong relationships between students and determines the multidisciplinary staff team that each student is supported by in the model.



For a secondary example, in a school with an average of 30 students per class, a cohort would typically include three teachers and 90 students. Each of the three teachers (English, math, and social studies, for example) would teach three 9th grade sections of their class — 30 students per class to make up the cohort of 90 students. In some schools, cohorts have four teachers.

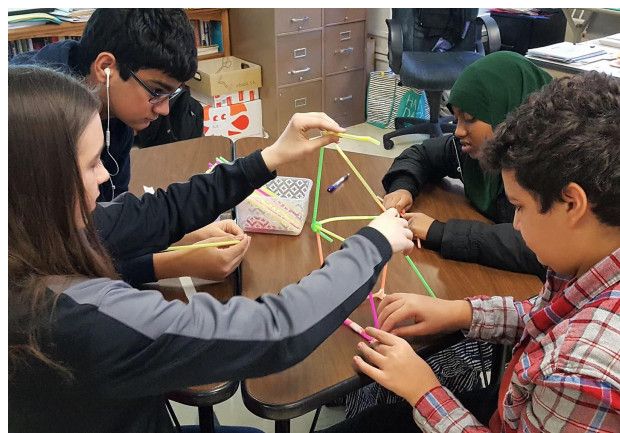
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### I/U-Time

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I/U-Time is BARR's integrated SEL support, a 30-minute weekly non-academic lesson that students engage in with their classmates and teachers. I-Time is programming for secondary, and U-Time is the primary school equivalent. The goal of I/U-Time is to help strengthen student-to-student and staff-to-student relationships and to build classroom community. I/U-Time lessons identify class members as "participants" and "facilitators," rather than "students" and "teachers," enabling students to build a perspective of teachers as people as well as instructors.

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The social-emotional focus of I/U-Time helps students not only build strong relationships but practice essential life skills, such as communicating effectively and setting personal goals. I/U-Time activities often place students in small groups, to encourage open discussion with peers. I/U-Time lessons range widely, content-wise, from fun games to serious discussions. Topics explored in the secondary school I-Time range from empathy, goal setting and communication to bullying, substance use, and grief and loss. [▶I-Time: Student Perspective](#) The primary-school U-Time includes fundamental elements of literacy in weekly lessons.

I/U-Time not only builds strong relationships but enables teachers to get to know students on a deeper level, so they can collect personal information to support block meetings—the weekly cohort teacher meeting focused on student progress and support planning. Lessons like “A Rainbow in the Clouds” help teachers learn about students’ support systems, knowledge which may be critical to future support strategies. [📄Sample U-Time Lesson: A Rainbow in the Clouds, K-2](#) [📄Sample U-Time Lesson: A Rainbow in the Clouds, 3-5](#) [📄Sample I-Time Lesson: A Rainbow in the Clouds, 6-12](#) As curriculum progresses into topics surrounding



risky behavior, the I-Time large and small group discussion format enables students to discuss experiences that may be linked to present challenges in school. In cases where this additional context is helpful for planning supportive strategies, teachers take insights from these conversations into block team meetings.

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## Individualized Student Support

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Teachers use comprehensive data (collected from daily observations, insights from I/U-Time, discipline records, attendance records, and academic data) to “level” students according to their needs. In teacher team meetings, students are leveled as 0 (thriving), 1 (in need of a teacher-led strategy), 2 (in need of two or more staff-led strategies), or 3 (in need of community connections). Teachers design and implement strategies as a team (for level 0–2 students) and with the support of specialists and administrators (for level 3 students).

Students more positively experience these strategies, regardless of level, because of existing relationships with teachers and the personalized nature of support. Support teams (encompassing both teacher teams and teams of specialists and administrators) account for relationships with students when there is a need for intervention.

For example, if a student is at a level 1 because of multiple missing assignments in Art class, the student’s science teacher may be identified to follow up with the student because of the strength of their existing relationship, cultivated when the teacher coached the student’s soccer team. The nature of this personal relationship would enable the teacher and team to gain

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additional information on the student’s situation, and offer support if applicable, to help the student complete the assignments.

Relationships with family are a special focus for Level 3 students as the community connect team connects them with community resources to address long-term needs, alongside a plan for school-based intervention.

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## Supporting Structures

The BARR system leverages its eight interlocking strategies to build intentional relationships, utilize real-time data, and enable schools to achieve concrete academic, social, and emotional outcomes for each and every student. Implementing the model requires significant shifts across many school structures, from curriculum and instruction to adult roles and schedules.

### **Schools leverage BARR’s SEL curriculum, I/U-Times, to build relationships and gather student data.**



#### **CURRICULUM, INSTRUCTION, & ASSESSMENT**

The SEL focus of BARR’s required I/U-Times curriculum is specifically designed to ensure the relationship building and data collection that underpin the model. Lessons help teachers gather information about what is happening in students’ non-academic lives that may be affecting their school performance. These insights are brought to block meetings and power brainstorming around possible interventions. BARR’s curriculum covers a wide range of topics relevant to the developmental needs of students. Each I/U-Time lesson is correlated with the 40 Developmental Assets and identifies risk and/or protective factors the lesson addresses.

[40 Developmental Assets](#)

U-Time curriculum is broken down into two grade bands, K–2 and 3–5, and I-Time from grades 6–12 includes adaptations for middle school grades. Each curriculum contains three volumes, totaling over 100 lessons.

[Sample U/I-Time Lessons](#) U/I-Time lessons are sequential, and it is recommended that I/U-Time activities be completed in the order presented, unless a lesson out-of-sequence complements a content area from another class.



#### **SCHOOL COMMUNITY & CULTURE**

### **Schools must be willing to foster a strengths-based school culture centered on relationships.**

Successful implementation of BARR starts with buy-in from administrators. School leaders must champion the BARR approach both culturally and in allocation of school resources. Adopting schools are not required to have a pre-existing culture of strengths-based development at the staff level, as adult mindset shifts are an early *outcome* of BARR implementation.

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**BARR's multi-tiered system of support requires partnership across adult roles, involving teachers, counselors, administrators, and other specialists in addressing the academic and non-academic needs of students.**

While I/U-Time and cohorts are the primary BARR experience on the student side, the multidisciplinary teacher team is the nucleus of support behind the scenes. Through regular observations while teaching and additional insights gained in I/U-Time, block teachers are able to determine which students fall into Tiers 0, 1, 2, and 3 of needed intervention.

The weekly teacher team meeting is where the cohort teachers discuss all students, with a focus on determining which students at “level 0–1” may benefit from a closer connection with a staff member. From this meeting, the team also identifies students whose needs may be best served at higher tiers of support. The Big Block meeting pairs the teacher team with school-based interventionists, specialists, and administration to focus on “level 2” students who may require help from more than one person or a specialist. School administrators, social workers, and counselors lead in creating an intensive support plan for “level 3” students through Community Connect meetings that explore a network of community-based services options and family support to meet student needs.



**ADULT ROLES, HIRING,  
& LEARNING**

School leadership must identify a BARR Coordinator to oversee BARR's programmatic implementation at the school level. BARR Coordinators are existing school staff with strong relationships across the school community which enable them to advance the BARR approach. BARR Coordinators participate in Big Block and Community Connect meetings, and serve as liaisons between the school and the BARR Center.

Preparation for BARR begins with a two-day in-person summer training for all staff who will implement BARR. Summer intensives continue in the second and third year to foster continuous improvement. Schools receive ongoing support through a BARR Coach who works 1:1 with the BARR Coordinator to guide implementation, and visits schools 3–4 times each year. BARR also hosts Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) for BARR Coordinators and school administrators, to support professional development and learning amongst staff in the model.



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**Schools must structure schedules that allow cohorts that take core courses together, and dedicate time for weekly I/U-Time.**

Cohorts in the secondary model are structured around 3–4 core subjects (typically math, English, and science or social studies). Students participate in I/U Time in one of their classes every week. Teachers work together to

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## SCHEDULE & USE OF TIME

coordinate the rotating I/U-Time schedule and must set aside time during class to facilitate I/U-Time for each of their sections over the course of the rotation.

For example, all students in Cohort 1 have Ms. Alvarez for Algebra, Ms. Charles for Chemistry, and Mr. Elton for English. Once a week, each teacher would dedicate 30 minutes of class time for I/U-Time for one of their sections. Once a week all students in Cohort 1 would have 30 minutes of I/U-Time with Ms. A, Ms. C, or Mr. E.

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## Investment from both families and community partners is necessary to ensure comprehensive response to student needs.



## FAMILY & COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

BARR treats families as active partners in student learning. All families are invited to participate in an initial orientation and a parent advisory council. Teachers also regularly call and meet with the families or guardians of students who need more support, so the educators and families can share successes, assess challenges, and work together more effectively.

Community partners are essential for planning interventions for students most at risk. Schools must develop knowledge around programs and services available in the community that may meet the needs of students beyond what the school can provide.

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## Schools utilize BARR's North Star system to best leverage data for student support.



## TECHNOLOGY & INFRASTRUCTURE

Schools retain exclusive access to and management of student data and continue to utilize their existing Student Information Systems. BARR's North Star is a proprietary spreadsheet for *harnessing* comprehensive student qualitative and quantitative data. BARR Coaches work with the school's BARR Coordinator to integrate student information into the North Star, enabling schools to efficiently access, review, and synthesize student data during block and community connect meetings.

Schools access BARR's learning resources, including I/U-Time curriculum, in BARR's searchable Learning Management System, Basecamp.

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## BUDGET & OPERATIONS

## Schools must put significant funding towards implementing the BARR system.

Schools must make a significant financial investment during the first three years of implementing BARR. After three years, the cost of implementation is lower.

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**Implementing the BARR system requires a three-year commitment, which includes ongoing support for continuous improvement.**

Schools receive coaching, training, and membership in the BARR network to support implementation of the BARR system.



**CONTINUOUS  
IMPROVEMENT**

**Coaching:** As primary support and connector of schools to the BARR Center and methodology, coaches perform 3–4 school visits per year, support annual needs analysis, and help evaluate bi-annual student/teacher surveys. They are regularly available to help schools brainstorm through challenges and improve their BARR programming.

**Training:** Each year of onsite training for BARR schools builds on the first year, enabling schools to evaluate and progress their supports. After initial implementation training in Year 1, Year 2 brings a focus on effective team meetings and addressing trauma through BARR. Year 3 centers on building resiliency and reducing risky behaviors.

**Networking:** BARR schools have access to a community of over 140 BARR schools across 98 districts and 17 states. As part of the network, BARR Coordinators have access to BARR’s monthly professional learning community calls to connect with others, troubleshoot issues, and share best practices for implementing BARR in various school settings.

## IMPLEMENTATION

### Supports Offered

[The BARR Center](#) offers the following support to help you implement their approach. Schools looking to implement BARR must commit to an initial three years in the model.

#### Breakthrough by BARR

*Cost Associated*



Breakthrough by BARR is the foundational package for schools in Year 1–3 of BARR implementation. This includes:

- a dedicated BARR coach with four on-site visits in year one and three visits in years two and three
- access to basecamp learning management system, bi-annual surveys, and North Star (organizational tool)
- ongoing BARR trainings and PD, professional learning communities (PLCs), and BARR Network.

[Learn More](#)

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## Reach

281

Schools

151

Districts

23

States

86,140

Students

## Impact

BARR has substantial evidence, rooted in rigorous study, to support the system's impact. [▶ BARR, 22 Years of Research](#) [BARR Results Website](#)

**BARR is the first and only school-improvement model to successfully pass the three tiers of evidence under the U.S. Department of Education's Investing in Innovation (i3) program.**

- The three levels of criteria—rigorous testing and replication in development, ability to be validated in a variety of settings, and ability to be scaled to serve schools throughout the country—were backed by research from the American Institutes of Research (AIR). [BARR Research Overview](#)

**Implementation of BARR improves student attendance.**

- BARR significantly reduced chronic absenteeism (students being absent more than 10 percent of the time). Assignment to BARR caused a favorable impact on the percentage of students who were chronically absent. The rate of chronic absenteeism was 19% in BARR schools, compared to 22% in control schools (Effective Size = -0.11). Greatest effect was seen for male students and students of color. [AIR 2022 BARR Scale-Up Study](#)

**BARR has substantial and statistically significant impacts on the proportion of students who pass all their core courses.**

- On average, large urban schools see a 40% reduction in failure rate after one year of BARR, while smaller rural schools measure a 29% reduction. [AIR 2019 BARR Validation Study](#)
- 80% of ninth graders in BARR passed all their core classes compared to 74% of students in control group schools. The impact was strongest for male students, students of color, students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, English learners, and students with disabilities. (AIR Scale-Up, 2022)

## Contact

**Hannah Furnald**

Chief of Staff

[hannah.furnald@barrcenter.org](mailto:hannah.furnald@barrcenter.org)

# RESOURCES



## Explaining BARR

A video overview of the BARR model, which is rooted in the belief that growth is possible and within reach for every school.

The BARR model uses eight interlocking strategies that build intentional relationships, utilize real-time data, and enable schools to achieve concrete academic, social and emotional outcomes for all students.

[www.BARRcenter.org](http://www.BARRcenter.org)

**Focus on the whole student**

In every interaction with students, educators address students' academic, emotional, social, and physical needs. Teachers work to better understand and build on students' strengths, consistently address the non-academic reasons why they may fall behind in school, and identify what they need to thrive.

**Hold regular meetings of the cohort teacher teams**

The teachers in a cohort have a shared meeting time. Each team meets weekly to discuss each student in the cohort using student-level data that is updated weekly. The teacher team evaluates each student's progress as well as academic and non-academic barriers to learning in these collaborative sessions.

## BARR's 8 Interlocking Strategies

An overview of BARR's 8 interlocking strategies that build intentional relationships and utilize real-time data.



## BARR Model One-Pager

A one-pager about the BARR model, including an overview of its approach and its impact on students and teachers.



**I-Time: Student Perspective**  
Students share what I-Time means to them.



## Sample U-Time Lesson: A Rainbow in the Clouds, K-2

A sample U-Time lesson plan for grades K-2.



## Sample U-Time Lesson: A Rainbow in the Clouds, 3-5

A sample U-Time lesson plan for grades 3-5.



## Sample I-Time Lesson: A Rainbow in the Clouds, 6-12

A sample I-Time lesson plan for grades 6-12.

Search **40 Developmental Assets™ for Adolescents (ages 12-18)**

Search Results: See identified the following building blocks of healthy development. Assets are Developmental Assets™—that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.

<b>Support</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Family support</b>—Family life provides high levels of love and support.</li> <li><b>Positive family communication</b>—Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents.</li> <li><b>Other adult relationships</b>—Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.</li> <li><b>Caring neighborhood</b>—Young person experiences caring neighbors.</li> <li><b>Caring school climate</b>—School provides a caring, encouraging environment.</li> <li><b>Parent involvement in schooling</b>—Parents are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.</li> </ol>
<b>Empowerment</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Community values youth</b>—Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.</li> <li><b>Youth as resources</b>—Young people are given useful roles in the community.</li> <li><b>Service to others</b>—Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.</li> <li><b>Safety</b>—Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.</li> </ol>
<b>External Assets</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Family boundaries</b>—Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.</li> <li><b>School boundaries</b>—School provides clear rules and consequences.</li> <li><b>High behavioral standards</b>—Significant role responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.</li> <li><b>Adult role models</b>—Parents and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.</li> <li><b>Positive peer influence</b>—Young person has friends model responsible behavior.</li> <li><b>High expectations</b>—Both parents and teachers encourage the young person to do well.</li> </ol>

## 40 Developmental Assets

The 40 Developmental Assets identified as building blocks of healthy development.

## Sample U-Time and I-Time Lessons

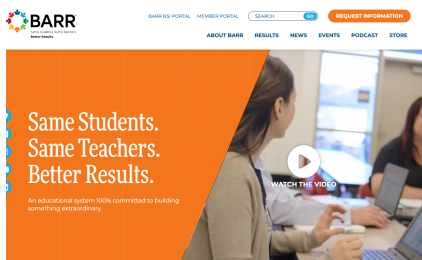
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The BARR system uses **eight interlocking strategies** that build intentional relationships, utilize real-time data, and enable schools to achieve concrete academic, social, and emotional outcomes for each and every student.

BARR's U-Time curriculum (grades K-5) and I-Time curriculum (grades 6-12) use 30-minute lessons that build intentional relationships - both student-to-student and staff-to-student - and promote social and emotional skills in students. Through training and coaching on the use of the curriculum as a component within the BARR system, teachers become skilled at building stronger relationships with their students and collecting real-time data such as student strengths, skills, and connections in school.

## Sample U/I-Time Lessons

A collection of sample lessons for U-Time and I-Time for grades K-2, 3-5, and 6-12 in English and Spanish.



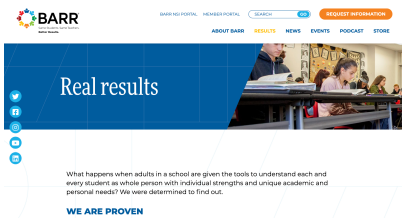
### [BARR Center Website](#)

The BARR Center website, which provides additional information and resources about the BARR model



### [BARR, 22 Years of Research](#)

A video summary of BARR's commitment to being evidence-based.



### [BARR Results Website](#)

BARR's website, which shares and summarizes its impact to date.



### [BARR Research Overview](#)

An overview of research on BARR through its participation in the Department of Education i3 program.

### **Building Assets and Reducing Risks (BARR) i3 Scale-Up Evaluation**

#### Final Report

Johannes M. Bos, Cheryl Graczeski, Sonica Dhillon, Amelia Auchstetter, Julia Casasantto-Ferro, Sami Kitmitto

June 2022

### [AIR 2022 Scale-Up Final Report](#)

Final report of research on BARR by AIR through the Scale-Up phase of the i3 program.



### **Building Assets and Reducing Risks (BARR) Validation Study Final Report**

APRIL 2019

Johannes M. Bos | Sonica Dhillon | Trisha Borman

### [AIR 2019 Validation Full Report](#)

Final report of research on BARR by AIR through the Validation phase of the i3 program.



### **Improving Student Outcomes in High School by Strengthening Relationships**

Results From a Rigorous Evaluation of *Building Assets, Reducing Risks* (the BARR Model)

### [AIR 2019 Validation Summary](#)

A summary of research on BARR by AIR through the Validation phase of the i3 program.



### [BARR at Johnson Central HS](#)

Testimonials from administrators, students, and teachers at a BARR high school in Kentucky.



### [BARR at North Lawndale College Prep](#)

Testimonials from administrators, students, and teachers at a BARR high school in Chicago, Illinois.



[BARR in North Dakota](#)

Testimonials from state and district superintendents, staff and administrators implementing BARR across North Dakota.