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UNDERSTANDING BARR'S EIGHT INTERCONNECTED STRATEGIES

BARR's eight interconnected strategies—all grounded in research about what works in education—provide a comprehensive structure through which a school can accomplish any goal it sets. BARR helps educators build safe, strong, trusting relationships with their students, and these connections pave the way for every student to engage in learning.

STRATEGY 1: Focus on the whole student

In every interaction with students (or discussion about students), educators address students' academic, emotional, social, and physical needs. Teachers work to better understand and build on students' strengths—to proactively address the nonacademic reasons why they may fall behind in school and to identify what they need to thrive.

STRATEGY 2: Provide professional development for teachers, counselors, and administrators

Professional development focuses on using student-teacher relationships to enhance achievement. It begins before the model is implemented and continues throughout the school year.

STRATEGY 3: Use BARR's I-Time Curriculum to foster a climate for learning

I-Time is a 30-minute weekly lesson that students take with others in their cohort as a supplement to the school curriculum. Taught by the cohort's core-subject teachers, I-Time's social/emotional focus helps students build strong relationships with teachers and each other—and practice essential life skills, such as communicating effectively and setting personal goals. I-Time also addresses important issues for adolescents, including substance abuse, grief, and bullying.

STRATEGY 4: Create cohorts of students

In the BARR model, students take a group of core courses as part of a block, or cohort. Each cohort typically has three core-subject teachers (typically math, English, and science or social studies), and the teachers' and students' schedules are aligned so the students take these three core subjects only with other students in their cohort. This structure helps educators cultivate connections—with students and with each other—that allow for more effective education.

For example, in a school with an average of 30 students per class, a cohort typically would 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 his or her class—30 students per class to make up the cohort of 90 students. In some schools, cohorts have four teachers.

STRATEGY 5: Hold regular meetings of the cohort teacher teams

The teachers in a cohort have the same scheduled planning period. This teacher team meets weekly to discuss each student in the cohort using student-level performance data that is updated weekly. The teacher team evaluates each student's progress as well as academic and nonacademic obstacles to learning. In these collaborative sessions, teachers identify students who are not on track and determine how to intervene to support them.

STRATEGY 6: Conduct Risk Review meetings

Cohort teacher teams identify persistently low-performing students and refer them to a Risk Review team, which includes the school's BARR coordinator, a school administrator, a school social worker/counselor, and other professionals as needed. This team is trained to help the students most in need so the highest-risk students get essential external support. Moreover, because the highest-risk students are getting additional support, the cohort teachers have more time for their students who need support but are not in crisis.

STRATEGY 7: Engage families in student learning

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

STRATEGY 8: Engage administrators

Before the school implements BARR, administrators learn how they can integrate BARR into their school culture and use it to reach their specific school goals. Throughout the school year, administrators regularly communicate with and provide ongoing support to the BARR teams in their schools.

BARR—Building Assets, Reducing Risks—gives schools a comprehensive, intentional approach to meeting students' academic, social, and emotional needs. Teaching becomes more purposeful, direct instruction becomes more effective, and students thrive with expanded support. BARR helps educators better connect with their students and address the issues that cause students to fail courses, drop out, and/or engage in harmful behavior.