

# Impacting 9th Grade Educational Outcomes: A Randomized Controlled Trial of the BARR Model

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## BARR students earn more core course credits, perform better on math standardized tests, and report better in-school experiences

The transition from eighth grade to ninth grade is a critical point for students. It can set them on a path toward successfully graduating from high school or dropping out. A growing number of schools have sought to support ninth-grade students through the Building Assets, Reducing Risks (BARR) model. BARR focuses on building in-school relationships and using students' strengths to improve student outcomes.

In this study, we found that students who received BARR earned more core credits and performed better in mathematics (as measured by a standardized test) relative to students who did not receive BARR. Students who received BARR also reported more supportive relationships and higher teacher expectations and rigor compared to students who did not receive BARR. BARR did not have a discernable effect on student engagement, sense of belonging, social emotional learning, or grit.

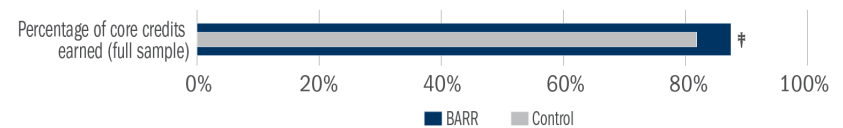
BARR increases supportive relationships, and teacher expectations and rigor



Source: AIR calculations from AIR-administered student survey.

Note: † = statistically significant at the  $p < .01$  level; ‡ = statistically significant at the  $p < .001$  level.

BARR increases core credits earned



## What is the BARR model?

BARR works with schools to improve staff-to-staff, student-to-staff, and student-to-student relationships. BARR brings together core subject teachers serving the same students to discuss the progress and challenges of all their students. Drawing on personal relationships, teachers discuss how to use each student's individual strengths to overcome challenges and improve their in-school experience. Students receive lessons from their core teachers to develop social and emotional skills. BARR provides training and offers ongoing coaching to teachers during the school year. Parent engagement is another key element.

## How did we do this study?

We examined the impact of the BARR model on Grade 9 students during their schools' first year implementing the model. This experimental study included more than 100 teachers and 4,000 students in 11 high schools. Each school was followed for one academic year (2014–15, 2015–16, or 2016–17). Within each school, Grade 9 students were randomly assigned to take three of their core academic classes (i.e., English language arts, mathematics, science, and/or social studies) with either BARR teachers or non-BARR teachers. Students in the program group were taught by teams of teachers trained in the BARR model. Students in the control group were taught by teachers operating in "business-as-usual" conditions. We compared the outcomes for the students in the program condition to the outcomes for the students in the "business-as-usual" condition to understand the impact of BARR on 9<sup>th</sup> grade student academic and social-emotional outcomes.

## Full Article Citation:

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