

[\\$450K grant to support Trailblazer education model at Mohawk Trail Regional School](#)

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BUCKLAND — A \$450,000 grant from the Boston-based Barr Foundation will support the Mohawk Trail Regional School District’s continued implementation of a Trailblazer education model.

“What we do is unique,” said Mohawk Trail Regional School Principal Chris Buckland. “We are at the forefront of innovation in the state for what we are doing for our students and what our students are going to be doing for our communities beyond school life.”

Starting in 2018 with seed funding from Mass IDEAS, Mohawk Trail Regional School began transitioning to a Trailblazer model that is based on four key principles: strengthening an advisory-based, inclusive school culture that focuses on building relationships and nurturing trust; leveraging progress among students and staff as a means to implement and refine an equitable system of standards-based teaching and learning; embedding opportunities for internships and work-based learning; and creating more leadership opportunities for staff and students.

“We have been pursuing all these elements for the past several years,” Buckland said. “This money will enable us to continue that work.”

This is the school’s second Barr Foundation grant for this amount, having received another \$450,000 in 2021.

Founded in 1987, the Barr Foundation works in partnership with nonprofits, foundations, the public sector, and civic and business leaders to elevate the arts, advance solutions for climate change, and connect students to success in high school and beyond.

The funding will go toward professional development that supports the Trailblazer model’s aforementioned principles, creating a restorative practice model in the school and bringing professionals at Mohawk Trail to other schools to see how educational methods like the Trailblazer model progress once implemented.

The Trailblazer model was designed by bringing together aspects of educational models that have proven to be successful in different schools in a variety of contexts, such as urban and rural settings.

“There is not one single model that is exemplifying this model,” Buckland explained. “It is a series of different things that are working well in different schools.”

One unique aspect of the Trailblazer model is student-led conferences, which were successfully piloted last year in the 11th grade.

This academic year there will be two student-led conferences for all students in seventh through 12th grades, marking the first time they have been implemented in the entire school.

Buckland added that the Trailblazer model is based on equity and designed to give students a unique experience, whether they plan to attend a four-year or two-year university, receive vocational training out of high school or go directly into the workforce. “Our focus is looking at school as part of the process,” he said, “rather than the end product of an education.”

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