

[Mohawk Trail receives \\$450K from Barr Foundation](#)

By [ZACK DeLUCA](#), Staff Report Published: 10/6/2021 3:36:05 PM

BUCKLAND – The Mohawk Trail Regional School was awarded \$450,000 in funding from the Barr Foundation to continue supporting the school’s Trailblazer model.

According to a press release from Mohawk Trail Regional School Director of Communications Carla Potts, funding from the Barr Foundation will be used over a two-year period for continued support of all-school redesign initiatives that began in 2018 with seed funding from Mass IDEAS.

Principal Marisa Mendonsa said the school was invited by the Barr Foundation for an extension of support based on the prior relationship between Mohawk Trail and the foundation through Mass IDEAS and Next Generation Learning Challenges.

Over the last three years the Mohawk Trail Regional School has been the recipient of three grants from Mass IDEAS to “rethink and re-imagine” the student experience. Mass IDEAS is an initiative of Next Generation Learning Challenges designed to incubate high-quality, innovative school models in order to transform K-12 public education across the state, and which operates with generous support from the Barr Foundation and Nellie Mae Education Foundation, according to MassIDEAS.org.

Through the Trailblazer model, students “blaze their trail” to graduation through real-world experiences and acquire 21st century skills at Mohawk Trail while pursuing their individual passions. Mohawk Trail breaks down the “traditional” classroom environment and offers co-taught, blended classes; intern- and externship opportunities; and high-quality instruction, Potts wrote in the press release.

This extended grant will continue to support partnerships with consultants, the school’s distributed leadership model, field work opportunities for students, as well as support for communications and community engagement.

Mendonsa said she’s excited about this next phase of funding and working with the Barr Foundation to continue the redesign work through the Trailblazer model.

“It’s an honor to receive this funding from the Barr Foundation and their support of our Trailblazer model and the vision we’ve re-imagined for our school,” Mendonsa said in the press release. “This funding will allow us to continue with our redesign initiatives and consider new courses that align with our focus on culturally responsive teaching and anti-racism practices.”

According to the release, educators are encouraged to be leaders and actively participate in distributed leadership at Mohawk Trail; and “they are encouraged (and supported) in the development of new courses and assessments that engage and enhance the student experience.” Barr Foundation funding will also allow the school to continue professional development with existing partners including EL Education, Next Generation Learning Challenges and Firefly Worldwide, Inc.

Since 2019 when Mohawk Trail began its redesign process, numerous advancements have been made school-wide including the implementation of a daily advisory for all students; community workgroups to provide feedback and insight; and co-taught, blended courses which provide students with a more in-depth look at a subject or topic. Other key features of its Trailblazer model include student-centered learning (independent study, internships, work experience, Capstone); and high-quality instruction and courses.

The additional \$450,000 provided by the Barr Foundation will assure this critical work can continue, Potts said in the press release.

Mohawk Trail currently offers 11 advanced placement courses and the opportunity to take any course offered at the honors level. Students are challenged and encouraged to dig-deep into their learning, while the school provides them with the tools to be successful post graduation.

“We are excited to partner with Mohawk Trail Regional School as they continue to redesign the learning experience to connect all students with success,” Ali Gross, Barr’s Program Officer for Education, said in the press release.

According to the release, the Barr Foundation’s mission “is to invest in human, natural, and creative potential, serving as thoughtful stewards and catalysts.” Based in Boston, Barr focuses regionally, and selectively engages nationally, working in partnership with nonprofits, foundations, the public sector, and civic and business leaders to elevate the arts, advance solutions for climate change, and connect all students to success in high school and beyond. Founded in 1997, Barr now has assets in excess of \$3 billion, and has contributed more than \$1 billion to charitable causes.

Source: <https://www.recorder.com/b1-MohawkTrailBarrFoundationGrant-gr-100521-42858919>