



Senator Rotundo, Representative Gattine, members of the Appropriations and Financial Affairs Committee, and Senator Rafferty, Representative Murphy, and members of the Education and Cultural Affairs Committee,

It is an honor for me to come and address you all today regarding the positive impact of BARR (Building Assets Reducing Risks) has had not only in the school district that I work in, but also in other districts in Maine where my own children attend school. As a former teacher, and current administrator, I know firsthand the difficulties our students and families face each day. I also know the amazing work that our educators do, with limited resources, each and every day.

BARR is a system that takes the best that is happening in all of our classrooms and streamlines it into a process that ensures we are discussing each student. Every student deserves our time and attention, but with limited time and resources we are often unable to look at the strengths and weaknesses of each student. BARR provides a structure that allows us to speak to the strengths and weaknesses of each student, as well as providing teaching insight and input.

As a parent of two elementary aged children, I see BARR in action. Students in both the elementary schools I work in and my children's school have UTimes, which are weekly lessons that help students develop what most people see as soft skills. Yet, as a leader in education, and working with local businesses to develop students who are work force ready, these are some of the most valuable skills our students can have.

When I visit businesses across the state of Maine such as Porvair Filtrations in Caribou, Tate & Lyle in Houlton, Smith's Farm in Presque Isle, Hancock Lumber in Bethel, KBS Builders in South Paris, Procter & Gamble in Auburn, and many other local businesses I find a similar theme. These local businesses want employees that have a good work ethic, good communication, and can learn. They want employees who are willing to take risks and initiative-who can work as a team, but also independently. All of those aspects are taught, modeled, and discussed in our UTimes that we do with our students.

Beyond BARR being a strong educational model that supports all learners, helps maximize educators time, and ensures discussion around students, it also embeds crucial lessons that our local businesses are telling us directly that are important for our students to graduate with. I urge you to continue to support BARR in our public schools.

Thank you,

Laura Columbia

Parent and Superintendent MSAD 58