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WPS Awarded Barr Foundation Grant to Support Implementation of Education Plan:  
*ChangeMaker Academy* to serve as pilot for Ed Plan to launch in September 2018

**Waltham, MA, December 12, 2017** – At their December 5, 2017 Board of Trustees meeting, the Barr Foundation approved a \$300,000 grant to Waltham Public Schools. The grant intends to support the planning and redesign of Waltham High School consistent with the education plan (<https://goo.gl/Hm6rgd>) for a new Waltham High School.

Building upon the education plan for a new Waltham High School (WHS) and guided by the principles of social entrepreneurship and the theme of youth as changemakers, Waltham Public Schools' goal through this Barr Foundation grant is to fundamentally transform the high school experience over the next five years where we deeply engage and prepare ALL students for the demands of college, career and community. Our vision leverages our students' passions and interests and our co-location to the robust and innovative community, cultural, academic and business institutions throughout the city. With the support of the Barr Foundation, our goal is to build our capacity and immerse ourselves in the work of innovative high school redesign by planning for and piloting a ChangeMaker program with a group of approximately 50-80 incoming 9th graders who mirror the diversity of our district starting Fall 2018 and then refining and expanding this model to transform the entire high school. We aim to integrate and embed the following four pillars of our vision in innovative and dynamic ways: 1) interdisciplinary project/problem based learning; 2) personalized academic support; 3) college and career exploration; and 4) proactive and coordinated health and wellness.

- **Innovative Learning Opportunities to Advance Student Engagement & Achievement:** We seek to provide a student-centered curriculum through flexible scheduling, anytime anywhere access, competency-based/mastery education, and interdisciplinary PBL. Students will demonstrate mastery of learning and skills through authentic assessments and exhibitions in real-world contexts throughout our community. As such, students will have multiple opportunities to advance key 21st century skills of complex communication, empathy, creativity, leadership and collaboration. Our goal is to raise expectations for ALL students as intellectuals, problem solvers, consultants, thought partners, entrepreneurs and social innovators.
- **Personalized Academic Support:** Every student is supported in developing a Personalized Learning Plan to meet their own academic interests, needs and goals that includes specialized supports for those with special needs. Small-group advisories led by classroom teachers will

provide students with consistent and continuous feedback as well as opportunities to reflect, increase self-efficacy, improve academic skills, master content knowledge, build executive functioning, and develop social emotional skills. The goal is to build and strengthen trusting and supportive peer-to-peer and teacher-to-student relationships.

- **College & Career Exploration:** Every student will explore college and career aspirations through professional and peer mentorship. These opportunities will create social connections, build positive relationships, support students in developing resiliency, and affirm students' identities.
- **Health & Wellness:** Through a holistic case management model, every student and family will receive proactive, integrated/coordinated care, services and programming that are matched to their needs and circumstances aimed to shift students from "surviving" to "thriving."

The funding from this grant will cover 18 months and provide time for educators and the community to plan out elements of the ChangeMaker Academy. In addition, funding will be available to support implementation in the fall.

The Honorable Jeannette A. McCarthy, Mayor of the City of Waltham, congratulated the school district on receiving this grant, "I am very pleased that the School Department has secured funding from the Barr Foundation. These funds will allow portions of the education plan to be implemented before the new Waltham High School is built. I thank everyone for their efforts." Superintendent Drew Echelson thanked the Barr Foundation for their support, "I want to personally thank the Barr Foundation for their investment in the Waltham Public Schools. We know that we have much for which we should be collectively proud in Waltham. However, we have far more work to do to deliver on a promise of excellence and equity for all students. The investment from the Barr Foundation will provide us the resources we need to move us closer to the inextricably linked principles of excellence and equity in our system." Principal Gregory DeMeo echoed the Mayor's sentiments, "I'm excited about this grant from the Barr Foundation and for us to bolster our work with implementing our education plan *now*."

Representatives from the Barr Foundation added their support, "We are thrilled to support Waltham Public Schools and community members as they engage in the planning process to design and pilot ChangeMaker at Waltham High School. This thoughtful redesign process is centered on the goal of ensuring all Waltham students are prepared for the demands of college, career, and community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century," said Jenny Curtin Barr Foundation's Senior Program Officer in Education.

The Waltham Public Schools plans to provide an update to the Waltham School Committee on the Barr Foundation at the December 20, 2017 meeting.

### **A Note on the Barr Foundation**

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. With assets of \$1.7 billion, Barr is among the largest private foundations in New England and has contributed more than \$834 million to charitable causes since 1999. For more information, visit [barrfoundation.org](http://barrfoundation.org) or follow @BarrFdn.