



By [Melanie Gilbert](#) | mgilbert@lowellsun.com

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LOWELL — Two school programs were recipients of grant funding from the Healey-Driscoll administration to improve student access to behavioral and mental health services and support.

The Lowell Public Schools received \$100,000, while the Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter School on Middle Street in Downtown Lowell received \$70,000. The funding was part of \$5.5 million allocated to 60 school districts across the commonwealth.

“We have a mental health crisis that was only made worse by the pandemic, particularly for students,” Gov. Maura Healey said in a statement released Monday. “That’s why improving students’ access to behavioral and mental health care is a priority for our administration. These grants will help districts connect students with the services they need to be safe, healthy and successful today and into the future.”

The governor’s fiscal 2026 budget includes more than \$21 million to support student behavioral and mental health.

The LPS funds will be used to continue a variety of initiatives taking place in the district including: training for staff on the district’s social-emotional learning, or SEL, curriculum; support for Elevate New England, a nonprofit partner that provides mentoring in the district; training around increasing inclusivity and a sense of belonging in the classroom; and continued cultural competency training for district social workers.

“These funds will allow Lowell Public Schools to continue to provide the high level of programming and services our students, families, and staff deserve and have come to expect and rely on,” Superintendent of Schools Liam Skinner said by email on Thursday. “We are thrilled to have the ability to continue these important programs and are grateful for the support of DESE in assisting us in meeting and exceeding our goals.”

In addition to the grants, the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education will provide related professional development for school district staff. Grants from DESE generally have a professional development piece to them — at no cost and independent of the grant funds — comprising in-person seminars.

Drew Rosenshine, the district’s director of mental health, SEL and behavior, said last year’s mental health focus was on creating a broader sense of belonging for all students, especially those from marginalized backgrounds whose voices are not always acknowledged by majority stakeholders.

“In this year’s cycle, it seems that the PD is supporting our work to develop a comprehensive school mental health system, an endeavor we are already hard at work on,” Rosenshine said by email Thursday. “For example, they asked us to complete a needs assessment of our system and from that assessment begin to develop goals to address.”

There is a kickoff conference next week which Rosenshine and Harley Baker, the SEL district support specialist, will attend as part of DESE’s professional development services.

A focus of LPS’s work is for classroom teachers to meet students where they are, and the funding can be used to create or expand comprehensive, integrated systems of student support and aims, through collaboration with families and educators, and to build strong local school partnerships with community-based mental health agencies and/or providers.

“Kids come to us from all different places and have different things going on in their lives and we need to do our best to meet them where they are,” Rosenshine said. “We are also constantly trying to understand other people’s experiences around school and how to make our schools more accessible to them.”

Mental health is just one piece of LPS’s wellness approach to the learning environment. The district partnered with Lowell Community Health Center and the UMass Lowell Zuckerberg College of Health Sciences to bring a mobile health unit to six district schools in 2025.

The doctor’s office on wheels will rotate once a week between the Community Schools of Greenhalge, Sullivan, Bartlett, Butler, STEM Academy and the Career Academy, providing checkups, sick visits, immunizations and onsite testing services.

At the high school, an onsite school-based health center run by LCHC offers primary care and eye care, as well as counseling services.

A clinician in community health centers since 2009, Director Cindy Slaga, of Dracut, runs the LCHC school-based health center at the high school.

“We’re also just a space that students know is safe,” she said in [earlier reporting](#). “They can get a granola bar and a bottle of water and make it through the rest of their day. We’re here so that they can stay in school.”

Lowell Public Schools and its partners offer a variety for mental health resources for students, staff and families. More information can be found at lowell.k12.ma.us/domain/2702.