

Federal grant will help extend practices of the best to the rest of the state's 28 charter schools.

By Kevin Landrigan

New Hampshire Union Leader 8/22/19

CONCORD — New Hampshire received a record five-year, \$46 million federal grant to expand its successful charter schools, Education Commissioner Frank Edelblut announced Thursday. New Hampshire was one of only three states to receive 2019 grants from the Department of Education's Office of Innovation & Improvement.

The total award was nearly twice the next-largest grant, \$25 million to

the Coalition for Public Charter Schools in Alabama. A similar association in the state of Washington was the only other recipient.

Edelblut said these grants will focus on at-risk students and help extend the best practices that exist in high quality charter schools to all 28 in the state.

"New Hampshire charter schools have not only provided excellent educations for Granite State students, but provided a model for innovation and education

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improvement for the nation," Edelblut said "Every kid deserves an educational environment in which they can thrive. Charter schools provide a valuable alternative for students who need one."

Gov. Chris Sununu has been a major proponent for education choice in the state's public school system.

"I want to commend the New Hampshire Department of Education for securing this funding," Sununu said in a statement. "The department highlighted the success New Hampshire has achieved through the growth of charter schools, and put together a plan to build on that success for the benefit of at-risk students. These funds will help us improve education in the Granite State — a win for our kids."

The grant will cover professional development for charter school staff and board members, and spread best practices to public schools across New Hampshire. There will be \$3.3 million available this year; the grant amount ramps up each year and reaches \$15 million in 2023.

Seven of the state's

charter schools are considered models for replication or expansion, according to the state's grant application: Academy for Science and Design in Nashua, MicroSociety Academy in Nashua, Mill Falls Charter school in Manchester, Polaris Charter School in Manchester, The Birches Academy of Academics and Art in Salem, Virtual Learning Academy in Exeter, and Seacoast Charter School in Dover.

There are 11 charter schools helping to reduce their dropout rates by providing alternative programs and pathways for students, officials said.

The National Center for Special Education in Charter Schools said unlike most states, New Hampshire has a slightly higher percentage of charter school students with special needs than attend the other public schools.

The grant will targeted money to educationally disadvantaged students and focus on improving student achievement in those schools that are not meeting state academic standards, officials added.

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