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English language tutoring program coming to Norwalk High

By Thane Grauel Updated 1:03 pm, Saturday, July 29, 2017

NORWALK — A grant should help some Norwalk High School students learn the English language a bit faster.

The Fairfield County Community Foundation has given \$25,000 to Academic Support Program to Inspire, Reinforce, and Empower, or ASPIRE. ASPIRE was created by the group English Learner Support Services of Fairfield County in collaboration with Norwalk Public Schools' English Language Learner Education Department.

The tutoring program will start in October at Norwalk High School. Two English Language Learner specialists will be there four days a week. Students will receive small-group instruction in English and other subjects.

"The idea is that instead of ELL students going to study hall, we would have them in the tutoring room at Norwalk High School," said Peter Shaker, a former Peace Corps volunteer who founded ELSS. "The idea is to enable them to pick up the basic language skills at a faster pace."

It's hoped the program will make graduation — and participation in post-secondary programs — more likely for the students.

"This grant will help support Norwalk ELL students with limited or interrupted school histories over the course of the coming school year," said Helene Becker, ELL instructional specialist for Norwalk Public Schools. "ASPIRE's tutors will help these students catch up to their peers in our ESL classes."

If the group can obtain funding, it aims to bring the program to Brien McMahon High School in the 2018-19 school year, and then other school districts in the county, Shaker said.

ASPIRE will contribute to the Fairfield County Community Foundation's "All Fairfield County Youth Thrive by Age 25" initiative by helping English language learners

graduate within four years.

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