



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

## Martins Huddles with Floral Park School Superintendent on State Aid Issues

JACK M. MARTINS January 14, 2011



Holding true to his promise of having an open door to the Village of Floral Park, Senator Jack Martins hosted Floral Park Bellerose School Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Lynn Pombonyo, at the State Capitol this past Tuesday to discuss State Aid issues impacting the school district. The meeting was held with Senator Martins, top State Senate budget staff and education funding experts.

The meeting was the very first with a school district by the new Senate budget team and

Martins. “This is just the first of several get-togethers I will be having with budget experts on state aid issues with schools, hospitals and institutions in the 7th Senate district. There are a lot of challenges we face with the State budget process. One thing is for sure, I am going to insure that our communities are going to have an aggressive voice at the budget table advocating on their behalf,” said Senator Martins.

Dr. Pombonyo came to Albany for the meeting and made a presentation to the budgetary team that highlighted budget issues that have impacted the district over a period of time. It was noted that the district attempted to put together such a meeting for years, but was unable to do so. “When Dr. Pombonyo came to me and discussed these issues, I knew we had to get right to work. I’m glad she called upon me and I was able to bring these issues to the attention of budget experts,” said Senator Martins.

The main thrust of the budget session centered on the fact that the Floral Park Bellerose School District has been cut a very vital portion of state aid in the school aid package called “high tax aid.” The discrepancy in the high tax aid packages Floral Park has received, as compared to other similarly situated schools, was brought to light by an in depth analysis put together by Dr. Pombonyo and school leaders.

“There are some real and very serious issues with high tax aid when it comes to the Floral Park Bellerose School district,” said Senator Martins noting, “our objective in bringing Dr. Pombonyo to Albany was to identify and pinpoint the discrepancies with Floral Park Bellerose and then put together some strategies to address the inequities which are glaring and very disturbing.”

Dr. Pombonyo briefed Senator Martins, Senate budget staff and education aid negotiators on the challenges Floral Park Bellerose has had to deal with over the past few years. “What Dr.

Pombonyo was able to do was to clearly show that a district like Floral Park Bellerose is being punished for using their state aid frugally,” said Senator Martins. “Our objective is to look at how a district like Floral Park Bellerose, which has the lowest per pupil expenditure in Nassau County, has been seemingly punished with cuts in high tax aid. What we are going to do is put together a plan of how to address this inequity, keeping in mind the great challenges our state faces at this time, and work to solve this disparity.”

In expressing the District's appreciation to Senator Martins, Dr. Pombonyo noted, "The Senator immediately understood the importance of securing equitable high tax aid for the Floral Park-Bellerose Schools, the district ranking the lowest in per pupil expenditure in Nassau County for a decade. Senator Martins made a commitment to working with the Legislature, the State Education Department, and our school district community to recover revenue that is desperately needed to operate our schools."

Budgetary education experts committed to Senator Martins and Dr. Pombonyo a forensic look at the high tax aid issue for the Floral Park Bellerose School District. Experts noted that budget analysts may have to go back to square one and look at the data that is being given to the New York State Education Department to determine if state aid calculations are accurate and a true representation for the Floral Park Bellerose School District.

“This is going to be a real process that is going to take a hard look at what happened to the district,” said Senator Martins concluding, “when you look at the numbers, and you see what is happening here, it’s pretty disturbing that this district was not given the attention it needed to address these issues. It’s going to get that attention now. Dr. Pombonyo made a clear argument based on facts and numbers that are indisputable. Now, New York State has to find ways to make this right and the Senate is going to chart a path to help the Floral Park Bellerose School district.”