



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jack M. Martins

Senator Martins Joins With MHS Officials to Announce Pilot Portuguese Language Program

JACK M. MARTINS August 14, 2012

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Senator Jack M. Martins joined with Mineola High School history teacher Paul Pereira, Mineola High School Principal Ed Escobar and foreign language teacher Elsa Coelho to announce that efforts to incorporate the Portuguese language into the foreign language curriculum have come to fruition. Beginning this September, the high school will be offering a section of approximately 25 students to the eighth grade in addition to the Spanish, French,

Italian and Latin.

“The Portuguese language has been part of the Mineola community for over 30 years. It is a staple of Mineola. It’s one of the most spoken languages in the world. The Mineola School District made a commitment to introduce it. I want to thank Superintendent of Schools Dr. Michael Nagler, Principal Escobar, Paul Pereira and the School Board,” Senator Martins said. “I think this is a wonderful opportunity to introduce the language to the community as a whole. Mineola, by taking this action, will be the only public school district in the state to offer Portuguese. It is a reflection of Mineola High School’s and the Mineola School District’s commitment to its mission statement.”

Mr. Pereira, who also serves as the Village of Mineola Deputy Mayor, has been trying for years to get the language introduced to Mineola High School considering the large Portuguese population in the school and the community. Portuguese is not among the foreign languages approved by the state. However, Senator Martins was able to secure a waiver from the Board of Regents to allow the school to offer the language to eighth grade students.

“I’m proud that we are finally here,” said Mr. Pereira, noting that approximately 18 percent of Mineola graduates are of Portuguese descent. However, said Mr. Pereira, “This is not just for the Portuguese-American community. This is a tool that will help all of our students. Our mission statement encourages students to be lifelong learners and I think we do a great job doing that.”

“What makes Mineola special really is the students. There’s a large Portuguese population here and it makes Mineola a special place,” said Principal Escobar. “This wouldn’t be happening if it were not for Senator Martins, Mr. Pereira and Elsa Coelho. It’s exciting.”

Mrs. Coelho, a foreign language teacher at the high school and a Mineola graduate herself, will be teaching the section.

The goal is to roll out a section per grade each year so that students who take the class in the eighth will be able to continue learning it in the later grades. However, if the program succeeds, it could be expanded to be a full-time program.