

Deer Park, NY—On Friday, Rep. Steve Israel (D-NY) visited ASCENT School for Autistic Individuals to meet with parents, teachers and students, and learn about ASCENT's innovative approach to treating autism. Israel spoke with teachers and parents, and toured several classrooms.

“When I visit schools in the district I often think I learn as much as the students do,” said Israel. “That’s why I was eager to visit with the parents, students and teachers at ASCENT. I cosponsored legislation, signed into law last year, to increase research for autism, but right now there is no medical cure. In the meantime, it’s vital that we focus on comprehensive treatment like the services provided to students and families at ASCENT.”

Autism is a neurological disorder that is marked by impairment across all developmental areas, including intellectual functioning, social and communication skills. There are over 1.5 million cases in the United States, with one out of every 166 children diagnosed with autism last year alone. In Congress, Israel has been a strong advocate for bolstering federal research for autism. He was a co-sponsor of the Combating Autism Act of 2006, which passed the House on December 6, 2006 and was subsequently signed into law by the President. The bill authorizes funds for autism research, prevention, and treatment through 2011. The funding levels for medical research are set by the House Appropriations Committee, on which Israel serves.

ASCENT is a private, nonprofit school for children with autism and provides full-day, 12 month academic and behavioral treatment programs for preschool and school age children ranging from 3 to 21 years. The primary goals of Ascent are to avoid institutionalization, enable children with autism to live in family environments, prepare them for enrollment in public school classrooms or for productive work and to help them acquire skills that facilitate full participation in community life.