

# Community School Board District 31

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## PERSONAL

April 12, 1995

Chancellor Ramon Cortines  
Board of Education  
110 Livingston Street  
Brooklyn, New York 11201

Dear Chancellor Cortines:

As you know, it has always been the dream of Michael Petrides and the fulfillment of that dream through the support of our Borough President, Guy Molinari and most certainly our member of the Central Board, Louis Desario, to allow the Petrides Complex to reflect an educational environment that will be open to all children and members of the educational community. As an elected member of the School Board in District 31 and as its Curriculum Chairman, I am truly excited about the proposal for the Petrides School which the Deputy Superintendent Anthony Polomene has submitted to you. The work the Deputy Superintendent has done on this project has been outstanding and tireless and will bring this dream to fruition.

Chancellor, you have given us a mandate to serve the student population of Staten Island in the most effective way possible. I know your focus and that of District 31 will be to help ensure that the instructional strategies, curricula approaches, professional climate and learning atmosphere of the Petrides School remain at the leading edge of educational research and practice and will have a permanent and lasting impact on the entire pedagogical staff of our City system. **For the school not to have this focus, but rather, to simply reflect a traditional school model, will diminish the intent of the Complex and may I boldly suggest, actually take away from any significant contribution we can make to the advancement of education.**

I would like to share with you, Chancellor, two beliefs that have been articulated and have guided the development of District 31's Mission Statement. **This Mission Statement was created through the joint collaboration of the CSA, the UFT, the parent groups on Staten Island and District administrators:**

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"All children can learn and do learn at different rates and in differing styles."

"Meeting the individual needs, interests and abilities of each student should be the focus of our educational programs."

This Mission Statement emphasizes the primacy of the individual and makes a commitment to the development of full potential. **Traditionally, District 31 has provided educational programs which have accommodated the special needs of its children.**

**An October 1993 report from the U.S. Department of Education** criticizes the current emphasis on remediation and bringing up low test scores, while the needs of high achievers are ignored. The report called for a more challenging curriculum for these students, and a better system of identifying them. These students exhibit high performance capability in intellectual, creative, and/or artistic areas, possess an unusual leadership capacity, or excel in specific academic fields. **They require services or activities not ordinarily provided by the regular school program in order to realize their contribution to self and society.** **Richard Riley, Secretary of Education** says there is a **national quiet crisis** in how we educate our talented youngsters. Our neglect of these students makes it impossible for Americans to compete in a global economy demanding their skill. **A substantial portion of these children 15 to 20 percent never achieve the level of performance expected of them and 30 percent are dropouts.**

**We would like to continue our commitment to nurture and value the needs of our talented and academically able students. We are committed to the educational philosophy that intelligence knows no ethnic, economic or social barriers.** We would like to continue to respond to the call for more challenging curriculum and a better system of identifying these students, as children are intelligent in many different ways, all of which a school can help to develop.

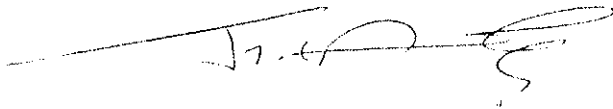
**The Petrides School will provide the opportunity to carry on in that tradition in an even more expansive, global way. One of the main focuses of the complex is its role as a professional development site and the heart of this site is the laboratory school. The students who attend this school will have a symbiotic relationship with the professional development site.** They will gain from the school's inherent design to demonstrate effective models in teaching and learning, the incorporation of recent research, inter-disciplinary teaching approaches, cooperative learning, inquiry-based active learning practices and portfolio assessments. **These learning models will advance teaching and learning strategies for all members of the educational community.**

The school will be the arena for the actual implementation of the ideals

At a time when the Mayor has given direction to try to make New York City more user friendly, I predict that the energy and leadership that you can give to this project may very well also have a positive economic benefit to the economy of New York City. The Petrides Complex will attract enthusiastic educational professionals seeking high levels of educational research from all over the nation to have the opportunity to experience one of the best education labs in the nation.

Chancellor, thank you for your consideration of my views and I hope this input will provide you the necessary background and context to continue to successfully forward our students into the 21st century.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jerry Cammarata", written over a horizontal line.

Jerry Cammarata

cc: Central Board of Education Members