

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**The Michael J. Petrides School**

**Elementary - High School R080**

**715 Ocean Terrace  
Staten Island  
NY 10301**

**Principal: Joanne Buckheit**

**Dates of review: May 17 - 18, 2012**

**Lead Reviewer: Michael L. Schurek**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Michael J. Petrides School is an elementary-high school with 1,315 students from kindergarten through grade 12. The school population comprises 18% Black, 16% Hispanic, 57% White, and 8% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 18.3% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 93.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal strategically utilizes resources to make effective organizational decisions to achieve school goals and support improvements in teaching and learning. (1.3)
  - To counter the effects of recent budgetary cuts, grant funding is allocated to organize intensive professional development for teachers in literacy, designing common learning assessments, and creating interdisciplinary units of study and performance assessment tasks aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Many teachers incorporate technology into lessons, utilizing Smartboards, power point, projectors, and laptop carts, thus motivating students, and increasing opportunities to incorporate higher order thinking into their work by using on-line research tools and resources. Consequently, students consistently maintain one of the highest credit accumulation and graduation rates as compared to the City.
  - Student schedules in grades kindergarten through grade 8 provide seven to eight periods of English language arts and math per week to ensure that they have ample time to delve deeply into planned tasks and activities. Common preparation periods for elementary and middle school grade teachers and department professional activity periods in middle and high school are combined with Saturday curriculum writing institutes so teachers can collaboratively plan curriculum and units of study. An additional 50-minute weekly school-wide extended day session for all teachers is used to conduct collaborative inquiry. As a result, an abundance of rigorous student work products reflecting high levels of instruction is posted in hallways and classrooms throughout the school.
- The school utilizes a variety of observational structures to elevate instructional practices and promote professional growth and reflection. (4.1)
  - Relative to each staff member's needs and experience, school leaders conduct two to four formal observations and seven to ten informal walkthrough observations, and utilize the Danielson competencies to provide teachers with written feedback and explicit next steps to improve instructional practices. Teachers support each other's development by conducting team instructional rounds to observe practices, review student work, and student-teacher interaction with a focus on academic rigor. Low-inference observations provide evidence specific to practice, and include references to task, interaction, questioning, and time on task. These structures yield observation reports and instructional rounds with written feedback indicating improved practice and increased consistency in the rigor of learning experiences as the year has progressed.
  - The principal uses the school's observation process as the basis for staff assignments, professional development, and teacher performance decisions. A new special education teacher is paired with a seasoned veteran in a collaborative team teaching class to ensure that students engage in rigorous activities for which the experienced teacher is known, and this is coupled with the utilization of technology to differentiate instruction and accelerate student engagement, an area of expertise brought to the classroom by the new teacher. Professional development is offered based upon teacher self-assessment, observations, and student needs. Teachers conduct inter-class and inter-school visitations as well as attend in school and outside professional development and turnkey the training to colleagues at teacher team planning sessions.

Two teachers are recommended for tenure this year based partially on their abilities to use next steps feedback to improve instructional practices. As a result, Acuity predictive assessments indicate 70% of grades 3 through 8 students demonstrate proficiency in English language arts, a 15% increase over last year.

- Relationships across the school are warm and supportive, enabling stakeholders to feel valued and sustaining a positive culture that promotes the academic and personal growth of students and adults. (1.4)
  - The principal meticulously studies multiple sources of data to implement needed strategies to maintain the school's highly safe and supportive environment. Last spring's Learning Environment Survey, (LES), communicated a safety concern among teachers thus prompting the principal to conduct mixed-staff small-group roundtable discussions and full staff professional development to improve teachers' abilities to use appropriate response protocols for disciplinary scenarios. In addition, the school leadership team surveyed parents to improve the low communication scores, resulting in monthly newsletters in grades kindergarten through 8, extra parent workshops, message template use by teachers, letters mailed home highlighting student achievement, principal and parent association E-blasts, and collaboration with parents of lower grade students. As a result, there were improved responses from teachers and parents on a recently conducted school survey, indicating increases in positive responses to this spring's LES.
  - Students articulate that they are highly motivated by their work, feel strongly supported by teachers that go out of their way to help them, and that they have influence on what happens in the school through student government and the open door policies of the administration and teachers. One student described how teachers routinely tutor them during their lunch or preparation periods to ensure mastery of concepts. Another student spoke about the fact that many projects and academic activities provide them with choices that help to motivate their learning. The formation of the Petrides Against Cancer Society and Habitat for Humanity is two organizations formed at the request of the student body to benefit members of society in need. These factors perpetuate a nurturing and safe environment that validates the importance of all stakeholders and enables the school to retain relatively low incident and suspension rates compared to citywide averages.
- Teachers collaborate frequently to examine student work, plan together to rewrite and align curriculum, and visit each other's classrooms to share ideas and best practice, through a desire to improve student outcomes. (4.2)
  - Almost all teachers meet multiple times each week on grades and as departments during common preparation periods, professional activity periods, and a weekly 50-minute extended day session. This time is used effectively to look at student work, monitor, and revise curriculum and instructional practice. Inquiry teams use the collaborative assessment protocol to review student work; analyzing both the task and the work generated, noting strengths and weaknesses, and identifying implications for curriculum and instruction. These observations lead to pedagogical adjustments and the use of focused strategies to improve student learning. A lower grade team's use of a graphic organizer to help students arrange their thoughts when composing a compare and contrast essay on literary characters is resulting in improved student writing as evidenced by increasing levels of proficiency when compared to baseline assessments.
  - Teachers direct and perform all facets of professional collaborations, often switching roles to take turns leading the work, to ensure that they maintain the practices of an

effective professional learning community. Performance assessment tasks are created and administered to students in grades kindergarten through grade 12, enabling teachers to analyze student work, to develop rigorous curricula, and target relevant student subgroup needs. One teacher remarking about the process noted, "It's like baking cupcakes from scratch instead of out of the box." These practices are contributing to student achievement gains this year as evidenced by 92% of Black ninth graders are expected to exceed credit accumulation targets this year.

- Effective student support services provide students and families with a wide range of opportunities to ensure that the social emotional needs of students and families are met. (4.4)
  - Teachers attend Respect for All training as part of the school's Positive Behavior Intervention in Schools campaign to reduce bullying and sustain the school's highly respectful culture. Students have formed a tolerance advisory committee through the guidance department to ensure that respect includes everyone regardless of orientation, religion, ethnicity, or views. The school conducts monthly awards assemblies to celebrate student successes that include academic accomplishments as well as social recognition for helping others. Using grant funding, students are trained to produce and conduct performances around real-life scenarios to raise social consciousness, thereby promoting social/emotional growth for the entire community.
  - A guidance counselor and a college advisor conduct workshops for families regarding college entrance processes, and track scholarship reports and credit accumulation data to support students as they prepare to enter college. Accommodations to programming are effected so that students who are encountering problems accumulating credits can have success. The pupil progress team recommendation regarding reprogramming of a student from foreign language studies to concentrate on content areas needed to graduate enabled the student to stay on track to graduate in four years. Consequently, the school's college enrollment rate of 81.7% far exceeds both peer and citywide averages.
- The principal conveys high expectations to staff, students, and parents, thus impacting positively on student achievement. (3.4)
  - School leaders promote a high degree of professionalism through the school's interactive team structure by regularly engaging team leaders and facilitators in training in literacy, common assessment creation, interdisciplinary unit design, and CCLS aligned performance assessment task construction, that is turn keyed to their respective teams to deepen instruction and accelerate student outcomes. All teachers are well aware that the school's goal is to ensure that every student leaves the thirteen-grade school fully prepared to sustain four years of college. To ensure goal achievement, teachers participate in curriculum writing and performance task planning and conduct instructional rounds, resulting in a school College Readiness Index that is double both peer and citywide averages.
  - Students hear about college acceptance from kindergarten orientation until the twelfth grade through roundtables, celebratory announcements, displays, assemblies, trips, and class discussions, to emphasize the high expectations of the school. The teacher teams design rigorous performance tasks for students using the workshop model to scaffold activities that enable all students, including high-need subgroups, to achieve. An accelerated middle school model pushes students to take algebra, living environment, and American history Regents' exams, and the credit tracking system ensures above average credit accumulation rates for all categories of high school students. As a result, the school earned full additional credit on the Progress Report for lowest third students' graduation rates in comparison to all schools citywide.

## What the school needs to improve

- Increase academic rigor by consistently emphasizing higher order activities across grades and subject areas to meet the needs of all students. (1.1)
  - The school carefully aligns curricula to State standards and Common Core Learning standards while emphasizing instructional priorities across grades and subject areas as evidenced by numerous interdisciplinary units of study and academic tasks requiring extensive writing and high levels of student thinking. While these work products entail higher order skills, some classrooms exhibit routines that are not rigorous and fail to engage students, including students in relevant subgroups. The use of a power point to lecture and question special education students about imperialism, while students sit apart from each other taking notes, limits needed interaction and opportunities to use peer support to achieve, hinders embedding rigorous habits of practice, and impedes efforts to engage all students in tasks that are cognitively challenging.
- Deepen delivery of content so all lessons are planned according to a coherent set of learning beliefs, engaging students through differentiated practices that extend learning. (1.2)
  - All classrooms activities are aligned with the curriculum and interviews with school leaders and conversations during teacher team meetings support the idea of student-centered classrooms utilizing the workshop model. However, some classroom visitations demonstrate teacher-directed practices when teachers ask recall questions for an extended period, failing to engage students in the high levels of participation observed in many other classes. Consequently, efforts to establish a coherent set of pedagogical beliefs that consistently engage students at all levels to achieve high-leveled work are impeded.
- Extend data gathering practices across subjects to include consistent assessment of learning goals to ensure that all teachers make suitable adjustments. (2.2)
  - Teachers use assessments and rubrics to analyze student learning, and other data helps to track the progress of all students, including those in subgroups, and in English language arts and math. While this practice presents a clear picture of student mastery in these two content areas, the lack of these structures in social studies and science provides missed opportunities to track student progress across curricula to develop a complete depiction of student capacity, and to suitably adjust instruction to meet the needs of all students in all subjects.
- Strengthen communication with parents to increase their capacity to assist in their children's learning and track progress towards attaining school goals. (2.4)
  - School leaders involve families in school decision-making through surveys, roundtable discussions, Parents as Partners meetings, the parents' teacher association, and the school leadership team. Parents conduct fundraising activities and have formed a grant writing committee to help the school overcome budgetary restraints, thus supporting a culture committed to student success. While parents express satisfaction with lower grade progress reporting, they shared concerns that the school's electronic grading system used in the upper grades, Ed-line, is not updated in a timely manner by many teachers. As a result, parents are not able to understand their children's performance, encumbering the exchange of information they need to help ensure increased achievement across all levels of the school.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

| School name: The Michael J. Petrides School   | UD | D | P        | WD       |
|---|----|---|----------|----------|
| <b>Overall QR Score</b>   |    |   | <b>X</b> |          |
| <b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>                             |    |   |          |          |
| <i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>  | UD | D | P        | WD       |
| 1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?   |    |   | <b>X</b> |          |
| 1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products? |    |   | <b>X</b> |          |
| 1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?   |    |   |          | <b>X</b> |
| 1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?   |    |   |          | <b>X</b> |
| <b>Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.</b>                 |    |   |          |          |
| <i>To what extent does the school ...</i>   | UD | D | P        | WD       |
| 2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?   |    |   |          | <b>X</b> |
| 2.2 Align assessments to curriculum, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?  |    |   | <b>X</b> |          |
| 2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?   |    |   | <b>X</b> |          |
| 2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?   |    |   | <b>X</b> |          |
| <b>Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.</b>                             |    |   |          |          |
| <i>To what extent does the school ...</i>   | UD | D | P        | WD       |
| 3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?  |    |   |          | <b>X</b> |
| 3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?  |    |   | <b>X</b> |          |
| 3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?  |    |   | <b>X</b> |          |
| 3.4 Communicate high expectations to staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?   |    |   |          | <b>X</b> |

**Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.**

| <i>To what extent does the school...</i>   | <b>UD</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>P</b> | <b>WD</b> |
|--|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers? |           |          |          | <b>X</b>  |
| 4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?  |           |          |          | <b>X</b>  |
| 4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?        |           |          | <b>X</b> |           |
| 4.4 Integrate child/youth development, guidance/advisement support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?                        |           |          |          | <b>X</b>  |

**Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

| <i>To what extent does the school...</i>   | <b>UD</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>P</b> | <b>WD</b> |
|--|-----------|----------|----------|-----------|
| 5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS? |           |          | <b>X</b> |           |
| 5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?           |           |          | <b>X</b> |           |
| 5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?   |           |          | <b>X</b> |           |
| 5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?  |           |          | <b>X</b> |           |

| <b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b> |                       |          |                   |          |                   |           |                       |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| <b>UD</b>                         | <b>Underdeveloped</b> | <b>D</b> | <b>Developing</b> | <b>P</b> | <b>Proficient</b> | <b>WD</b> | <b>Well Developed</b> |