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## ***Stamford Residents for Excellence in Education Announces BOE Endorsement***

October 29, 2009 (Stamford CT) – Stamford Residents for Excellence in Education is a non-partisan group of hundreds of Stamford families committed to giving EVERY child an excellent education. After a careful review of the candidates, the group announced its bi-partisan endorsement for Board of Education, signed by ~200 members at [www.keepgrouping.org](http://www.keepgrouping.org).

As background, we want all children at every level in the Stamford schools to thrive. As part of that, we believe all children should be challenged in appropriately grouped classes, moving at the pace and depth that is right for them.

We support many of the administration's initiatives and changes including flexible grouping by subject (e.g., allowing different placement in math than reading), elimination of any rigid and/or permanent tracking that may exist (i.e., not keeping a child in a group for years based on 4th grade testing), frequent re-evaluation for movement, extensive professional development for teachers, accountability at all levels, and a rich curriculum.

However, we believe that there should also be: Multiple, flexible ability-based groups per subject in district schools - NOT just one or two groups - particularly in core skill subjects. And far greater emphasis placed on understanding and replicating best practices from within our own system.

On these last two points, unfortunately, the administration has seemed more interested in pursuing radical approaches based on misleading "research" with a shaky foundation and questionable applicability to Stamford, rather than doing the hard and effective, but less glamorous, work of replicating best practices that have been successful in our own school system. The former makes for better press. The latter makes for better schools.

We believe the move to having only two groups in sixth grade was misguided and rushed, and that the expansion of this approach would be a grave mistake for the children of Stamford and our property values, and that the trajectory of reducing ability groups needs to be reversed. We further believe that the Board of Education's role should not be that of a rubber stamp for the superintendent – that the superintendent must report to the Board and not the other way around.

To that end, we have reviewed the positions and experience of the five Board of Education candidates. Based on that we endorse:

- Democrat Polly Rauh
- Republican Jerry Pia
- Republican Lorraine Olson

Parent, Rebecca Blieman, wrote on the [www.keepgrouping.org](http://www.keepgrouping.org) endorsement comments, "I think it is very important to group by ability. My child, Olivia Martinez, is in the upper end of the class and she has been in several classes where she is not grouped and I see that she loses interest because the information is not challenging enough."

"I strongly support Rauh, Pia and Olsen because they understand our Stamford community and the need to provide an education that CHALLENGES all of our students - top, middle and bottom", said Nicole Zussman parent of two public school children. These and other signatures and comments are available at [www.keepgrouping.org](http://www.keepgrouping.org).

While we deeply respect the commitment and effort of anyone who seeks public office, we do not support candidates Naomi Chapman-Taylor or Fred Pierre-Louis. They both have publicly subscribed to a position of complete heterogeneous grouping in the school system that goes far beyond even the administration's current approach. We are concerned with their relative lack of experience in general, and the lack of nuance with which they see this issue in particular.

Links:

- Position: <http://www.keepgrouping.org/position.html>
- Research rebuttal: <http://www.keepgrouping.org/research.html>
- Endorsement signatures: [http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/keep\\_grouping/signatures-1.html](http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/keep_grouping/signatures-1.html)

*Paid for by Stamford Residents for Excellence in Education, Nicole Zussman, Treasurer*