

To the Citizens of Stamford,

As we near Election Day with the honor and responsibility of electing new members to the Board of Education, we feel the need to clarify a few issues in this ever-increasing critical choice. There has been much discussion regarding the Middle School Reform and what it means for our children's education right now and for years to come. If you have not been paying attention to the facts, it is time to understand what is at stake. If you have been paying attention to the facts and understand what is happening right now, please be informed that there are many people in this city (including some of the candidates running for the Board of Education) who are not clear on what the Middle School Reform means for the children of Stamford.

- It is important to note that the single group model in which the Stamford Middle School Reform is based upon comes from a community that has minimal similarities to the City of Stamford. In addition, although this community implements a single group for Middle School students in a given grade, the comparison school offers tutoring in small groups on a regular basis (i.e., every other day in groups of 8) as part of the curriculum to support students who may need extra assistance in keeping up with the pace of classroom learning. Is this not ability grouping? More importantly, do Stamford Public Middle Schools have the budget to offer tutoring in small groups on a regular basis to those students who may need assistance?
- Parties on all sides of the debate are in agreement and do not support “tracking”, which is the previous Stamford Middle School model of inflexible grouping no longer employed.
- It is becoming increasingly clear that the Stamford Public Schools Administration is moving toward implementing a single heterogeneous group model in the Middle Schools. This means that the two-group system in place at present will disappear, we just don't know when. The question remains, in a single group system will all children from across the learning spectrum receive the attention that they need to maximize learning opportunities on a daily basis?
- Research indicates gains for children of ALL levels of learning and abilities when they are grouped by ability for certain core subjects.
- We, and many others, support this “flexible ability grouping” model, which allows for the movement of students across ability groups, as appropriate. We feel that flexible ability grouping allows for students of different abilities to get the educational attention that they need in the classroom, across all levels of learning.

It is important to elect members for the Board of Education who clearly understand the pros and cons of the current Middle School Reform and what the consequences are for all current and future children who attend Stamford Public Middle Schools. We need to elect people who will support a school system where the educational needs of ALL children with different learning abilities will be successfully met and who will be mindful of the following stated Stamford Public Schools goal: Developing and implementing strategies to meet the individual needs of all students, including those who exceed standards and those who are below standards (<http://stamfordpublicschools.org/>).

For more information on flexible ability grouping, please see <http://keepgrouping.org/>.

Parents of Past, Current, and Future Stamford Public Middle School Children
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