

# Five seek three seats on D86 board

*Four newcomers, one former member vie for residents' support*

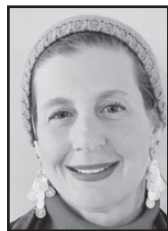


Hinsdale High School District 86 voters will choose a trio to serve on the board when they head to the polls Tuesday, April 4. Four newcomers and a past board member are running for the four-year posts.

The information below was taken from questionnaires submitted by the candidates. See related coverage on Page 12.

— by Ken Knutson

## Hinsdale High School District 86



Asma Akhras

### Background

Age: 48  
Attendance area: South  
Years in district: 30+  
Education: BA, education — elementary and secondary math state certified, St. Xavier University; M.Ed., curriculum and instruction, Benedictine University  
Occupation: implementation leader at Great Minds  
Community service: strategic planning committee and education foundation member, Darien Elementary District 61; Hinsdale South High School Foundation member; D86 CELT committee member  
Board experience: member, Indian Prairie Public Library Board

### Qualifications

Akhras' education background gives her a unique perspective to help lead the process of hiring the next D86 superintendent, she said. Following board meetings and experiencing the district's impact on her own children as a parent has deepened her passion for the district and community.  
"I'll hold the administration accountable to the highest standards while ensuring that we set realistic expectations and support all types of learners."

### Why is she running?

If elected, Akhras noted she would be the only board member from the Hinsdale South attendance area. As the parent of two Hinsdale South graduates and a current freshman, she believes representation from both high schools enriches the board.  
"I have the expertise and approach our board needs for important decisions, such as hiring our district's new superintendent and creating a new strategic plan for our future."



Andrew Catton

### Background

Age: 43  
Attendance area: Central  
Years in district: 5  
Education: BBA, international business, Bradley University  
Occupation: director of manufacturing, Thermoflex Corp.  
Community service: volunteer soccer and basketball coach

### Qualifications

Attending board of education meetings over the last two years has given Catton a good handle on the work of the board. As an experienced manufacturing executive, he has had to meet strict budgets, aggressive timelines, challenging labor markets and demanding customers — all skills that lend themselves to helping lead the district.  
"I am well-suited to immediately take action on the complexities of the district and deliver results that will improve student opportunity and performance."

### Why is he running?

Catton said he's running to ensure the three future D86 students in his home receive an excellent education. He wants to address COVID learning loss and declining proficiency he believes has left students at a disadvantage. Championing operational excellence initiatives to restore the community's expectations of educational excellence for the benefit of all stakeholders is his mission, he said.  
"A comprehensive turnaround plan is urgently needed to restore faith in the system for the sake of all stakeholders and that both school ratings ensure D86 stays a destination district."



Kay Gallo

### Background

Age: 62  
Attendance area: Central  
Years in district: 38+  
Education: some college  
Occupation: self-employed computer consultant  
Community service: served on the D86 referendum committee in 2019, longtime church volunteer, active PTO member at her children's schools  
Board experience: D86 board member 2009-17, board president 2015-17; Maercker Dist. 60 board member 2001-05; current Hinsdale Central High School Foundation board member

### Qualifications

Gallo said working in tech has equipped her with patient resolve to remedy clients' technology frustrations and a problem-solving mindset that board members must have. Her previous tenure on the board enables her to hit the ground running, she said, and her two years as board president was characterized by a constructive dynamic with the administration.  
"I was instrumental in fostering a collaborative working relationship with the district superintendent while setting strong measurable goals and holding him accountable to the high academic standards the community expects."

### Why is she running?

Gallo is troubled by recent curriculum and grading changes she thinks were rushed without sufficient communication to the community. She wants more transparency and more opportunities to allow all students to succeed.  
"Academic expectations have been lowered, standardized test scores have declined and rapid-fire changes have impacted teachers' abilities to meet all students' academic and social-emotional needs."



Cat Greenspon

### Background

Age: 52  
Attendance area: Central  
Years in district: 9  
Education: BA, Loyola University Chicago, double major in political science and communications  
Community service: Hinsdale Central PTO leadership positions, Hinsdale Central Music Parents Association president, Hinsdale South Community Action Team member, former D86 PTAC and CELT member, Big Shoulders Fund partner  
Board experience: Museum of Science and Industry board member since 2014, YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago board member 2014-18

### Qualifications

Greenspon said her work on tutor/mentor programs and supporting various STEM projects paired with her nonprofit board experience has shown her how to bring about positive change. Respectful, data-driven discussion should be the goal.  
"Developing a productive course of action that moves the collective forward towards betterment for all is both an art and a skill I've been honing for a long while."

### Why is she running?

Greenspon believes the district's legacy of educational excellence has been disrupted by changes that have not produced measurable positive results. She believes the views of teachers and the wider community are largely ignored. She wants to help the board function well and promote an open exchange of ideas rather than frustration and division.  
"I am committed to invest my time, bring stakeholders together, build consensus, make hard decisions and stick to my campaign promises."



Deborah Willoughby

### Background

Age: 45  
Attendance area: Central  
Years in district: 1  
Education: BA, Hanover College, double major in chemistry and business; MBA Wake Forest University (dual concentrations in finance and entrepreneurship)  
Occupation: head of finance for global vegetables and flowers at Syngenta  
Community service: teaches classes as part of Operation Hope helping at-risk youth understand financial decisions

### Qualifications

Willoughby said her corporate workplace experience has shown her the value of listening all perspectives and asking challenging questions to understand and address critical issues. She's able to work collaboratively to develop solutions with everyone's input and stay focused on the ultimate goal.  
"I think this type of collaborative leadership and keeping our goals in the forefront of our minds is critical for District 86 Board of Education."

### Why is she running?

Educating students prepared to be productive members of society as they move into adulthood needs to be the district's primary purpose, Willoughby said, and she wants to support this effort through collaboration among the board, administration and community, as well as a focus on data assessment.  
"I think it is important for board members to come in with an open mind and ensure they are acting in the best interests of our students as they work along their path to becoming adults."