

## D86 board candidates share their views

*Hopefuls speak out on curriculum, collaboration, DEI and top three priorities*

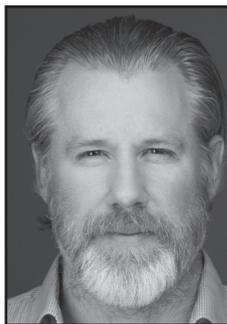


**Where do the candidates stand on the issues?**

Pamela Lannom compiled these responses from personal interviews and questionnaires.



**Asma Akhras**



**Andrew Catton**



**Kay Gallo**



**Cat Greenspon**



**Debbie Willoughby**

### Curriculum decisions

New strategic plan will address curriculum, and board must hold superintendent accountable. Trusts that superintendent, administrators, department chairs and teachers are making correct recommendations that are in alignment with strategic plan. Would like to see each campus have a school improvement plan.

Board should review administrative proposal, provide feedback, and adopt it once back and forth is complete. More emphasis should be on historical best practices rather than “edu-fads” that have led to a decline in academic performance in the district.

Would like board policy to dictate that new courses are piloted before approved, as has been done in the past. Curriculum changes should come before the board with compelling reasons and data showing why they are being recommended.

The board’s responsibility is to have a thoughtful discussion — asking questions and fully understanding educators’ perspective and appropriate data — before making districtwide curricular decisions, prioritizing student needs and preferences at each campus. Believes teachers’ opinions have been ignored or dismissed.

The board’s role is to provide oversight by asking questions, understanding data and making sure any proposed changes have been thought through. Rely on experts (administrators, department chairs, teachers and consultants when appropriate) to help make recommendation.

### Improved collaboration

Disheartened by loss of trust between board members and administrators. Believes with her ability to connect with others, she can find bridge to bring individuals together. Thinks lack of trust has affected the drop in standardized test scores, as tension has prevented the district from moving forward.

Pursuit of operational excellence will result in more collaboration. Believes board members and the public should have more opportunities to speak their mind openly and freely. Grace could be offered when dealing with public comment time limits.

Every board member’s voice needs to be heard at the table, as everyone has the same level of input. There should be no majority/minority when it comes to discussion. Listening to all viewpoints helps the board reach consensus.

Would respectfully and humbly remind boardmates and administrators that focus must be growth of all students. Must have thoughtful, respectful discussions of the best steps to support all students and might have to agree to disagree on which initiatives or measures to implement.

Learned importance of building trusting relationships, understanding others’ perspectives and asking questions during 20 years of working for and holding leadership roles in multinational, multi-billion dollar company. Focus on common intent of providing best education for kids.

### DEI efforts

Supports initiatives, including hiring of Patrice Payne, and has seen the community become more diverse and multicultural since she moved here in 1991, which she sees as a strength. Believes district can preserve academic rigor while giving every student an equal opportunity to learn.

Under-served students should be helped, but formalized DEI programs are not the way to go. Diversity happens naturally, anywhere where people are pursuing excellence. Does not support the generic one size fits all strategic plan. Would reallocate DEI resources, like director’s salary, to special education students.

Thinks DEI activities are being under-reported by the district and wonders why a consultant was considered when the district had hired a director of instructional equity. District is not sharing a narrative of what it hopes to accomplish, so people are filling in the blanks. All meetings should be recorded so community can watch videos.

Would like to see CELT committee look at more than just race, including socioeconomics, gender and access to courses. DEI works should be student driven, should not create other areas of inequity. Data suggests curriculum changes designed to address equity are not working.

Work is incredibly important and more needs to be done, such as addressing hiring practices to ensure the district has a diverse group of teachers and administrators. Work to make sure students and community members feel welcome, regardless of backgrounds or persuasions. Believes most people support an inclusive community.

### Top 3 priorities if elected

1. Collaborate to build a strong culture, starting with communication and trust among all stakeholders.
2. Ensure an academically rigorous curriculum that supports growth and access for all D86 students.
3. Hire the most qualified superintendent possible who bring a focus on academic excellence and creation of the next strategic plan.

1. Address comprehensive COVID learning loss and declining proficiency scores that have gone unacknowledged by superintendent and current board majority.
2. Champion operational excellence initiatives to restore community’s expectations of best-in-class educational excellence for the benefit of all stakeholders.
3. Pass comprehensive turnaround plan to reverse one-size-fits-all approach for students to stop decline and ensure D86 remains a destination district.

1. Begin the process of launching a robust national superintendent search to hire the best qualified candidate, taking into account stakeholder input.
2. Begin to reverse any changes that have resulted in declining student performance.
3. Review the performance of the district’s law firms to determine if replacement is appropriate.

1. Choice to meet all students’ needs, with a focus on data-driven decisions that provide more choices
2. Accountability for better outcomes, with a focus on fiscal responsibility and resourcefulness
3. A true spirit of partnership among stakeholders

1. Ensuring appropriate oversight for the upcoming superintendent search
2. Ensuring the district hires a superintendent who will continue the district’s history of educational excellence
3. Updating the strategic plan and working with all stakeholders in a collaborative manner to provide stability and direction to the district

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