

## D86 candidates speak to host of issues

Board hopefuls address previous board decisions, communication, more

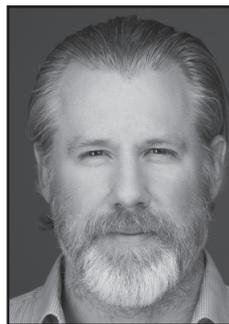


Where do the candidates stand on the issues?

Pamela Lannom compiled these responses from personal interviews and questionnaires.



Asma Akhras



Andrew Catton



Kay Gallo



Cat Greenspon



Debbie Willoughby

### District's greatest strength, area in need of attention

Strength — academic excellence, with the district highly ranked and students performing at exceptional levels  
Needs attention — academic excellence, with improvements needed among segments of the student population. Supports school improvement plan for each campus, with provisions for students performing at all levels.

Strength — students, parents and community stakeholders who believe, support and live the motto of "a tradition of excellence"  
Needs attention — COVID learning loss and declining proficiency performance scores that have gone unacknowledged and unaddressed by superintendent and current board majority

Strength — students, parents, teachers, support staff, community at large  
Needs attention — curriculum and student growth. District has been unable to address declining performance while widespread curriculum changes have been focused on identical programming instead of meeting diverse students' needs.

Strength — the community of students, employees and residents  
Needs attention — students. The district's laser focus should be on student growth and achievement.

Strength — active and engaged community  
Needs attention — ensuring the academic trajectory of the district remains strong by working with students across the district to ensure their academic needs are being met

### District communication

Sees improvements but believes more can be made, especially when it comes to sharing evidence and reason for changes being made.

District communicates only "sunshine and lollipops," avoiding difficult conversations about topics such as lack of rigor, changes in grading practices and unproven pilot programs.

Superintendent has not done a good job of communicating reasons behind changes or determining residents' opinions on various issues before making recommendations to the board.

Would like to see "fireside chats" to rebuild trust and provide more information on issues that have come to the forefront or are causing distress or division.

District makes lots of information available through website but needs to find an easier way to distill information for community in clear bullet points that describe action, consequences and steps yet to be taken. Starts with superintendent who can communicate clearly.

### Representing the community

Will focus on outreach and listening to community members' concerns. Believes division on board is preventing healthy dialogue at meetings and creating distrust in community. Audience also must behave respectfully.

Examine differences of opinion using common-sense filter, then come to a decision as a group. Supports common-sense solutions developed with more in-depth evaluation of the problems and new leadership.

Every board member's voice must be heard so superintendent knows what everyone thinks. Allow public to voice their opinions without cutting them off.

Would be happy for community members to reach out to her with thoughts and concerns and would work hard to gather any necessary data

Will work to understand multiple perspectives, talk to experts to understand implications and then make a decision. Research what other districts have done also might be helpful on certain issues.

### Past board decisions

Agrees with aligning grading practices to provide same benchmarks and systematic processes to assess student growth  
Disagrees with how little weight summative assessments are given vs. formative assessments, as students might not have enough opportunities to show growth and learning

Agrees with maintaining existing boundaries and staying away from grade-level centers  
Disagrees with contract extension for Superintendent Tammy Prentiss, especially given 2,200 signers on a petition to have her fired

Agrees with requesting a full tax levy to make sure public education is fully funded  
Disagrees with contract extension for Superintendent Tammy Prentiss and its wording that she cannot be fired for the results of the Valbrun investigation

Hard to fully agree or disagree with board decisions of late, as she does not think they have been based on all data, which makes thoughtful discussion difficult at best

Agrees with approval of updated 2023-24 school year calendar, with first semester exams taking place before winter break  
Disagrees with contract extension for Superintendent Tammy Prentiss, as no clear explanation was provided as to why it was necessary

### Desired accomplishments in first term

Hire an effective superintendent, bring the community together, improve academic excellence, create a strong strategic plan

Turn around decline in performance, keep D86 as a destination district, require more transparent budgets

Foster more stability, hire a leader who believes in the entire district and doesn't try to pit one school against each other, reverse "one size fits all" approach, examine student growth

Shift emphasis from the district and its reputation to focus more on students and their growth and success

Work toward academic progress, bring community together, create more collaborative environment, hire a new superintendent who embodies traits the community desires

This and other election coverage is posted online at [thehinsdalean.com](http://thehinsdalean.com)