

Anoka-Hennepin School Board candidate comparison, District 4

Dear neighbor,

The candidates elected to the Anoka-Hennepin School Board on Nov. 4 will make decisions that directly impact our students and our community. Because of this, our union of educators decided to provide some information on where the candidates in District 4 stand on some key issues. We have done our best to represent each candidate fairly. The candidate's statements were compiled from their campaign materials, interviews, public statements, board meetings and forums.

Matt Audette (incumbent) v. Abbey Payeur

Does the candidate support providing mental health services and lessons in how students can recognize and regulate their emotions (sometimes called social-emotional learning)?	
<p>Payeur</p> <p>"For example, my opponent has said he is morally opposed to social-emotional learning, which our schools use to teach traits such as respect, responsibility, perseverance, honesty and gratitude. District surveys show that 75% of teachers and more than 90% of parents support SEL. Despite this evidence and chances to see the program in classrooms, he refuses to support it and stalls important votes when he doesn't get his way." [1]</p>	<p>Audette</p> <p>"I personally consider what is behind these programs to be poison to our kids. I will never vote for any of these programs." [2]</p>
To do their best work, educators need the district administration to run smoothly and professionally. Will the candidate manage the district efficiently?	
<p>Payeur</p> <p>Payeur says the budget is her top issue. She called for a focus on long-range planning and adding new revenue streams through grants and business partnerships to avoid annual deficits and rushed cuts. "In order for us to work more effectively, we need this long-range plan of stable funding," she said. [3]</p>	<p>Audette</p> <p>He threatened to derail the budget process in 2024 over what he called "divisive programs" required by state law and voted against the 2025 budget because it funded social-emotional learning. He has voted against the budget four times in four years. [4]</p>
Will the candidate work to provide a safe and welcoming learning environment for all students, no matter their race, background, ZIP code or gender?	
<p>Payeur</p> <p>She said, "Before students are ready for content, they need to feel seen, heard, and loved or cared-for." [5]</p>	<p>Audette</p> <p>In January, Audette opposed accepting \$41,000 in state arts funding for Andover High School, stating: "Anti-racism, which is a Kendi-Angelonian definition of the term, is a divisive ideology; it has no place in our schools. I won't support this effort." [6]</p>
Will the candidate support teaching Anoka-Hennepin students an honest history of the United States, both the good and the bad, so they can avoid the mistakes of the past?	
<p>Payeur</p> <p>She taught a class called "The Danger of a Single Story," where her students examined topics from multiple perspectives. She said they "learned how to hold competing ideas...at the same time and then make determinations on which ideas had more merit." [7]</p>	<p>Audette</p> <p>In discussing the implementation of the new, more inclusive state social studies standards for schools, he said: "What is the minimum we have to comply with in some of these areas that are difficult?" [8]</p>

What is the candidate's personal and professional training in education?	
<p>Payeur</p> <p>Payeur holds a Ph.D. in curriculum and instruction from the University of Minnesota, earned in 2022; a master's degree in Literacy Education from Bethel University and a bachelor's degree in elementary education from Augsburg University. She spent eight years as a classroom teacher in Anoka-Hennepin. Payeur is a professor at the University of St. Thomas, focusing on the science of reading. She serves as vice-chair of The Reading League Minnesota. [9]</p>	<p>Audette</p> <p>No formal training in education, but earned a high school diploma from St. Francis High School, earned a bachelor's degree from the University of Notre Dame in 1997, served as an Army officer from 1997-2001 and graduated from the University of Minnesota's Carlson School of Management in 2005. Has more than 25 years of business experience. [10]</p>

Sources

[1] "Six Voices, Three Seats: Meet the Candidates Vying for Anoka-Hennepin's Future," ABC Newspapers, Sept. 26, 2025, https://www.hometownsource.com/abc_newspapers/community/andover/six-voices-three-seats-meet-the-candidates-vying-for-anoka-hennepin-s-future/article_612e0722-c659-425d-ad59-0359cf7510ed.html.

[2] Matt Audette, "Regular School Board Meeting, May 5, 2025," YouTube video, (3:01:17), posted by Anoka-Hennepin Educational Service Center, Streamed live May 5, 2025, Regular School Board Meeting - May 5, 2025.

[3] Abbey Payeur, "League of Women Voters: Anoka-Hennepin School Board District 4 Candidate Forum," YouTube video, 6:23, posted by QCTV, Sept. 10, 2025.

[4] Emily Baude, "Anoka-Hennepin School Board Member Threatens to Stall Budget Talks over 'Divisive' Curriculum," KSTP, April 22, 2024, <https://kstp.com/kstp-news/local-news/anoka-hennepin-school-board-member-threatens-to-stall-budget-talks-over-divisive-curriculum/>.

[5] Abbey Payeur, "League of Women Voters: Anoka-Hennepin School Board District 4 Candidate Forum," YouTube video (10:05), posted by QCTV, Sept. 10, 2025.

[6] "Citing Anti-racism, AH Board Member Opposes Arts Funding," ABC Newspapers, Jan. 19, 2025, https://www.hometownsource.com/abc_newspapers/abc_newspapers/news/education/citing-anti-racism-ah-board-member-opposes-arts-funding/article_02d5e05c-d29f-11ef-9bb4-0b85457efc7a.html.

[7] Abbey Payeur, "League of Women Voters: Anoka-Hennepin School Board District 4 Candidate Forum," YouTube video (6:55), posted by QCTV, Sept. 10, 2025.

[8] Matt Audette, "Regular School Board Meeting, July 15, 2024," YouTube video, (1:38:58), posted by Anoka-Hennepin Educational Service Center, Streamed live July 15, 2024.

[9] "Abbey Payeur for Anoka-Hennepin School Board," accessed Sept. 26, 2025, <https://www.abbeypayeurforschoolboard.com/>.

[10] "Matt Audette," Ballotpedia, accessed Sept. 26, 2025, https://ballotpedia.org/Matt_Audette.