

**2005 LeftinLowell.com Lowell City Council
Candidate Questionnaire
Cecilia Okafor**

1. What do you see as the top three issues that need to be addressed by the next Lowell School Committee? What specifically can you do to address those issues?

- Textbooks
- Bridging the gap between parents and school system
- Kids having more role models

First, our children need textbooks. This should be the first thing to think about when doing budget, before any other thing. Lowell high school is still struggling with textbooks. How our children can compete without good current textbooks? Good material produce good product. I believe if we provide each kid in Lowell high school with current books we don't have to worry whether they are going to pass their MCAS or SAT Exams. This issue can be fixed if we cut certain things down, e.g. janitors, kitchen aids, and security people, we can replace them with police officers. My point here is that we have to find away to provide textbooks for our children no matter what.

Bridging the gap between parents and school system is very important. Parents and teachers need a way to communicate. Without good communication between these two macro-system, we will continue to have high drop-out rate in Lowell high school. There are many ways to do this such as;

- Sending each kids home room teachers phone number with each kids
- Sending days and time of each grade teacher's meetings.
- Have more parent liaisons
- Provide mini open house with flexible time.
- Provide mini activities that would bring parents, teachers and kids together.
- Parents have to provide their current contacts every semester.

These are few things I can think of now, but I know there are other alternative ways to do this.

Kids having more role models are also important because if they do, they will develop to be better people and they will also achieve more goals in life. Having role models in school can also serve as a parent liaison, and can also prevent dropouts as well.

2. Should the Lowell School Committee be directly involved in the negotiation of collective bargaining agreements? Why or why not?

I would say yes. Lowell school Committee should be directly involved in the negotiation of collective bargaining agreements. I see the Committee like Board members, to help in negotiation, bargaining, advising and supporting the institution.

3. What is your view on M-CAS requirements for graduation?

I believe it should be allowed because all kids should remember some skills that they previously learned such as being able to write an essay on a book or other sources of information, being able to solve simple forms of math and remembering previously studies on physical science, astronomy, social science, and etc.

I see MCAS as a preparation to proceed to the college level of education.

I also believe that MCAS system should provide a booklet for MCAS, so kids can study off it, and it will give teachers guidelines to prepare kids for the MCAS as well.

4. *Is Lowell prepared to meet the new requirements of the addition of science M-CAS that will take effect in 2010? If not what do you propose to see that students are proficient in science?*

I believe Lowell can be prepared to meet the new requirements of the addition of the new science M-CAS that will take effect 2010, if the system-MCAS and school provide booklets for teachers for guidance.

5. *What specific proposals will you make to improve the percentage of students in Lowell that are proficient in the other M-CAS requirements?*

- Provide more current textbooks.
- Provide booklets that cover information to pass M-CAS
- Schools provide M-CAS preparation classes for students (like they have for SAT).

6. *Are the alternative schools for students with discipline problems working in Lowell? If not what should be changed?*

I believe that it works. Kids that are sent there do not behave the same as when they return to their old school.

7. *What kinds of security measures are needed in Lowell schools to protect students and teachers?*

I believe I already answered this question on #1, when I mentioned security being replaced with police officers. Not only it will save us money for textbooks, but also they have more experience when it comes to prevention and protection of crimes.

8. *Do you support the teaching of Intelligent Design (creationist theory) alongside evolution in science classes? Do you think it should be taught instead of evolution?*

I think these two should together. Teaching of intelligent design (creationist theory) alongside evolution in science should go together in classes. There is no way you can teach one and live the other. First of all it is not helpful for kids, in terms of learning.

9. *Do you support/oppose the search of student lockers or backpacks for contraband? Why/Why not?*

- Based on what I know now, I would say I would support the search of student lockers or backpacks for contraband items. Reason being that many children is bring knife, gun or other things as weapon in the school. Any items that are not for school tool should not be allowed in the school compound.

- Not only that it will make school be a safer place to be, and it will make children understand that school is a place for learning.

10. What do you propose to improve working relations between the Lowell School Department and Lowell City Hall?

- Lowell City Hall should be more supportive to Lowell school department.
- I believe school system is a benchmark of a City. If a school system of a city performs well it tells more about that city. The city hall should also work closely with school committee especially when things get tough. It also important for city to ask questions to the school department, even if it's not their job to do so.

11. Is the cost of the Lowell School Administration adequate, too high or too low? Why?

- I will not say too high, and I won't say is too low. There is minimum of everything.
- My concern is on appropriate tools for our children. Each kid in Lowell high school should have current textbook on each subject.