

# They Just Don't Mesh

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I pulled the original story after it looked as though I was finally going to get the additional data I sought.

For years now, I have looked at the numbers for the on-time graduation...with skepticism. The percentage that the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) reports and the numbers reported to obtain that percentage have always seemed fishy...the stinky kind of fishy. The kind of fish that's hard to swallow.

VDOE has away expressed that other factors contribute to the massive difference in the on-time graduation numbers and fall enrollment numbers of students entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade for the first time. In other words, you can't just look at the fall enrollment for the number of first-time 9<sup>th</sup> graders.

Hampton's impressive graduation rate of 90.6% seems unlikely. VDOE can provide the results in their **On-Time Graduation** report but not how districts reached that accomplishment. It seems, VDOE throws out old data once new numbers arrive. That's what VDOE tells me. So IRS returns you should keep for three years but crucial student data gets tossed out every 6 months or so. Helps to prevent any type of scrutiny. Makes me wonder how Williamsburg-James City County was able to fix any error in their on-time graduation reporting.

**“The Virginia On-Time Graduation Rate expresses the percentage of students in a cohort who earned a Board of Education-approved diploma within four years of entering high school for the first time.”**

**Virginia Department of Education**

This year's quest for on-time graduation facts began with an attempt to get the number of students who transferred in and out of the district. This for years has been the explanation for enrollment numbers varying greatly from on-time graduation cohort. This year I decided to have VDOE prove it.

Cohort	Sch Num	Sch Name	Original 9th Graders	Transfers In	Deceased	Transfer Out
2016	280	Hampton High	398	49	1	71
2016	320	Kecoughtan High	419	31		55
2016	430	Bethel High	468	42	1	60
2016	50	Phoebus High	307	24	1	42

**Table provided by VDOE**

The original 9<sup>th</sup> graders for Bethel High School would be 449 students (468+42-1-60). Not the 631 found in the enrollment numbers for Bethel High School. That would be – 182 fewer.

School Year	School Number	School Name	Grade 09
2012-2013	430	Bethel High	631
2012-2013	280	Hampton High	521
2012-2013	320	Kecoughtan High	455
2012-2013	50	Phoebus High	376

**Fall enrollment table available on the VDOE website**

This is where we are at with the numbers.

School Name	Original 9 <sup>th</sup> Graders	Transfers In	Deceased	Transfer Out	Class of 2016 Total Cohort	2012/2013 9 <sup>th</sup> Grade Enrollment	Difference
Hampton High	398	49	1	71	375	521	146
Kecoughtan High	419	31		55	395	455	60
Bethel High	468	42	1	60	449	631	182
Phoebus High	307	24	1	42	288	376	88

Where are these additional students coming from and why do I think they are important? It would indicate to me that the numbers being reported for on-time graduation is **NOT** accurately being reported to the public. I then asked VDOE about the additional students reflected in the enrollment data reported on their website. Oh...those numbers for fall membership (which are much greater than the cohort count) includes **“first time and repeat ninth graders.”**<sup>VDOE</sup> Repeat 9<sup>th</sup> graders. This would mean there are approximately 476 student from the Class of 2015 that are now hopefully be graduation with the Class of 2016 but will not be part of the Class of 2016 on-time graduation cohort. Not students earning a **“diploma within four years of entering high school for the first time.”**<sup>VDOE</sup> VDOE reports Hampton having approximately 4% of their students repeating a grade. It would seem that the vast majority would be high schoolers and 9<sup>th</sup> graders in particular. In any case, the on-time graduation numbers would be more like...I don't know...60%...70% or 80%...not the much improved 90%.

Below are the numbers that VDOE reports Hampton provided as repeaters for grades 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> at our high schools over 5 years.

Sch Yr	Sch Num	Sch Name	Gr 9	Gr 10	Gr 11	Gr 12
2012-2013	430	Bethel High	124	60	28	8
2012-2013	280	Hampton High	98	21	13	12
2012-2013	320	Kecoughtan High	55	28	16	16
2012-2013	50	Phoebus High	92	41	16	13
Sch Yr	Sch Num	Sch Name	Gr 9	Gr 10	Gr 11	Gr 12
2013-2014	430	Bethel High	109	39	21	17
2013-2014	280	Hampton High	37	10	9	14
2013-2014	320	Kecoughtan High	28	20	9	7
2013-2014	50	Phoebus High	88	27	24	15
Sch Yr	Sch Num	Sch Name	Gr 9	Gr 10	Gr 11	Gr 12
2014-2015	430	Bethel High	62	25	28	14
2014-2015	280	Hampton High	53	29	14	19
2014-2015	320	Kecoughtan High	46	36	13	17
2014-2015	50	Phoebus High	50	27	21	10
Sch Yr	Sch Num	Sch Name	Gr 9	Gr 10	Gr 11	Gr 12
2015-2016	430	Bethel High	67	34	32	15
2015-2016	280	Hampton High	71	56	31	13
2015-2016	320	Kecoughtan High	60	60	26	8
2015-2016	50	Phoebus High	67	40	17	14
Sch Yr	Sch Num	Sch Name	Gr 9	Gr 10	Gr 11	Gr 12
2016-2017	430	Bethel High	86	52	53	13
2016-2017	280	Hampton High	95	37	23	11
2016-2017	320	Kecoughtan High	93	43	22	12
2016-2017	50	Phoebus High	79	33	24	10

I have to wonder about the 42 students that were reported by Hampton as dropouts from the cohort that made-up the Class of 2016. Was that number deflated?

Niche reports that Hampton's 68.3% of our students miss 15 or more days per school year. The Hampton Roads school district that comes near that number is Portsmouth with 15.9%. The numbers...they just don't mesh!