

Very Transparency

posted – April 2, 2016

You don't have to get a transparent answer to know that something is rotten in the state of Hampton City Schools.

I submitted a Freedom of Information Act request Thursday evening a week ago to Hampton City Schools for employees' –

1. Full Name
2. Assignment Title
3. Organization
4. Job Classification
5. Salary
6. Budget Fund Code

Got a bit of the requested information Tuesday. Hampton refuses to provide Organization or Budget Fund Code, which adds to the murkiness that is our schools; yet, several things stood out in this information which prompted an additional request for information.

One teacher who was hired last year with zero experience.

Hampton City School Board Position Report
#14-15 - September 3, 2014

Name: [REDACTED]	Title: Teacher - [REDACTED]	
Level: Instructional (Licensed)	Dept: Alternative Programs	
Action: External Hire	License: HCS Pending	
Date: 8/28/2014	Comment:	
Experience: 0		
Budget: 50-9-844-510-1-1121		

This teacher's salary on January 14, 2015 – 139 days after hiring was \$40,000. Okay, that's kosher. Fast forward to March 24, 2016. This teachers salary should now be \$41,200...but it isn't. This same teacher is now being paid at 6 years of experience and with a masters.

Years of Credited Teaching Service	Step	Salary for BACHELOR'S	Salary for MASTER'S IN FIELD	Salary for MASTER'S +30	Salary for EDS/CAGS	Salary for DOCTORATE
0	0	\$40,500	\$43,100	\$43,900	\$44,100	\$45,100
1	1	\$41,200	\$43,878	\$44,702	\$44,908	\$45,938
2	2	\$41,500	\$44,300	\$45,100	\$45,300	\$46,400
3	3	\$41,816	\$44,655	\$45,528	\$45,746	\$46,838
4	4	\$42,455	\$45,322	\$46,204	\$46,424	\$47,527
5	5	\$42,879	\$45,746	\$46,628	\$46,850	\$47,952
6	6	\$43,089	\$45,957	\$46,838	\$47,059	\$48,162
7	7	\$43,339	\$46,205	\$47,087	\$47,308	\$48,410
8	8	\$43,664	\$46,530	\$47,413	\$47,633	\$48,735
9	9	\$43,991	\$46,858	\$47,741	\$47,961	\$49,063
10	10	\$44,321	\$47,187	\$48,070	\$48,291	\$49,393
11	11	\$44,654	\$47,521	\$48,403	\$48,623	\$49,726
12	12	\$44,989	\$47,856	\$48,738	\$48,959	\$50,061
13	13	\$45,326	\$48,193	\$49,075	\$49,295	\$50,399
14	14	\$45,732	\$48,598	\$49,480	\$49,701	\$50,804
15	15	\$46,648	\$49,514	\$50,397	\$50,617	\$51,719
16	16	\$46,998	\$49,864	\$50,747	\$50,966	\$52,069
17	17	\$47,581	\$50,447	\$51,330	\$51,550	\$52,654
18	18	\$48,532	\$51,399	\$52,281	\$52,501	\$53,604
19	19	\$48,896	\$51,764	\$52,645	\$52,866	\$53,969
20	20	\$49,502	\$52,369	\$53,251	\$53,472	\$54,575
21	21	\$49,875	\$52,741	\$53,624	\$53,844	\$54,946

Whoops. I ask –

“Ms. Gulotta,

How does a teacher ([REDACTED]) hired with zero years of experience acquire 6 in a single year? Also, do pay raises or merit increases no longer go through the board for approval?”

Her response –

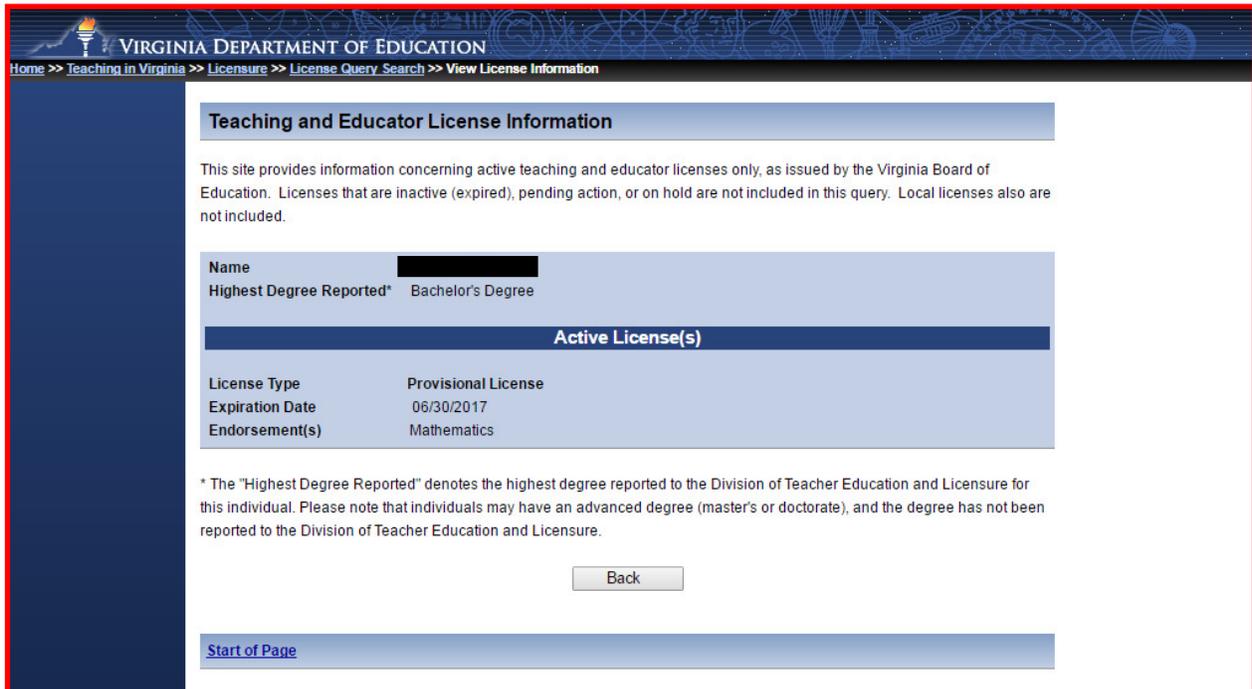
“You have attached the HCS School Board Position Report #14-15 from Sept. 3, 2014. When this Board report was developed, we did not yet have official confirmation of the years of experience for Mr. [REDACTED]. Therefore, he was placed at 0 years of experience. Since that time, he has provided the appropriate documentation for experience, so the Division placed him appropriately on the pay scale.”

Of course I considered this to be a questionable answer; therefore, I went back to the black hole –

“So you paid him a year at the zero because it took that long? Also, is Hampton hiring without verif[y]ing resume and work history? And the other question about pay increases, they no longer go before the board?”

No answer yet. So here is my take on these questions. To keep the public from finding out, raises (which there were some) are not brought up at board meetings in Consent Agenda – Personnel Report. Documents remain hidden from the public. This is not to say the board is unaware of the raises they just are not addressed at board meetings. As to the teacher who is paid an excessive amount more than he should be for years he hasn't worked and for a degree he hasn't earned...

PROVISIONAL LICENSE AND BACHELOR'S DEGREE



The screenshot shows the Virginia Department of Education's website. The header includes the logo and navigation links: Home >> Teaching in Virginia >> Licensure >> License Query Search >> View License Information. The main content area is titled "Teaching and Educator License Information" and contains the following text: "This site provides information concerning active teaching and educator licenses only, as issued by the Virginia Board of Education. Licenses that are inactive (expired), pending action, or on hold are not included in this query. Local licenses also are not included." Below this, there is a table with the following information:

Name	[REDACTED]
Highest Degree Reported*	Bachelor's Degree

Below the table is a section titled "Active License(s)" with the following information:

License Type	Provisional License
Expiration Date	06/30/2017
Endorsement(s)	Mathematics

At the bottom of the page, there is a footnote: "* The 'Highest Degree Reported' denotes the highest degree reported to the Division of Teacher Education and Licensure for this individual. Please note that individuals may have an advanced degree (master's or doctorate), and the degree has not been reported to the Division of Teacher Education and Licensure." A "Back" button is located below the footnote, and a "Start of Page" link is at the bottom left.

Interesting side note – on December 17, 2014, the board, after the school board got hammered over raises, had a discussion as to whether salary should be available to the public. The board voted against transparency.

Meeting Minutes

6. Deliberation

6.01 Dedication of Property to City of Hampton at Syms Middle School

Representatives from the City of Hampton presented information regarding the dedication of property to City of Hampton at Syms Middle School.

6.02 Personnel Reports/Salaries

The Board discussed a request from a community member to change the Board's procedure and place the personnel report with salary information on the public side of BoardDocs. Dr. Shifflette stated that as of June 2006, salaries were no longer posted on the HCS personnel report. Ms. Robbin Ruth reviewed every school division website in the Commonwealth of Virginia to see where the personnel information is located on the agenda. She stated that 55% (72 school divisions) of the divisions do not have personnel reports posted on their site. Of those that did, only three included salary information. The information varied as to what was included. One included a number for the individual, but no name, another included supplement information and no base salary information, and the third had salary information for some, but not all, positions. Salaries for every employee were not included.

Of the school division websites that include a copy of the personnel report, 42% of the reports are on the consent agenda, 35% are listed as an item for action following a closed session meeting and 23% are in various places on the agenda (ie., Superintendent's Report.)

The Superintendent said her recommendation is to leave the personnel report as is on the agenda.

Board members shared their thoughts on whether this information should be available.

6.03 Revision of School Board Policy GBM-Instructional Personnel Grievances

There was no additional discussion on this policy.

6.04 Revision of School Board Policy GDF-Personnel Records

Ms. Smith asked if employees can access their records digitally. Ms. Ruth said yes they will be able to.