

# A School is Not a School, If You're Not Learning There

posted – 21 July 2018

Hampton City Schools and the City are going gaga over the academies starting at the various high schools. Students and parents are too. The thought of exiting high school with an associated degree and the ability to step into junior status at a university or college is exciting. (Local junior colleges may not be too pleased with this outlook. Student enrollment is already dwindling at Thomas Nelson and Tidewater.) Instead, maybe the graduating senior will exit high school prepared to step into employment. Both are promising prospects...or are they. Example: Law and Public Safety Academy. At eighteen with a diploma, a student can hope to get one of Hampton's six budgeted police cadet positions of which ZERO are currently filled. If the graduate goes next door and applies in Newport News to the cadet program, he or she will be required to enroll in college as well. In addition, both programs have stringent requirements for hire. So stepping into a field may not be so easy.

This is Hampton City Schools, a district that struggles with the basics. The initial Standards of Learning (SOL) Chemistry pass rate at one of the high schools this spring was 15% – 15 – whereas last year, when all was said and done, the pass rate was in the 50%. Lousy but not as lousy.

This summer, numerous appeals were made by the school district for SOL remediation held at one of its high schools. I would imagine the 85% failing Chemistry students helped in Hampton's decision to offer this remediation for those floundering hopefuls wishing to graduate. How foolish Hampton would look if the SOL and graduation rates were dreadful all the while focusing on these 16 academies? Sixteen academies that required time...money...travel. Not for naught, for the next batch of kids – fingers crossed. Let's hope Ford Next Generation helps Hampton to figure out what has been missing in their classrooms.

Hampton's student homelessness is rising...the number of economically disadvantaged students is increasing... gang and youth violence is growing...eviction rates are among the highest in the country – though our city manager would like you to believe otherwise. The focus on the academies may be misplaced. Unfortunately, if misplaced, it will take precious learning time lost to another scheme with students suffering the consequences.