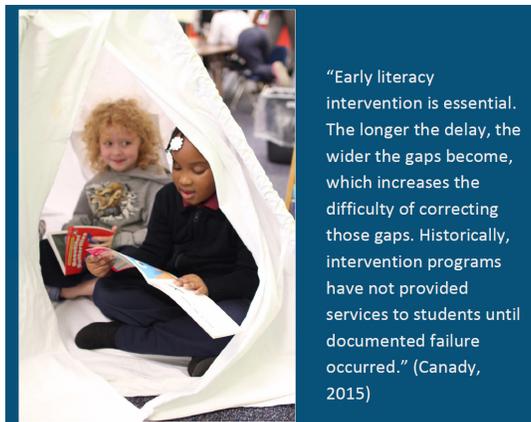


# Fill-in the Crack

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“Early literacy intervention is essential. The longer the delay, the wider the gaps become, which increases the difficulty of correcting those gaps. Historically, intervention programs have not provided services to students until documented failure occurred.” (Canady, 2015)

From the FY19 budget presentation by Hampton City Schools to the City of Hampton.

It's a sad state when you think about the condition our schools are in...and I don't just mean physical. Recently, there was painting, cleaning and the general sprucing up of schools for the visit of state dignitaries. This shows the value our districts places on our children - for them Hampton will primp and tidy but not for our children. Rather than try to dress to impress the actual inferior condition of our schools should have been the message. But, I guess that would imply *piss-poor management*. What less visual conditions are hurting our schools? For one, Hampton is failing at the very foundation of an education for many and those with the ability to step in and rectify the situation...Hampton School Board...refuses to do so. Just how are they refusing? Hampton has decided to budget for 79 fewer slots for Pre-kindergarten – why, because of a dwindling student population according to our superintendent. Fewer students equal fewer teachers. However, what Hampton doesn't want to tell you is that it is turning their back on students because the state will only jointly fund with the city 548 slots. This equates to the 79 fewer slots than this year's 627 - a 12.6% decrease. The state's reasoning is based on fewer students and a lower percentage of disadvantaged students. This jointly funded program for the early learners is called the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI). Below are parameters for this program.

1. At or below 200% of poverty
2. Homelessness
3. Student's parents or guardians are school dropouts
4. Family income is above 200% but at or below 350% of federal poverty guidelines in the case of students with special needs or disabilities
5. Local criteria

**School divisions and localities allowed filling up to 15 percent of the actual VPI slots using local criteria.**



- Parent did not complete high school
- Physical abuse and neglect, family abuse, substance abuse
- Single family home
- Foster care
- English Language Learners (ELL)
- Parent that is incarcerated
- Military deployment
- Student raised by relatives other than parents
- Other than income or listed local criteria

The state will not spend a penny more than for those 548 slots. Currently, the state pays nearly 70% of the cost for those students. Given that Hampton City School's administration and now Hampton School Board is fully aware of the benefits of a preschool education...no longer thinking they were just "stupid", Hampton is turning their back on children whose parents have applied for Pre-K?

This means every student is eligible for free meals but the school board refuses to allow the full participation in this program.

This is what is happening at the state level. The state figured Hampton would have 1,506 students in kindergarten this year, yet only had 1,396. A prediction off by 7.88%. Next school year (beginning September 2018), the state is figuring another drop to only 1,358 kindergarteners in Hampton. Then the state factors in the number of poor or disadvantaged students. After all, VPI is more for the being needy than for those having needs. The state claims from FY18 to FY19, Hampton's number of poor students has decreased from 49.04% to 47.27%. This would contribute to fewer available slots for Pre-k too. From all the information available online...which is current...this is not the case. Using the data available for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) program, in July 17, 2017, 40.5% of Hampton's students were eligible for free or reduced meals. Nearly a year later and a month ago, April 1, 2018, 41.98% of the students are considered eligible for free and reduced meals. Definitely shows an increase.

Maybe the state is using other numbers for determining the number of disadvantaged students. Could the state possibly be using the fall demographics? I hope not. It would seem Hampton's reporting of disadvantaged student is...lacking. This would explain the state considering Hampton City Schools' population as having a lower percentage of disadvantaged students. Example: This school year, Hampton City Schools reported 21 of its 728 Pre-k students as economically disadvantaged - in other words, 2.9%. The state must believe those numbers. They weren't reject as foolish. What did Hampton report last year - 55.42% of the Pre-k students as economically disadvantaged. Hmm. The numbers also wouldn't support the program requirements.

Nevertheless, the state assures that the biggest factor is the predicted of fewer students.

Okay. What exactly is that funding? Based on the district's composite index of .2773 this school year, of the \$6,125 per student funding for this program, Hampton's share is \$1698.46 per VPI student. Come September, Hampton's composite index drops to .2741. This means Hampton is expected to contribute \$1678.86 per VPI student. Therefore, in FY19, Hampton will be spending \$19.60 less per VPI student.

The state records for the CEP program indicates a greater percent of economically disadvantaged students...the fall enrollment records indicates a greater percentage of economically disadvantaged students trend (49.07% this year and 44.90% last year)...and the composite index indicates our community is struggling more; hence the lower composite index of .2741 in FY19 and FY20.

Does fewer students justify the state snatching-up student slots to give to other districts and for Hampton to fire teachers. It could if that is how the program is believed to operate.

Hampton filled its VPI Pre-k slots but was left with children on a waiting list. In FY16 - 142 children were on the waiting list for the Pre-k program. In FY17 - there were 80. This school year, FY18, there were 161 children on the waiting list. These children did not have to be turned away. The state doesn't have to contribute to Hampton City Schools for these children to be kindergarten ready, the City could have and should have foot the bill...at the School Board's behest. The \$986,125 to cover the cost of the 161 children on the waiting list could easily been found in the budget. Eliminate the extravagant spending on travel - Hampton School Board seven members spent \$28,852.77 last year while Chesapeake School nine members only spent \$450.07. How many trips by members of Hampton City Schools and the City of Hampton need to travel Nashville to determine the academies benefits on an already done deal? Tens of thousand would have been more wisely spent on Pre-k. The increase in administrative costs...while instructional cost decline...could be eliminated. The examples could go on and on. The point - the state or federal government do not have to contribute for the Hampton City Schools to provide the necessary service.

Below is information pertaining to Hampton's particulars. With the increasing percentage of disadvantage students in Hampton, and the fewer VPI slots available, how many children will fall through the crack during the 2019 and 2020 school year?

<b>Year</b>	<b>VPI Slots</b>	<b>Percentage of Disadvantage Students</b>	<b>Composite Index</b>	<b>District's Per Student Share</b>
2015	612	49.70%	0.2878	\$1,726.80
2016	625	43.10%	0.2878	\$1,726.80
2017	632	44.89%	0.2773	\$1,698.46
2018	627	49.07%	0.2773	\$1,698.46
2019	548	To Be Determined	0.2741	\$1,678.86
2020	534	To Be Determined	0.2741	\$1,678.86

Based on per student expenditure of \$6,000 in 2015 and 2016 and \$6,125 in 2017 thru 2020.