

Bedford admits error in student test score data

Colleen Wilson, cwilson2@lohud.com Published 11:26 a.m. ET Nov. 17, 2017



(Photo: Frank Becerra Jr., Staff)

Bedford school officials acknowledged this week that state English proficiency scores, including for students in a controversial bilingual education program, were improperly inflated in a district report.

The district incorrectly listed English Language Arts (ELA) test scores for third-graders at four of the five elementary schools, including Mount Kisco Elementary School, where there is the new Dual Language Bilingual Education (DLBE) program.

Schools Superintendent Christopher Manno called it "a minor error with major impact."

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The data in the district report lists non-English-speaking students in the DLBE program as 13 percent proficient in ELA. In reality, only 7 percent of those students were proficient in English, a modest increase from 5 percent in 2016 and well below the 11 percent state average.

"We talked with the consultant and she looked at the data and she immediately recognized the error and apologized," Manno said. "We will update all of our data accordingly, and our presentations accordingly, and we'll send along an apology."

Bedford contracts with the Lower Hudson Valley Regional Information Center, the tech arm of BOCES, for data consulting, Manno said.

The DLBE program, launched in the 2014-15 school year, is only at Mount Kisco Elementary School. It offers classes in English and Spanish on alternate days. English-speaking students, as well as non-English-speaking students, are enrolled in the program.

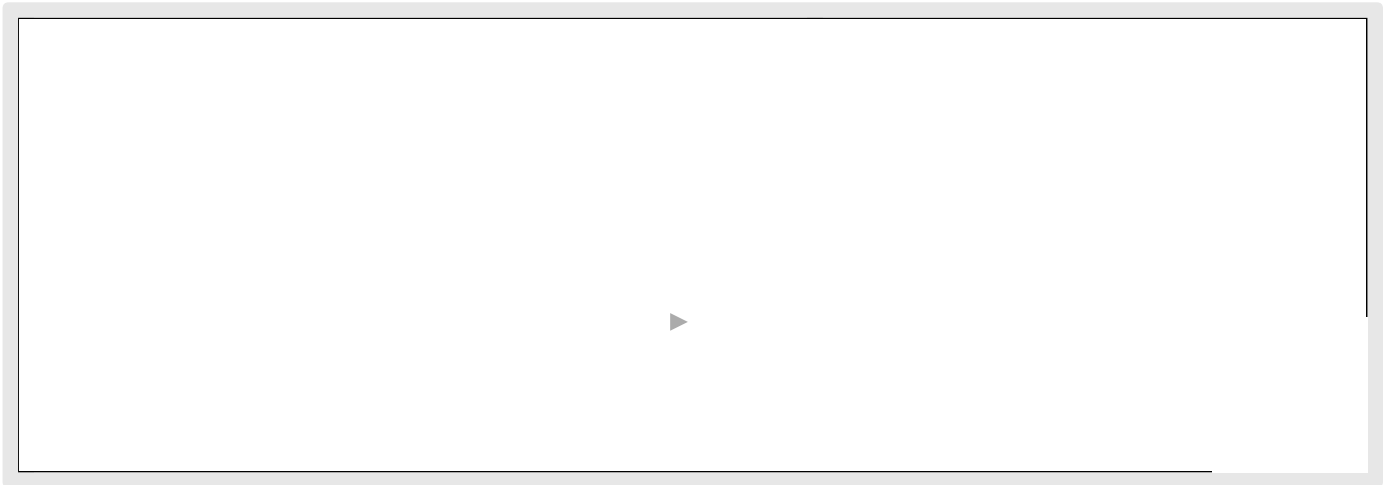
Nearly 400 students in grades 1-4 at the elementary school are currently in the program. Last year's third-graders, who were the first class to enter DLBE, were also the first to take state proficiency tests, which start in third grade. Their scores from last spring are in question.

The community has been divided over the DLBE program since it launched. While some parents have called into question the academic merits of the program, others say their children have benefited from the language-immersion approach.



Christopher Manno,
superintendent of the Bedford
Central School District, (Photo:
Mark Vergari/The Journal News)

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How it happened

The errors first appeared in a template showing student proficiency on state exams in a “Student Data Achievement” presentation made by Joel Adelberg, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction, at an Oct. 25 board meeting.

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Manno used the same data when he made a presentation to the Board of Education on Nov. 15. The presentation was an assessment of the DLBE program with options on possibly expanding it in the future.

The discrepancies in the state testing data were first noticed by Michael Solomon, a district parent and former school board member, who spoke during the Nov. 15 board meeting.

"I started taking a look at it and noticed that the proficiency scores for our ELLs (English language learners) in third grade were significantly higher than state averages, and that struck me as odd," Solomon said.



Solomon discovered the errors by cross-checking the district's data with online state Education Department numbers, and brought his findings to the school board.

"I was trying to raise that in a time where there's some spirited discussion on what dual language in our district is going to look like," he said. "And the critical information of Dr. Adelsberg's Oct. 25 presentation was wrong."

The report listed the exact same scores for third grade ELA and math exams. Those scores were accurate for the math exams but wrong for ELA.

Timely issue

**Bedford Central School District
2017 student achievement
report.** (Photo: Bedford Central
School District)

The discrepancies in the data come at a time when the district has spent months studying the DLBE program and recently began engaging the school community on whether to expand the program to the entire district, an idea that has been met with mixed reaction from the community.

Manno urged parents to keep in mind that this is one year of data, and "it really would not be reasonable to draw conclusions on the effects of anything based on one year of data."

Joe Malichio, a parent with four children in the district, spoke at the October board meeting and called into question whether the program has shown academic improvement. He said the program "exists because we have demographic challenges in Mount Kisco ... It doesn't exist because it wasn't impeccably researched."

Kristen McIntyre, who also spoke at the October meeting, said her fourth grader at Mount Kisco has excelled under the program and is on the path to read, speak and write in two languages.

"My son has taken to learning another language like a fish takes to water," McIntyre said. "The dual language program has provided him with the foundation of knowledge and skills to become bi-literate before he graduates high school."

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