

Poor students lose ground with Common Core

By Diana Lambert and Phillip Reese, Sacramento Bee

Despite longtime efforts to reduce the achievement gap between rich and poor students in California, the divide grew much wider under the state's new testing system, according to a *Sacramento Bee* review of state data released this month. About 21 percent of economically disadvantaged students in California met state math standards under the new Smarter Balanced Assessment System, compared with 53 percent of all other students.

That means the percentage of wealthier students meeting state standards is about 2.5 times higher than the percentage of economically disadvantaged students. By comparison, under the previous testing system used in 2012, the percentage of students scoring "proficient" was about 1.5 times higher for wealthier students than for poor students.

The new statewide exam is based on Common Core standards, a national set of guidelines intended to promote critical thinking, analytical writing and problem-solving skills. Students often must combine several skills to correctly answer questions, and memorization is less valuable. Students, regardless of income level, fared worse than under the previous testing system, but low-income schools suffered the steepest performance declines.

Read the whole story