



Do happier teachers produce higher test scores?

By: Jennifer Hall

My Inspiration

I spent 6 years in the school system as an elementary educational assistant. Most of my job was working with children that were behind. Most of the teachers I interacted with were fairly happy with their jobs but I started to wonder if their job satisfaction had anything to do with their test scores. This is a broad look at that using teacher satisfaction surveys and TNReady scores for the state of Tennessee.

Using data taken from a survey given in 2022 , 'Strongly Agree' answers were averaged by district and the top 20 are being looked at here.

Unless otherwise indicated, when answering survey questions please consider your experiences during this current school year (2021-22). Also, the terms "school leaders" and "school leadership" are used throughout this survey. When reflecting on questions that use these terms, please consider your principal and any assistant principals at your school.

TC_01. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your school.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. There is an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect within this school. (Select one option)	1	2	3	4
b. Teachers are encouraged to participate in school leadership roles. (Select one option)	1	2	3	4
c. I am generally satisfied with being a teacher in this school. (Select one option)	1	2	3	4
d. I would recommend this school to parents seeking a place for their child. (Select one option)	1	2	3	4
e. Our school staff is a learning community in which ideas and suggestions for improvement are encouraged. (Select one option)	1	2	3	4

TC_02. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding school leadership in your school.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. The principal at my school communicates a clear vision for this school. (Select one option)	1	2	3	4
b. The staff feels comfortable raising issues and concerns that are important to them with school leaders. (Select one option)	1	2	3	4
c. I like the way things are run at this school. (Select one option)	1	2	3	4

TC_03. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about your school's leader(s). For these items, consider the leader (your principal or an assistant principal) who you consider most responsible for engaging with you around instruction.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. My school's leader regularly models effective instruction. (Select one option)	1	2	3	4
b. My school's leader regularly gives feedback on my instruction. (Select one option)	1	2	3	4
c. My school's leader knows my instructional strengths and areas of growth. (Select one option)	1	2	3	4

d. My school's leader is knowledgeable about the curricula being used. (Select one option)	1	2	3	4
e. My school's leader is knowledgeable about the non-academic needs of my students. (Select one option)	1	2	3	4

TC_04. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding school safety.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. School leadership effectively handles student discipline and behavioral problems. (Select one option)	1	2	3	4
b. Students treat adults with respect at this school. (Select one option)	1	2	3	4
c. Students in my school are safe from bullying.	1	2	3	4
d. I feel prepared to respond to any type of emergency situation that may occur at my school. (Select one option)	1	2	3	4

TC_05. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding the teachers at your school.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. Teachers at my school feel responsible when students fail. (Select one option)	1	2	3	4
b. Teachers at my school feel responsible to help each other do their best. (Select one option)	1	2	3	4
c. Teachers at my school help maintain discipline in the entire school, not just their classroom. (Select one option)	1	2	3	4
d. Teachers at my school take responsibility for improving their school. (Select one option)	1	2	3	4

TC_06. Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding your planning time this school year.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a. Teachers in my school are allowed to focus on teaching students with minimal interruptions. (Select one option)	1	2	3	4
b. My individual planning time is sufficient. (Select one option)	1	2	3	4
c. My collaborative planning time is sufficient. (Select one option)	1	2	3	4

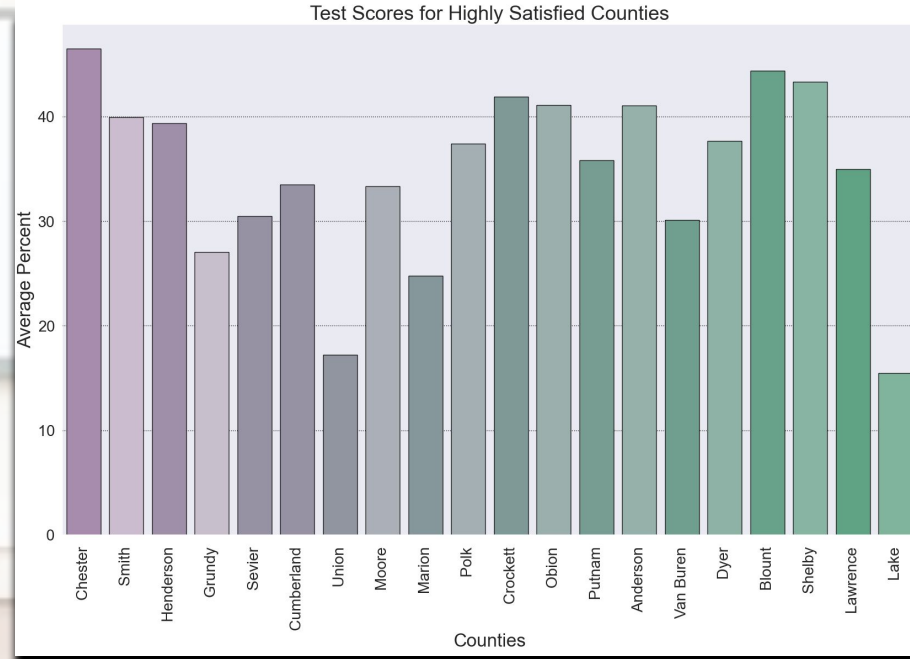
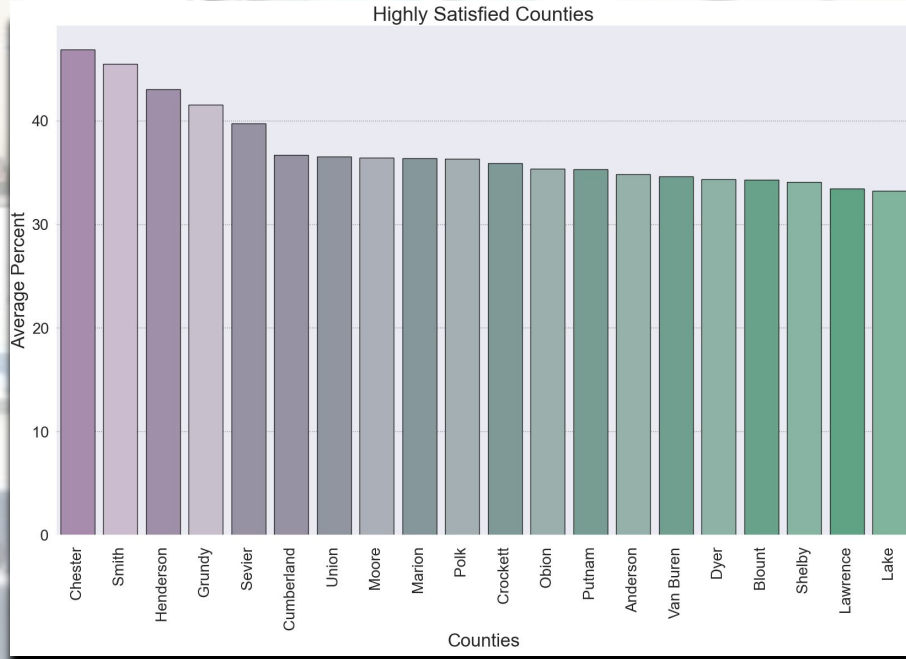
Test Scores

Test scores are taken from 2022 state TNReady assessments, grades 3-8, and only the percent of students that met or exceeded expected scores was used. Composite ACT scores from 2022 are also used.

Highly Satisfied Counties and Test Scores

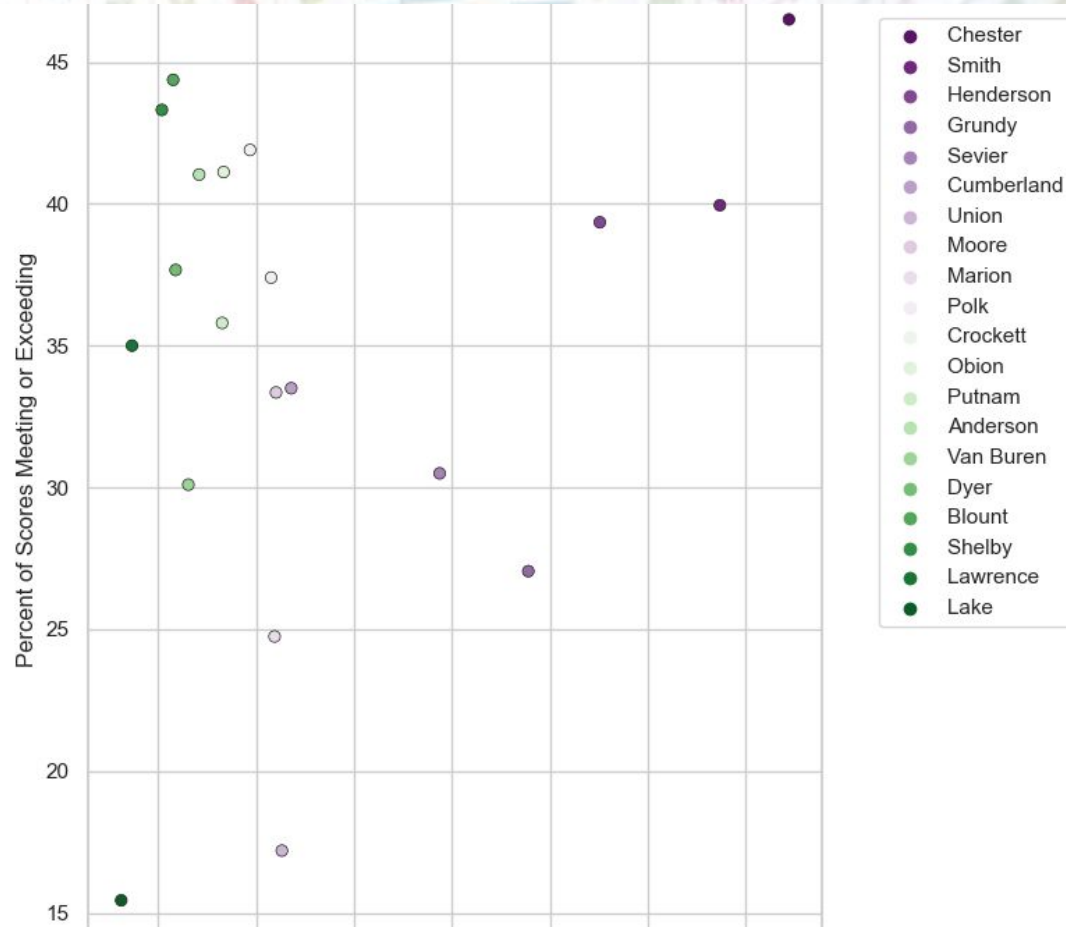
First, a look at the top 20 counties based on satisfaction and their test scores for 2022. Colors are used to differentiate counties.

Top 20 Highly Satisfied Counties



Test scores are an average of ELA and Math from grades 3-8 and either meet or exceed grade level.

Not much of a correlation

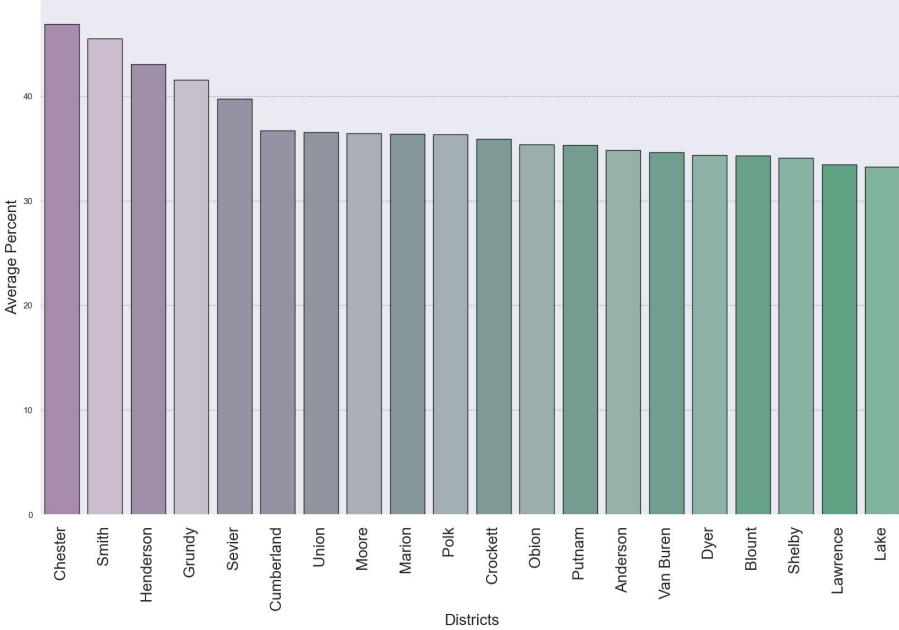


How About ACT Scores?

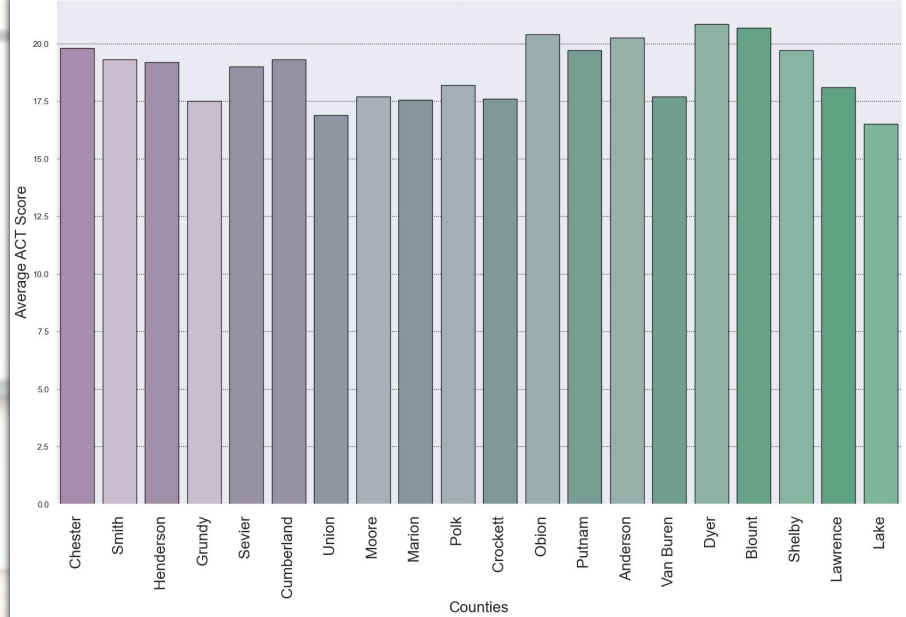
Now to compare the same satisfaction graph to ACT scores.

A Look at ACT Scores

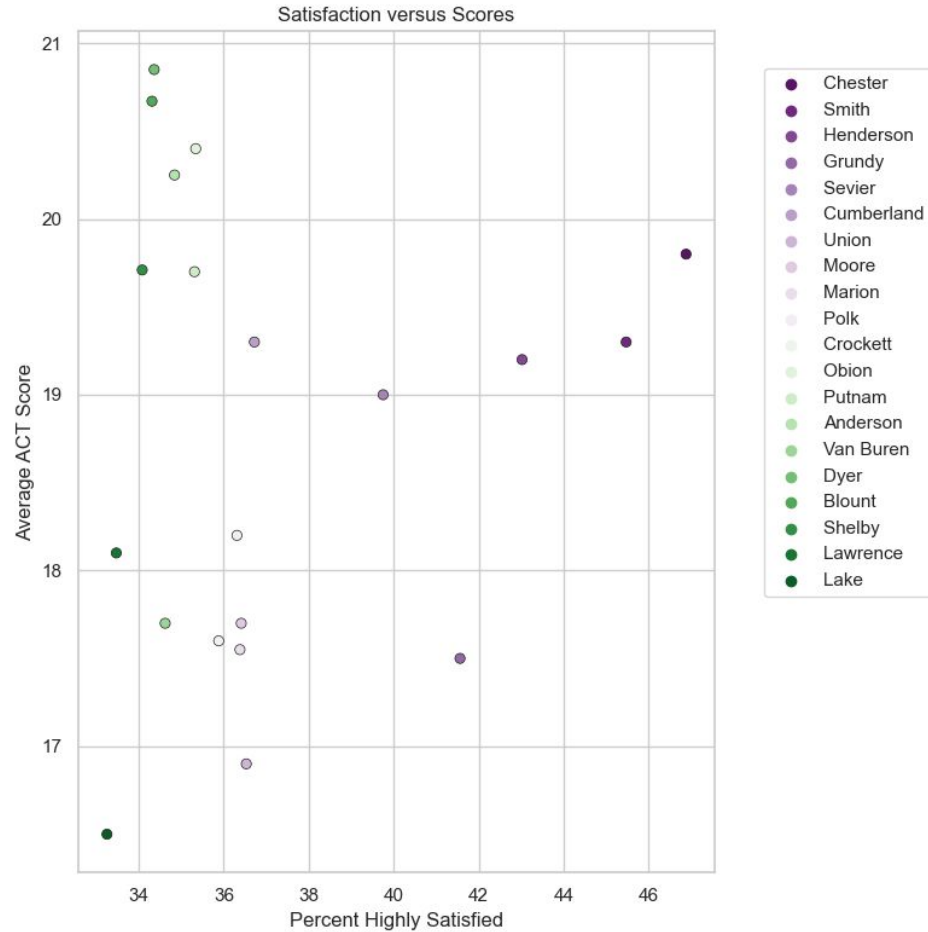
Highly Satisfied Counties



ACT Scores for Highly Satisfied Counties



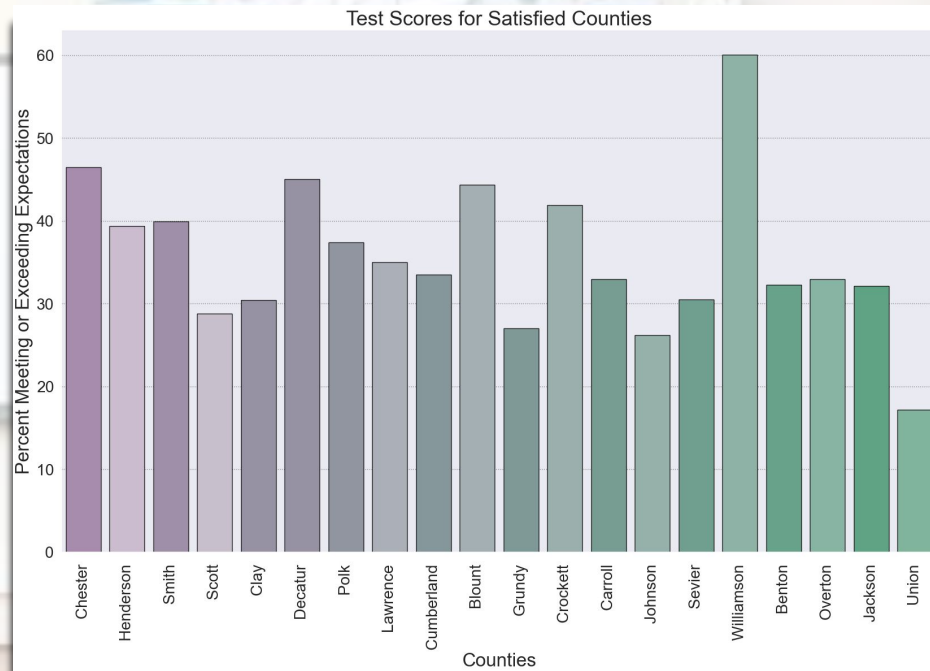
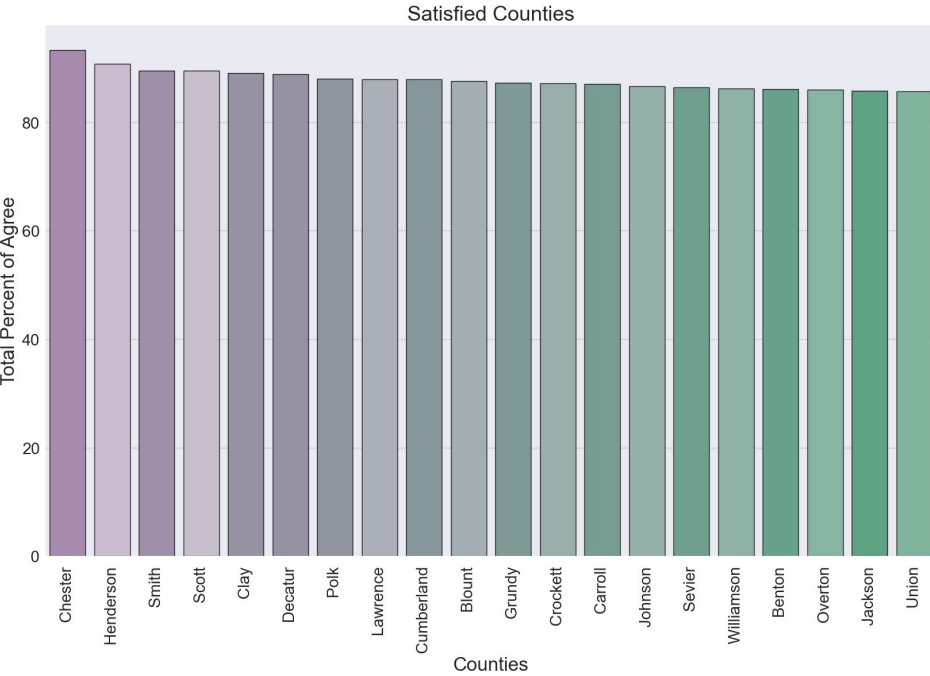
Still No Correlation



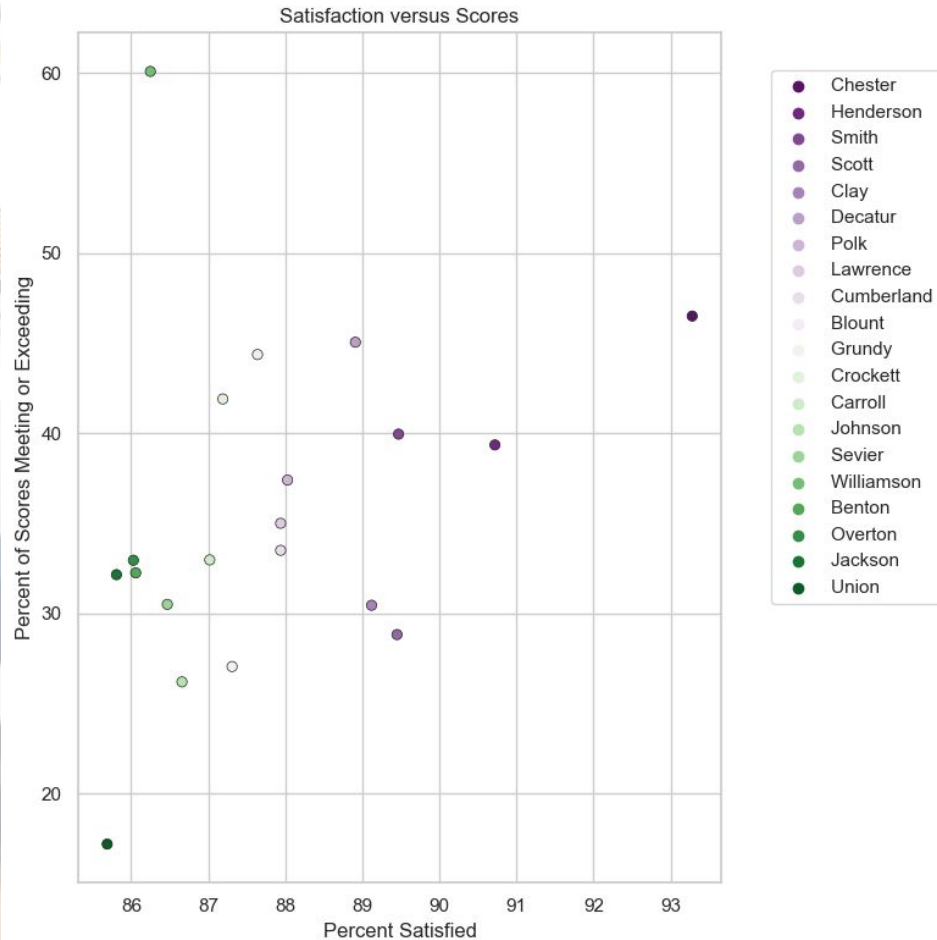
So Now What?

What if the 'Agree' category was added in as well?

Total Agree and Strongly Agree



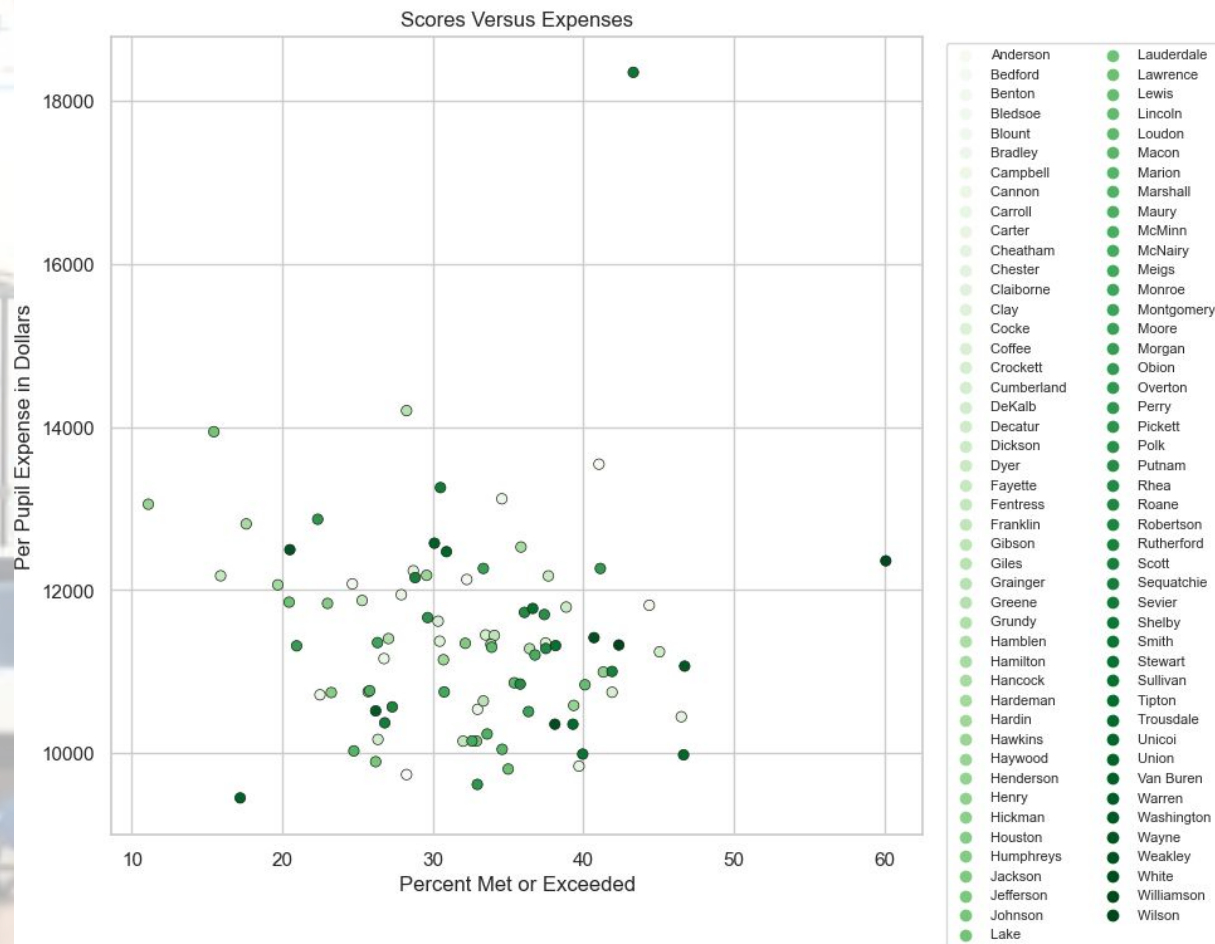
Slightly More Correlation But...



What else could contribute?

Spending per child data was brought in and compared to test scores.

Is Money Spent Per Child the Answer?



A Different Approach

Now a Look At Top Scoring Schools



In Conclusion:

The conclusion I made is that, for the most part, teacher satisfaction doesn't play too much of a part in test scores. I would like to investigate more on things like the socioeconomics of each county and compare that to test scores as well as possibly finding something on parent involvement. I feel like those might result in higher correlations to test scores. I would also like to dig into the counties that seem to be doing very well and find out exactly what they are doing right!