I came across some data a couple of weeks ago and wanted to test a belief that I’d had since high school against a couple of correlations. The data consisted of a large number of variables related to Massachusetts school districts, and included in the data was how high school students did on the Massachusetts standardized test which 10th graders take, called MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System).

My belief was this: my school was the anomaly - we had below average funding, and above average class sizes, yet we were consistently in the top 10% of the state in MCAS scores across each subject, and very near the top in math and science. I never bothered to check the numbers because I thought it would be obvious: larger class sizes and lower funding are correlated with lower test scores. Students in districts without as much funding get screwed, and this is an issue of a failure of distribution across the state of wealth when it comes to school funding. This is the rhetoric I’ve heard for years, and I’ve never heard anyone question it.

Then I ran the numbers, and I was taken aback by what I saw. Across districts with students taking the 10th grade MCAS, there is practically no correlation between

Granted, this data doesn’t say much. It is looking at one snapshot in time

Graphs demonstrating what I found can be seen at nickusoff.com/mcas, and please email me at [Nicholas.usoff@tufts.edu](mailto:Nicholas.usoff@tufts.edu) if you would like to see the data I’ve compiled. I extracted data from