



Factors Affecting Children's Attitudes Towards the Environment

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INTRODUCTION

As environmental concerns continue to rise, more environmental education is being introduced in classrooms; however, some people will care about the environment more than others. As such, my project will focus on identifying the variables that most dramatically influence students' attitudes towards environmental care, as measured across schools in Orange County. This research will focus on schools across Orange County that vary in socioeconomic status, proximity to a body of water, and level of environmental education. By evaluating students' perspectives at each school on ocean and water conservation, I will identify which variables have the greatest impact on students' attitudes toward protecting the environment.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGIES

- 1) Collecting a mix of quantitative and qualitative data
 - a) Quantitative data: chosen factors (watershed proximity, median income, teaching score)
 - b) Qualitative data: surveys of student initial attitudes towards the environment
- 2) Choose the schools I would like to research based on their variation in socioeconomic status, proximity to a watershed, and level of environmental teachings
 - a) Level of teaching determined by a self-made scoring chart based on quantity of clubs, classes, units, and awards granted
 - b) Schools chosen: Laguna Beach High, Santa Ana High, Los Alamitos High, San Juan Hills High
- 3) Reach out to schools regarding survey collection
- 4) Compare the survey results to individual school factor standings to find relationship trends

DATA AND FINDINGS

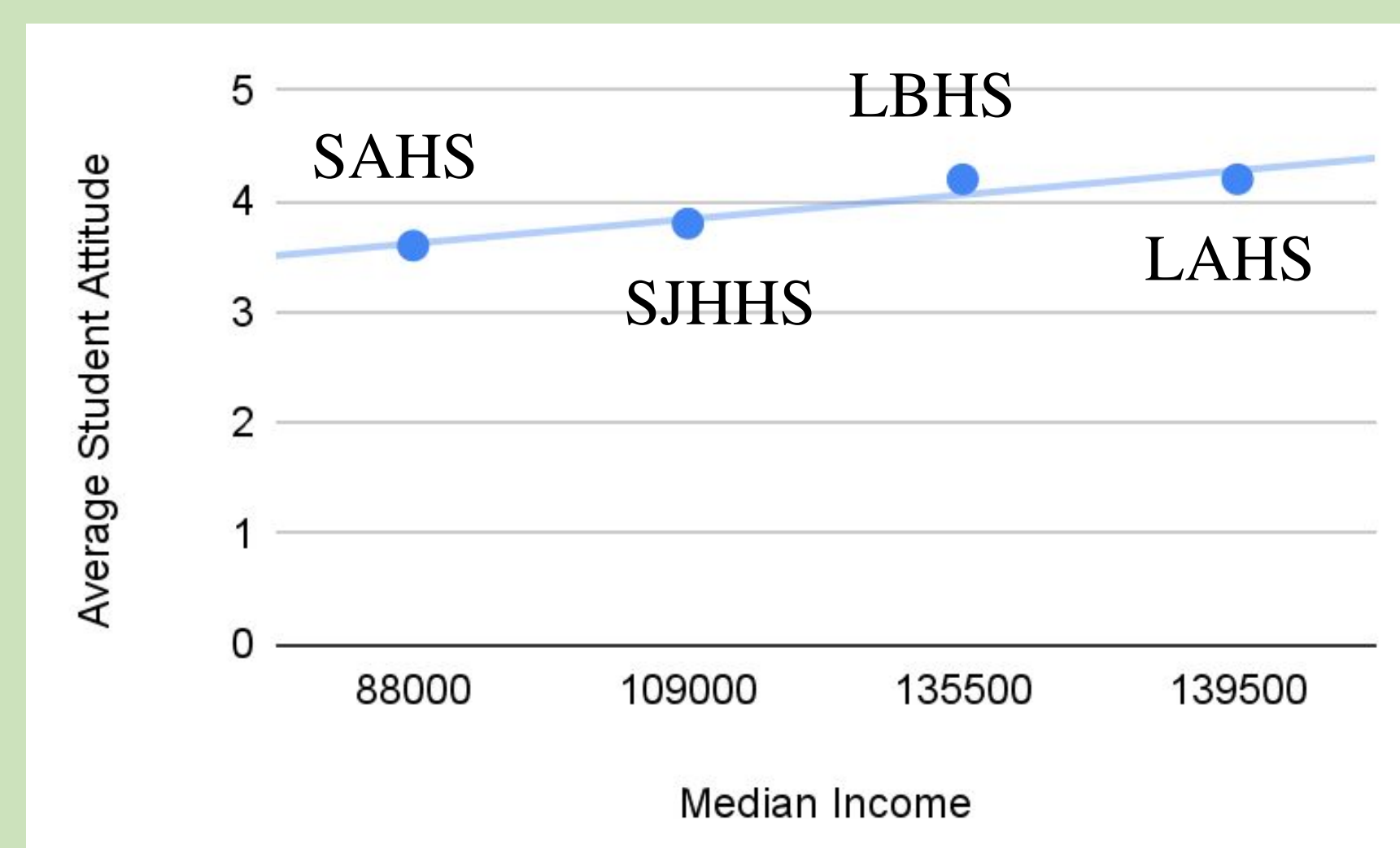


Figure 1. High Correlation Between Average Median Income and Student Attitude

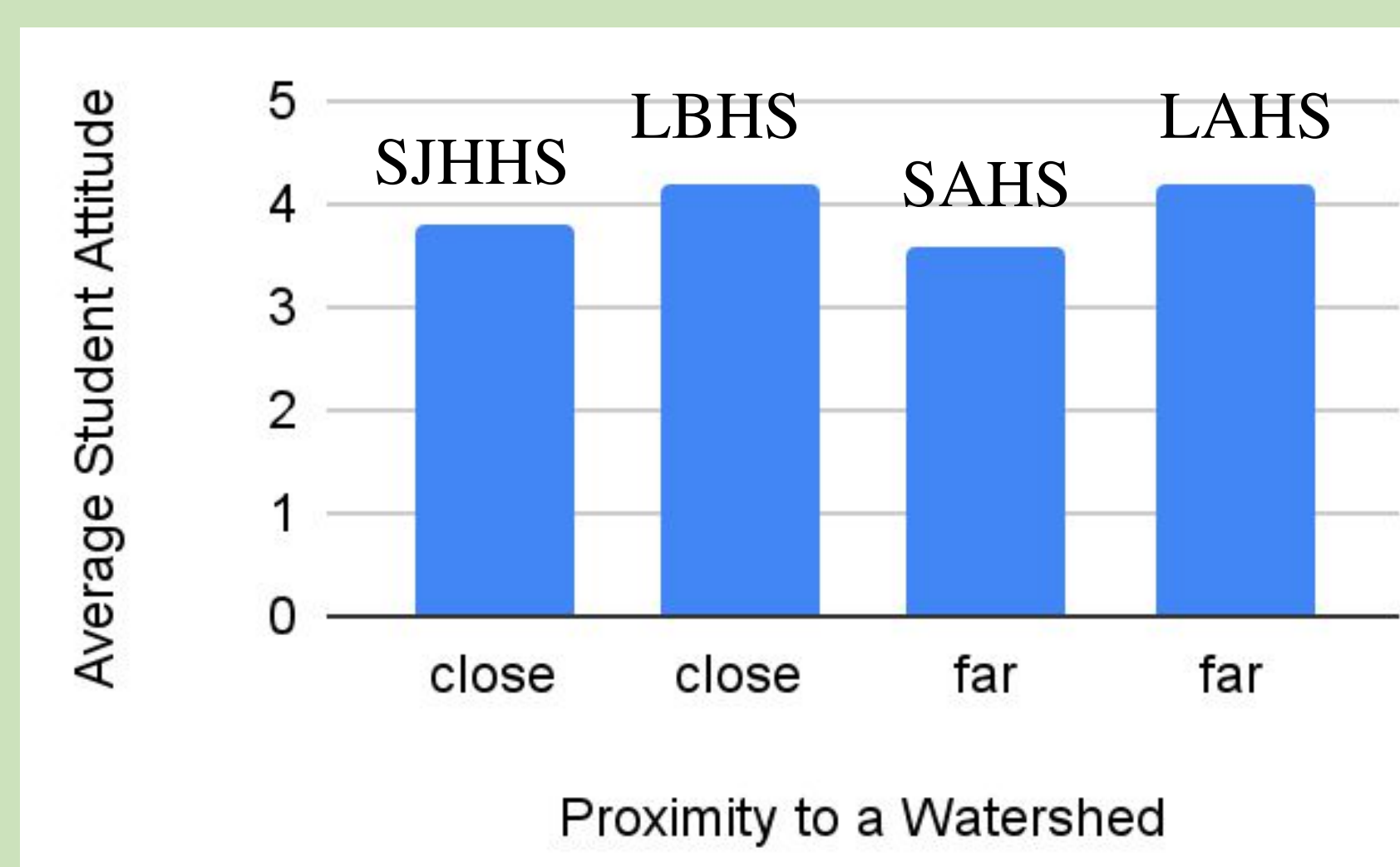


Figure 2. No Correlation Between Watershed Proximity and Student Attitude

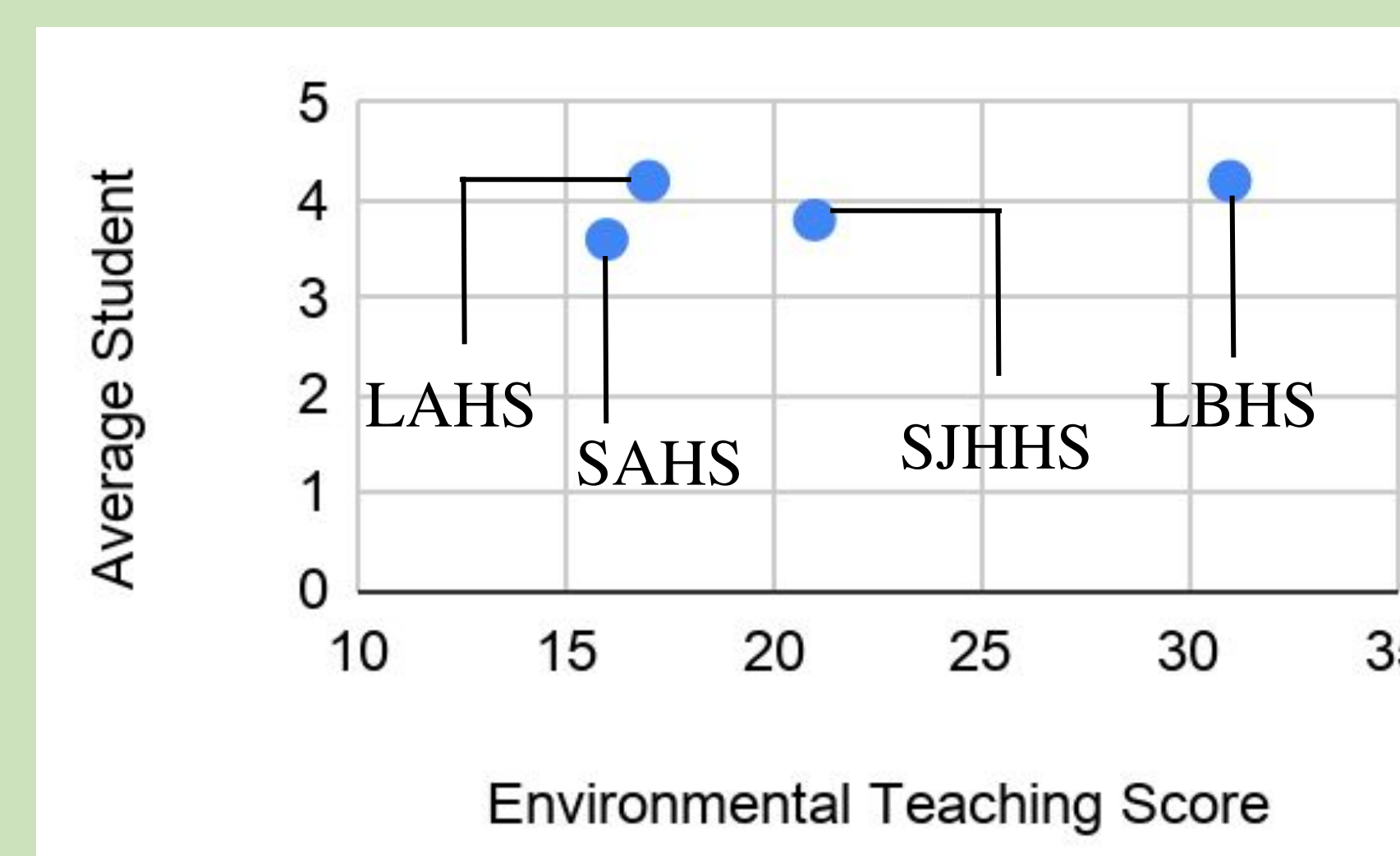


Figure 3. Moderate Correlation Between School Environmental Teachings and Attitude

DISCUSSION, ANALYSIS, AND EVALUATION

Figure 1 shows that there is a clear and strong correlation between the average median household income surrounding the schools and the survey results of student attitudes towards the environment. This data lets us infer that students that come from a wealthier home and town are more inclined to protect and be involved with helping the environment.

Figure 2 proves that schools within a two mile radius of the ocean, a lake, or river and schools outside that radius have both high and low pro-environmental attitudes, proving no correlation. This means that schools far from a watershed are just as capable of having high attitudes.

There is a unique correlation between school environmental teaching and the average student attitude as shown in Figure 3. Although schools with higher environmental teaching generally have a higher attitude, Los Alamitos High proves that there does not need to be lots of environmental teaching for students to have strong positive attitudes towards.

CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Although it should be seriously noted that this study had a very small sample size, its findings can still be helpful to the LBHS staff. Because of the suggestion that average median household income plays the biggest role in student attitudes, it should encourage our staff to harness the social capital associated with wealth to affect change. This data also teaches school principals, teachers, and district board members how schools enforcing the minimal requirements of environmental teachings being met versus going above and beyond drastically affect student attitudes. Additionally, California government officials can learn that school environmental teachings still vary by school, despite requirements, and that if environmental teachings are more heavily enforced, student pro-environmental attitudes will increase. Finally, it is important to note that although education seems to be less important in high income schools, it is still very important in low income schools.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS / REFERENCES

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