The Use of Tests in Selective School Admissions

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Competing Considerations

➤ To participate in academically challenging contexts, students must have prerequisite knowledge and skills. **(rigor)**

➤ Standardized tests correlate with family income and have greater disparate impact than selecting on grades alone. **(diversity)**

➤ **In college admissions, grades are better predictors than tests because grades are cumulative and grades reflect effort as well as academic skills.**

Lessons from SAT/ACT College Admissions

➢ HSGPA & SAT measure academic preparedness & predict student success.

 (freshman gpa & graduation)

➢ SAT added to HSGPA improves prediction of college GPA by 15%.

➢ **Test scores reflect unequal HS opportunities. (+test wiseness, test prep, stereotype threat)**

➢ **Given modest predictive correlations, tests should never be used as if they are perfect measures of merit.**

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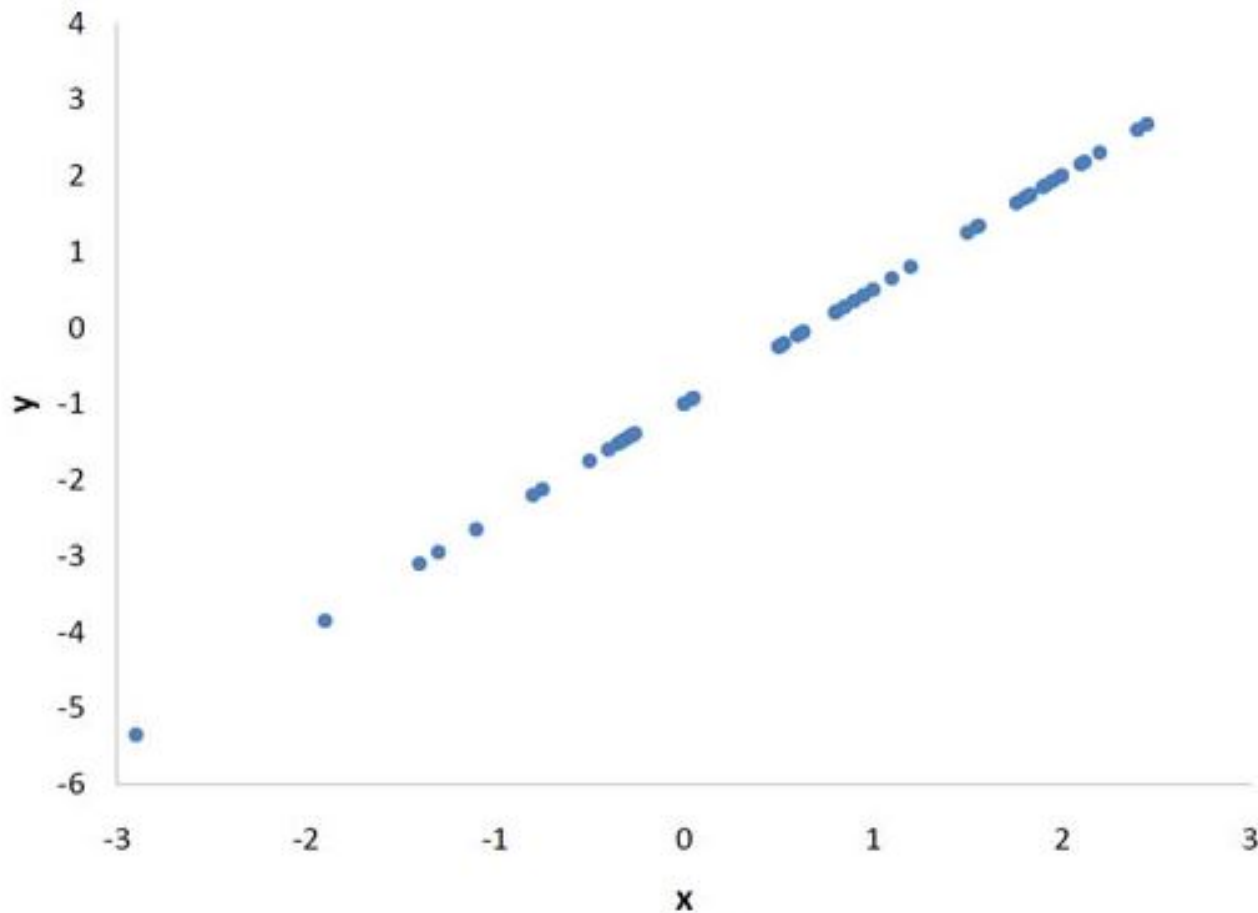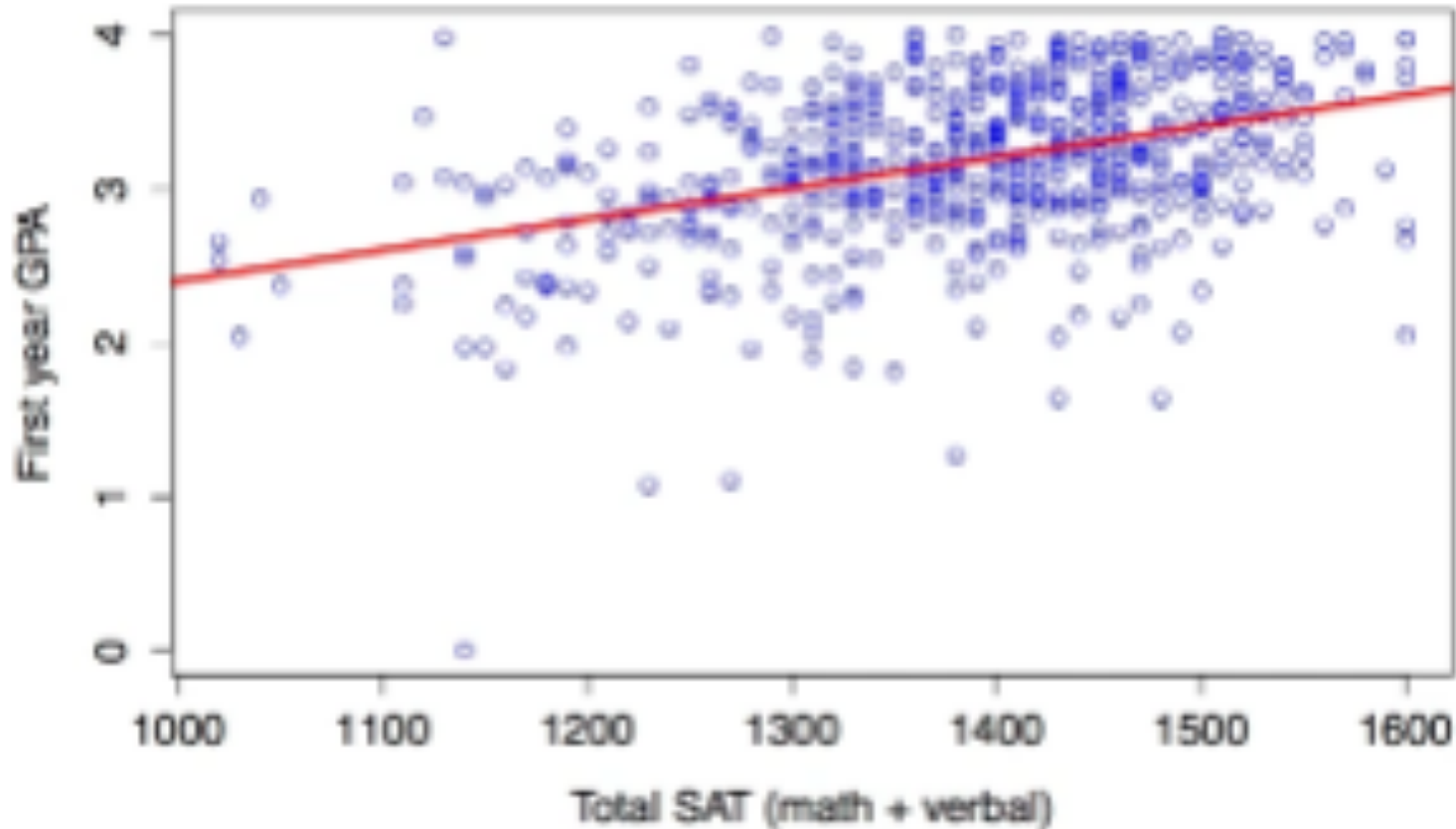# Hypothetical Example of Perfect Merit Measure

Figure 1. A perfect positive linear relationship, r = 1.
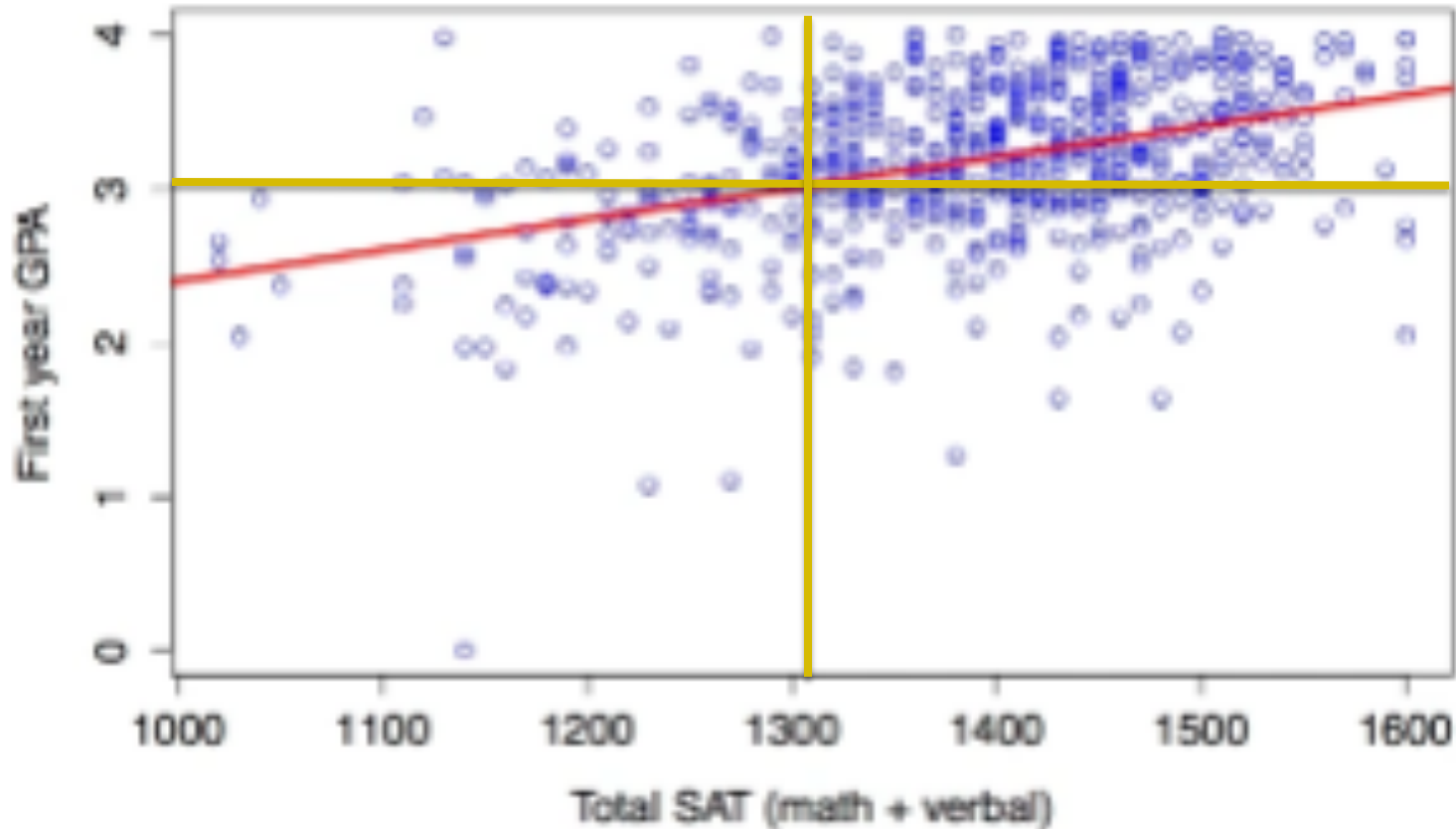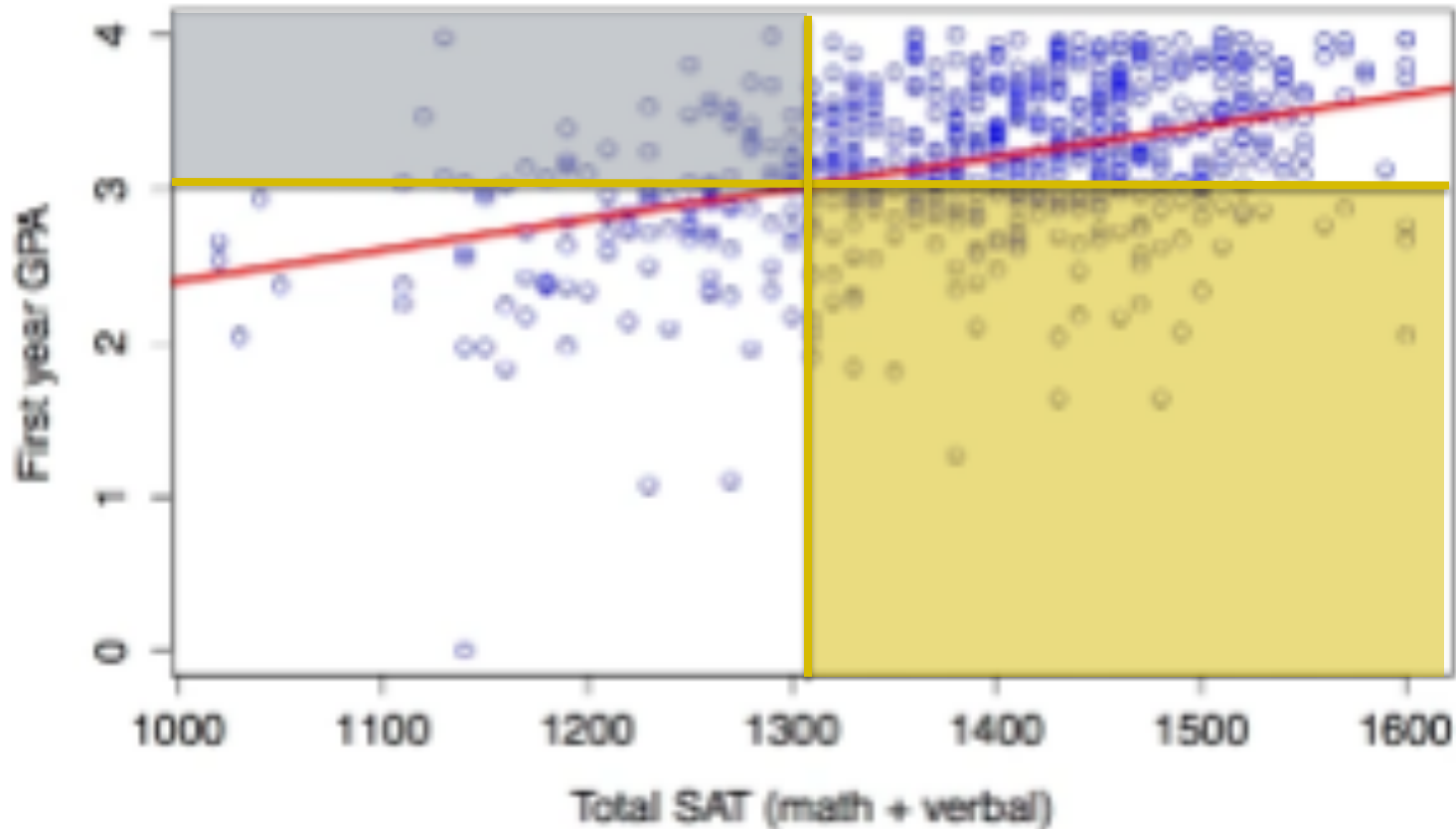
Total SAT used to predict College GPA

Scatter Plot of First Year GPA vs. SAT Score

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Two points regarding NWEA MAP tests

➢ Use of Differential Item Functioning (DIF) and Item Bias statistics do not make a test bias free. Because total test score is used as the target, DIF can only identify items that exaggerate group differences.

➢ NWEA MAP uses all multiple-choice or selected-response items. Therefore, it cannot measure aspects of the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks such as modeling and argumentation.

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