What is good about the underlying bill, and why I strongly urge my colleagues to oppose the Murray amendment, is that we do not make that decision. The data is there. We do not force or encourage or incentivize the system to go one way or the other in terms of higher quality teachers, better recruitment, or professional development versus hiring another teacher and reducing class size.

We basically say: No, you decide. If you are in Nashville, TN, in a disadvantaged part of Nashville, TN, or in rural Tennessee, you decide how you can best use that education dollar based on your local needs. The pooling of resources, the discretion we give to local communities about how to use that dollar we feel is so important, we believe that school districts should have the flexibility to decide whether to use the money we have made available for reduced class size, for teacher training, for technology in the classroom, or some other means to reduce the student achievement gap.

There is some data, as I mentioned—again, I am one who thinks class size is, indeed, an important issue. I just think it needs to be determined by a particular school or a particular district rather than by Washington, DC.

There are studies that have prioritized the importance of class size. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future found that, if your goal is student achievement, then teacher quality is five times more important than class size per se. Class-size reduction is important, but in a relative sense it is less important than having a good quality teacher.

The New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies found student grades were not linked to class size. Smaller classes did not lead to better test scores, and that there was no difference in the achievement of students from small classrooms versus those from large classrooms.

In Dallas, researchers confirmed that one of the studies that was done at the University of Tennessee found that not only did high-quality teachers have an enormous impact on student achievement, but that low-quality teachers actually stunted the academic performance of their students.

We have a shortage of high-quality teachers. People who say class size is the answer need to recognize—again, it has been spelled out over the course of the morning and last week—that there is a shortage of high-quality teachers.

We do need to invest—remember, the purpose of this bill is to invest in education because the role of the Federal Government is no longer spender but investor. We know this because after about $120 billion over 35 years, we are still not accomplishing our goal. So, it's not just a matter of money but a matter of investment. If you are a prudent investor, you need to make sure that the outcome is delivered, and in education the outcome is student achievement.

If we have compulsory class size reduction, basically we are putting more teachers in the classroom. But if we have a shortage of high-quality teachers, by definition it means we are going to be taking lower quality teachers.

The data outlined is clear: You actually hurt children rather than help children if you are putting poor quality teachers in a classroom today and, therefore, it is very important that you weigh the relative importance of putting just bodies at the head of that class, interacting with your children, against putting high quality people at the head of the class.

The point is, we give the school, the school district, the parents, the opportunity to make that choice based on the needs they identify—it could be through assessments, it could be identification of that local need in any way that school district or that school sees fit.

Our underlying bill is very different from the Murray amendment which overrides the school district priorities, and overriding the school district priorities in many ways restricts that choice, that freedom. That is why I urge defeat of the Murray amendment and hope my colleagues will join me in defeating that amendment.

Again, as has been outlined in the underlying bill, we stress professional development, as well as class size, but it must be a local choice.

Mr. President, I yield the floor and urge my colleagues to vote against this amendment.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, how much time do I have remaining?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. One minute.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, in my last 1 minute, I will address two quick points. Our colleagues keep referring to local control. How can one define a bill against an amendment that it should be local control when this underlying bill itself requires Federally mandated testing, requires funding streams for reading, for technology, for 20 other programs? That is fundamentally a flawed argument against this.

Our argument is about local control. Local schools decide whether they want to reduce class size knowing they have a Federal partner if they want to make that happen.

Second, I keep hearing the Hanushek study referred to.

Let me remind my colleagues that the Hanushek study is based on study of pupil-teacher ratio which includes all of the certified people in the building which is today almost everybody. Hanushek is fundamentally flawed because he does not look at class size. All of the studies that we have shown from Wisconsin, Tennessee, the RAND study, and the California study dramatically show that reducing class size increases student performance.

How tragic it will be if this Senate does not approve this amendment and keep the commitment to reducing class size that we began 3 years ago.

Thank you, Mr. President.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I seek recognition to comment on Senator MURRAY's amendment regarding class-size reduction. Yesterday, I withdrew my second degree amendment, amendment No. 388, which would have accomplished what I sought to do last year on the appropriations bill covering the Department of Education. I would have preferred to give class-size reduction in hiring new teachers a presumption among the various items which the Federal funds could be spent for on teachers. If a school district would make a determination that other issues—such as training teachers to improve the education of students with disabilities or those with limited english proficiency—are more important, then I believe Federal funds should be available for those purposes as they may be decided at the local level.

As chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee that is responsible for funding critical labor, health and education programs, I have sought to strike a balance between providing States and localities the flexibility they need to implement programs designed to improve the academic achievement of all students—thereby relieving them of Washington's straightjacket—and placing the highest priority on those issues that we deem critical to the success of America's schoolchildren.

I believe that we must weight carefully the flexibility our States and school districts need to improve student achievement with priority programs such as class-size reduction. The underlying bill will permit the Federal funds to be used for class-size reduction by hiring more teachers although it lacks the impetus which a presumption would have given.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Who yields time?

Mr. FRIST. Mr. President, I yield the remainder of my time.

RECESS

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the hour of 12:30 having arrived, the Senate stands in recess until the hour of 2:15 p.m.

Thereupon, at 12:30 p.m., the Senate recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. THOMAS).

BETTER EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS ACT—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. We will now resume consideration of the Murray amendment No. 378. There are 5 minutes equally divided before the vote.

The Senator from Washington.

Mrs. MURRAY. Mr. President, in a minute we are going to be voting on a