

worked across party lines to join my colleagues in supporting this bipartisan amendment, particularly to have worked with Senators KIRK, REED of Rhode Island, and BROWN on this measure. It is an improvement to the long-overdue reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that we have been debating over the course of this week.

The Every Child Achieves Act importantly focuses on ensuring that those students most in need have access to a high-quality education. It continues to ensure that title I funds flow to school districts where Federal support can make the greatest impact and the most difference. It requires States to report key information that will help us identify disparities such as per-pupil expenditures, school discipline, and teacher and educator quality. But I believe we must further strengthen those reporting requirements in order to fully ensure that the range of critical school resources—from quality teachers, to rigorous course work, to well-conditioned and equipped school facilities—is being equitably distributed among school districts in a given State. And we must require States to demonstrate how they will act to address disparities among schools.

Despite the advances we have seen since President Johnson signed the Elementary and Secondary Education Act into law 50 years ago, significant gaps in achievement and opportunity still exist. The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights recently published data from a comprehensive survey of schools across the Nation that illustrated the magnitude of the problem. For example, the report describes how Black, Latino, American Indian, and Native Alaskan students and English learners attend schools with higher concentrations of inexperienced teachers.

Furthermore, nationwide, one in five high schools lacks a school counselor, and between 10 and 25 percent of high schools across the Nation do not offer more than one of the core courses in the typical sequence of high school math and science.

In my home State of Wisconsin, higher poverty and higher minority school districts remain more likely to have inexperienced teachers. The Department of Education has data that shows that, for example, in Milwaukee, where there are the most high-poverty and high-minority schools in our State, 8 percent of teachers are in their first year of teaching and 19 percent of teachers lack State certification. The State average is 5.6 percent for first-year teachers and 0.3 percent for those who lack certification.

As with the Nation, achievement gaps follow these disparities. According to data from the National Center for Education Statistics, there are startling differences in student proficiency and graduation rates both in Wisconsin and nationally. For example, the average math proficiency in low-per-

forming schools in my home State is 12 percent. The average in all other schools in the State is 51 percent. That is a huge gap; it is a 40-percent gap. There is also a 37-percent gap for reading and language arts proficiency and a 31-percent gap in graduation rates.

We cannot close those achievement gaps if we do not provide all students with equal access to core educational resources. That is why I am pleased to join Senators KIRK, REED, and BROWN in offering this opportunity dashboard of core resources amendment. This amendment requires each State to report what key educational resources are currently available in districts with the highest concentrations of minority students and students in poverty. Then it requires them to develop a plan to address the disparities that are shown to exist. It gives States flexibility to develop those plans and lay out a timetable with annual benchmarks for taking action, and it protects a parent's right to know about the critical educational resources that are available to his or her child.

As we work to reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in its 50th year, we have yet to see its promise of equal access to educational opportunity fulfilled for all of America's students. As we look to the next half-century of supporting public education, it is critical that we take steps to ensure that all children have access to the educational resources that will help them succeed, regardless of race, ethnicity, or family income.

I understand there may be a vote on this amendment early next week. I certainly hope so. I urge my colleagues to support this very important bipartisan effort.

Thank you, Mr. President.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EXPERIMENTS IN POLICY

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, when I return home to my State during our district work periods—the time when the Senate is not in session—as I get a chance to travel my State, as the Presiding Officer does in his, I always feel as though I learn something, and I appreciate a little bit more how different policies can have a different impact and produce different results.

As the distinguished Senator from Wisconsin was speaking about the importance of education, I couldn't help but think that we all agree with that, but we have maybe some differences on which policies actually produce a better result. I couldn't help but think a little bit about that last week as I was visiting some of the ranchers and folks

in west Texas in the ag sector who were very interested in what we were doing here in Washington on trade promotion authority, as we have worked with the President on a bipartisan basis to pass this structure by which the next big trade agreement—the Trans-Pacific Partnership—will be considered and voted on.

I do have a bias. I think experiments in policy are best conducted at the State level, not at the national level. We have seen, for example, as the Presiding Officer knows, a huge experiment in health care reform where, under the Affordable Care Act, one-sixth of our economy was effectively commandeered by the Federal Government in a one-size-fits-all approach. Of course, the results were much worse than even its most ardent opponents predicted. Many of the basic promises that were made in order to sell the Affordable Care Act simply aren't true. They haven't come to pass.

So I think it is helpful to do just the opposite. Rather than experiment at the national level with what kinds of policies actually work, let's try these at the State level. Indeed, on the matter of trade, I would say I come from a State that is the No. 1 exporting State in the country, and that is one reason why our economy grew last year—2014—at 5.2 percent. The economy across the United States grew at 2.2 percent. There are a lot of reasons for that difference, but don't we think it would make some people curious about whether there were actually policies or practices at the State level that produced a better result—a growing economy with rising wages and more jobs?

This isn't just me being proud of where I come from. I guess people are accustomed to Texans being proud of their State and bragging about it. That is just kind of who we are, and we accept that. But this is more than that. This is talking about the policies that actually work, that have been embraced and implemented here at the national level, once tested at the State level—we could actually see a better outcome for all of America.

For example, Texas farmers and ranchers know from our experience in Texas that trade is a good thing. As we begin to explain and explore the importance of trade promotion authority, the idea that we comprise roughly 5 percent of the world's population—in other words, 95 percent of the world's population is beyond our shores but we represent 20 percent of the world's purchasing power—why wouldn't we want to open up our goods and services and the things we grow and make to these markets abroad so that more people can buy the things we grow and raise and what we make?

I wish to speak about another innovation or at least another practice at the State level that has had an impact on the quality of education at the State level. As we continue the discussion of the Every Child Achieves Act—

legislation that will hopefully help improve the results for 50 million children—I am glad we will be bringing another tried-and-true example of what has happened at the State level to the national level.

I was happy to cosponsor with the senior Senator from Virginia an amendment which takes into account the commonsense purpose of encouraging the States to conduct efficiency reviews of school districts and campuses to make sure Federal dollars delivered to each classroom are spent as cost-effectively as possible. This amendment builds on an incredibly successful program in Texas—one that brings greater accountability to our schools and helps them discern how they can make each dollar go just a little bit further. This program is called the Financial Allocation Study for Texas, or FAST. It was developed by the Texas comptroller, Susan Combs—the immediate past comptroller of the State of Texas—to evaluate the operational efficiency of the school districts and campuses across our State. To do that, the comptroller uses data about school finances, school demographics, and academic performance from each school and campus around the State to help measure academic achievement relative to spending.

There is a broadly held fallacy that the quality of educational outputs is equal to how much money we put into it. In other words, if we want a better product—education—all we have to do is spend more money. I would say that is demonstrably false. There are many of our parochial schools that do an outstanding job of educating their students at a fraction of what our public schools do. So I think it is a fallacy to say that if we want more or better education, all we have to do is spend more money. There is a smarter, more efficient way to deal with that, and that is what the financial allocation study is designed to achieve—to measure academic achievement relative to spending.

As the senior Senator from Virginia explained earlier, this successful Texas model of a fiscally responsible education system caught his eye when he was Governor of Virginia, and fortunately he then implemented a similar program. In Virginia, the savings came from commonsense recommendations—again, as we did in Texas—things such as introducing software programs to improve bus routes, enhancing methods of facilities management, and encouraging best practices in hiring and personnel management.

While more States have adopted similar programs, these money-saving opportunities should be available to all school districts nationwide. So now, with the adoption of this amendment just yesterday and with the eventual passage of the Every Child Achieves Act, we can make sure school districts all across the country are using their dollars for what they are really intended—classroom education—not stuck in the back office bureaucracy.

As many of us have already mentioned, the underlying legislation, the Every Child Achieves Act, is really about putting the responsibility for our children's education back in the hands of parents, local school districts, and teachers—the people who are actually closer to the issue, closer to the problems, and the ones who perhaps know more than any bureaucrat in Washington could ever hope to know about what actually works at the local level. It is also about flexibility, meaning it is up to individual States, not just the Federal Government, to determine how to achieve the best outcome for all of our students. Importantly, I should add, that flexibility translates into greater options for schools across the country by giving States additional freedom to create and replicate high-quality charter schools, for example, and giving more parents more choices, as I said, for their children's education.

I am very proud of the good progress we have made across a number of issues this year so far—passing the anti-human trafficking laws and finally cracking the code on how we pay physicians under Medicare adequately rather than temporarily patching that problem, as we have for so many years. We passed a budget for the first time since 2009 that balances in 10 years. And, yes, we worked with the President of the United States on a bipartisan basis to pass trade promotion authority. Next week, we will conclude this Every Child Achieves Act by reforming our early and elementary childhood education system to get more of the power, to get more of the authority out of Washington and back to parents, teachers, and the States, where it really belongs.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent to speak for up to 20 minutes.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

EVERY CHILD ACHIEVES ACT

Mr. FRANKEN. Mr. President, we have been living under No Child Left Behind, or NCLB, for 13 years. During that time, we have learned a lot about how NCLB works and a lot more about what doesn't work. Students, teachers, and parents across the country have been waiting a long time for us to fix this law.

As a member of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, I am proud to have worked on the legislation before us today and to have helped to get it this far. The Every Child Achieves Act of 2015 builds a strong bipartisan foundation to reform our national education system, and I thank Chairman LAMAR ALEXANDER and Ranking Member PATTY MURRAY for their leadership on this bill.

Over the last 6 years, I have met with principals and teachers, students, par-

ents, and school administrators in Minnesota. These conversations have helped me to develop my educational priorities to help improve our schools, our communities, and our Nation's future. I worked with colleagues on both sides of the aisle, including the esteemed Presiding Officer, to find common ground, and I am very pleased that many of my priorities to improve student outcomes and close the achievement gap are reflected in the legislation that is before us today.

During my conversations with parents and students, I often speak about children's mental health. At Mounds View school district in Minnesota, I met a single mother named Katie Johnson. She told me about her son, a 9-year-old boy whose behavior she just wasn't able to control. Because this school had a system in place—a mental health model in place—they were able to identify that he might have some mental health problems and get him access to community mental health services. He was diagnosed with ADHD and Asperger's. He was able to get the treatment he needed, and it turned him around. Katie told me that her son is now doing well in school and he had taken up Tae Kwon Do. Katie told me that her life had been out of control when she couldn't control her child. But she pointed to herself—and I will never forget this—she pointed to herself and said: "Now I am bulletproof. I can do anything."

Well, I said, let's do this. So I came here and introduced the Mental Health in Schools Act, and I am proud that over the last couple of years we have gotten \$100-plus million extra through the appropriations process for programs like the one in that bill.

I have worked hard to get provisions based on my Mental Health in Schools Act into the bill before us today. My provisions will allow schools that want to work with community-based mental health organizations and mental health providers to use Federal education funding to provide mental health screening, treatment, and referral services to their students by equipping school staff with the training and tools to identify what it looks like when a kid has a mental illness. Every adult in this school, from the lunch lady to the principal, from the schoolbus driver to the teacher, was trained to see what it looked like when a kid might have a serious mental health issue, and then they would refer to the professional in the school, the counselor or school psychologist.

One of the most common features of successful schools in disadvantaged communities is the presence of an effective school principal. This should come as no surprise. It is a matter of common sense to expect that a successful school or any successful organization would have a strong leader. Research shows that school leadership is one of the most critical components of