Right now high school computer science teachers are generally math teachers with some computer science training. What’s wrong with that?
One of the issues is that kids come in at different levels. There’s a smorgasbord of curricula out there and very little consistency.

Certification will change that?
It’s a game changer. We’re going to be able to create really good teachers. And they’re going to be career jobs like in any other certification. My biggest frustration at Stuyvesant was we were never a computer science department; we were always considered math teachers, and we didn’t have a seat at the table.

But in the past two years, the city has created a thousand computer science teachers under the mayor’s Computer Science for All program. What the city is doing is wonderful. But you can’t really prepare a teacher with a couple of weeks of summer training. They’re doing the best they can, but it’s not the same as what we’re developing at Hunter, where computer science teachers will really know their content and really know how to teach it.

Will it be hard to attract computer science graduates to teaching?
People say, “You’re never going to get teachers because of the [high] salaries in the tech industry.” I don’t agree. Math teachers could all go to Wall Street, and yet we still have math teachers. There are people who want to go into education who love computer science—like me. I loved being a teacher.

How did you end up becoming a teacher?
In the late ‘80s in New York City, computer scientists either did niche consulting or worked for one of the banks. I ended up as a programmer at Goldman Sachs. It just didn’t do it for me. My mom and my grandma were teachers. My dad died when I was 11, and some of my male role models were my junior high and high school teachers. I got a job teaching math at Seward Park High School.

How was it?
I had no idea how hard it would be. Working on Wall Street was a walk in the park. I had no idea how hard teaching would be. Working on Wall Street was a walk in the park.

DOSSIER

WHO HE IS Coordinator of computer science education, Hunter College
BORN Manhattan
RESIDES Chelsea
EDUCATION Bachelor’s and master’s in computer science, NYU
BASICS “In the late ‘90s, I designed an introductory course for students who were not superachievers. I wanted a student, regardless of what they do, to be able to look at the world as a computer scientist.”
FULL CIRCLE “My first exposure to computer science was around sixth or seventh grade. Hunter College had a Saturday class for kids in computer programming. I knew early on I wanted to do something with it, but I never imagined I would go into teaching.”