UCCRN Empowers Cities on the Frontline of Climate Change

COP21, PARIS — The Urban Climate Change Research Network (UCCRN) released the Summary for City Leaders of the upcoming Second UCCRN Assessment Report on Climate Change and Cities (ARC3.2) at the COP21 Climate Summit for Local Leaders. UCCRN is dedicated to providing the information that city leaders—from government, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and the community—need in order to assess current and future risks, make choices that enhance resilience to climate change and climate extremes, and take actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

With the momentum of the 21st Conference of Parties of the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (COP21), UCCRN aims to expand the network and grow cities’ impact on mitigating climate change and increasing resiliency. UCCRN Co-Director Dr. Cynthia Rosenzweig of NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies and Columbia University’s Earth Institute said, “the ARC3.2 Summary for City Leaders tells cities what they need to know to succeed as climate change leaders, and provides climate change projections for 100 cities so they know what to expect.”

The ARC3.2 Summary for City Leaders provides a broad synthesis of the latest scientific research on climate change and cities. It presents the major findings and key messages on urban climate science, disasters and risk, urban planning and design, mitigation and adaptation, equity and environmental justice, economics, finance, and the private sector, urban ecosystems, urban coastal zones, public health, housing and informal settlements, energy, water, transportation, solid waste, and governance. The Summary also presents five pathways to urban transformations that emerge throughout the ARC3.2 report, including:

1) Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation are the cornerstones of resilient cities.
2) Actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions while increasing resilience are a win-win.
3) Risk assessments and climate action plans co-generated with the full range of stakeholders and scientists are most effective.
4) Needs of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable citizens should be addressed in climate change planning and action.
5) Advancing city creditworthiness, developing robust city institutions, and participating in city networks enable climate action.

The ARC3.2 report was co-edited by Dr. Paty Romero-Lankao, at the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR). According to Romero-Lankao, “The Report is the most comprehensive assessment of urban climate change risk, adaptation and mitigation research and action to date.”
Urban Climate Change

COP21, PARIS — The Urban Climate Change Research Network (UCCRN) released the Summary for City Leaders of the upcoming Second UCCRN Assessment Report on Climate Change and Cities (ARC3.2) at the COP21 Climate Summit for Local Leaders. UCCRN is dedicated to providing the information that city leaders—from government, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, and the community—need in order to assess current and future risks, make choices that enhance resilience to climate change and climate extremes, and take actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

With the momentum of the 21st Conference of Parties of the United Nations Convention on Climate Change (COP21), UCCRN aims to expand the network and grow cities’ impact on mitigating climate change and increasing resiliency. UCCRN Co-Director Dr. Cynthia Rosenzweig of NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies and Columbia University’s Earth Institute said, “the ARC3.2 Summary for City Leaders tells cities what they need to know to succeed as climate change leaders, and provides climate change projections for 100 cities so they know what to expect.”

The ARC3.2 Summary for City Leaders provides a broad synthesis of the latest scientific research on climate change and cities. It presents the major findings and key messages on urban climate science, disasters and risk, urban planning and design, mitigation and adaptation, equity and environmental justice, economics, finance, and the private sector, urban ecosystems, urban coastal zones, public health, housing and informal settlements, energy, water, transportation, solid waste, and governance. The Summary also presents five pathways to urban transformations that emerge throughout the ARC3.2 report, including:

1) Disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation are the cornerstones of resilient cities.
2) Actions that reduce greenhouse gas emissions while increasing resilience are a win-win.
3) Risk assessments and climate action plans co-generated with the full range of stakeholders and scientists are most effective.
4) Needs of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable citizens should be addressed in climate change planning and action.
5) Advancing city creditworthiness, developing robust city institutions, and participating in city networks enable climate action.

The ARC3.2 report was co-edited by Dr. Paty Romero-Lankao, at the National Center for Atmospheric Research (NCAR). According to Romero-Lankao, “The Report is the most comprehensive assessment of urban climate change risk, adaptation and mitigation research and action to date.”

These pathways provide a foundational framework for the successful development and implementation of climate change. UCCRN advises cities to immediately act on climate, as nearly two-thirds of world’s population will live in cities by 2050.

The Report supplies statements on general trends and conditions derived from the most recent research on urban climate change as well as city-specific details from 100 case studies developed in conjunction with the Assessment.

UCCRN Regional Hubs in Europe, Latin America, Australia, Africa and Asia promote enhanced opportunities for urban climate change adaptation and mitigation knowledge and information transfer, both within and across cities, by engaging in ongoing dialogue between stakeholders. Dr. Rosenzweig said “the Hubs help link
knowledge to action with tools like ARC3.2 Case Study Docking Station, an online searchable database of what 100 cities do to solve climate change.” These city climate actions are available online at uccrn.org/casestudies.

"The ARC3.2 Case Study Docking Station provides readers with an opportunity to query information and data about climate change actions that they deem relevant to their own city interests and needs," according Dr. William Solecki, at Hunter College at the City University of New York and another Co-Editor of the report.

The ARC3.2 authors are scholars from a variety of universities and institutions in cities around the world. The Co-Editors of the ARC3.2 report are Cynthia Rosenzweig, William Solecki of Hunter College of the City University of New York, Paty Romero-Lankao of the National Center for Atmospheric Research, Shagun Mehrutra of Milano at the New School, and Shobhakar Dhakal of the Asian Institute of Technology.

About UCCRN:
UCCRN is a global consortium of individuals and institutions dedicated to the analysis of climate change mitigation and adaptation from an urban perspective. Based out of Columbia University's Earth Institute, the Network aims to institutionalize a sustained state-of-the-knowledge assessment process of climate change science tailored for urban needs, drawing on the experience of cities across the world as they act to adapt to and mitigate the impacts of climate change.

For more information on the Urban Climate Change Research Network (UCCRN) and the UCCRN Assessment Reports on Climate Change and Cities, visit www.uccrn.org.
THE COMMODIFICATION OF NEWS

How CUNY's First Class of Social Journalists Is Reinventing Reporting

Sustainability and salvation lies in abandoning volume in favor of value

By Jeff Jarvis • 12/16/15 8:30am

Journalists on computers in 1978. (Photo: AFP/Getty Images)

This week at CUNY’s Graduate School of Journalism, we will graduate our first class of social journalists.

You might ask: What the hell is “social journalism”?
That is just what we teachers and students have been discerning in the inaugural year of this program—the first of its kind in the nation. The other day, as I watched our 13 graduates rehearse final presentations of their work, I was struck by what we have learned together.

The new degree was inspired by my argument that the path to sustainability and salvation for journalism lies in media abandoning volume (cats and Kardashians as bait for page views) in favor of value (that is, relevance and impact in people’s lives). To do that, we journalists must understand how to build relationships with the communities we serve.

*Journalism begins with understanding the needs of the public we serve.*

When she read that thesis in my book, *Geeks Bearing Gifts*, our dean, Sarah Bartlett, asked whether we should build a degree around these skills. In only nine months, we received funding to start the program from LinkedIn founder Reid Hoffman and the Knight Foundation, hired the amazing Dr. Carrie Brown to direct the program, and saw her develop the curriculum, hire an impressive set of teachers, and recruit the first class. Now they are set to leave us.

In their presentations, our students without exception emphasized the importance of listening above all other skills. Our job as journalists does not begin with finding stories we want to write or making content to fill publications or attracting audience to what we create. Instead, journalism begins with understanding the needs of the public we serve.

Of course, our students learned the skills of social media—but not to use them as too many media organizations do, just to market the content they make. Our students use these tools to listen to communities and then to serve and collaborate with them.
Social journalists do not brag about traffic, Facebook “likes,” or viral content—they are concerned about their impact and reflect our need to find new ways to value what we do.

I was struck how often the students said that collaboration is harder than reporting. I often say reporting is journalism’s highest value and I still believe it is a precious resource we had best not squander on repetition and clickbait. Our students argued that reporting is often best done hand-in-hand with the communities they serve. They also talked a lot about the need to gain the trust of these communities, to begin by cultivating ambassadors who could be their guides.

Dear to my heart, these social journalists did not brag about their traffic, their Facebook “likes,” or their viral content. They were concerned about the impact they have. They reflect our need to find new ways to value what we do.

Prof. Brown and I required the students to find a community that was self-defined (that is, not living under some fake, external label, such as “millennials” or “Hispanics”); then to determine their needs and give us the evidence of those needs; then and only then to determine how journalism can help them meet their own goals—and finally to tell us how they will measure their success (not with pageviews or likes but with impact).

One of the great lessons I learned in this program is that a journalist might improve the situation of one community by affecting the behavior of another. So, for example, our student Emily Goldblum wanted to serve lesbians in New York. A problem she identified was misunderstanding in that community of bisexuals. Thus, she wanted to serve one community, bisexuals—but affect the behavior of another—lesbians. This was a pattern I saw in much of the students’ work.

They served an amazing variety of communities: Rachel Glickhouse chose to serve undocumented immigrants and helped one man defer his deportation. Luis Miguel came to
us with the ambition to become the Anthony Bordain of sport—understanding the culture of nations around the world through their athletics (great idea, huh?)—and started by helping a kids’ soccer team with their ambition to finally have a real field to play on. Cris Furlong came in not as a journalist but as an activist who was already fighting to reduce traffic deaths in Queens and she learned to bring the tools of journalism to her cause. Deron Dalton served the community of #BlackLivesMatter leaders. Nuria Saldanha served citizen journalists in the favelas of Sao Paulo, teaching them how to use Facebook to report. Aaron Simon is teaching residents of Brooklyn about the toxic dumps they live over. Adriele Parker is working with the hidden community of African-Americans experiencing depression. Erica Soto is helping fans help independent musicians. Pedro Burgos studied commenters, Betsy Laikin Muslim women, and Sean Devlin Irish-Americans. And—get this—Julia Haslanger is serving the community of social journalists.

I don’t have room here to explain all their work; my blog post will give you more (and, if you’re in a position to, you can hire any of them—the Observer has had great luck with CUNY j-school grads). They are reinventing journalism and teaching me what it can be.
NYC MAYOR BILL DE BLASIOLaunches
Nearly $8 Million Assistance Program
For Immigrants

Although President Obama’s executive amnesty programs remain held up in the courts, New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio has launched a nearly $8 million initiative to provide legal assistance to the illegal immigrant community in the city and prepare them for executive amnesty.

“New York City’s commitment to our immigrant communities will not waver. While the courts delay executive action and much-needed relief, while some voices may attempt to create hostility toward immigrants, while more than 30 governors tried to resist the resettlement of Syrian refugees, New York City will demonstrate the power and values of our city,” de Blasio said Monday, announcing the initiative.

Dubbed ActionNYC, the $7.9 million program will create “navigation hubs” in each of the five boroughs for immigrants to receive legal assistance and education about possible immigration benefits available to them.

“ActionNYC will demonstrate that there is another way. We can build the capacity of
community-based organizations and legal service providers to ensure that all New Yorkers can come out of the shadows and live their lives freely. This program demonstrates New York City’s commitment to ensuring everyone can live their own American dream,” de Blasio added.

According to the Mayor’s Office, there are more than half a million illegal immigrants in New York City and another 700,000 legal immigrants in the city who are eligible to become U.S. citizens.

The program is slated to start in the spring of 2016 and will be administered by Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, in collaboration with the Human Resources Administration and the Research Foundation of the City University of New York. The initiative will provide contracts to “community-based organizations” and legal services to implement the program.

“Today many New Yorkers qualify for permanent immigration relief and do not know it. ActionNYC will reach New Yorkers in the languages they speak and in the neighborhoods in which they live. Community-based organizations will be a critical factor in ActionNYC’s success, as they are the places trusted by immigrants, and they provide a host of related services that immigrants need,” Nisha Agarwal, Commissioner of the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs, said in a statement.

The program will also utilize “navigators,” who will receive “specialized training” to assist immigrants with non-legal work.

In a statement, Rep. Eliot Engel (D-NY) chastised Republicans for failing to move forward on immigration reform and praised the new program.

“While Republicans in Congress continue to twiddle their thumbs on immigration reform, it’s exciting to see local municipalities like New York City take the initiative and invest in programs geared toward helping the immigrant community. ACTIONNYC will provide $7.9 million for community navigation hubs that will help bring vital services and legal expertise to the more than 1.2 million people living in New York City who are either undocumented or eligible for citizenship,” he said.
Once Upon A Time, Brooklyn College Almost Ended Up In Bensonhurst

DANIEL FRAZER ON DECEMBER 15, 2015

With its sprawling ocean views, the green hills of Staten Island in the distance — the Verrazano Narrows Bridge in its future — the shores of Gravesend Bay would once have made an excellent home for a City University of New York (CUNY) campus.

Established in 1930, Brooklyn College became the first co-ed college in New York City, beginning its 85-year history in a now-defunct building in downtown Brooklyn. A few years later, in 1937, Brooklyn College's current campus located in Midwood/Flatbush area was opened, but few may know that Bensonhurst nearly became the home of the borough's great educational landmark.

Citing a more affordable location, Leo Previn of the West End Chamber of Commerce —
the support of many local businesses, churches and community leaders of Bensonhurst and Bath Beach — offered up the area surrounding Bay 19th Street and 21st Avenue. Previn and his delegates posited that the area was unencumbered with a large population, and lacked major businesses or routes of transit. The Midwood/Flatbush site, meanwhile, already had its commercial and residential zones rubbing elbows with one another.

Previn and his delegates also spoke about the 60 acres his plot offered compared to the more modest 42 of the Midwood/Flatbush site. He also noted that developing Brooklyn College there would speed up the creation of Shore Parkway, which at the time was still in its infancy.

Of course, his strongest selling point may have been the 2,000 feet of shoreline, along with the general peacefulness in Southern Brooklyn. Previn, perhaps ahead of his time, believed education should take place in a calm and enriching atmosphere, where your view isn't obstructed by the hustle of busy city life.

![This green pasture nearly became the site of Brooklyn College. (Photo by Daniel Frost/Bensonhurst Bean)](image)

The Bensonhurst location was one of several locations bidding to hold Brooklyn College, with neighboring Bay-Ridge also offering the plot of what is now Owl's head Park.

The Midwood/Flatbush location of today, which at the time was referred to as the Wood-Harmon Property, was a mostly mixed-use plot of land in the middle of a fairly bustling region with many modes of transportation. Originally used as a site for the Ringling Brothers Circus and when the clowns weren't in town, the plot had been turned into a golf-course.

The Bensonhurst area was ultimately passed up as a result of a Brooklyn civic council ruling that the Wood-Harmon location would be accessible to the most students, would better serve evening students, and would not require any filling in of the shoreline.

While the Wood-Harmon location would initially cost more than the Bensonhurst location, it was argued the additional cost of construction and the possible out-of-bounds location (meaning fewer students), would ultimately cost the city more.

With a limited budget and a nation reeling from the Great Depression, the initial cost of the site at $5.5 million dollars (The equivalent of $78 million, today) was too rich for the city's blood. However, as the economy continued to crash, and the owners of the plot became more desperate, they eventually settled for a far more reasonable price, and with the New Deal funding the now Brooklyn College was born.
ruling the way, Brooklyn College was born.

While this is largely speculation, one wonders about the kind of impact Brooklyn College may have had on modern Bensonhurst and the surrounding areas. With widespread neglect surrounding the general Gravesend Bay area, its parks in disrepair and littered, and its buildings charming, but far less modernized than the rest of the city's architecture, could the spotlight of a major educational institution possibly have benefited the neighborhood?

As Brooklyn moves forward, many neighborhoods have changed drastically with time, however, Bensonhurst and its surrounding areas is arguably among the least touched. We may have dramatic ocean views, colorful and diverse streets and centuries-old cemeteries, but we haven't a city college.
Seeking to wring every drop of liberal voting juice out of the blue/commie bastion that is New York City, Brooklyn-born presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders has waded into a CUNY labor dispute on the side of the workers. About 25,000 City University of New York professors and staffers have gone without a raise or a contract since 2010, in part because state funding, about half of the New York City university system's budget, has not kept up with inflation.

On Friday, the New York Times reports, Sanders sent Governor Andrew Cuomo a letter calling for him to give the faculty a fair shake:

As a college degree becomes increasingly important for economic security in our vastly unequal society, CUNY has historically represented the possibility that a college education of the highest quality could be accessible to all. It should continue to represent that possibility.

That is why I am troubled by New York State's refusal so far to invest in a fair contract for the university's faculty and staff...Show New Yorkers that your concern for working people and people of color includes a commitment to their ability to achieve a college education.

Also on Friday, Cuomo vetoed a bill that would have required the state to cover predictable increases in CUNY and SUNY costs, such as inflation, rising utility and health insurance rates, and non-contract raises.

A 2011 bill allowed CUNY and SUNY to increase tuition by $300 a year until 2016, and called for the state to keep its university funding where it is. CUNY is facing a $51 million budget shortfall this year, according to the Times, because that funding has not increased with inflation.
Cuomo aide Jim Malatras told the Times the funding bill was vetoed because it would have committed the state to another $600 million in spending, and the governor believed that should not be done outside of the budget process. The bill Cuomo threw out, of course, had to pass through the state Assembly and Senate to reach his desk.

CUNY's faculty and staff union the Professional Staff Congress wrote in a statement:

Governor Cuomo's veto represents a decision not to invest in sustaining top-quality college education for the working people, the poor and the people of color in New York. His position is now absolutely clear.

Cuomo had the chance with this bill to take an action that had huge bipartisan support and that would have resonated not only in New York City but across the state. He deliberately refused that chance, despite his repeated claims of being a leader in progressive policy. He cannot be a progressive while systematically withholding funds from CUNY.

A recent poll by the Des Moines Register and Bloomberg Politics shows 39 percent of Iowans leaning Sanders in the upcoming state caucus, versus 48 percent for Hillary Clinton. New York's union-funded Working Families Party endorsed the Vermont senator last week. Sanders has pledged to, if elected, make public colleges free and reform the student loan system.
PSC-CUNY ad campaign to slam Cuomo veto

By Jeff Waggoner on December 15, 2015 at 9:41 AM

The Professional Staff Congress of CUNY, the union that represents CUNY faculty and staff, said Monday it’s starting an social media ad campaign critical of Gov. Andrew Cuomo’s veto of the “Maintenance of Effort” bill.

Both houses of the legislature supported the bill, which according to PSC-CUNY “would have ensured that tuition hikes go to improve CUNY and SUNY, rather than to offset underfunding from the state. Governor Cuomo has failed to restore CUNY to pre-recession funding levels, despite the resurgence in the state’s economy. Under his administration, per-student investment in CUNY has remained essentially flat. Since 2008, it is down 14 percent.”

The governor, however, says that “the state's financial support for SUNY and CUNY has increased $798 million since the 2011-12 academic year.”

“After the veto of the MOE bill,” the union said in a statement, “the PSC announced a social media ad campaign to press Governor Cuomo to change course and stop starving CUNY of resources. The campaign will feature ads on Facebook and Twitter, an online petition and other tactics aimed at mobilizing the communities who depend on CUNY.”

“With this veto, Governor Cuomo signals his refusal to invest in the education CUNY students need. Cuomo’s decision to veto the bill will damage the quality of education
CUNY can offer and reduce students' access to the top-quality faculty and staff they deserve. If the aim of the veto was to hurt New York's low- and middle-income communities, that aim has been achieved," said Barbara Bowen, president of the PSC-CUNY.

Separately, the United University Professions, which represents SUNY faculty, also expressed disappointment with the veto.

"I am disappointed that the governor chose to veto the Maintenance of Effort bill, which would have increased state support for SUNY to cover inflationary and mandatory expenses like heating and electric bills and building costs—expenses that students are paying for through higher tuition," said UUP President Frederick E. Kowal.

"We remain hopeful that he will take steps in the near future to find an innovative solution to provide the necessary funding to resolve this dilemma, once and for all," Kowal said. "UUP will continue to push for passage of this important initiative."

Here is the governor's veto message:

This bill would expand and make permanent the maintenance of effort (MOE) requirements that apply to State support for the City University of New York (CUNY) and the State University of New York (SUNY).

In addition to making permanent the current MOE requirements set to expire next year, this bill would impose new MOE requirements on the state,
effective beginning in the 2016-17 State Fiscal Year. These new requirements would obligate the State to continue General Fund support for SUNY hospitals and various other operating costs at levels enacted in the prior year— including any increases.

The state currently provides $5.34 billion in total support for SUNY and CUNY campuses. This includes over $3.86 billion for campus operations and employee fringe benefits, $1.08 billion in debt service to pay for capital improvements on campuses and $403 million in tuition assistance for SUNY and CUNY students. In total, the state's financial support for SUNY and CUNY has increased $798 million since the 2011-12 academic year. In addition, since 2011, the state has provided $470 million in funding for competitive NY-SUNY 2020 and NY-CUNY 2020 capital investments to improve academic opportunities for students across the state.

The MOE provisions in current law were specifically negotiated in 2011 in the context of a larger higher education agenda, which included a five-year rational tuition plan, a tuition credit for students eligible for the Tuition Assistance Program, and a Capital Challenge Grant Program. The MOE provisions in current law reflect a three-way agreement between the governor and the legislature, and isolated changes should not be made outside the context of broader discussions about higher education policy. Further, given the potential negative impact on the state's financial plan, the issue raised by this legislation are better dealt with in the context of negotiations for the upcoming state budget. I vetoed similar legislation in 2013 on this same basis (Veto #285 of 2013). For these reasons, I am constrained to veto this bill.

This bill is disapproved.
In a boost for the Professional Staff Congress, the union that represents faculty and staff at CUNY, Democratic presidential candidate and Vermont U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders has written a letter to Gov. Andrew Cuomo, asking that he settle the union contract with competitive salaries.

Sanders, a Brooklyn native, called on Cuomo "to invest in the City University of New York and fund a fair union contract for CUNY faculty and staff," according to PSC-CUNY. "The message from Sen. Sanders came in a letter delivered to Gov. Cuomo last Friday, the same day he vetoed legislation to fund CUNY and SUNY."

"CUNY represents hope for economic and social justice," Sanders wrote.
The Opinion Pages  |  LETTERS

A New Education Law, and the One Left Behind

DEC. 15, 2015

To the Editor:

As your Dec. 11 news article “Revamping of No Child School Act Is Signed” and Prof. David L. Kirp’s Dec. 10 Op-Ed essay, “Left Behind No Longer,” make clear, delight over a new federal education law has more to do with replacing No Child Left Behind than the substance of the new law, a periodic revision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

Missed in the hoopla, however, is what looks like a permanent change in education policy. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act was originally an anti-poverty statute. The new legislation continues No Child Left Behind’s recast of the federal role as guarantor of school quality, an empty promise at best and a crucial deviation from the more appropriate focus on funding for students below the poverty line. A return to this mission will truly be cause for celebration when the law is again rewritten.

DAVID C. BLOOMFIELD
Brooklyn

The writer is a professor of education law at Brooklyn College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

To the Editor:

Evidently Prof. David L. Kirp has observed the cycles of school reform, from hope to despair, long enough not to join in unqualified praise for the federal law succeeding No Child Left Behind. Nevertheless, he assumes that shifting some enforcement of accountability from federal to state hands will yield positive results.

In truth, there isn’t as much change as the bipartisan spin suggests. States must still coordinate their standards with 11 different federal statutes and then win approval from the education secretary.

Assessing students’ personal qualities, such as “grit,” instead of their basic knowledge opens the door wider to psychological testing and privacy invasions. Ultimately, public schools should be accountable not to bureaucrats but to the parents entrusting their children to them.

ROBERT HOLLAND

Arlington Heights, Ill.

The writer is senior fellow for education policy at the Heartland Institute, a conservative and libertarian think tank.

To the Editor:

Re “Course Correction for School Testing” (editorial, Dec. 7):

The flaw in your position toward school testing is seeing tests as a primary mechanism “to improve instruction.” There are many reasons students do well and poorly on standardized tests, teachers and schools being one variable.
Poverty, parental engagement, culture and community are other variables that must be addressed if we are serious about improving the quality of education.

When tests are seen as instruments of judgment, as the No Child Left Behind Act has done, without a prescription for growth, then the tests lose any academic value. Tests are not a problem in and of themselves; how they are perceived and used is a problem. When they are used as a referendum on the quality of teaching and learning, they lose their pedagogic potential. Standardized tests measure where students are at, and not where they started.

It is time to start seeing and using tests as tools for transformation and not as political weapons that simply label schools as “in need of improvement” or “failing.” Our reliance on standardized testing offers neither a diagnosis nor a prescription for the problem of educating children.

LARRY HOFFNER

New York

The writer is a former high school teacher in the New York City public schools.

A version of this letter appears in print on December 16, 2015, on page A34 of the New York edition with the headline: The New Federal Education Law.