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Council of the Great City Schools

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Pittsburgh School Board Member Named Urban Educator of the Year

LONG BEACH, Calif., Oct. 8 – William “Bill” Isler, who has served on the Pittsburgh Board of Public Education for the past 16 years, tonight won 2015 Urban Educator of the Year honors at the Council of the Great City Schools’ 59th Annual Fall Conference here.

Four big-city school board members competed for the nation’s highest honor for urban education leadership, recognizing in alternating years an outstanding superintendent and school board member from 68 of the largest urban school systems in the country.

Urban school leaders recognized Isler during the Council’s 26th Annual “Urban Educator of the Year” award banquet, where he received the prestigious Green-Garner Award in memory of two urban school leaders.

Sponsored by the Washington, D.C.-based Council, Aramark K-12 Education and Voyager Sopris Learning companies, the top prize is named for Richard R. Green, the first African American chancellor of the New York City school system, and businessman Edward Garner, who served on the Denver school board,

Elected to the Pittsburgh school board in 1999, Isler became president of the policy-making body in 2003, and through his leadership was able to regain lost support of the foundation community in funding Pittsburgh Public Schools. He has led the board through very challenging periods in the history of the district, including closing more than 30 underutilized schools.

He is recognized in the community as a board member who puts student achievement first, and equally for making sure the district is fiscally accountable for the use of taxpayer dollars. His leadership – five years as board president and at least 10 years as vice president – has contributed to efforts in increasing student academic success, which has resulted in higher graduation rates and more students attending postsecondary institutions.

“Bill Isler is one of the best school board members any urban school district could have,” says Council Executive Director Michael Casserly. “But he has also inspired improvement in urban education nationally as Pittsburgh Public Schools representative on the Council’s board of directors for 15 years – 12 of those on the executive committee and one year as chair of our national board.”

As the recipient of this year’s Green-Garner Award, Isler receives a \$10,000 college scholarship to present to a student.

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