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Council of the Great City Schools Selects Dr. Lily Wong Fillmore as the 2023 Recipient of the Dr. Michael Casserly Legacy Award for Educational Courage and Justice

The annual award, which is sponsored by Curriculum Associates, recognizes an individual who has made outstanding contributions in the field of Grades K–12 urban education

WASHINGTON, D.C., March 21, 2023—The Council of the Great City Schools (CGCS) has named Dr. Lily Wong Fillmore as the 2023 recipient of the Dr. Michael Casserly Legacy Award for Educational Courage and Justice. The annual award, which is sponsored by Curriculum Associates and named after the Council’s former executive director, recognizes an individual who has made outstanding contributions in the field of Grades K–12 urban education by taking courageous and passionate stances on the issues of educational justice and equity.

Fillmore, who received her Ph.D. in linguistics from Stanford University, was a faculty member of the University of California at Berkeley Graduate School of Education from 1974 to 2004. During this time, she focused much of her research, teaching, and writing on issues related to the education of multilingual learners. She specifically focused on social and cognitive processes in language learning, cultural differences in language learning behavior, sources of variation in learning, and primary language retention and loss.

In her research, Fillmore has conducted studies of second language learners in school settings of Latino, Asian, American Indian, and Alaskan Native children and has held steadfast in calling for high expectations for such children. Before her research work, she was instrumental in establishing a volunteer corps to teach in farm labor camps in California from 1954 to 1964.

After retiring from the Berkeley faculty, Fillmore has worked with educators in urban school districts to improve academic language and literacy instruction for English learners and multilingual learners. Since 2010, she has partnered with CGCS and worked with specific member districts to ensure English learners have access to the high-quality, rigorous instruction needed to meet college and career readiness standards.

“Dr. Lily Wong Fillmore has been the guiding intellectual force behind enriching the language experiences of so many of our urban students, making her most deserving of this award and the scholarship that comes with it,” said Casserly. “Her advocacy for rich and juicy text and her support for the highest standards in language instruction has inspired not only the Great City School staff and membership, but teachers and researchers the world over. Her lifelong work has embodied excellence, courage, and justice at every turn and our children are better off because of her commitment and dedication to their well-being.”

“Dr. Lily Wong Fillmore has been a tireless advocate for the language rights of traditionally marginalized students for decades. Her groundbreaking work on language acquisition and literacy development for English language learners has been crucial in raising the rigor of their education experience and ensuring these students thrive academically,” added Council Executive Director Ray Hart. “Throughout her distinguished career, Lily’s efforts to create linguistically and culturally affirming learning resources have challenged, inspired, and empowered educators to support the academic needs of multilingual learners. This award is a fitting tribute to Lily and her dedication and deep commitment to helping historically underserved students attain their greatest potential.”

Fillmore is the third recipient of the Dr. Michael Casserly Legacy Award for Educational Courage and Justice. Casserly received the inaugural award in 2021 and Rep. Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (D-Va.) received the award in 2022.

“We are proud to once again sponsor this award and help the Council recognize such a deserving educational leader,” said Rob Waldron, CEO of Curriculum Associates. “Throughout her decades of service to students, Dr. Lily Wong Fillmore has helped support the advancement of Grades K–12 urban education while being a true advocate and champion for educational equity.”

To learn more about the CGCS, visit CGCS.org. To learn more about Curriculum Associates, visit CurriculumAssociates.com.

About CGCS

It is the special mission of America’s urban public schools to educate the nation’s most diverse student body to the highest academic standards and prepare them to contribute to our democracy and global community. The Council brings together 78 of the nation’s largest urban public school systems in a coalition dedicated to the improvement of public education for our nation’s urban public school children. See CGCS.org.

About Curriculum Associates

Founded in 1969, Curriculum Associates, LLC designs research-based print and online instructional materials, screens and assessments, and data management tools. The company’s products and outstanding customer service provide teachers and administrators with the resources necessary for teaching diverse student populations and fostering learning for all students.

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