

Children's Literature Assembly Early Career Award 2026

Purpose of the Award

The Children's Literature Assembly Early Career Award is intended to recognize the work of one early career children's literature scholar who shows **extraordinary promise as a researcher and leader in the field of children's literature**. This award recognizes an educator who has demonstrated sustained and significant research impact throughout their career to date and whose body of work has advanced knowledge, influenced practice or policy, secured competitive funding, and/or contributed meaningfully to the mission of the Children's Literature Assembly.

Particular consideration will be given to research that shows **clear evidence of impact**, such as publications in high-quality venues, successful grant awards, development of new programs or interventions, community or stakeholder engagement, policy influence, or innovations that positively influence the field of children's literature.

Criteria for Award Consideration

Nominees must meet the following criteria:

- be an active children's literature scholar; and
- have graduated with a doctoral degree no more than seven years prior to the nomination date.

The deadline for nomination is September 1, 2026. Eligible individuals may either self-nominate or be nominated by a CLA member. All nominees are asked to submit electronically, as PDFs, the following four items:

1. a 1-2 page letter from the nominator describing the nominee's qualifications for the award, with priority given to the nominee's achievements in:
 - research, including publications and grant activity, and the impact of contributions to the field of children's literature (primary criterion);
 - leadership and service to the field of children's literature;
 - Innovation in the theory, practice, or methodology in the field of children's literature, and
 - teaching, mentoring, or partnerships related to children's literature.
2. a letter of support from a CLA Member or a professional colleague
3. a current curriculum vitae, including all publications, degrees, honors and awards, service, and classes taught
4. a written statement by the nominee that describes his or her professional growth and research agenda

Send these four items in one email to Courtney Shimek (courtney.shimek@mail.wvu.edu) by September 1, 2026.

Review Process

Submitted materials for each nominee will be reviewed and voted on by all committee members. Committee members can include both Board members and regular membership members. Members of the committee are appointed by the Board.

Evaluation Criteria

1. Promising Research Impact (Primary Criterion)

Evidence that the nominee's research in their early career has produced meaningful and measurable outcomes, such as influential publications, external funding, program implementation, policy influence, and/or improvements to communities or professional practice.

2. Scholarly Leadership and Reputation

The extent to which the nominee has established leadership within the field of children's literature through presentations, leadership in research initiatives or other children's literature-related events, editorial roles, national or international collaborations, and/or recognition by professional organizations.

3. Innovation and Advancement of Knowledge

The degree to which the nominee's research has advanced theory, methods, or applied practice in children's literature, contributing new insights and/or approaches that shape the field.

4. Broader Teaching and Mentorship

Evidence that the nominee has expanded research impact through collaboration, teaching, interdisciplinary work, mentorship, and/or engaging community or institutional partners.

Award Notification

Nominees will be notified of their status by October 1, 2026, and the award will be presented publicly at the CLA Breakfast at the annual NCTE convention in November. Awardees will receive a ticket to the CLA Breakfast and a certificate.