



2020 CASEL Award Nominations: Distinguished Contributions to SEL

Mary Utne O'Brien Award for Excellence in Expanding the Evidence-Based Practice of SEL

One of CASEL's strategic goals is to support and encourage leaders in SEL policy and practice. The CASEL Board of Directors established the Mary Utne O'Brien Award for Excellence in Expanding the Evidence-Based Practice of Social and Emotional Learning. CASEL will present the Mary Utne O'Brien Awards annually in the fall at a CASEL event to two outstanding SEL leaders in the following areas:

- (1) Federal or State Policymaking Related to Social and Emotional Learning, and
- (2) District or School Leadership Related to Effective Implementation of Social and Emotional Learning.

This award focuses on two fields - **PUBLIC POLICY AND EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE** - and is designed to highlight priorities that advance evidence-based practice in states and school districts and are captured in the CASEL strategic plan.

MARY UTNE O'BRIEN'S LEGACY



In April 2010, the field of social and emotional learning (SEL) lost a dedicated and inspirational colleague, Mary Utne O'Brien. Mary joined CASEL as Associate Director in 1999 after many years of leading public health research studies in Chicago. Working closely at CASEL

with Roger Weissberg, Mary quickly became a key leader not just for CASEL, but also for the entire field of social and emotional learning. In 2004, she was appointed as CASEL's Executive Director. When CASEL incorporated as a not-for-profit organization in 2007, she became Vice-President for Strategic Initiatives, responsible for strategic

planning, development of collaborative partnerships, and exploration of new projects.

Mary believed in the importance of highly disciplined experimental and action research, partnerships with schools throughout the country, and effective policymaking related to SEL at all levels of communities and governments. In her view, these were essential tools to support and demonstrate the impact of SEL not only on children's learning and development but also on school functioning and practice. Through CASEL's strategic plan and ongoing efforts to expand evidence-based preschool to high school SEL nationwide, and through the Mary Utne O'Brien Awards, CASEL honors her memory and remains on a course to make her dream a reality.

THE AWARD CRITERIA

CASEL will honor two awardees annually for their work to expand evidence-based SEL in the field of policy and/or practice.

FEDERAL OR STATE POLICYMAKING RELATED TO SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING.

This award will be presented to elected officials, policymakers, or international field leaders who have made important contributions to integrating SEL into federal- or state-level policies affecting Pre-K-12 education.

Previous awardees:

- Congresswoman Judy Biggert (2011)
- Congressman Dale Kildee (2011)
- Congressman Tim Ryan (2012)
- Ellen Moir (2015)
- James Comer (2015)
- Joan Duffell (2018)
- Tom Roderick (2018)

DISTRICT OR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP RELATED TO EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING.

This award will be presented to district or school leaders who has provided the vision, inspiration, and practical strategies for developing the infrastructure and support for high-quality SEL at the district or school level.

Previous awardees:

- Carol Comeau (2012)
- Jillian Ahrens, Linda DePriest, Koua Jacklyn Franz, Ed Graff, Sherrie Raven, Trish Shaffer, Kristina Tank-Crestetto, Karen VanAusdal (2013)
- Michelle Van Allen (2018).

SELECTION COMMITTEE

The selection committee for the 2020 Mary Utne O'Brien Awards includes the CASEL Board of Directors, CASEL President and CEO (Karen Niemi), CASEL's Vice President of Practice and Programs (Melissa Schlinger), and selected colleagues and previous awardees who worked closely with Mary and share her understanding of the importance of high-quality SEL-related policy and practice.

PROCESS AND TIMELINE

CASEL invites nominations for deserving candidates for each award by May 15, 2020.

Nominations should be sent to Cynthia Coleman ccoleman@casel.org with:

- one-page nomination letter outlining the candidates suitability for the award and clear identification on which award the nomination is for (i.e., Policy, Practice)
- the nominees' CV
- two documents and/or reports representing the nominee's leadership in SEL policy and/or practice (e.g., district plans, legislation)
- two-page statement from the nominee outlining his/her contributions to the SEL field

Note that self-nominations can be submitted as well. Selection committee members will review submitted material and make selections by June 1, 2020. Award winners will receive a small cash award, a plaque, and recognition at a CASEL event. Winners will also be invited to write an essay to be shared with CASEL's network.

Learn more at <https://casel.org/awards/>