

---

# MEET THE SATELLITE TEAM

---



Amy Christianson

Language Access, Curriculum, and Satellite Director

[achristianson@reachdane.org](mailto:achristianson@reachdane.org)

Amy Christianson has worked in the field of education for nearly three decades, in the early childhood community, K-12 schools, and institutions of higher education. She has worked as a teacher, administrator, educational coordinator, professional development specialist, and director. Amy has a bachelor's degree in early childhood education and English-as-a-Second Language from the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee. She also obtained a master's degree from Cardinal Stritch University and a Doctoral degree from Edgewood College in Educational Leadership. Amy's interests and areas of expertise include dual language learners, and language access and equity. She lives on the east side of Madison.



Laura Simkin

Satellite Associate Director

(608) 381-2676 [lsimkin@reachdane.org](mailto:lsimkin@reachdane.org)

Laura has been deeply engaged in the early childhood community since 1990, in just about all possible roles, including as family child care provider, teacher, community college instructor, director and group center owner, T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship Counselor and WECA Membership Services Director. In her work as Satellite's Associate Director, she focuses on all things family child care, overseeing the daily operations of the Satellite program. She has a bachelor's degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in Child and Family Studies and a master's degree from Wheelock College in Leadership and Policy in Early Care and Education. She is passionate about providing every child with the very best early childhood experience.



Estella Vargas

Bilingual (Spanish/English) Accreditation Consultant

(608) 852-7724 [evargas@reachdane.org](mailto:evargas@reachdane.org)

Estella has served in various roles in the early childhood and human services field over the last few decades, including as a child care provider, community support specialist, and domestic abuse shelter advocate. She holds a Family Services Credential, a Family Child Care Credential, and a Dual Language Learners Credential. Estella is passionate about supporting family child care providers in providing the highest quality care for children. She is both bilingual and bicultural, growing up moving back and forth between the border cities of El Paso, Texas and Chihuahua, Mexico. She has been living in Madison since 1991.



## Jen Jorgensen

Accreditation Consultant

(608) 416-9531 [jjorgensen@reachdane.org](mailto:jjorgensen@reachdane.org)

Jen graduated from the University of Wisconsin–Madison with a Child Development and Family Studies degree and has been working in early childcare education and family support for over 20 years. She enjoys creating healing and engaging learning environments for children, with a special interest in social emotional well-being. She's passionate about supporting family care providers to create spaces where children can grow and thrive. Jen resides in Madison.



## Mykenzie Lerg (Lemberger)

Accreditation Consultant

(608) 843-5378 [mlerg@reachdane.org](mailto:mlerg@reachdane.org)

Mykenzie has been working in the early childhood education field since 2014, as an early childhood teacher, family support specialist, director, and Satellite accreditation consultant. She has achieved her endorsement as an Infant Family Specialist through the Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health. She has her Wisconsin Infant Mental Health Capstone Certificate. Her degree in Human Development and Family studies rounds her credentials. She is passionate about connecting with providers and children, supporting healthy social emotional development, and understanding behavior through ongoing reflection. She currently resides in Monona.



## Rachel Halstead

Accreditation Consultant

(608) 690-0174 [shalstead@reachdane.org](mailto:shalstead@reachdane.org)

A Milwaukee native, Rachel Halstead is an Accreditation Consultant with Satellite. She has a degree in Education from the University of Wisconsin–Madison and has been working in the early childhood field for over a decade in various roles, including as classroom teacher and center director. She loves supporting family child care providers as they cultivate warm and enriching environments for the children they serve. Rachel lives in Madison.



## Stephanie Winkel

Accreditation Consultant

(608) 416-3996 [swinkel@reachdane.org](mailto:swinkel@reachdane.org)

Stephanie ran a family child care in Neenah and Appleton from 2012-2024. Before opening her family child care, Twinkeling Stars Nature Preschool, she attended UW-Oshkosh where she graduated with a bachelor's degree in early childhood-middle adolescence education. Stephanie also works as an adjunct instructor in the Early Childhood Department at Fox Valley Technical College, provides trainings at early childhood conferences, and was the president of a family child care support group in the Fox Cities. She is a firm believer in the beauty of the family child care model and helping providers express their own passions, values, and niches in the field.



## Grace Eilers

Family Child Care Content Specialist  
(608) 400-2823 [geilers@reachdane.org](mailto:geilers@reachdane.org)

Grace Eilers oversees the implementation of professional learning opportunities at Satellite. She holds a Master of Arts in child and adolescent development from the University of Minnesota Twin Cities and an Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Endorsement®. Grace has worked in the early childhood education field for over a decade as an infant/toddler educator, Head Start 3 and 4K teacher, and early childhood mental health practitioner. Her previous experience in academic research and direct care supports her ability to connect research to practice. She is inspired by the work ethic, compassion, and perseverance of the (mostly) women in family child care. Grace grew up in the Milwaukee metropolitan area and currently lives in Eau Claire.



## Laura Cruz

Administrative Assistant  
[lcruz@reachdane.org](mailto:lcruz@reachdane.org)

Laura works as an administrative assistant for Satellite. Originally from Miami, Laura has experience in out of school care, biological science, and bilingual education. She earned a bachelor's degree in biology from Florida Atlantic University and is currently enrolled in the University of Wisconsin–Madison School of Pharmacy. She has played various roles in the field of science and education over the years, most recently as a bilingual education assistant at a local high school where she assisted students and educators with Spanish translation in the classroom. Laura shares Satellite's mission of supporting access to high-quality care and education for all children.



## Janna Hack

Mental Health Consultant

Janna Hack has worked in early childhood for over 25 years as a therapist, mental health consultant, trainer, and university instructor across a variety of child/family serving programs. She received her master's degree in clinical social work at Wayne State University and completed the post master's infant mental health certificate program from Merrill Palmer, Wayne State University in 1999. Janna's passions include supporting strong, healthy relationships for everyone, especially those who have experienced trauma and parental separation. She is also very passionate about integrating equity and conflict transformation skills into her work. She lives on the east side of Madison.