
MEET THE SATELLITE TEAM



Amy Christianson

Language Access, Curriculum, and Satellite Director

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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

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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

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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 and a Family Child Care Credential and is currently working on 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.

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Jen Jorgensen

Accreditation Consultant

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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 15 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

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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

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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.

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Grace Eilers

Family Child Care Content Specialist

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As the family child care content specialist, Grace Eilers oversees the planning and development of professional learning opportunities at Satellite. She holds a Master of Arts in applied child and adolescent development from the University of Minnesota Twin Cities and is endorsed by the Wisconsin Alliance for Infant Mental Health. Grace began her journey in the early childhood field in 2016 as an infant teacher and has since held positions in early care and education, mental health, and academic research. She has a deep passion for fostering belonging, community, and connections for not only young children, but the professionals who care for them. Grace grew up in the Milwaukee metropolitan area and currently lives in Eau Claire.