



## WHATCOM CENTER FOR EARLY LEARNING

Hello WCEL families and supporters! As we move from fall to winter, whether you're celebrating a special tradition or simply enjoying family time, we hope you are finding cozy moments together this season!

As we reflect on our year, our agency is grateful for those who have come before us and all who are supporting this work today - our amazing staff, volunteers, donors, and the Board of Directors. In addition, we are so appreciative of the kids, families, and caretakers we walk alongside every day.

Together, you help us provide the best care and support for young kids and families. This supports our mission to *partner with families to provide high-quality, equitable, and comprehensive therapy and support services to children experiencing developmental delays and disabilities.*

**We are grateful for our community, and for you!**

### AKI YADA



Aki joined WCEL's Early Learning Program (ELP) team in September of 2019 as a Classroom Assistant. She is currently the lead classroom teacher at WCEL's Bellingham and Lynden Toddler Time. Originally from Tokyo, Japan, Aki eventually moved to the United States and received a Master's of Education from Western Washington University. Aki is passionate about inspiring curiosity in kids and connecting with families. She is currently working towards certification as a Japanese medical interpreter through WCEL's new Language Access program. Aki knits, teaches piano and loves nature and Whatcom County's trail systems. She is often exploring the outdoors with her husband, two daughters, and their dog.



**"The connections and relationships with kids and families who come through the doors at WCEL have captured my heart.** It is a lot of work to get to know each child and family individually, and it's worth it to see the joy when they connect with each other. WCEL has taught me valuable lessons about inclusive environments and creative approaches to changing environments to help kids thrive. I love working with my ELP team, who care deeply about each family in our program."





# JENNIFER ENGER



Jennifer joined WCEL in 2021 as a Family Resources Coordinator (FRC) at the Brick House. She now serves as both a FRC and Early Support Program Manager for the team. She also serves on WCEL's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee. Jennifer recently became a CHERISH certified FRC. CHERISH is a model created to reduce trauma and support reunification. It considers the perspectives and needs of parents, caregivers, social workers, and kids in the child welfare system. Jennifer has lived experience as an adoptive mother of two.



Jennifer has a thoughtful and caring approach to working with families, and she is dedicated to learning and applying new knowledge to her work. Additionally, Jennifer gardens, bakes, reads, enjoys time outside, and loves a good dance party.

**"My favorite aspect of this work is finding the perfect resource that fits a family's needs.** I also enjoy the close-knit teaming that is involved in all we do, and reflecting with both families and team members. I am thankful that our agency has introduced the CHERISH model, which makes sure to honor parents and caregivers, and supports them during their Early Support journey."



At WCEL, we continue to grow and expand to serve our community. With 16 new team members, we're expanding our services to help more families. We now have a partnership with Whatcom County's Healthy Children's Fund to support mental health for 0-5 year olds and their caretakers; we held a county-wide convening to increase language justice; and we have recently become a CHERISH-certified agency. Watch your mailboxes in early 2025 for our annual report, which will share more agency updates for 2024!

We work together to support kids with developmental delays and help families thrive! We rely on individuals and businesses like you to share their time, talents, or financial resources with WCEL so that we can continue to serve over 450 children, families, and caretakers every month. Your support - whether through donations or time - makes a real difference for kids and families. If you can, please make a donation via our website ([wcel.net](http://wcel.net)), or Venmo (@[wcelkids](https://www.instagram.com/wcelkids)). Please consider signing up for our monthly Changemakers program to provide sustainable giving. If you have skills or time to share, please drop us a line at [info@wcel.net](mailto:info@wcel.net).

Thank you for being a generous part of the WCEL community!

Sierra James, Executive Director

