



### Jennifer Jennings-Shaffer



**ELAC Representation:** Children's Alliance/ Early Learning Action Alliance

**Occupation:** Early Learning Policy Director

**City/Region:** Seattle, WA

#### Getting to know YOU:

##### **What drew you to early learning?**

I've always been interested in education. It has the power to open doors and nurture possibility. Learning about the research and having the chance to see truly stellar early learning programs in action have convinced me that access to high quality, comprehensive early learning opportunities that are embedded in the context of families, communities and culture is one the best things we can do to address societal inequities so that every child has the chance to become their best possible self. Working at the Children's Alliance and with the Early Action Alliance gives me the opportunity to work toward that promise through advocacy.

##### **How do you hope to influence a stronger early learning system for Washington?**

We are at critical moment in building our early learning system. We have momentum and information beyond anything we've had before. My hope is that we seize this moment to focus clearly on the potential of early learning to help close the opportunity gap. To do this will require intention, willingness to ask ourselves tough questions and commitment to partnering with families and communities.

##### **What was your first job?**

Working as an assistant in a church nursery with children ages birth to five- two services a week for four years. It was an eye opening experience.

##### **As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?**

It was a toss-up between being a gymnast or a teacher. The pitfalls associated with my gymnastics career became apparent quite early; teaching sounded like a good idea through my first couple years of college.



### Jennifer Jennings-Shaffer

**What is your favorite childhood memory?**

It's tough to choose but one that stands out is going to the beach at low tide with my mom and my brother. We spent a lot of time flipping over rocks to investigate starfish, crabs and whoever else happened to be under there. My mom's love of animals is contagious and I'm grateful to her for sharing it.