JEN HILLEBRANDT

Through early experiences with NOLS (National Outdoor Leadership School), adventures at the Colorado College, and a degree in Sociology, Jen Hillebrandt discovered that she was meant to be a teacher, but not in the traditional sense. “Experiential Education” would become a life-long pursuit.

Once she discovered this “calling”, she attended the **University of Colorado at Boulder** to further her studies, obtaining a **Colorado Teaching License as well as a Master’s Degree in Elementary Education, with emphasis in bilingual and special education.** Later, Jen traveled to Costa Rica to hone her Spanish language skills in an immersion program, as she found herself in Leadville, Colorado, teaching an elementary class of students with varying levels of English proficiency. She strongly believes in the benefits of immersion studies, and that language and culture are intricately linked.

In 2001, Jen finally made her way to Crested Butte, after dreaming about calling it home for years. Here, she has discovered the joys and challenges of motherhood, and gained new insights into **early childhood development and education**. Jen started **a state licensed in-home preschool/daycare**, simultaneously obtaining training and **certification as a Montessori Primary teacher** (focusing on children aged 3-6 years).

In all her various manifestations as an educator, Jen has realized her strengths and passions lie in **early childhood education**, as well as **literacy for all ages**. She firmly believes in the benefits of Montessori education, Multiple Intelligences theory (which allows for eight ways to be “smart” and to learn), and finally, time spent problem-solving in the outdoors and developing a relationship with our natural world. She is so grateful to have the opportunity to share these passions with others, as part of the Peak team.

Jen has also served as the Director of Paradise Place Pre-school, and currently works at the Crested Butte Public Library.