

# THEN & NOW



**1916** – Lizzie Merrill Palmer bequeaths \$3 million to establish a school for young women. With insightful leadership, executor Tracy McGregor organizes the school, purchases the Freer House as its home and enrolls students by 1920.

**1920** – Edna Noble White becomes the first director of the Merrill-Palmer School for Motherhood and Homemaking. Direct engagement with children and families is a foundational principle.

**1920** – Merrill-Palmer researches malnutrition in young children due to World War I food shortages.

**1922** – Merrill-Palmer opens the country's second nursery school and demonstrates the importance of studying and working directly with young children.

**1923** – Merrill-Palmer joins Children's Hospital to research nutrition in pregnancy and early infancy.

**1924** – Merrill-Palmer School establishes one of the country's first community child guidance clinics.

**1929** – Merrill-Palmer creates rating scales for personality development and attitudes in young children. Versions of these scales are still in use today.

**1931** – Merrill-Palmer publishes the results of an eight-year research project on "The Measurement of Intelligence of the Preschool Child."

**1943** – Merrill-Palmer School publishes the landmark book, "Child Development: Physical and Psychological Growth through Adolescence."

**1964** – Merrill-Palmer is key in developing the philosophy and national standards for Head Start.

**1981** - Merrill-Palmer Institute becomes part of Wayne State University.

**1988** – Merrill-Palmer launched the Infant Mental Health program (in conjunction with schools and colleges at Wayne State University) and granted more than 120 graduate certificates

**1991** – Merrill-Palmer hosts "100 Languages of Children" on the innovative Reggio Emilia approach to play-based early childhood education.

**1989-1999** – Merrill-Palmer partners with Chrysler's UAW to create the country's first resource and referral center to help employees find quality childcare.

**2005** – The Skillman Center for Children is integrated into Merrill-Palmer to create the Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute for Child & Family Development, emphasizing both organizations' commitment to community outreach.



## MERRILL PALMER SKILLMAN INSTITUTE for Child & Family Development



### EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The **Early Childhood Center** at the Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute has been educating young children since 1922. It is accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. Knowledge of child development, theories of child behavior, best practices for educating young children, child-centered play, building relationships with children and families, and child-guided and teacher-planned activities are guiding values.

The **Woodward Corridor Early Childhood Consortium** – This joint project with the College of Education provides leadership, training and resources to early childhood centers in Detroit's midtown and Livernois-and-Six-Mile neighborhood. Funding is provided by the Kresge and PNC Foundations.

**Supporting the Social-Emotional Development of Infants and Toddlers through Caregiver Mindfulness and Sensitivity** –The aim of this University Research Corridor project is to improve responsiveness and interactions among teachers, parents and young students through professional development, coaching and mindfulness-based interventions.

### CHILDREN'S HEALTH

**Reducing Alcohol and Drug Use in Pregnant and New Mothers** – This project is working to create effective, low-cost, and easy-to-administer screening and intervention tools to reduce drug and alcohol use. One approach, SBIRT (for Screening, Brief Intervention, Referral and Treatment), is delivered via computer in the ob-gyn waiting room to reduce marijuana use during pregnancy.

**Screening Prenatal Substance Use** – This three-site study compares the best available screenings for prenatal substance use and improve identification. Earlier screening means earlier help and healthier babies.

### CHILD & ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT

**Brain Structure and Function from Childhood to Young Adulthood** – By combining cognitive ability tests with neuroimaging, researchers study how brain structure and function shape learning and memory across development.

**Adoptive and Foster Parenting** – This study addresses a critical need by training adoptive and foster parents of adolescents with moderate to severe behavioral health challenges, often resulting from trauma. Working with parents helps teens reduce high-risk behaviors, interact more successfully with peers, and do better in school.

**Helping Military Families through Parental Deployment** – When a parent in the military is deployed, the family copes with unique issues that can affect the psychological health of the children and the non-deployed spouse. Two projects aimed at designing effective prevention and intervention programs are underway to support family well being.

### TRAUMA AND MENTAL HEALTH

**Emergence of Sexual Risk among Sexually Abused Adolescent Females** – We are investigating early sexual behavior and development in girls who were victims of child sexual abuse to create effective risk-reduction interventions.

**Helping Latina Survivors Cope with Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence** –The project's goal is to help Latina women feel more comfortable talking about incidents and seeking help through tailored, culturally sensitive services. The work is in collaboration with Detroit's LA VIDA Partnership, a non-profit offering an array of services to Latina women and children.

**Dual Title Degree** – Merrill Palmer Skillman Institute launched the world's first dual-title degree in Infant Mental Health in 2012. Students graduate with skills in working with infants and their families, and a deeper understanding of applied research and the needs of community agencies and practitioners.

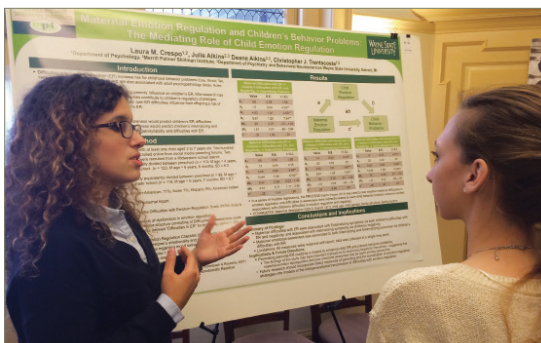
**Explorations in Development Conference** – Jointly sponsored with the Michigan Association of Infant Mental Health, this yearly two-day conference addresses issues impacting infants, children and families and is of particular value to mental health providers, educators, human service professionals, and health care professionals.

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH

**Healthier Urban Families** – We train hundreds of teachers, parents and children each year on a variety of timely topics such as stress, anger, safe texting, time management and mindfulness.

The **Giant Step Teen Conference** is the oldest, continuously run teen conference on diversity and inclusion in Michigan and possibly in the country. We unite hundreds of teens from different backgrounds to get to know and respect each other. Trained facilitators foster discussion on topics like bullying, social status, and common interests. The goal is to replace prejudice and bias with understanding and friendship.

**Families First** – In partnership with the United Way for Southeastern Michigan, this program brings together researchers and professionals who work with children and families to enhance community-based programs and evidence-based practice.



[www.mpsi.wayne.edu](http://www.mpsi.wayne.edu)



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SKILLMAN INSTITUTE  
**100 YEARS**  
for Child & Family Development