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Senior Profits From Intensive Child Study

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Senior Profits From

**Intensive Child Study**

Betty Ann Brady reports on a quarter's work in child development at Merrill-Palmer School

In a will providing for the establishment of the Merrill-Palmer School, Lizzie Merrill-Palmer stated: "I hold... that the welfare of any community is... dependent upon the quality of its motherhood and the spirit and character of its homes." Because of her convictions of 25 years ago, students today are profiting by the school's central aim of promoting better parenthood.

With this purpose in view, two types of education have been developed: one for those who expect to marry and raise families and the other for those who wish to enter professionally the field of child and parent training. College seniors from selected cooperating institutions attend Merrill-Palmer in Detroit for a term's or a semester's study. In addition, graduate students may work toward a master's or a doctor's degree.

During each term the student selects one major which covers approximately half the total amount of work. Studies of pre-school children, older children or family life are examples of these majors which are planned to give an understanding of human development at different periods through an integration of relevant subject matter.

Each major group meets at least twice weekly under the guidance of a leader who organizes the program of work with the students. Participating specialists contribute to the discussions and studies.

Much of the student's work and supplementary reading is done on an individual basis. Discussion groups are kept small to facilitate direction and guidance. To make practical application of knowledge the student is gaining, special periods are set aside for students and staff in each major to work on a related problem.

To supplement the major work, "minors" provide opportunity for actual experience in the field. An example is the work in a settlement house nursery school. Located in a city slum area, the children are a contrast to those in Merrill-Palmer, where students also observe and teach.

Voluntary service guiding the play of convalescent children in a hospital, feeding and bathing babies in a nursery for homeless infants, living in a city apartment on a city budget, visiting high school classes—such are the experiences through which students put theories to practice.

The entire atmosphere is one of informality. Individual conferences as well as a casual cup of tea each afternoon provide periods for students and teachers to talk together. Weekly general conferences are planned so that staff and students might share thinking, discuss timely topics or extend their cultural interests.

Living in small residential houses means that students from all over the United States and from foreign countries can manage their own domestic life.

Child development majors may supplement their work at Iowa State by attending Merrill-Palmer School in Detroit. College seniors and graduate students learn from research and experience to apply child development studies to family life or to the professional world.