

History of Talaris

Our beginning

In 2000, Bruce and Jolene McCaw, as new parents, found themselves searching for information about parenting. The McCaws learned that researchers had vital information about how babies and young children think, feel, and learn. However, they saw a substantial gap between what scientists know and what parents practice. They also saw an opportunity to bridge this gap by translating the knowledge into usable information for parents and caregivers. As a result, the McCaws established the Talaris Research Institute (now known as the Talaris Institute) in 2000.

The early years

Inspired by the work of University of Washington molecular biologist John Medina, Ph.D., the McCaws invited him to serve as the Founding Director of Talaris. Dr. Medina's academic work explored a "brain friendly" educational system in which the science of learning is combined with the practice of learning. Dr. Medina served as the Executive Director of Talaris from 2000 to 2003.

Initially, Talaris strove to achieve its mission by advancing brain science to all who nurture children. It sponsored early childhood development research initiatives led by some of the preeminent researchers in the field. It launched what is now known as the Institute for Learning and Brain Sciences (ILABS) at the University of Washington as well as the Bringing Baby Home project at the Relationship Research Institute in Seattle.

From research to practice: Parenting Counts

In 2003, with a new Executive Director, Terry Meersman, Talaris began to develop a more refined focus on the parent-child relationship and aligned its work with major partners such as the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the State of Washington. Talaris also began to build a strong product partnership with PBS stations across the country with the brand name "Parenting Counts: A Focus on Early Learning." This multimedia parenting education program featured one-minute television spots that aired nationally and companion workshops for parents. The spots focused on social and emotional development in the first years of life. Small grants to participating PBS stations and the Boeing Company's in-kind printing support helped disseminate these products through community partners. The Parenting Counts products grew in depth of research and in sophistication as communications tools for a larger number of parent-serving organizations. At the same time, Talaris partnered with the Gates Foundation and the State of Washington to launch a major public-private partnership for early learning named Thrive by Five and helped establish a new Department of Early Learning for the state. The combination of high-quality products for parents and strong partnerships continues to characterize Talaris work.

Talaris today

Today, Talaris continues to expand Parenting Counts nationally and to develop additional programs that will support parents and caregivers in the healthy social and emotional development of children ages birth through five. Katie Simons is the new Executive Director and Bruce and Jolene McCaw serve as Honorary Co-Chairs of the board of directors and primary benefactors of Talaris.