Perkins

World-class leader in the education of individuals who are blind, visually impaired, and deafblind
Since our founding in 1829, Perkins has been a national and international leader and resource providing state-of-the-art education and services to infants, toddlers, children, youth, and young adults who are blind, deafblind or visually impaired, including those with additional disabilities, their families, and the professionals who serve them. Our ultimate goal is to maximize the potential of each child to lead a proud, productive, and meaningful life in the mainstream of society in the United States and around the world.

Perkins Advances Our Mission Through the Work of Five Divisions

Perkins School for the Blind, the first school in the U.S. to educate students with visual impairments, has stood as a thought leader from its earliest days. Perkins pioneered the education of children who are deafblind, and the school continues to nurture an innovative teaching and learning environment on our historic Watertown, Massachusetts campus and in schools throughout the region.

Perkins Products, formerly called Howe Press, began producing tactile books in 1835 and in 1951 introduced the Perkins Brailler®, the most widely used braille writer in the world. Today, the re-designed Perkins SMART Brailler® merges computer technology with its famous predecessor, fostering literacy through braille for a new generation of learners. Perkins Products’ line of accessible technology provides communication and daily living solutions to people of all ages.

Perkins Library first provided patrons with reading matter in 1837, adding braille and talking books in 1931. Since then, the award-winning Library has provided free services to millions of Massachusetts residents of any age who are unable to read traditional print materials due to a visual or physical disability. Now readers have access to digital audio books and online downloads. Each day, the Library sends more than 2000 books to its patrons.

Perkins eLearning operates on the precept that knowledge is most powerful when it is shared. With its well-deserved reputation for being a teacher of teachers – regionally, nationally and globally – Perkins experts now interact and exchange ideas worldwide through online resources such as webcasts, real-time webinars, specialty learning websites and vast research archives.

Perkins International works with partners in 67 countries to enable people who are blind, deafblind or have low vision, including those with additional disabilities, to fulfill their potential as active members of society. These partnerships serve to expand educational opportunities, strengthen government policies, increase access to information and technology, and build sustainable local programs. The overarching goal is to empower children with disabilities, their families and educators.
At Perkins, we:

- Create **innovative environments** which allow infants, toddlers, school age children and youth varied opportunities for exploration and discovery;
- Encourage an attitude, sensitivity, and awareness of **professional accountability** to the individuals, families and agencies we serve locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally;
- Are committed to and advocate for **literacy through braille**;
- Serve as a resource for our **professional colleagues** in the United States and around the world by maintaining a leadership position in the development of **new teaching methods and educational materials**, including online programs and **expanded core curriculum**;
- Work closely with **parents** to provide them with the information and knowledge necessary to enhance the learning process for their children;
- Are leaders in harnessing the power of **state-of-the-art technology** to enable individuals with disabilities to live independently and realize their educational and life potential and
- Respond to the specific needs of a diverse population by maintaining community **partnerships**, conducting **research**, and **translating our research into practice**.

Perkins’ exemplary services and strategies impact more than 500,000 individuals each year in the United States and 67 countries across the globe. Perkins also has pioneered many of the social and technological innovations that have facilitated the inclusion of people who are blind, visually impaired and deafblind into society, including the new SMART Brailler®. With an annual budget of $70,000,000, Perkins employs more than 800 full and part time staff, including teachers of the visually impaired, orientation and mobility specialists, speech and language specialists, physical therapists, music therapists, and social workers. Our professionals have expertise in on-line and in-person training and technical assistance. Our researchers and our partners use qualitative and quantitative methodologies. Last year over 1,400 volunteers helped us further our mission.

Our experience, expertise and commitment are demonstrated through continuous expansion and improvement of our research capacity and our on-line and in person education, training and technical assistance programs, including:

- Early intervention services for infants and toddlers and education services for school- age children;
- Teaching literacy through braille;
- Professional development and curricular resources;
- Parent training and instruction;
- Technology advancement and use of accessible technologies;
- Community outreach and partnerships; and
- International programs.
Early Intervention and Education Services for Individuals with Disabilities

Perkins is a national leader in the design, implementation, and evaluation of early intervention, education, and transition services and supports for individuals who are blind, visually impaired and deafblind.

- **Perkins Infant and Toddler Program** is known nationwide as an essential resource for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. Teachers of the visually impaired, teachers of the deafblind and orientation and mobility teachers work with infants and families in their homes. Group programs on campus and in the community provide supplemental instruction and support.

- The **Perkins Early Learning Center** is a preschool and transitional kindergarten program. The specialized services of teachers of children with visual impairments, orientation and mobility specialists, as well as clinical and paraprofessional staff knowledgeable about visual impairments and additional disabilities makes the Perkins Early Learning Center a truly unique resource.

- The **Perkins Lower School** serves children in kindergarten through 8th grade who are blind or visually impaired, including those with multiple disabilities. Age-appropriate learning activities in concept development, math, reading and writing, music therapy, games, art, cooking, and social play, is based on students’ unique needs. Whether a student is college bound or requires a more functional, life skills program, everyone experiences the joy of learning and discovers their own unique gifts.

- The **Perkins Secondary Program** provides students from around the world age 14-22 with individual and group instruction to develop organizational, reasoning, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills as part of their high school experience. Both core curriculum and specialized coursework are part of all students’ daily schedules.

- The **Perkins Educational Partnership Program** brings together our expert educators with parents, school-based personnel, and other agencies to provide specialized services to families and public school students who are blind, deafblind, or visually impaired with or without multiple disabilities both on and off of our campus.

- **Perkins Community Programs** include:
  - Special classes and programs offered on and off our campus;
  - Services provided by our [Braille & Talking Book Library](http://www.braille.org) and [Low Vision Clinic](http://www.lowvisionclinic.org);
  - Outreach to students and teachers in public and private schools.
  - **Perkins Community Living Services** provides part-time individual support to adults living in the community.
• Perkins offers specialized weekend and summer programs for public school students throughout New England. Our Outreach Short Courses include educational, social and recreational activities, support, exposure, and training in key areas for students who are blind or visually impaired from elementary through high school.

• The Perkins Deafblind Program is one of the few programs worldwide dedicated specifically to deafblind students. Perkins Deafblind Program offers a variety of curriculum options to both day and residential students from age three to 22 who are deafblind including those with multiple disabilities.

• Perkins is the sponsoring agency and assumes overall responsibility for the New England Consortium of Deafblind Projects, which provides technical assistance to children who are deafblind in Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts and New Hampshire, as well as to their families and educators. NEC maintains a child census of participating students and provides technical assistance to professionals working with these children. Resource information, workshops, consultations, and in-service training are provided on a local, state or regional level by qualified NEC staff.

Teaching Literacy Through Braille

Perkins is a national leader in supporting and expanding literacy for individuals who are blind, deafblind or have vision impairments. For students who are blind or will become blind, or have serious visual impairments, learning braille is equivalent to a sighted child learning to read and write print words and sentences. Through Diagnostic Evaluation Services, Perkins professionals evaluate students in public and private school settings for a variety of educational and clinical needs, including the student’s literacy needs. Through professional development and parent support programs, Perkins experts train teachers and parents in the appropriate levels of braille skills to be able to work with students who use braille. Perkins provides braille literacy resources through workshops, conference sessions, mini-courses, and online resources.

With the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Perkins launched Paths to Literacy, an online interactive hub for information about literacy for children and youth who are blind or visually impaired.
Professional Development and Curricular Resources

Perkins has been known as a “teacher of teachers” since before Anne Sullivan attended Perkins and before she taught Helen Keller in the 1880s. We began our work in teacher training in 1920, when the first group of teachers from around the world visited to learn about teaching children who are blind. In the mid-1950s, Perkins worked with Boston University and Boston College to establish a formal teacher training program in response to a severe shortage of educators prepared to teach children who are deafblind. Perkins continues to train teachers of the blind and deafblind both in the United States and around the world.

- **Perkins eLearning** is becoming the “go-to” source that teachers, parents, administrators and other educators can access for timely, accessible materials and resources. Our eLearning site provides resources to help an educator find specific strategies and teaching tools for each child they encounter. Resources for professional development include webinars, webcasts, online workshops, short courses, and tutorials. Through webinars, online courses, and tutorials, participants can earn professional development credit. We are working with state accrediting and licensing agencies to establish vehicles for awarding credit to participants from around the United States.

- The **Perkins Training and Educational Resources Program** collaborates with school systems and other key stakeholders in developing and delivering needs-based professional development programs for thousands of teachers, administrators and family members. Through the Training Center, Perkins sponsors and leads professional development national and regional seminars, symposiums, and conferences, as well as webinars, webcasts, and online workshops and tutorials. The program also provides a range of unique and essential curricular resources for educators in the field.

- Perkins is a leader in developing, teaching, training and advocating for the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC). Perkins ECC programs include instruction on assistive technology proficiency (including low vision devices where appropriate), self-sufficiency and interaction (including Orientation and Mobility), self-determination, sensory efficiency, socialization, recreation and fitness, and independent living skills, and age appropriate career education. In partnership with the American Foundation for the Blind, Perkins has developed [www.ECCadvocacy.org](http://www.ECCadvocacy.org), a website dedicated to ensuring that children who are blind, visually impaired and deafblind have equal and appropriate education through the Expanded Core Curriculum.

- **Perkins Outreach Short Courses** deliver programs on the Perkins campus and in other school locations (most recently throughout New York State). These are opportunities for public school students, who may be the only student who is blind in their school, to expand skills, build relationships, and meet peers. Expanded Core Curriculum is woven into every element of these programs.
• The **Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library** distributes braille materials, audio books, and other accessible media to more than 25,000 people who cannot access traditional print materials.

• **Perkins Scout** is a searchable database of carefully evaluated online resources related to blindness and visual impairment.

**Parent Training and Instruction**

Perkins supports and collaborates with national parent organizations, and individual parent groups, including local, state-based, and disability-specific groups.

• **Wonderbaby.org**, a website created by a parent of a child who is blind to provide comprehensive resources for parents and caregivers of children with disabilities, is now part of Perkins eLearning. The site has become a one-stop, virtual epicenter of all things parenting, blindness and visual disability. Thousands of parents worldwide connect to the resources they need, ask and answer questions about child development, and reach out to one another through this active parent-driven community of interest.

• For 30 years, Perkins has hosted the annual “Early Connections” conference, which provides a unique opportunity for parents and vision professionals to learn from each other and network. The conference addresses diverse topics such as assistive technology, working with school systems, transition, feeding issues, independent living skills, and support groups.

• The 2012 “Families Connecting with Families” conference was a joint project of Perkins, the National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments, the Jewish Guild for the Blind, and the New England Consortium of Deafblind Projects. This international conference covered all aspects of raising a child with a visual impairment, such as early childhood development, assistive technology, social skills, and transition to college.

**Technology Advancement and Accessibility (Perkins Products)**

Perkins believes in harnessing the power of **cutting edge technology** to enable individuals with disabilities to live more independently and realize their educational and life potential. We are leaders in the field of assistive technology and devices for people who are blind, deafblind or have visual impairments, and have developed and disseminated numerous technologies and products to individuals, parents and professionals worldwide. To this end, Perkins offers training, equipment demonstrations, technology assessments for education, evaluations of people with low vision and other disabilities, software testing, and consulting for making websites accessible.

• **Perkins Products** uses high-technology adaptive devices, training, and consulting services to bring greater independence to people of all ages who are blind, visually impaired or learning disabled.
The new Perkins SMART Brailler® has the potential to transform the way people who are blind learn to read and write braille. The SMART Brailler provides audio and visual feedback coupled with hard-copy output so that everyone can learn braille together – students, teachers, parents, adults losing their vision.

The new iCanConnect project, funded by the FCC to implement the 21st Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act, provides deafblind individuals throughout the country with access to telecommunications tools. To implement this project, Perkins and Helen Keller National Center are partnering with state agencies, schools, and organizations in every state in the U.S.

The Perkins Assistive Device Center is a workshop that creates customized low-tech materials for children with disabilities. Hundreds of professionals, parents and university students have attended workshops at Perkins and around New England led by Assistive Device Center professionals. Monthly workshops at Perkins cover a variety of adaptive design topics.

The Low Vision Clinic at Perkins, a collaborative project with New England Eye Institute, provides cutting-edge eye assessment of visual fields and use of vision, and has developed model classrooms that help students use their vision optimally.

The Grousbeck Center for Students & Technology is a 17,000 square foot social and training center which employs the most sophisticated high-tech tools available to people who are visually impaired.

In addition, Perkins specialists remotely train students, parents and professionals on the following: speech and braille technology, large print access technology, braille production, hands-free computing, learning disability software, and general applications.

**Community Outreach and Partnerships**

Today, Perkins programs and services reach more than 500,000 infants, toddlers, school students, adults and seniors on our Watertown, Mass., campus, in the community, across the United States, and around the world. Perkins provides services in every state in the United States and in 67 countries worldwide.

Perkins believes in partnerships. We work with hundreds of partner organizations, both public and non-profit, across the country and internationally to change what it means to live with blindness. For example, Perkins works collaboratively with:

- The American Foundation for the Blind, Texas School for the Blind, CHARGE Syndrome Foundation, and Ohio Center for Deafblind Education.
- Local and national parent organizations, including the National Association for Parents of Children with Visual Impairments.
- Nonprofit organizations, school districts, universities, corporations, government agencies, associations and distributors around the globe that share our mission.
International Programs

Perkins International works in 67 countries building capacity at local, regional, and national levels to develop independent, sustainable education services. Perkins International is committed to helping marginalized populations who are blind, deafblind, or blind with additional disabilities unlock their potential and realize their unique value as members of their communities. Every child, regardless of disability, has a right to education, vocational training, access to information and technology, and a supportive community. Our ability to bring this work to scale became possible in 1989 when the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and Perkins joined in collaboration to promote the program globally.

We bring assistive device expertise to projects for children who are deafblind and parents in developing countries where economics make it necessary to find low-cost solutions.

Institutional Capacity and Leadership

Institutional Capacity

Perkins serves more than 500,000 individuals each year in all 50 states and 67 countries across the globe. With an annual budget of $70,000,000, Perkins employs 809 full-and part-time staff, including teachers of the visually impaired, orientation and mobility specialists, speech and language specialists, physical therapists, music therapists, and social workers. Perkins employs 38 teachers who work in homes and public schools throughout Massachusetts, as well as 78 teachers on campus. Almost 70 percent possess the highest level of professional licensing in their field. Last year more than 1,400 volunteers helped us further our mission.

In addition to its rich history and tradition of excellence in education, Perkins faculty, staff and students live and work on a campus that blends tradition with innovation. The Perkins campus in Watertown, Mass., is the focal point and functional center of Perkins’ extensive programs. Our period architecture and historic buildings have been modified and updated for accessibility. Two new buildings, the Grousbeck Center for Students & Technology and the new Lower School are both fully accessible, environmentally friendly buildings. Our classrooms feature state-of-the-art technology to suit individual student needs and abilities. Our Information Technology Department and Technology Training Center provide full support on various technical issues and easy access to technology training for students and teachers.
Leadership

Steven M. Rothstein, MBA
President
Mr. Rothstein has 10 years of service at Perkins. He has broad experience in human services, government, and non-profit programs. His commitment to serving Perkins’ mission locally, nationally, and internationally is enriched by his understanding of the interlocking roles of private organizations, government agencies, and charitable organizations. He co-founded Citizens Energy Corporation, a non-profit organization that provides tens of millions of dollars in energy and medical benefits to low-income citizens nationally and internationally. He has served on the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Board of Education and for a variety of local and regional community, non-profit and education organizations. He holds a BA from Williams College and an MBA from Northeastern University.

Dorinda Rife, MA
Superintendent of Educational Programs
Dorinda Rife guides campus and community educational programs. Her extensive experience prior to coming to Perkins includes serving as Principal of the Arizona State School for the Deaf and Blind, and teaching Orientation and Mobility in Oregon, Colorado, and Arizona. She has been an active member of the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (AER) since the early 1980s and was awarded the Margaret Bluhm Worker of the Year Award for overall service to AER and the field of visual impairment in 2007. Ms Rife is a graduate of Pacific University and holds a master’s degree in Special Education from Northern Colorado University.

Betsy McGinnity, MEd
Director, Training & Educational Resources Program
Betsy McGinnity leads the development and delivery of education resources to support teachers and parents including printed publications, online resources, training both in-person and through online courses. She has extensive experience as a teacher of students with deafblindness and severe disabilities in public and state schools and at Perkins School for the Blind’s Deafblind Program. McGinnity holds a MEd from the University of Washington in Seattle.

David Morgan, MBA
Vice President & General Manager, Perkins Products
David Morgan is responsible for all aspects of the Perkins Products Division, including strategic planning, operations, manufacturing, research and development, and sales and marketing. He has directed a series of projects to update, retool, and modernize manufacturing and is responsible for new product design and development of the award winning Next Generation™ Perkins Brailler®, and the recent release of the Perkins SMART Brailler®. Mr. Morgan has a BS in Business Management from Daniel Webster College and an MBA from the University of New Hampshire.
Aubrey Webson, PhD
Director, Perkins International
Dr. W. Aubrey Webson oversees Perkins International’s work with hundreds of partners in 67 countries around the world. Dr. Webson leads initiatives to grow Perkins’ services and helps shape educational services for children who are deafblind and those with multiple disabilities; supports government and service workers in policy development. He also introduced and implements the Institutional Development Program, a capacity building project for organizations of the blind in Africa and the Caribbean. Prior to joining Perkins, Dr. Webson worked with SightSavers International and Helen Keller International, and served as the Executive Director of the Caribbean Council for the Blind. He holds a Doctorate in Management from Case Western Reserve University.

Kim Charlson, MA
Director, Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library
Kim Charlson was appointed director of the Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library in 2001 following 16 years as the Service Management Librarian and Assistant Director. Charlson serves on a number of committees for the Library of Congress’ National Library Service for the Blind and Physically Handicapped and as a national member of the Braille Authority of North America, the standard-setting body for braille in the United States and Canada. She is currently the first vice-president of the American Council of the Blind and the chair of the Massachusetts Braille Literacy Advisory Council. Charlson previously held positions on the International Council on English Braille, the Governor’s Advisory Council on Disability Policy, and the Secretary of State’s Help America Vote Act Advisory Committee. Her publications include Establishing a Braille Literacy Program in Your Community: A Handbook for Libraries and Other Community Organizations and Drawing with Your Perkins Brailler, an instructional book for using braille to create tactile pictures. She has contributed to numerous other publications including a chapter on braille library services in the book, Braille: Into the Next Millennium and Making Theatre Accessible: A Guide to Audio Description in the Performing Arts. In 2004, she was inducted into the Massachusetts Library Association Hall of Fame. Charlson has a Master’s in Library Science, summa cum laude, from the University of North Texas.

For more information please contact Mary Burdick at 617-972-7498 or Mary.Burdick@Perkins.org