

# Perkins SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND



## Perkins School for the Blind - innovation in education since 1829

- 1829 Dr. John Dix Fisher charts the first school for the blind in the United States after observing educational practices in France for people who are blind.
- 1832 New England Asylum for the Blind opens with Samuel Gridley Howe as the director, using rooms in his father's downtown Boston home.
- 1833 Enrollment grows and Thomas Perkins, vice president and school trustee, offers his larger home to the school.
- 1837 Laura Bridgman enrolls in the school and becomes the first documented person who is deafblind to be educated.
- 1838 Bursting at the seams with 65 students, Thomas Perkins sells his house and puts the funds toward the school's relocation to a hotel in South Boston. The school is re-named Perkins Institution for the Blind to honor his generosity.
- 1842 Charles Dickens, the author of literary classics such as "David Copperfield," visits Perkins and documents Howe's work with Laura Bridgman in "American Notes."
- 1881 Howe Press opens to produce braille books.
- 1887 Perkins graduate Anne Sullivan travels to Alabama to teach Helen Keller. The pair relocate to Perkins the following year and stays until 1893.
- 1912 A new campus is built on the banks of the Charles River in Watertown, Mass., the school's current site.
- 1931 Perkins Braille & Talking Book Library established as one of the original providers of accessible materials for Americans who are visually impaired or print handicapped.
- 1951 The Perkins Brailler® is designed and produced by David Abraham at Howe Press.

- 1955 The school's name is changed to Perkins School for the Blind.
- 1989 The Hilton/Perkins Program is launched to enhance and expand services to children who are blind or deafblind throughout the United States and around the world.
- 2003 Perkins opens the Thomas and Bessie Pappas Horticulture Center, a greenhouse for students to learn about and care for plants and our environment.
- 2008 Perkins Products unveils the Next Generation Braille<sup>®</sup>, an update on the Classic that is 25 percent lighter than the 1951 original and easier to use.
- 2011 Perkins opens the new Lower School, with larger, more accessible classrooms and a multi-use auditorium, as well as renovated office space and cottages. The opening of Independent Living Apartments allowed older students practice adult living skills.
- 2011 The Grousbeck Center for Students & Technology opens as a focal point for student interaction, thanks to the generosity of the Grousbeck Family Foundation.
- 2012 Perkins co-sponsors Africa's first Braille Cup, the first-ever braille reading and writing competition on the African continent, emphasizing literacy's life-changing impact.
- 2012 Perkins Products unveils the SMART Braille<sup>®</sup>, a revolutionary tool that combines audio feedback and a digital screen to change the way people who are blind and sighted can learn braille.
- 2012 The Federal Communications Commission taps Perkins, jointly with Helen Keller National Center, to manage the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program, also known as [iCanConnect](#). The program was made permanent in 2015.
- 2013 Perkins Products and Philips Color Kinetics introduce LightAide<sup>®</sup>, the first-ever programmable LED learning tool for children with disabilities, particularly low vision.
- 2014 Perkins names Dave Power, parent of a Deafblind Program graduate, as President and CEO, the organization's tenth leader.
- 2015 The Perkins-Business Partnership and Perkins Solutions are established to advance opportunities for Perkins graduates and adults who are blind.
- 2016 Inspired by her son, a Perkins graduate, Board of Trustees chair Corinne Grousbeck launches [BlindNewWorld](#), a social change campaign to reduce stigma and foster inclusion of people with impaired vision.
- 2016 Perkins launched its first mobile app, [BlindWays](#), a micronavigation iPhone app to assist riders – both sighted and blind – to accurately locate bus stops.
- 2017 Perkins International Academy launched with event at the United Nations Convention on Rights of People with Disabilities 10<sup>th</sup> Conference of State Parties.