Perkins School for the Blind
Leading since 1829 to foster access and inclusion through education

1829  Dr. John Dix Fisher charters 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 first director Samuel Gridley Howe at his father’s downtown Boston home.

1833  Enrollment grows and Thomas H. Perkins, vice president and school trustee, offers his larger home to the school.

1837  Laura Bridgman is enrolled and becomes the first child with deafblindness to be formally educated.

1838  With enrollment swelling to 65 students, Perkins sells his house and donates the proceeds to relocate the school to a hotel in South Boston. The school is re-named Perkins Institution for the Blind in his honor.

1842  Author Charles Dickens visits Perkins and documents Howe’s work with Laura Bridgman in “American Notes.”

1881  Howe Press opens to produce tactile print and braille books.

1887  Class of 1886 valedictorian Anne Sullivan travels to Alabama to teach Helen Keller. The pair relocates to Perkins the following year and stays until 1893.

1912  A new campus is built on the banks of the Charles River in Watertown, Massachusetts, 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.

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1955  The school’s name is changed to Perkins School for the Blind.

1989  The Hilton/Perkins Program (now Perkins International) is launched to enhance and expand services to children who are blind or deafblind around the world.

2003  Perkins opens the Thomas and Bessie Pappas Horticulture Center, a greenhouse designed for students to learn about and care for plants and our environment.

2011  The new Lower School opens with larger, more accessible classrooms, a multi-use auditorium and renovated office space and cottages. The Independent Living Apartments open in repurposed space where 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 unveils the SMART Brailler®, a revolutionary tool that combines a manual brailler with interactive audio feedback and digital screen to change how people who are blind and sighted can learn braille.

2012  The Federal Communications Commission taps Perkins to manage the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program, also known as iCanConnect. The program was made permanent in 2015.

2013  Perkins and Philips Color Kinetics introduce LightAide®, 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 prepare the world for Perkins graduates and to advance opportunities for 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 around blindness and foster inclusion.

2016  Perkins released its first mobile app, BlindWays, a micro-navigation iPhone app to assist riders – both sighted and blind – to accurately locate bus stops.

2017  Perkins International Academy is launched during an event at the United Nations. The worldwide training initiative aims to prepare 1 million teachers to educate 6 million children with impaired vision and additional disabilities in need of special education.