In India, 1 million children need education

Giving every child every chance to thrive

Empowering changemakers around the world, pg. 4

Including every child, pg. 5
Dear Friend,

I’m pleased to bring you another glimpse inside the critical work of Perkins School for the Blind. This time, we focus far from our Watertown campus, on work that is immensely important to serve the more than 6 million children around the world who have a visual impairment and additional disabilities.

Children and young adults with blindness or visual impairment are profoundly underserved in the U.S. and around the world. Approximately half also have an additional disability. This is why Perkins’ international work focuses on children with multiple disabilities and visual impairment in developing countries — they are truly some of the world’s most vulnerable children. Your support has been and continues to be vital to our work.

In this issue, we’ll tell you more about Perkins International, our team who shares Perkins’ expertise and methods with educational professionals around the world. Through our international work, we meet children where they are by working with parents, teachers, schools and governments. We also offer an international teacher training program, the Perkins International Educational Leadership Program. You’ll learn more about it through the eyes of participants and see the impact it has had on the lives of children around the world as we celebrate its milestone 100th year.

With your ongoing support, we will continue to reach these children around the world and give them and their families hope for the future.

Warmly,

Dave Power
President and CEO

Established in 1829 as the nation’s first school for the blind, Perkins today impacts the lives of children and young adults who are blind, deafblind or visually impaired with additional disabilities, as well as educators, professionals and caregivers. Our reach extends across the nation and throughout the world. The school is an accredited member of the New England Association of Schools and Colleges. It is licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and by the Department of Early Education and Care. Perkins does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national or ethnic origin, disability, age or sexual orientation.
News briefs

INAUGURAL CAREER LAUNCH CLASS ON PATH TO PROFESSIONAL SUCCESS

Career Launch @ Perkins graduated its first class this winter, giving five young adults who have visual impairments a variety of professional skills and competencies to take into the workplace. Each participant is now on their own career journey, with most training for or accepting full-time roles at the companies where they held internships. We can’t wait to see where this group of Career Launch trailblazers goes from here!

The second Career Launch class is currently on campus and getting ready to start internships of their own.

PERKINS STUDENTS BECOME WIZARDS FOR A WEEKEND

During Harry Potter Weekend, Perkins students, alongside children from public schools in the region, had the chance to let loose and dress up as characters from the popular book series. The event was as much about learning as having fun, as teachers planned a number of Hogwarts-inspired activities to encourage social skills, orientation and mobility and other skills. Like the story of Harry Potter himself, the weekend was truly magical!

Like many extracurricular activities, Harry Potter weekend gave students the chance to socialize with kids from other schools.

Skiing blind? No problem here. At Perkins’ annual weekend ski camp, kids with visual impairments learned the ins and outs of safe, adaptive downhill skiing before hitting the slopes with sighted guides.

In the Infant-Toddler Program, volunteers who generously share their time with Perkins play an important role in giving the very youngest children we serve the care and attention they need to thrive, every single day.
In India, 1 million children need education

Giving every child every chance to thrive

BY DAVID EISENBERG

A year ago, Aditya, then 11 years old with visual and orthopedic impairments, was living at home in Lucknow, India, and not attending school.

His family wanted to help him. But Aditya couldn’t communicate his own needs and his parents didn’t know what his needs were. That disconnect left Aditya’s future shrouded in uncertainty.

“We couldn’t understand what he was feeling,” says his father, Vimlesh. “Our interactions with him were minimal.”

Then came the knock on the door.

Members of Perkins India — an initiative of Perkins International — met Aditya during a home visit. They provided an expert assessment of his abilities and referred his family to appropriate resources for a diagnosis and government support. With those in hand, they helped get him enrolled in a nearby school led by highly skilled, Perkins-trained special educators.

A year later, Aditya can communicate his needs to his family. He can read and write and is learning more every day. He has built a social life with peers, and displays a newfound confidence in those relationships. His family no longer feels hopeless — they believe Aditya has a future.

And while this is just one story, it illustrates why Perkins needs your help on our mission to serve children in India.

In the country with the second-highest population, there are an estimated 1 million children with visual impairment and additional disabilities. The majority of them live in extreme poverty and don’t attend school. Their families would do anything to help them, but they don’t know how. Frequently, medical professionals lack answers as well, and the shortage of trained special educators leaves most schools ill-equipped to welcome these children into the classroom.

“Families just don’t know what they can do to support their children, or who they can approach for support,” says Sampada Shevde, Country Head of Perkins India. “That’s where we come in.”

Perkins India approaches the problem by meeting families where they live, literally:

The team partners with local organizations in the state of Uttar Pradesh to conduct home visits and identify children with visual impairment and additional disabilities who are currently unknown to school systems, medical professionals and government agencies.

Once identified, the team assesses the child to get a clear sense of their abilities and connect the family to governmental resources and other medical necessities.

From there, they work with the family to enroll the child in a school with educators capable of creating effective individualized lesson plans.

All the while, the team is training educators, ensuring they have the skills...
necessary to welcome more children into the classroom and are able to satisfy every student’s unique needs.

“Our work revolves around the children,” adds Shevde. “But in connecting the families to financial, medical, nutritional and accessibility supports, it’s the whole family whose standard of living improves.”

The initial goal is to identify the children who need support and are currently invisible to the educational and government structures in Uttar Pradesh and then refer them to appropriate services and educational opportunities. In areas where services don’t exist, Perkins aims to establish programs that can support children with multiple disabilities and their families close to their homes. With the identification and intervention model proven, we’ll expand our reach around the country. The end goal is to create a sustainable, nationwide method of ensuring every child with visual impairment and multiple disabilities has a seat in the classroom and is included in their community.

Your support enables Perkins to put our strengths to work in a country where they are critically needed. Your support enabled us to lift Aditya out of isolation. And it’s what will enable us to do the same for the million others just like him.

Perkins-trained teacher Prabhakar works on a counting exercise with Vinod.

Perkins India leader Sampada Shevde, pictured right, works with a child.

PROFILE

Meet Dick Carlson

Dick Carlson is an Honorary Trustee and, with his wife, Deborah, a member of the Perkins Corporation. He serves as co-chair of the Perkins International Educational Leadership Program’s centennial campaign.

What inspires you about international teacher training?

It’s a great example of how one person can multiply their impact to help more children with multiple disabilities. The education professionals we train on campus empower whole communities around the world, everyone from parents to governmental officials. I’m amazed at the change one person can make after completing the Educational Leadership Program.

What do you hope for the future of the Educational Leadership Program as a result of the increased support and awareness from this centennial campaign?

Looking at the global picture, there are over 6 million children with disabilities, including visual impairment. They are vulnerable and often overlooked. Perkins is committed to providing them with the education they deserve. By the end of the year, I hope we have the resources to help even more children, so we can continue for another century.

What would you say to someone considering supporting the work Perkins does around the world?

These professionals have a profound ripple effect when they return home.

When you support participants in the Educational Leadership Program, you are helping children around the world to learn and reach their full potential.
Empowering changemakers around the world

For 100 years, Perkins has trained special educators to reach 6 million children with multiple disabilities, no matter where they live.

BY DAVID EISENBERG

When Isis was 13, she went to see a physical therapist named Kaique Manuel in São Paulo, Brazil. They couldn’t communicate with one another, however—a result of Isis’ hearing loss and autism, and Manuel’s lack of training working with children who have multiple disabilities.

The experience, and that inability to communicate, put Manuel on a path to Perkins as a member of the Educational Leadership Program’s Class of 2020.

“She was looking at me and didn’t know what was going on. I tried to find a way to reach her, but I just couldn’t,” recalls Manuel. “It was really frustrating.”

All around the world, talented professionals like Manuel want to help children like Isis but don’t have the skills. They are special educators, therapists, medical professionals and more. The children they struggle to support number in the millions.

Perkins identified this problem 100 years ago and responded by inviting educational professionals to study alongside our teachers. Today this program is known as the Perkins International Educational Leadership Program.

With your ongoing support, the Program has equipped participants like Manuel with the skills to improve the lives of the most vulnerable children, no matter where they live.

“As a young girl, I read the autobiography of Helen Keller. Her life, courage and accomplishments so inspired me,” notes RoAnn Costin, a longtime supporter of Perkins’ international work. “This work builds on her belief that all children deserve the right to an education, no matter where they are born.”

Most critically, each participant also develops the skills necessary to effectively share what they’ve learned with fellow educators, who in turn train peers of their own. This creates a multiplier effect: One graduate of the program can empower whole communities, reduce the stigma against disability and shape policy in support of inclusive education.

Thanks to your support, these are just some of the ways program graduates improve life for children in their countries. It’s also why Manuel is excited for the future of children like Isis back in Brazil.

“We can make big changes,” he says. “I really believe it. I can follow in the footsteps of past graduates and bring real change to my country.”

#ThePerkinsEffect: With the help of generous supporters, we have built a growing network of highly skilled changemakers who reach the most vulnerable children with visual impairment and additional disabilities in some of the poorest places in the world. Support their work by giving today: Perkins.org/ELP100
Including every child
Showing teachers, families and communities how children who are blind or visually impaired can learn and engage in life

BY KATHERINE HOLLAND

On my office wall, there’s a quote by Maya Angelou: “Each child belongs to all of us and they will bring us a tomorrow in direct relation to the responsibility we have shown to them.” Here, at Perkins, we believe every child can learn. Yet around the world, an estimated 6 million children with multiple disabilities and visual impairments are excluded from school, family and community life because of the mistaken belief that they can’t learn. Perkins has the expertise to show how these children can be included. That means we have an opportunity — and a responsibility — to make a difference.

In every region of the world, Perkins partners with parents, schools and governments to meet children where they are. At home, in community programs, in the health system, in public or private schools, Perkins makes sure these children are seen and we help create or connect the services to keep them on a path to learning.

One of the ways we do this is through our Perkins International Educational Leadership Program (ELP).

Every day, somewhere in the world, a child learns with the help of a Perkins-trained teacher. That’s because, for 100 years, Perkins’ impact has extended beyond Watertown, reaching children in 92 countries by welcoming educators from around the world to live and learn on our campus in this intensive nine-month residential training program.

ELP graduates are a close-knit community of educators, parents and policymakers. These leaders take what they learn at Perkins home to their countries, where they do the hands-on work of educating children with visual impairment and additional disabilities. And their impact is even greater: ELP graduates go on to reach even more children by sharing their Perkins training with fellow educators, who then train more educators, creating a ripple effect to help more and more children unlock their full potential.

And that’s just the first 100 years! Children with visual impairment and additional disabilities depend on grown-ups to help them learn, so we can never stop developing leaders, mentoring educators, training teachers and engaging families. I’m excited about the next 100 years and how many more children we can reach.

Join us. With your help, we can create a tomorrow where each child, wherever they live, whatever their ability, can learn.

Katherine Holland is the Executive Director of Perkins International.
LET US KNOW YOUR PREFERENCES

Thank you for supporting Perkins School for the Blind. Did you know this publication is also available by email? Let us know your contact preferences at Perkins.org/Preferences or call us at 617-972-7328.