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 Lines of Business that collaborate on local, national and global levels and work together every day to change what it means to be blind.

Perkins School for the Blind, the first school in the United States 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 public schools throughout the region.

Perkins Solutions helps businesses, educators and care givers deliver accessible solutions to individuals who are visually impaired. Perkins Solutions develops and distributes accessible technology in 170 countries, ranging from classic mechanical Perkins Brailleers to cutting-edge tools. In addition to technology products, we offer a full spectrum of services including assessments to help customers identify their technology needs, and training to ensure the users’ full benefit.

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 people who are unable to read traditional print materials due to a visual or physical disability. Readers have access to digital audio books and online downloads. The Library circulates more than 530,000 items in braille, audio, electronic and large print formats to over 28,000 patrons.

Perkins eLearning is an online portal designed to provide resources and support anyone, anywhere in the field of blindness education. We operate 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 interact and exchange ideas worldwide through online resources including webcasts, webinars, specialty websites, and online courses that offer professional development or graduate credit.

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** that 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 in all its forms**;
- 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;
- Respond to the specific needs of a diverse population by maintaining community **partnerships**, conducting research and **translating our research into practice**.

Perkin’s exemplary services and strategies impact over 1.1 million individuals each year in the United States and 67 countries across the globe. Perkins has pioneered many of the social and technological innovations that facilitate the inclusion of people who are blind, visually impaired and deafblind into society, including the new SMART Brailler®. With an annual budget of almost $75m, 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. Last year more than 1,000 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 with disabilities and education services for school-age children;
- Teaching literacy in all its forms, with an emphasis on braille;
- Professional development and curricular resources;
- Parent training and instruction;
- Innovation in technology and use of accessible technologies;
- Community outreach and partnerships;
- 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, and their families. Teachers of the visually impaired, teachers of the deafblind and orientation and mobility specialists 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 are 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 to 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 including those with multiple disabilities both on and off campus.

- 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. The Perkins Deafblind Program offers a variety of curriculum options to both day and residential students age 3 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 educational programs. 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

Perkins is a national leader in supporting and expanding literacy in all its forms for individuals who are blind, deafblind or have vision impairments. 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.

For many 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 words and sentences. 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.

Perkins teachers and staff also utilize an array of communications methods in addition to braille to promote literacy among all students. Sign language and tactile images are used along with assistive technology for students for whom braille is not the most effective method of communication.

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.

### Transition to Adult Life

Perkins prepares students for adult life by teaching essential skills as part of the Expanded Core Curriculum. Students receive training in social interaction, independent living and career readiness among other topics, preparing them for a smooth transition to life after Perkins. When combined with academic classes, life skills training equips students with the skills and confidence they need to be contributing members of society.

- The **Transition to Life Cooperative** offers young adults age 18 to 22 a chance to work on transition-related skills before heading to college or an employment opportunity. Participants reside in accessible apartments on the Perkins campus where they are able to practice their independent living skills while also holding a job in the community. Participants are responsible for preparing their own meals, doing laundry, managing a household budget and more.
• The Deafblind Program offers a Vocational Training program for students age 14 to 22 to gain hands-on work experience either through an on-campus job or community placement. Training opportunities include placements in greenhouses, recycling centers, office buildings, museums and cafeterias.

• Perkins partners with school districts in Massachusetts to offer transition services to public school students who are blind or visually impaired. In participating districts, a Perkins transition specialist and job coach meet with students to prepare for life after high school.

• More than 40 local businesses have offered employment or volunteer positions to Perkins students, and Perkins continues to work with potential employers to provide work-experience opportunities for students who are blind, deafblind or blind with additional disabilities.

• Perkins Outreach Short Courses offer short programs on a variety of topics related to transition, from surviving the college application process to exploring employment opportunities. These courses are open to students who attend Perkins as well as community schools.

• The Perkins Business Partnership is an alliance between Perkins and some of the region’s best-known businesses and nonprofits that is working to create a path to employment for people who are blind or visually impaired.

• A wide variety of hands-on vocation experiences take place weekly at the Grousbeck Center for Students & Technology, a 17,000-square-foot social and training center which employs the most sophisticated high-tech tools available to people who are visually impaired. Students from all programs learn job skills by serving coffee at Perk Café, making calls to donors, delivering mail and responding to student requests for technology assistance at the student helpdesk.

• Our Summer Employment Programs offer job opportunities in a wide variety of fields designed to acquaint students with the expectations and challenges of a career. Perkins job coaches provide on-site support to students as they manage work responsibilities and encourage exploration of assistive technology where beneficial. Classes include resume writing, interviewing skills and other career development topics.

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 teachers 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 the trusted source for teachers, parents, administrators and other educators to gain 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. Participants can earn professional development and graduate credit for online workshops and tutorials.

• 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 Perkins Training Center, we sponsor and lead 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, independent living skills and age appropriate career education. In partnership with the American Foundation for the Blind, Perkins 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. 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 Library** distributes braille materials, audio books and other accessible media to over 28,000 people who cannot access traditional print materials.

• **The Perkins Archives** include collections related to the history of the education of the blind and deafblind, institutional archives and correspondence of significant figures in the school's history, including Helen Keller, Anne Sullivan and Samuel Gridley Howe. The collections are in a variety of formats, including original manuscripts, ledgers, scrapbooks, photographs, paintings and film recordings.

**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 over 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, as well as 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.

• Perkins is a long-time sponsor of The International CHARGE Syndrome Conference, which brings together parents of children with CHARGE Syndrome, a genetic disorder characterized by sensory, physical, medical and developmental problems.

Technology Advancement and Accessibility (Perkins Solutions)

Perkins believes in harnessing the power of cutting edge technology to enable individuals with disabilities to live independently and realize their educational and life potential. We are leaders in the field of assistive technology 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, evaluations of people with low vision and other disabilities, software testing and consulting for making websites accessible.

• Perkins Solutions 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 Perkins SMART Brailler® is transforming 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 and adults losing their vision.
• Our 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. 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 Grousebeck Center for Students & Technology is a hub for technology on campus. Students broadcast radio shows using state-of-the-art technology in the Radio Perkins studio and practice social skills during interactive story time. The Center is also home to the Perkins Solutions assistive technology display.

**Community Outreach and Partnerships**

Today, Perkins programs and services reach over 1.1 million infants, toddlers, school students, adults and seniors on our Watertown, Massachusetts campus, in the community, around 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 over 1.1 million individuals each year in all 50 states and 67 countries across the globe. With an annual budget of $75m Perkins employs over 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. 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 over 1,000 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, Massachusetts 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, LEED-certified 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.

**Key Program Staff**

**W. David Power, MBA**
**CEO & President**

Dave Power has guided growing organizations as an operating executive, board member and advisor for over 25 years. His diverse background includes roles as CEO, general manager and marketing executive. He founded Power Strategy to help mid-sized organizations with strategy, innovation and growth, and has taught strategic management and design thinking at Harvard Extension School. He is the author of The Curve Ahead: Discovering the Path to Unlimited Growth, and has spoken to international business audiences on innovation and growth. Perkins’ mission and story is close to his heart. Power has served on Perkins’ Board of Trustees since 2003 and his son, David, graduated from the Perkins Deafblind Program in 2009. He holds BSCE and MS degrees from Tufts University and an MBA from Stanford Business School.

**Dorinda Rife, MA**
**Superintendent and Executive Director, National Educational Programs**

Dorinda Rife provides leadership and sets priorities for Perkins’ educational programs at the state and regional level, as well as for Perkins’ campus programs and services. As Executive Director of National Educational Programs, she seeks to share the expertise and proven strategies of Perkins educators with students, teachers,
Ms. 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.

Kim Charlson, MA
Director, Perkins Library

Kim Charlson was appointed director of the Perkins 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 the chair of the Massachusetts Braille Literacy Advisory Council and was elected the first woman President of the American Council of the Blind in 2013. 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.