

2020

Annual Report

# RESILIENCE



*Perkins*

## OUR MISSION

Perkins is a comprehensive human services organization that serves individuals and their families from early childhood through assisted living and senior care. Our mission is to promote meaningful and sustained well-being for children, youth, and adults facing educational, developmental, or mental health challenges.

## OUR VALUES

We are grounded in our work by six core values: collaboration, compassion, excellence, learning, inclusivity, and integrity.

### At a Glance

**Founded:** 1896

**Organization type:** Private, nonprofit, 501(c)(3), Approved Private School

**Structure:** Board of Directors, operational management by President & CEO

**Annual budget:** \$26,152,248

**Employees:** 360

**Geography:** Communities across Massachusetts and New England

**People served this year:** 955



*"We delight in the beauty of the butterfly, but rarely admit the changes it has gone through to achieve that beauty."*

*Maya Angelou*

Dear Friends,

By any measure, the moment in history we are living through right now is difficult, testing the limits and abilities of humanity. But as we reflect on the past year at Perkins, we are in awe. Students and adults in our programs, overnight care staff, nurses, teachers, housekeeping team members, and families within the Perkins community have pulled together this year in a remarkable way to cope, push through, and find joy, despite the set of complex challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic.

As we reflect on Perkins' 124th year of service, we are sure of one thing – the extraordinary RESILIENCE our community members have demonstrated. As you'll see from the stories of flexibility and determination within, countless people from Perkins confronted the pandemic with strength and creativity, keeping everyone's spirits high.

As we turn toward the future during this exciting 125th year, we have much to celebrate: a major campus development project underway on our Lancaster campus and a historic affiliation established with a full merger on the horizon. In fact, by the end of this historic year, Perkins will have a new name and a broader continuum of care after many months of careful reflection and planning underway now. We are undertaking these significant changes with the utmost seriousness, ensuring that we preserve the beauty and significance of our history while evolving for the needs of the present and future.

We hope that through this report you will join us in celebrating the resilience of the people of Perkins, a community that has grown stronger this year in countless ways.

Sincerely,

**Michael W. Ames, PhD**  
*President and Chief Executive Officer*

**Suzanne M. Frisch, Esq**  
*Chair, Board of Trustees*

# Then: 125 Years of History

Taken from archives and viewbooks through the years, these photos and their captions remind us of the countless number of people who have blossomed at Perkins.



*After-school activity – reading!*



*Longtime Perkins resident, the late Ted Bayles, rides a tricycle on the campus.*

**125**  
YEARS  
1896-2021



*The Perkins Family, 1933*



*Students in classroom*

## OUR ALMA MATER

Ivied walls of Manor Lawn,  
Echo now our song,  
Of respect and love unending  
That to thee belong.

Chorus:  
Alma Mater, that we cherish,  
Glorious be thy fame;  
We will work and strive forever,  
To uphold thy name.

Blue and gold to thee we owe,  
Gratitude untold,  
May our hearts be ever loyal,  
To the Perkins School.

# Now: What Perkins Means to Me



*"In these current times, I feel the environment here makes me feel safe. Everything is in harmony and everyone cooperates together."*

*Joseph Mangual-Torres, DFPS 12th Grader*



*"Dedication. Perkins staff have unbreakable dedication both to helping those we serve and supporting each other as a team."*

*Margaret Hladysz, Perkins Training Director*



*"Community – a great, big community. Whenever anyone needs something, no matter who it is, staff, resident, or a member of a day program, someone is willing to step in and help."*

*Lisa Paskell, Perkins Adult Services Program Coordinator*



*"Being here has helped me figure out how to stay calm and have fun and learn easier."*

*Paul Kelly, DFPS 5th Grader*

# Perkins Adult Residents Dig Deep Through Extended Distancing

Residents of the Perkins Adults program have contended with missing their friends, family, and routines for longer than most through the Covid-19 pandemic. Keeping busy with meaningful work has been an important outlet, allowing them to maintain some of their routines.

With support and encouragement from Nancy Welvaert, Perkins Vocational Counselor, residents Seth Ryan, Matthew Boss, and Chad Morgan have adapted to new work routines quite well since external work opportunities have been paused due to the pandemic. These three men are now responsible for doing laundry for the entire Perkins campus. Matthew missed his job working in the kitchen at the Doctor Franklin Perkins School in Lancaster, and Chad had to work on perfecting his folding technique, but they've taken their new roles in stride and do a wonderful job keeping up with the flow of laundry. On a typical day, the team washes, dries and folds ten loads, starting around 9 a.m., sending the clean loads off for delivery by 1 p.m. These paid positions provide Matt, Seth, and Chad, who



Left to right: Nancy Welvaert, Chad Morgan, Seth Ryan, Matthew Boss, Scott Alfano

reside in the Barlow Apartments, a paycheck and a rhythm for their days and weeks, and provide the Perkins campus an essential service.

Another Barlow resident, Scott Alfano, works upstairs in the residential area of the building, sweeping, mopping and vacuuming, cleaning bathrooms, and emptying trash as part of the Vocational Clean Team, a group of residents who work together to keep the building clean. Scott enjoys his work, though he admits it's been tough being separated from family and day program friends.



Adult Services served...

**94 people from 34 towns.**

# Staying Safe and Happy at Davis Manor

Congregate care settings in Massachusetts struggled to keep Covid-19 out and spare the health and lives of their often vulnerable, elderly, or immunocompromised residents. This underscores the hard work and flexibility of both the staff and residents of Davis Manor, a Perkins residence that is home to ten men and women who are compromised due to their age or medical conditions.

Francis Kariuki, a Residential Supervisor in Adult Services who has worked at Perkins for 17 years, shared that strict precautions were already in place after some residents were hospitalized with the flu earlier in the year, making the transition to a Covid-19 lifestyle marked by sanitizing, isolation, and distancing somewhat easier.

Kariuki and his colleagues, especially fellow Residential Supervisor Jackie Rivera, have worked hard to help Davis Manor residents find ways to stay busy, happy, and engaged, and have adapted quite well to pandemic living – including mask wearing as part of a daily routine. While trips to the coffee shop and other typical day excursions



*Francis Kariuki, Perkins Adult Services Residential Supervisor*

are postponed, the staff is always looking for ways to bring the residents the things that they love, like coffee deliveries, cooking activities, and making lots of time for walks around the beautiful Perkins campus.

Each Davis Manor resident has a favorite hobby, like knitting hats for newborns at local hospitals, constructing jigsaw puzzles, and playing trivia games. And while work is on hold for now, Davis residents find plenty to do around the house or yard, like raking leaves and tidying up.



*Doris, a Davis Manor resident*

Separation from families is perhaps most difficult when special holidays or birthdays arrive. But those, too, are thoughtfully planned out. One resident had his favorite birthday meal – swordfish – as he normally would do with his family at home. “We wanted to show his family he got the same thing that he gets for every birthday,” Kariuki shared.

Of all Perkins residential programs, Davis Manor faces a long road back to normalcy. While some Davis residents have been able to visit with loved ones outdoors, visits to families off-campus won’t be possible for the foreseeable future. The same goes for the day programs attended and jobs that residents held before the shutdown in March. Yet, with multiple rounds of disinfecting each day and social distancing, Covid-19 has not made it through the doors of Davis Manor. Kariuki said he and his colleagues are careful to use good judgment when not at work, knowing that the health of the residents is in their hands. “This team here is very committed to the work and the people we serve,” Francis shared. “We have faced challenges before, and we always come through it together with the residents and stronger than before.”

**Our adult residents range in age from 21-81 years old.**

# A New View: How 2020 Taught Me to Connect with Patients via Screen

Perkins Behavioral Health Clinician Amanda Levitan, LICSW, had only heard of telehealth before the Covid-19 pandemic. Like other Perkins Behavioral Health clinicians, she took a crash course when in-person visits were suspended on March 13th. Here, she shares what was challenging, what was surprising, and what was wonderful about adopting telehealth in a short period of time.

Before non-essential businesses, schools, and services closed in March by order of Governor Charlie Baker, I felt hesitant about providing behavioral health therapy to patients virtually. I'd seen commercials highlighting different programs that connected clinicians and patients over phone or via screen. Privacy was my biggest concern. How do you make sure no one is listening to your conversation? On the other hand, I also thought it was convenient. I see patients on a weekly basis, "but what if a crisis happens on a Sunday night?" I thought.

Perkins recognized the mental health demands of our clients, and made the push to pivot for all students and clients, even in the early days of the pandemic crisis. In the first few days of the shutdown, my colleagues and I were trying to connect with patients via telephone. Once we were able to adapt our agency communication platform to be compliant with federal privacy laws, we were able to launch telehealth visits with Perkins Behavioral Health patients. All I know is, the process was very complicated and it was a lot of quick turnaround and impressive work for Dianne Walsh, Associate Vice President of Community Health Services, and Lisa Knobel, our Office Manager.

A lot of the initial work was calling clients and asking "do you feel comfortable with this?" It was definitely a hard transition, as was turning my house into a therapy office. It was really tough those first couple of weeks to figure

out what this would look like, how I'd provide support to my clients, and for how long. But after the first questions, it surprised me how easy it was for me to transition to telehealth. I realized that I didn't have to drastically change my approach.

Early in the pandemic, routine and structure were the biggest things that I was emphasizing to our patients and families. How can we make these kids feel safe and how can we feel we are in control of this situation? Are they eating three meals a day? Are they getting seven-to-eight hours of sleep? I had so many questions. My job is to empower my clients and to say, "Actually, you do have control, you do have a routine. It's just not going to look like it did prior to March 13th."

In my office, I have fidgeting tools, games, and clinical exercises – I lost that when we shifted entirely to telehealth. I spent a lot of time online doing research, trying to find online interactive games and art therapy. I've really had to get creative and move out of my comfort zone, and that's been stressful. But telehealth has been effective – except when the technology goes out!

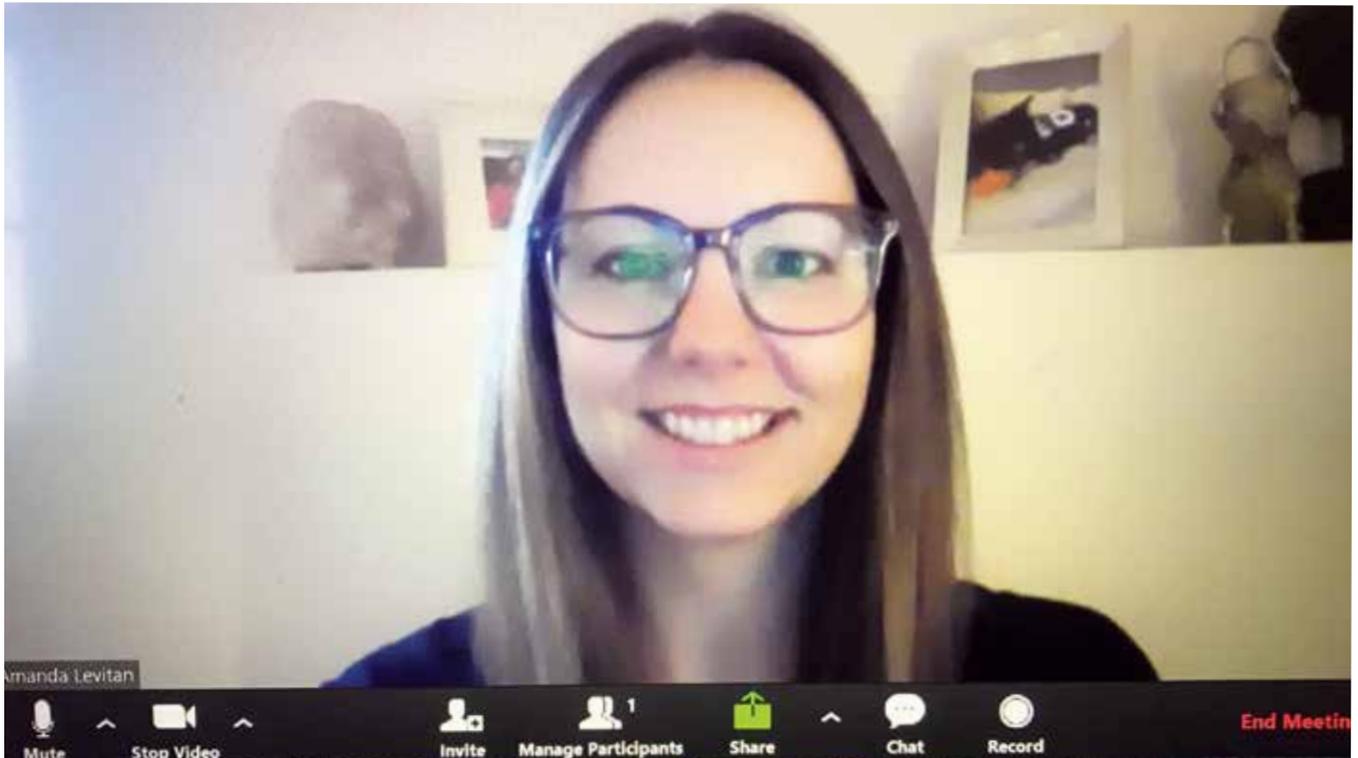
I was also very worried about all of my patients, especially the kids, who have experienced complex trauma. School, sports – these activities were their respite and all of that was gone. Not being able to have eyes on them was also hard for me, and even seven months later, it's still hard. I can't be

*Between March and June 2020, Perkins Behavioral Health provided...*

**2,508 sessions to clients through Telehealth.**

*Perkins Behavioral  
Health served...*

**505 people from 55 towns.**



in a room with them or give a client a tissue. Being in the same room with someone and being able to hold that pain for them...that's what I'm missing.

Some of my patients were able to maintain stability through the height of the pandemic last spring, while some were more crisis-driven, and others had to change their treatment goals. But I'm a big believer in resiliency. A lot of my kids have been through significant trauma and still get out of bed every day. With Covid-19, we're all going through the same trauma, and I think we are truly going to come out better for it. Sometimes I even ask my clients, "Do you even realize how resilient you are?"

I've definitely gained new insight in my work with patients thanks to our transition to telehealth. I've met with patients holding baby chickens in their yards, patients on walks, and patients fighting with siblings. Before telehealth, there was often a disconnect with some of the patients' parents.

*"With Covid-19, we're all going through the same trauma, and I think we are truly going to come out better for it. Sometimes I even ask my clients, "do you even realize how resilient you are?"*

*Amanda Levitan*

Now, I am able to connect with parents who may have been working odd hours or two jobs. One of my clients has been in and out of the hospital, and I was able to see him in his hospital bed the other day through the screen. To be able to see my patients anywhere has been a really positive experience. Even though I look forward to seeing patients again in person, I do hope telehealth is here to stay as a viable option across health care settings.

# Doctor Franklin Perkins School Trailblazes Learning in the Face of Covid-19

As a designated special education school for students in grades K-12 and an Adult Transition program for ages 18-22, Doctor Franklin Perkins School had already been providing in-person education for months as many public schools re-opened this past September. Even in the midst of the pandemic, the Perkins school buildings welcomed residential students who really benefited from the structure of in-person learning.

By September, Perkins staff had months of experience in effective pandemic learning and safety precautions – from virtual learning methods, to cohorting groups of students into “bubbles,” and physical distancing among students and staff, among many other safety precautions. The knowledge and experience gained proved valuable as state education officials impressed that school could resume services with the right safeguards and teaching practices in place. In June, the Doctor Franklin Perkins School was invited by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to present best practices in delivering curriculum and other services online and within a hybrid model to other educators in a virtual, statewide education conference.

Chief Academic Officer, Cindy Wing, shared that she was thrilled for the opportunity to share the Perkins experience with approximately 700 public and private school educators in the conference. At the start of the pandemic, the school pivoted to create virtual learning opportunities for students at home, which allowed teachers the ability to teach virtually from their own homes, too – all while simultaneously providing in-person learning to residential students. Hybrid, in-person learning for all students began shortly after in the summer months. “This experience has been incredibly transformative. We became a model across the state,” Cindy shared.

That’s not to gloss over the incredible challenges that accompanied the transformation. In the early days of the

*“They were playing games, coloring with students, spending time with them while they were playing in their yards. An amazing number of positive things occurred.”*

**Amy Melanson**  
*Clinical Coordinator, Day Program*

shutdown Governor Charlie Baker ordered in March, faculty and staff were nervous and unsure how to safely teach with distancing protocols in place. Teachers were reassigned to different classrooms, and even grade levels in some cases. Students were grouped by residence and their school day looked much different without day program peers there, and without being able to interact with residential students from other houses.

In the first week of remote learning for Day students, Cindy shared that communication with families wasn’t always adequate and she recognized that some parents and students felt disconnected. But the staff took it as a learning opportunity. The Clinical staff became the communication point for students, faculty, and families. Weekly calls with staff teaching remotely and in the school were implemented, and the same was done with families. The school had to become aware of each student’s unique challenges in learning at home, while also teaching effectively to in-person students. Many teachers were juggling both groups of students. “We would be remiss if we did not take a few moments this year to pause and reflect on our staff and students’ ability to rise above the challenges presented. They reflected such commitment and resilience in the face of adversity and had the ability to share gratitude for the silver linings we witnessed together,” says Cindy.

Other Education leaders also shared their reflections on the spring of 2020 and the months that ensued in school.

**Doctor Franklin Perkins School served...**

**203 students from 101 towns in Massachusetts, and three other states.**



*Cindy Wing, Perkins Chief Academic Officer (right), accompanied by members of the Doctor Franklin Perkins School leadership team*

*“For students learning remotely, there was an incredible shift in how we delivered our services. We were right there at home with them, and families were incredibly welcoming.”*

*Debbie Stephenson  
IEP Coordinator, High School and Adult Transition Program (ATP)*

*“Everyone was dedicated to implementing standards in remote learning. The early feedback from the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education was that Perkins’ learning plans were comprehensive. This gave families and districts the confidence that learning was going to continue.”*

*Ashley Pamp  
IEP Coordinator, Middle and Elementary Schools*

*“Moving to virtual learning in the spring via Ring Central (a communication app) was the most difficult part of the spring. Students and teachers had to learn to use the app without notice, but staff banded together to help each other learn, sharing tips and tricks along the way.”*

*Debbie Rivera  
Director of Curriculum, High School and ATP*

*“We had to stop, think, and reinvent everything. It was a challenge but it was humbling, realizing how much easier things were before the pandemic. The trick is to keep moving, because the only way out is forward.”*

*Kristin Stanley  
Administrative Assistant*

*“From the start of pandemic learning, we changed a lot of our students’ normal routines and rules. We implemented strict boundaries within the school buildings. We mandated masks. And with very few exceptions, these students have led the way in modeling the behavior we asked for without complaints. They have followed every protocol we established and understood the reasons we asked so much.”*

*Sharon Lowry  
Assistant Director of Education*

# Digging Deep: Manor 'Quaranteam' Finds Lifelong Lessons and Bonds

In March 2020, the Perkins campus shut down to all but residential students as the Covid-19 pandemic unfolded and non-residential programs shifted to virtual programming. The women working and living in the Perkins Manor faced endless questions about how to navigate daily life.

Residential Program Director Amanda Saunders thought this past year was a challenging year well before the pandemic changed everything. Saunders, who joined Perkins 17 years ago, couldn't have anticipated that a crisis like this would fall into her lap. A woman who exudes grit, Amanda led the Manor staff and students through the challenges that arose, with faith in her staff and the hope that student residents would be able to cope while quarantining together under constantly evolving Covid-19 guidelines.

At the time that schools and non-essential businesses were closed to flatten the Covid-19 curve in mid-March, the Manor housed nine women with various learning and emotional challenges. At Perkins, the Manor students had been practicing independence, while learning job and life skills. Now, they were facing a historic event that threatened their safety and that of their loved ones.

With guidance from the Perkins Leadership Team and state agencies, staff members were able to act safely to create a sense of stability for residents – and quickly, too. In daily house meetings, staff spoke to students about how they were feeling, shared the latest information about Covid-19, and gave updates on residents' routines. School was closed for a week, and then reopened for Perkins residential students. Their peers who lived at home and commuted to campus would learn remotely for the rest of the spring.

All of the necessary precautions to keep the campus safe asked a lot of the students and staff. Most of the activities that Perkins residential students participated in were suspended or had to be completely transformed. School provided some much needed structure, but working off-campus was no longer an option, and mixing between

residences was not allowed, so extracurricular activities, such as sports, were upended. And visits with family, on or off the Perkins campus, were suspended.

To help residents to continue to develop life skills, staff led group lessons on a range of topics, from cooking to healthy relationships. To maintain connections with family, iPads were provided to residents for video calls home. "It was an eerie time," says Joe Mantha, Director of Residential Operations at Perkins. He commended both residential staff and students for maintaining their composure through such stressful times, "The kids have been doing so much – basically everything that we ask of them around protocols – while wearing their masks all day every day. It's remarkable," he shared.

Leaning into the challenges of living and working in a group setting through Covid-19, Manor staff and students formed a special bond and came up with a name for their group: the Manor Quaranteam. They even made matching sweatpants bearing the team name in iron-on letters. Anxiety soon gave way to a sense of camaraderie and normalcy. When they couldn't visit the pool for their daily afternoon swim, the Quaranteam crafted together. When they couldn't play organized sports, they went on daily walks. Many spent time with the animals at the Rein in a Dream barn facilities, riding, working, or engaging in animal therapy. Occasional takeout orders became an opportunity to support local businesses also challenged by the pandemic, while exposing residents to diverse and healthy cuisine.

"We told the residents, 'We aren't going to let you fall into a hole,'" Amanda says, while describing how she and the staff held onto the reins around routine and structure with the students. And despite her tough love approach, students selected Amanda to receive the Residential Staff Member of the Year Award for her dedication on Perkins' annual Recognition Day ceremony in June.

It became clear to Amanda, that just as residents needed

**In a recent survey, 88% of families of residential students expressed that they were "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with Perkins' overall response to the pandemic.**



*Amanda Saunders, Residential Program Director (left) and Manor staff*

their structure and the Perkins staff to be physically there, the staff benefitted from the work routine and to feel that they were a part of something. One dedicated residential supervisor, Emily Lescinkas, shared that there have been many struggles through the spring and beyond as residents grew weary of Covid-19 isolation. There are days that some act out and days that staff members don't feel like they can keep up the grind. At the same time, Emily said, lasting bonds have been formed between colleagues and with the Manor residents as a result.

"I have watched these young women work hard to maintain a routine. They've completed every chore, followed their expectations most of the time, and overall handled the transition into pandemic life very well. They have faced challenges during this pandemic that most of us can't even begin to understand. They are truly warriors and I am happy to have the opportunity to work with such great people," Lescinkas shared. Saunders agreed, saying that, for all its challenges, the pandemic has provided invaluable lessons to the Manor women.

As some restrictions eased over the summer and school resumed on a normal schedule in the fall, Saunders began to reflect with residents on how they can apply what they learned about their emotional regulation, triggers, and navigating the unexpected during the shutdown and how to apply that as they continue their journeys toward independence. Saunders tells them, "You guys did this. You can do anything at this point."



*Manor residents and staff*

# CDC Leads in Diversity and Inclusion

Perkins Child Development Center Director, Patricia Sinclair (known to most as “Patty”), is on a mission. During her tenure at Perkins, Patty has reimagined Perkins’ early childhood classrooms in many ways, including prioritizing diversity and inclusion, making gender, cultural, racial, and LGBTQ+ inclusion a part of classroom materials, curriculum, and books.

The first thing that Patty did when she arrived at Perkins in 2017 was an assessment of all of the existing program materials, from intake forms to marketing pieces. There is now a two-to-three-day transition process for new children and families joining the program, including a one-on-one meeting with a teacher to go over admission paperwork – a true discussion and partnership. As children settle into the classroom, there are many opportunities for families to get involved, to share their cultural backgrounds, and bring in items from home to help the child adjust, allowing the teachers to really understand their home life, so that the classroom can feel like an extension of their home.

“The intake time and point of transition are major milestones for families where we check in on topics: anything important that’s happened in the family so that we can get to know the child better, cultural backgrounds, what kinds of foods they eat at home, etc. Each holiday is celebrated differently and we want to have those conversations with families. Without those touch-bases and key pauses, you miss information that allows you to really get to know the child in the context of the family,” says Patty.

Perkins has been integrating and prioritizing diversity and inclusion through the last few years, and staff members like Patty truly bring the work to life. At Perkins CDC, staff engages in a lot of professional development on the topic of inclusivity and self-reflection around their own anti-bias lenses in order to enrich the curriculum, environment, and teaching practices. About a year and a half ago, the team launched an anti-bias evaluation of each classroom, with the goal of students being able to see themselves in the materials and explore their spaces with a diverse and culturally rich lens – and then to create subsequent development goals based on the findings.

“You walk into the classrooms at the CDC thinking about how a child feels they need to belong. Families – and specifically children – need to belong,” says Cindy Wing, Perkins Chief Academic Officer.

In exploring diversity and inclusion hands-on in the classrooms, free play and dramatic play have been vital. Moving away from pink and blue gender stereotypes and gender-conforming messaging is a large part of the work. “Kids will often challenge you and say things like, ‘You can’t wear that because you’re a girl,’” says Patty. “It’s not our role to say ‘you’re right or wrong,’ but it is our job to encourage them to think of a different perspective, and to follow that conversation up with parents, helping them along the journey to raise anti-bias children.”

A Parent Advisory Committee was also put into place to learn about parents’ perspectives of the programs and hear what their experiences are like. Historically, the CDC – like many centers – has had a more traditional scope of events, like “Muffin with Moms” or “Donuts with Dads,” but they’ve been slowly evolving into offering more inclusive options, like a day to invite any special grownup. Patty and her team are constantly improving on creative partnerships with parents. “There’s no arrival point when it comes to inclusion work, it’s something that has to always be top of mind and heart,” Patty notes.

The creative partnerships include staff, too. Mid-2018 marked the start of a yearlong process into thinking about who we are at the CDC, what we want to achieve, and what we want children, families, and staff to experience and learn during their time. Patty notes that the CDC promise and principles has been the biggest undertaking in her time so far with Perkins, as it’s the foundation which all decisions and practices evolve – the most important being that everyone feels a sense of belonging.

Today, it’s important that families who enroll at the Perkins CDC, as well as candidates for hire, are open to the conversations, as diversity and inclusion work are part of an ongoing commitment that requires that openness from everyone in order to be truly successful. “The impression I want to instill, right from the start, is that you can see yourself represented within our school. From small aesthetic details, intentional inclusive practices and welcoming, caring adults, the goal is for individuals to recognize that this is a special place,” says Patty.

*The CDC served...*

**106 students from 19 towns.**

# Emergency Care for First Responders

The last many months have been different for every Perkins program, and that's certainly true at the CDC. After a brief shutdown due to Covid-19, the CDC applied for and was approved by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care to temporarily open as a free, drop-in Emergency Child Care Program for children of Covid-19 first responders.

For a little over three months, Perkins CDC offered emergency child care and served 19 children of first responders and essential personnel.

Remaining open through the pandemic and serving a different group of children with many new protocols to learn in such a short time proved to be extremely valuable in the long run. CDC staff had to pivot quickly and adapt to a new way of teaching in altered classrooms. Classrooms were rearranged and teachers were shuffled around into rooms they normally didn't work in, cleaning

was heavily prioritized, and meticulous safety precautions were put into place. Additionally, CDC Director Patty Sinclair, Vice President of the Massachusetts Association for the Education of Young Children (MAAEYC) and a board member of the local Worcester County Chapter of MAAEYC, was able to provide a lot of advocacy and support to the CDC team, as well as other educators, administrators and child care business owners through weekly virtual pandemic-support calls

For months, things looked different at the CDC - and though certain elements are returning to a familiar look, there's still a lot to stay on top of. This year is an undoubtedly stressful time for educators and parents, but the CDC team continues to face the challenge. While we're not out of the thick of it yet, and each day brings something new to the table, this time has been "a true example of creativity, support, and resiliency," says Patty.



*Patty Sinclair  
CDC Director*



*Patricia Goodwin  
CDC Lead Teacher*

# A Sense of Calm at Rein in a Dream

It was an unprecedented year for the staff and students of Perkins' Rein in a Dream (RIAD), but they rose to the challenge and demonstrated perseverance and a determined spirit.

The program came to a brief halt in March when the pandemic hit, but RIAD's staff was able to quickly reopen the barn safely, offering a haven to Perkins residential students through the shutdown. Program Director Cherie Ansin and Assistant Program Manager Karen Jordan reflected on the lessons learned in a year of uncertainty, and why the future is bright.

## What did you expect FY2020 would bring to Rein in a Dream?

**Cherie:** Expectations for 2020 were high because we had a strong team, community participation was growing, and our services were becoming more robust. Furthermore, we continued to see the value of our therapeutic work more widely recognized, like through an exciting grant that is allowing us to upgrade the facility to better meet the needs of our busy center.

## On March 13, non-essential businesses and services were closed. What then?

**Cherie:** When we had to close, there was a sense of disbelief. Services were in full swing and we didn't want to interrupt any of our students' progress. But luckily, the week following the March 13th shutdown, we were able to reopen activities for the Perkins residential students and continue with their therapeutic care.

During such an uncertain time where residential students were unable to be with family and had limited opportunities off-campus, RIAD provided structure, routines, and support from trusted staff and positive interactions with the animals. This demonstrates what numerous studies have shown, that connecting children with nature and animals decreases anxiety, and that positive experiences with animals can increase a feeling of comfort that comes from feeling physically and emotionally safe.

## What kept the RIAD team motivated?

**Karen:** As one of the two instructors on campus who provided opportunities to the residential clients, we never hesitated to meet the challenge of providing services during the pandemic. As a team, we embraced the continuation of services, giving residential students experiences to support their positive mental health.

During this time, several of the students asked for additional time at the program. In addition to their regular lessons, they were encouraged to try a new program. For example, if they were already registered for the Job Skills Program, then they were introduced to Horsemanship lessons or Animal Assisted Activities, which involves caring for the animals. Additionally, many students who hadn't been involved in RIAD services before were able to try something totally new. The students were so resilient during this time and despite the heaviness of what was going on in the world around them, they cared for the animals while also meeting their own emotional needs. We were even able to correlate students accessing services at RIAD with having decreased negative behaviors within the programs.

For the students, the importance of routines and rituals couldn't be underestimated. The daily routine provided a sense of predictability in everyday life and was essential for reducing stress. The animals provide a sense of calm, while simultaneously teaching students to better attune to those around them, as well as themselves.

**Cherie:** Honestly, we are passionate about our work, and we believe in the healing power of the animal-human bond.

## How were you able to safely move to reopening the program to the community in the summer?

**Cherie:** After a careful review of guidelines, the team developed a safe and manageable system for holding community lessons. It was imperative that we limited potential cross-contamination for different cohorts of students. With two portable horse stalls on loan to RIAD from Fieldstone Show Park, instructor Cathy Cosgrove led the charge of setting up a stall for the horses, a tack area for the equipment grooming station, and instructor work space in the arena. The configuration of the arena allowed us to offer community horsemanship lessons while maintaining safety protocols and limiting exposure for the Perkins

RIAD  
served...

160 people from  
ages 5 - 64.

students. Every detail was considered, including how to manage previously shared riding equipment by assigning boots and helmets to students who did not have access to their own gear. Our community students had been waiting patiently to return, eager to work with their favorite horses. The available lesson slots were filled within two weeks of resuming lessons. The participants and their families were supportive and cooperative with the health screenings, temperature checks, and hand washing. We were delighted to have our students back in the saddle!

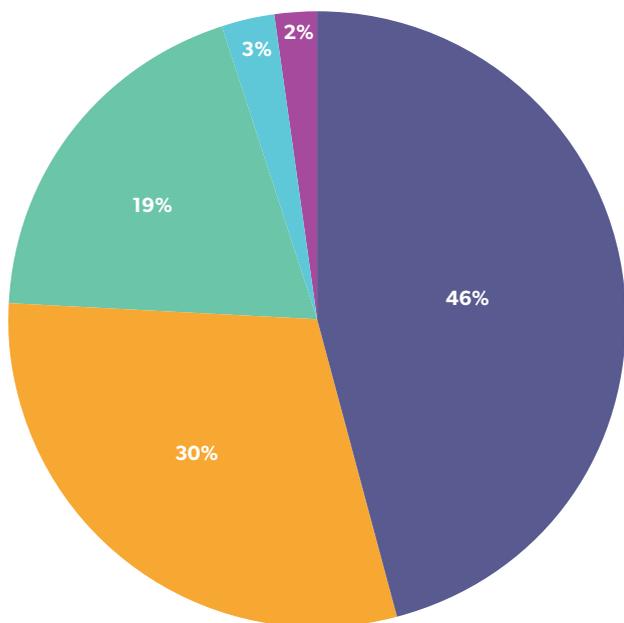
**What are your hopes for the year ahead?**

**Cherie:** I'm excited for the year ahead. Despite this pandemic, I believe we had a successful year. Together, the team demonstrated resiliency, perseverance, and tenacity – these are the same skills that we teach our students. They, too, succeeded as they navigated life during Covid. Looking ahead, I will be working on strategies to strengthen the residential and community services, increasing services, as allowed by Covid guidelines, and enhancing existing programs to further improve outcomes. We are eager to see the completion of a newly renovated space that will allow us to expand group programming (when it's safe), provide opportunities for trainings, increase much needed office space, and provide a welcoming reception area.



*Cherie Ansin, RIAD Program Director (right) and Karen Jordan, RIAD Assistant Program Manager (left)*

**Rein in a Dream Services Delivered**



- Horsemanship
- Job Skills Development
- Animal Assisted Activities
- Other
- Clinical Services

# Diversity in Focus

## P.R.I.D.E. Rocks!

In 2016, Perkins established the P.R.I.D.E. (People Really Interested in Diversity and Equality) Alliance, a student-driven organization for residential students at Perkins. Their goal is to improve the lives of the LGBTQ+ community and allies on campus, spread awareness, educate, support diversity, promote acceptance and equality, and prevent bullying. Led by Perkins Training Director Margaret Hladysz and Residential Clinician Jenn Simpson, the group meets weekly, and even continued to meet throughout the pandemic over video conference.

This year, the group held a pre-pandemic movie screening of *Dumplin'* – a movie that addresses themes like bullying, feeling like an outsider, and self-acceptance, which drew an audience of 25 Perkins students. In June, during Pride Month, Perkins students and staff (including our youngest learners at the Perkins CDC) painted “Pride rocks” in support of the LGBTQ+ community and placed them in front of the Perkins Peace Pole. And because of George Floyd’s murder just months before Pride Month, students and staff contributed Black Lives Matter rocks to the garden as well. Additionally, the group explored some important topics, such as same-sex marriage and civil unions, learning about past and present-day legislation, as well as discussion around identity and identity struggles. “Everyone has been really supportive through all of the discussions, and we all really appreciate that we can have a safe space,” said

one Perkins P.R.I.D.E. Alliance student. The group was also working on an initiative to advocate for gender-inclusive bathrooms when Perkins rolled them out, validating the alignment of efforts towards progress for the LGBTQ+ community at Perkins.

“It’s been really helpful to have P.R.I.D.E. and regularly meet as a group while feeling otherwise disconnected during the pandemic,” says Hladysz. “It’s like a big, safe family where no one will judge you,” said a P.R.I.D.E. Alliance student, nodding in agreement.



## Our Commitment

**Diversity, equity, and inclusion** have been organizational goals, explicitly included in our strategic plan and values, since 2017. But in 2020, a year defined by a global pandemic and police violence – both disproportionately negatively affecting Black and Brown people – we have been moved to amplify our work and accelerate our progress.

Led by our President and CEO, Executive Leadership Team, and Diversity and Inclusion staff committee, we are committed to confronting a lack of diversity within administrative positions, as well as unpacking and changing implicit and explicit racism at all levels of the organization.

In June, Perkins pledged publicly and privately to confront racism and promote inclusion as a part of our mission to promote meaningful and sustained well-being for everybody we serve. Soon after, with support from residential students and staff, we placed Black Lives Matter signs around our campus and held a learning walk for staff and program participants.

We've conducted regular meaningful conversations within Senior Leadership and program divisions about diversity, equity, and inclusion and how to apply that lens to our day-to-day work. Student clubs are discussing race and racism and working alongside staff to build a true culture of inclusion in the school and at the residences.

But this is just the beginning. In 2021, we are hosting a community forum about race and racism, and will move formally from a listening, learning, and early implementation phase into a more structured process that allows us to both assess the full needs of the organization and create sustainable change in coordination with an experienced team of advisors.

We are motivated by our fundamental belief in the value of every human being, humbled by our shortcomings as a society and an institution, and committed to change. Please join us in this journey, and by all means, reach out with any thoughts, questions, suggestions, or resources by contacting Naomi LeBlanc, VP of Organizational Advancement and Chair of Perkins Diversity and Inclusion Committee, at [nleblanc@perkinschool.org](mailto:nleblanc@perkinschool.org) or (978) 368-6449.

## Teens Take on Diversity and Inclusion

The student-run Diversity and Inclusion Committee has been busy reflecting on the topics of diversity, inclusion, and equity this past year, while spearheading interesting and fun projects around campus.

**International Day of Peace, November 2019** – Students placed international flags around the Perkins peace pole and created their own individual flags with an illustration or inspirational word or phrase of what peace means to them. The campus also held a moment of silence, followed by a video and curriculum around “Climate Action for Peace.”

**Winter Door Decorating Contest, December 2019** – This year's theme was “Helping Hands for the Holidays,” and each classroom had the opportunity to decorate their classroom door showing ways to help others in the

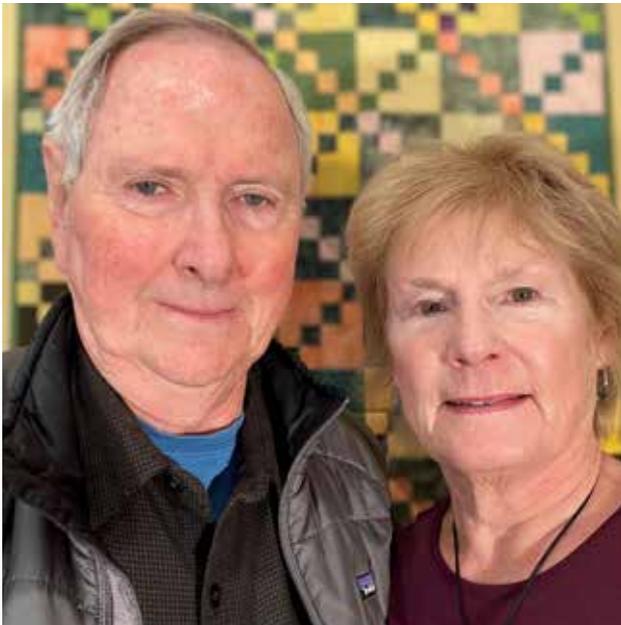
community, at school, or by helping the earth through the holiday season.

**Martin Luther King Jr. Day, January 2020** – MLK's famous “I Have a Dream” speech was presented over the school-wide intercom in observance of the important holiday.

**Arts in Bloom & Summerfest** – This year's Summerfest was certainly not typical, though the Diversity and Inclusion Committee helped the school settle on an annual theme of “Activism: Agents of Change,” with various art, dance, and music projects on campus and virtually throughout the summer.

**Did You Know?** Perkins has two diversity and inclusion committees, one formed by and for students and overseen by staff, and one just for staff.

# Why I Donate



Robin and Marion Mahar, Parents of Perkins alumni

*"Perkins saved our family. Our son, Robby, required 24/7 support which became an overwhelming burden on our family. Perkins provided the residential and homelike services which we felt would best support Robby and allow him to grow and thrive. Thank you Perkins so much."*

"We have been involved with Perkins over most of the 30 years the Nypro Foundation has been in existence. Our board sees Perkins as a significant contributor to our community, and this becomes even more apparent when Nypro employees engage in some of the agency's many valuable programs. Perkins truly does a fantastic job. We have confidence that any money given to Perkins represents a great investment in our community."

*Nypro Foundation*

## How Can I Make a Difference at Perkins?

### Get involved!

Contact local state officials around education policies

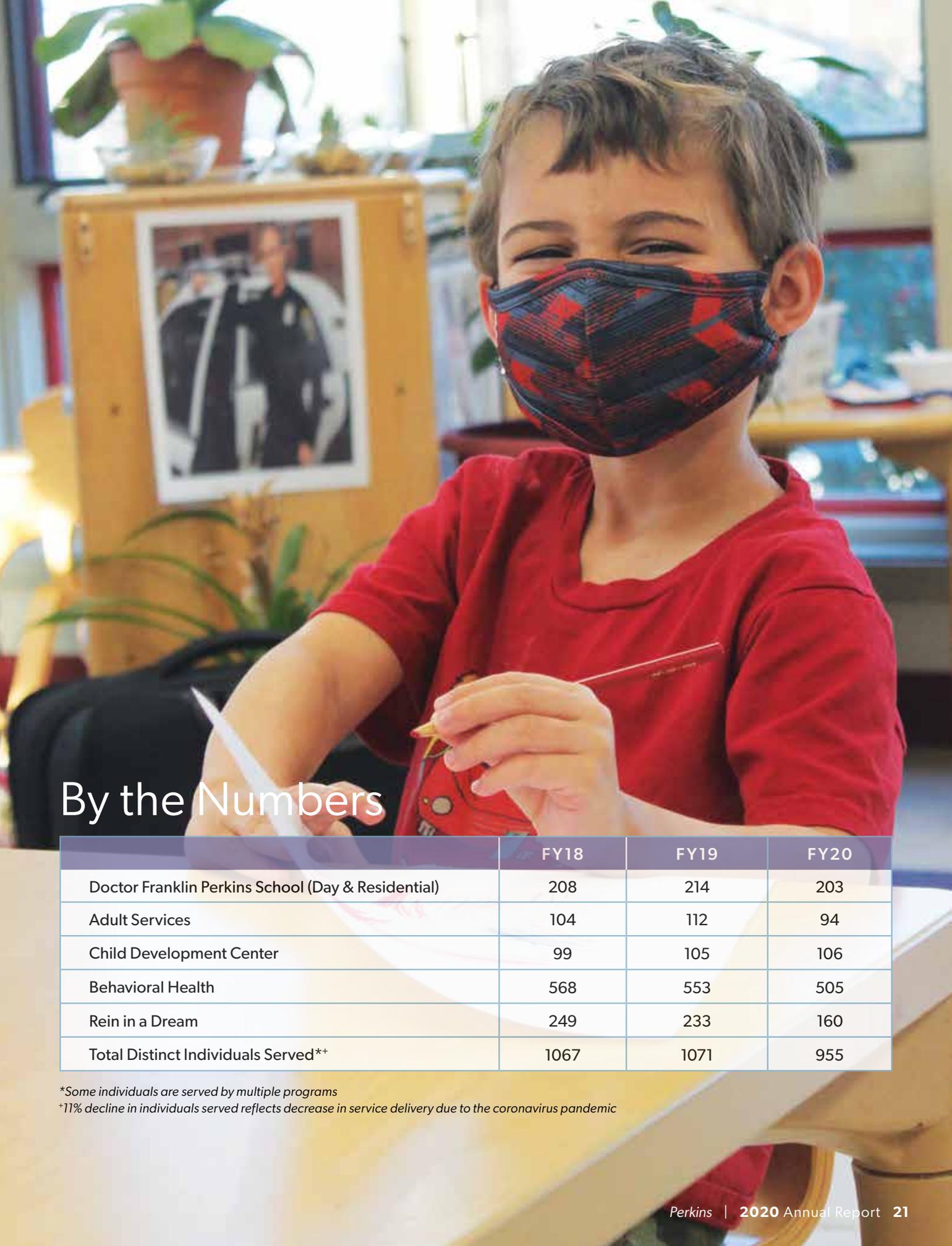
Spread the word and invite a friend to our next Perkins event! Online events, too!

Be an ally and an advocate for those with special needs

Help our mission by making a donation ([perkinsprograms.org](http://perkinsprograms.org))

Learn more about who we are by liking and following us on social media

Refer a friend or colleague to our careers page



## By the Numbers

	FY18	FY19	FY20
Doctor Franklin Perkins School (Day & Residential)	208	214	203
Adult Services	104	112	94
Child Development Center	99	105	106
Behavioral Health	568	553	505
Rein in a Dream	249	233	160
Total Distinct Individuals Served**	1067	1071	955

\*Some individuals are served by multiple programs

\*\*11% decline in individuals served reflects decrease in service delivery due to the coronavirus pandemic

# Strategic Plan Update

In 2017, Perkins released a 3-year strategic plan, available on our website, that came out of a year-long listening and design process. The plan, which established seven strategic imperatives and associated outcomes for each, sought to articulate strategic focus, strengthen core operations, and facilitate expansion to reach more people seeking services. Perkins staff and Trustees have worked systematically and steadily for the duration of the plan, now extended an additional year to June 2021 because of the pandemic.

We're proud to report:

## Perkins programs are stronger

- Perkins staff have rigorously evaluated and updated procedures and protocols across divisions, meaning that the people we serve receive high-quality, consistent care that is proven to provide positive outcomes.
- We will soon release our long-anticipated theory of change that integrates with our program model and highlights the common threads that run through our programs, as well as serves as a framework for program design.

## We've invested in our staff

- We've enhanced staff orientation, professional development, and supervision opportunities, along with increasing pay for direct care staff, to provide our valued employees with increased support in performing their roles and developing their careers.
- We are committed to expanding the diversity of our workforce, as well as unpacking and changing implicit and explicit racism at all levels of the organization.

## Our finances are strong and stable

- Through careful multi-year financial planning, creating detailed division-level budgets that are evaluated regularly, and ensuring timely statement preparation for review by management and Trustees, we have maintained a secure financial position for many years now.
- Just this past year, philanthropic support has reached new levels, allowing us to provide essential technology and PPE to our students and adults, as well as enabling behavioral health providers in using telehealth, facilitating the upgrade of our Rein in a Dream facilities, and supporting us in sending transition-age students to college classes.

## We've put data at the forefront of program decisions

- We invested in program evaluation by implementing an electronic records system, creating a quality improvement division, and building review of data into our regular operations, ensuring that data drives decisions.

## We're planning for and investing in the future

- To best support our programs, we've upgraded technology across divisions from computers and SMART boards, to a sophisticated phone and video-conferencing system that proved essential amidst the pandemic, to hardware and software upgrades to ensure smooth operations.
- We've recently broken ground on a multi-year campus development plan that will maintain the character of our current campus, while building toward the needs of our current and future students and adults. The full project will modernize, enhance, and connect our campus to best serve people today, tomorrow, and into the future.

## We have doubled our impact

- Well-designed programs, consistently high program enrollment, careful financial management and planning, and steady leadership all contributed to the Boards of both Perkins and Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps agreeing that RFK Children's Action Corps would become an affiliate of Perkins, with a merger planned for the near future. The partnership doubles the number of people Perkins reaches through its programs and significantly expands our workforce and reach, allowing us to apply the important work of this most recent strategic plan to programs serving a thousand children, doubling Perkins' current reach.



Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps, an affiliate of Perkins, is a leader in child welfare and juvenile justice, operating a number of programs and services for at-risk youth and families. Our work includes community-based initiatives, residential treatment, and juvenile justice programs, and we partner with national organizations and state agencies to use proven methods and develop new ways to advance practices in the care of those most vulnerable. We help individuals and families overcome difficult challenges and situations by providing the tools and skills they need to heal, grow, and thrive. Everything we do is based on the belief that every child deserves the chance for a brighter tomorrow.



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American Occupational Therapy  
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Association of Children's Residential  
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Association of Developmental  
Disabilities Providers

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Assumption College

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Boston College

Children's League of Massachusetts

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Council on Exceptional Children

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Health Center

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International Association of Special  
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Leading Age Massachusetts

Leominster Public Schools

Lesley University

Massachusetts Association for the  
Education of Young Children

Massachusetts Association for the  
Education of Young Children, Worcester  
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Massachusetts Assisted Living Facilities  
Association

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Private Schools

Massachusetts Association of Special  
Education Administrators

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NH Department of Education

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RI Department of Children, Youth  
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RI Department of Education

VT Department of Education

## Accreditations

National Association for the Education of  
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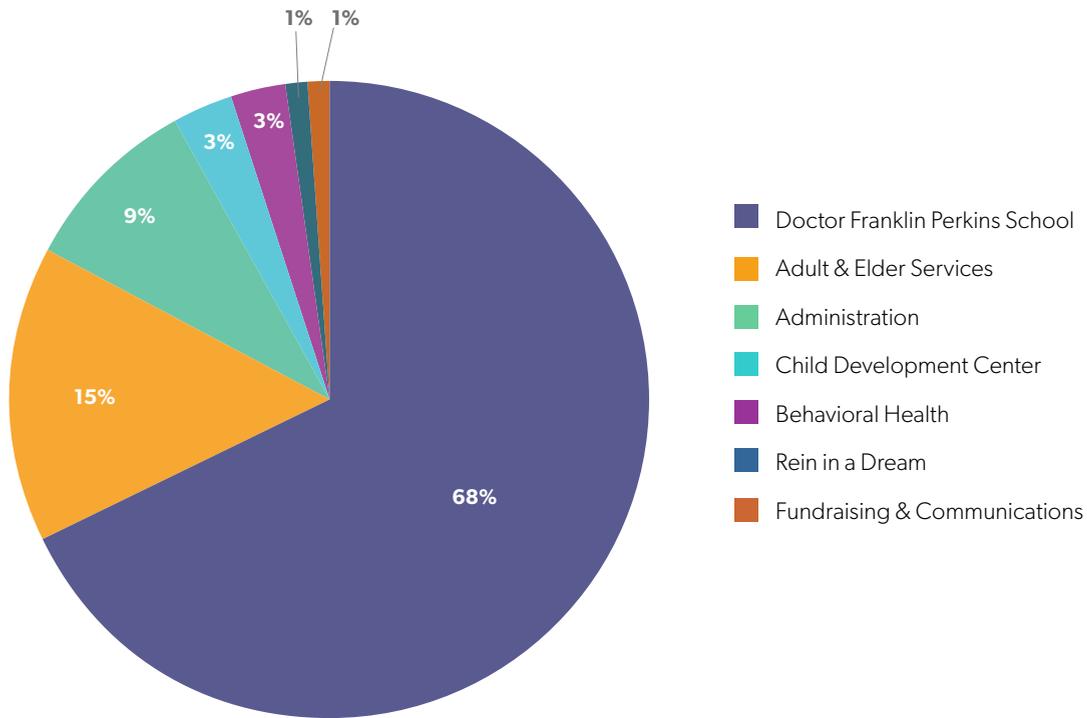
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*Special thanks to The Hanover Insurance  
Group and Melissa Begley, Creative  
Director, for the design of this year's  
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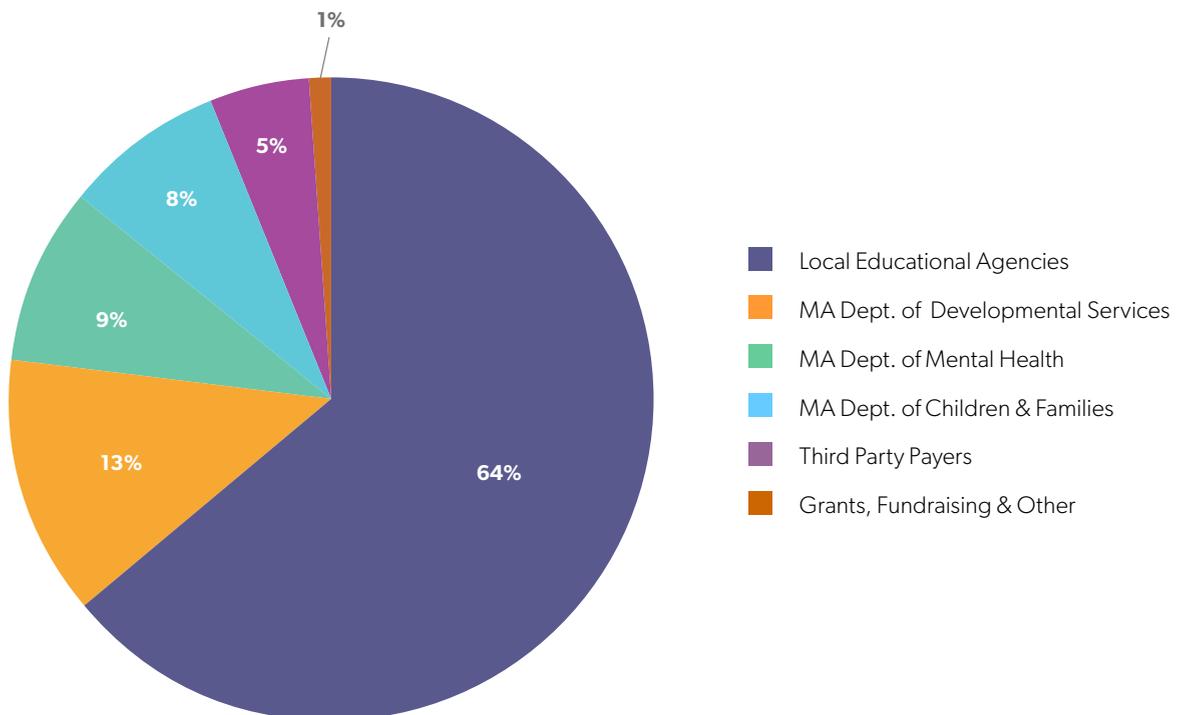


# Financials

## Expenses

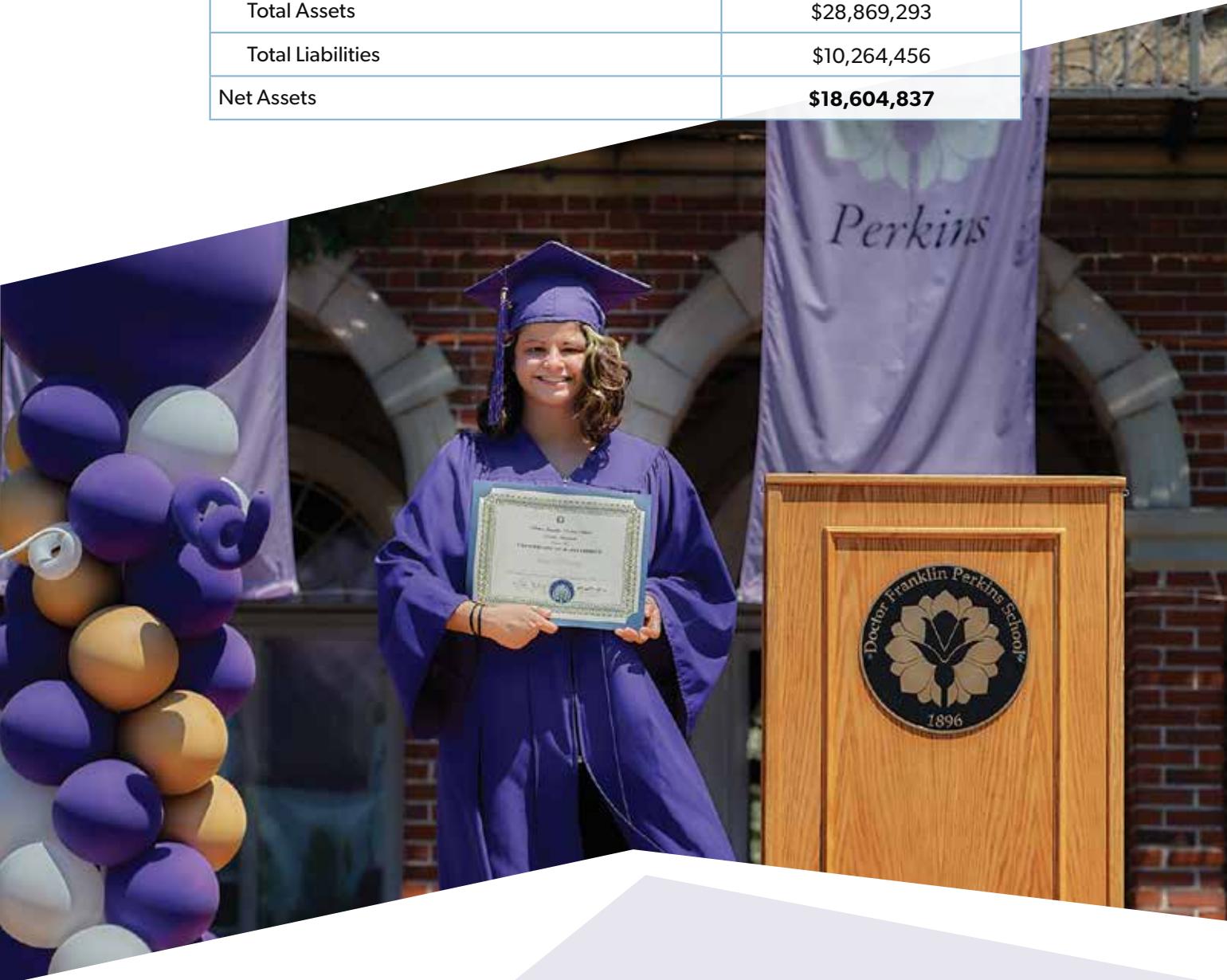


## Sources of Revenue



# Financials

Total Revenue	\$27,052,013
Total Expense	\$26,392,816
Net Revenue	\$659,197
Unrealized Gain on Investments	\$59,528
Surplus/(Loss)	\$718,725
Balance Sheet	
Total Assets	\$28,869,293
Total Liabilities	\$10,264,456
Net Assets	<b>\$18,604,837</b>



# 125 YEARS

1896-2021



**Doctor Franklin Perkins School**  
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