



# THE PACKER COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE

BROOKLYN, NEW YORK  
HEAD OF SCHOOL

START DATE: JULY 1, 2019

[www.packer.edu](http://www.packer.edu)



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# THE PACKER COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE

## Mission

Grounded in rich traditions while embracing the future, Packer is a diverse community that balances the value of scholarship and intellect with the importance of meaningful and sustained relationships. Guided by dedicated adults, Packer students are challenged to develop talents, pursue aspirations, and become empathetic, responsible, globally-minded individuals.

We educate students to:

Think Deeply  
Speak Confidently  
Act with Purpose and Heart

## OVERVIEW

The Packer Collegiate Institute, an independent, college preparatory school for students in preschool through Grade 12, seeks a Head of School to lead its diverse and tight-knit community of students, faculty, and staff. The oldest independent school in Brooklyn, Packer was founded in 1845 in historic Brooklyn Heights. With a rich educational history, the school is proud of the outstanding education it offers to children in a dynamic, purpose-driven environment.

In June 2019, Dr. Bruce L. Dennis will conclude his remarkable 15-year tenure as Packer's Head of School. Under his leadership, Packer has expanded its academic program through Advanced Topics courses (replacing Advanced Placement); the Independent Science Research Program; Symposium, in which the entire 10th Grade travels internationally; and a schoolwide increase in interdisciplinary, project-based, and inquiry-based offerings. Robust programming in the arts, extracurricular activities, and athletics is part of every Packer student's experience. Dr. Dennis has overseen the restoration and expansion of the school's landmark campus, including the Packer Early Learning Center, opening in fall 2018. Still decidedly grounded in Brooklyn, Packer is now regarded as being among the top schools in New York City. The school also has an international external community and global reach.

Packer seeks candidates who are able to embody and advocate for the mission of the school. Retaining the school's familial community and preserving its traditions will be critical, as will be advancing the school's reputation and extending its growth and progress.





## THE SCHOOL

The Packer Collegiate Institute has a long and storied history. Founded in 1845 as The Brooklyn Female Academy, the school enjoyed early financial and educational success until 1853, when it was completely destroyed by a fire. Only days later, Harriet Packer, the widow of one of the school's late trustees, donated a large sum of money to rebuild the school, specifying that it be named in honor of her husband. For much of the latter 19th century, The Packer Collegiate Institute flourished as Brooklyn Height's school of choice, as boys were admitted through 8th Grade. In 1919, the school added a junior college, which operated until the early 1970s, when the Board of Trustees made the decision to close the college and to become fully co-ed, allowing boys to attend through 12th Grade. For 150 years, the school expanded and renovated its campus in keeping with its growing enrollment and programmatic offerings.

Today, Packer enrolls approximately 1,030 students. With a wealth of tradition behind it, the school has built on its past while embracing the future, and continually strives to balance rigorous academics with meaningful and sustained relationships. An outstanding faculty of 127, a professional staff of 58, and an experienced and dedicated senior leadership team guide students of all ages to broaden their intellect, develop their talents, pursue personal goals, and become caring and responsible globally-minded citizens. Students are encouraged to be risk-takers and creative problem-solvers. By nurturing the uniqueness of each student, Packer honors and celebrates differences within its own student community. Alums recall Packer as a school where they felt safe physically, intellectually, and emotionally with faculty and administrators dedicated to keeping it that way and note, "people go to Packer for a reason." Parents say, "I love the character of the school and the people it attracts;" "I just got a really great feeling when we came here."



As a result of the institution's programmatic and physical enhancements and a surge in admissions demand over the past 15 years, Packer has now become competitive with other top-tier independent schools throughout New York City. Today, approximately 30% of its students commute daily from Manhattan and more than 60% of its newly admitted Upper School students live outside of Brooklyn. All five boroughs of New York City and parts of New Jersey are represented in the student body. Approximately 25% of students receive financial aid assistance and 33% identify as students of color.

At its core, Packer is a caring and open-hearted community where adults model for students the attributes the school prizes most: kindness, integrity, intellectual curiosity, and inclusiveness. Learning at Packer is a shared adventure, fueled by the energy of its students and teachers in an environment one must experience to appreciate fully. Faculty and students exude a passion for learning, a trait supported by an institutional culture that values experimentation and consistently aspires to excellence. Packer is actively engaged in conversations about true inclusivity and equity among its children and adults, placing a premium on developing the whole person. The school strives for inclusivity and equity by making conversations and activities that explore identity a mainstay of its communal work. The sense of and commitment to community and family are deeply felt, along with a pervasive spirit of kindness and generosity.

## ACADEMICS

Students at Packer grow to be productive members of a pluralistic, collaborative community of learners. At each level, developmentally appropriate programs suit the changing academic and physical capacities of students. As students grow intellectually and personally, they prepare to move beyond Packer as contributing, engaged, and effective members of their future communities. Learning specialists provide extra support to meet a range of learning needs of some students.





In the Reggio-Emilia-inspired Pre-K threes and fours programs, each child's gifts and interests are encouraged in a safe, nurturing environment. The essential element of learning at this age is play. Through play, as well as through shared and personal experiences, children learn to navigate their social worlds and develop confidence, fine motor skills, and readiness skills. Literacy and math skills are naturally incorporated into the school day, and children work with the science specialist to harness their inherent curiosity. Specialists in music and dance explore the arts and movement with the children. In the fall of this year, these students will move to their own dedicated facility a block from the main campus. Through Kindergarten, an emphasis on emergent curriculum allows children to shape their own learning, pursuing their interests through integrated real-world explorations.

The Lower School for Grades 1-4 stresses the fundamentals of literacy and mathematics in a joyful, student-focused environment. The academic program incorporates three fundamental goals: learning to solve problems, learning to access information, and learning to present information to others. The curriculum is designed with ample time built in for social studies, science, art, music, library studies, dance, and physical education. Classrooms each have substantial in-class libraries, current curricular materials, modern technology, and a teaching pair comprised on a deeply trained and experienced senior teacher and an associate teacher. Computers are available to Lower School students and teachers in all grades, both in the classroom and in the Lower School Computer Lab where students attend weekly classes.

Packer's Middle School for students in Grades 5-8 offers a rich, challenging academic program grounded in meaningful content and structured around the development of critical skills. In the fifth and six grades, the curriculum is anchored by classes in math and science and a core humanities class combining English and history. Students at this age also take language and literacy in addition to music, art, physical education, computers, and health. The sixth-grade program expands to include the study of Spanish, French, Latin, or Chinese. In seventh and eighth grade, English and history



## College Enrollment

The following is a selection of schools to which graduates have matriculated in the past five years:

Amherst College  
Barnard College  
Binghamton University  
Boston College  
Bowdoin College  
Brandeis University  
Brooklyn College of CUNY  
Brown University  
Bucknell University  
Claremont McKenna College  
Colby College  
Colgate University  
Columbia University  
Cornell University  
Dartmouth College  
Duke University  
Emory University  
Hamilton College  
Harvard University  
Johns Hopkins University  
Kenyon College  
Macalester College  
Massachusetts Institute of Technology  
McGill University  
Middlebury College  
Northeastern University  
Oberlin College  
Pennsylvania State University  
Pomona College  
Princeton University  
Rhode Island School of Design  
Rochester Institute of Technology  
Stanford University  
Syracuse University  
Tufts University  
University of Chicago  
University of Colorado, Boulder  
University of Edinburgh  
University of Maryland  
University of Michigan  
University of Pennsylvania  
University of St. Andrews  
University of Southern California  
University of Wisconsin  
Vassar College  
Washington University  
Wesleyan University  
Whitman College  
Yale University

Ten students in the class of 2017 pursued a gap year, many with the intention to intern, work, or travel independently before college.



become two separate classes. Students deepen their language study and can specialize in the arts option of their choice. Beginning in Grade 5, children participate in a school-wide laptop program. Fifteen years ago, the school completed renovations of an adjacent church it had acquired, building Middle School classrooms and offices in its nave, and in the process creating a remarkable metaphor for Packer's blending of traditional and progressive educational practices.

As students continue through to the Upper School, they encounter a rigorous and exciting program of required and elective offerings designed to encourage them to realize their highest level of achievement. Freshmen and sophomore students pursue a prescribed program to ensure they are confident and capable in critical analysis, reading, writing, mathematics, research, language, computer literacy, and study skills. Juniors and seniors have opportunities to apply these skills through a wide range of special and often interdisciplinary electives and Advanced Topics (AT) courses. Independent study, School Year Abroad, Chewonki Semester School, High Mountain Institute, and cultural exchange programs are just a few of the special opportunities available for juniors and seniors. Faculty speak about an "amazing collaboration among students and teachers."



## ARTS AND ATHLETICS

Packer offers a range of opportunities that foster the development of each student's creative and artistic voice and cultivate "the artist" within each student. A passionate faculty encourages students to be risk-takers and creative problem-solvers. By nurturing the uniqueness of each student, Packer honors and celebrates differences within its own student community. The school has a comprehensive curriculum in the arts including visual arts, photography, media arts, dance, drama, orchestra, brass choir, chamber music, wind ensemble, chorus, and a Middle and Upper School jazz band. The Janet Clinton Performing Arts Center, which features instrumental and choral music classrooms and a dance studio, supports theatrical productions throughout the year.

Opportunities abound for Middle and Upper School students to participate in competitive interscholastic athletics at both the varsity and junior varsity levels, as well as in a broad array of student clubs and activities. As members of the New York State Association of Independent Schools Athletics Association, Packer embraces the NYSAISAA's standards for a successful athletic program, cultivating within each athlete competence, character, civility, and citizenship. Varsity and junior varsity teams include cross country, soccer, volleyball, basketball, indoor track, squash, swimming baseball, flag football, golf, softball, tennis, track and field, and ultimate frisbee. The school holds many individual records and team championships, and students graduate from Packer to play for some of the nation's finest colleges and universities.





## SCHOOL LIFE

Diversity is at the forefront of the school's thoughts about teaching and learning. Time is spent creating safe classroom communities in which students are encouraged to act with honesty and empathy. Faculty members model open-mindedness, self and mutual respect, and critical thinking while offering learning experiences through which all students can become thoughtful, sensitive, and confident members of the Packer community. An integral part of this work is a school-wide investigation of anti-bias in the curriculum. All teachers are involved in this work of connecting what is taught to the school's diversity mission of building an inclusive community. Student clubs, parent groups, and affinity groups are also a part of Packer's quest to ensure an authentic sense of connection and belonging for each and every student.

Packer's community engagement program is designed to encourage service to others while promoting personal growth and education. Students in each division are involved in service on a variety of levels—individually, grade-wide, and school-wide. Efforts are made to connect projects to the curriculum while engaging student interest in a way beneficial both to the student and the service agency. Projects have included preparing food for a neighborhood homeless shelter in Lower School and volunteering at Metro Club, an organization that works with adults with mental illness, in Middle School, as well as activities across all three divisions at the Arab-American Family Support Center. The service program in the Upper School has recently undergone changes that have resulted in more meaningful experiences for students. A Service Leadership Council is responsible for programming on five different issues. Students in Grades 9 through 11 must complete 15 credit hours of service by the end of May.

Packer enjoys the talents of many long-serving and outstanding faculty, deeply committed to their teaching practice and to nourishing the intellectual – and personal – growth of each student. Classroom





work involves depth as well as breadth of learning, with an emphasis more on students doing authentic work and adopting a growth mindset than just covering material. Faculty note that the “intellectual power of my colleagues is impressive” and that teachers have a commitment to “make this a learning community of adults” and are supported by the school’s generous professional development. People have a growth mindset. Teachers appreciate that there is “lots of autonomy and support to take risks, try new things, and there’s a huge level of trust in the capability of people hired here.” Faculty interaction with students is described as warm, open, and trusting, as well as authentic. “And the kids are great – confident, communicating freely and easily, creative, and interactive with each other; very engaged.”

## CAMPUS

Throughout its 170-year history, Packer has renovated and expanded its campus to accommodate its growing programs and student body, while maintaining many of the traditional spaces at the school. The campus now includes six connected buildings: Founder’s Hall, the Science Building, Alumnae Hall, the Pratt Building, the Commons, and the Middle School. This has been no mean feat given the school’s location, flanked by the some of the tallest building in Brooklyn on one side, and charming early 19th-century streets and brownstones on others.

Renovated in 2008, the top floor in Founder’s Hall is devoted to largely the visual arts, including a photography studio. Also located in Founder’s Hall is the Chapel (which seats 700), used as an assembly space. The Science Building is contiguous to Founder’s Hall and the home of recently refurbished physics, chemistry, and biology classrooms and labs that support Upper School science program. The Commons and the Belle Alenick Baier Atrium provide eating and gathering spaces for students; the Carol Shen Gallery, home to rotating art exhibits; and the Janet Clinton Performing

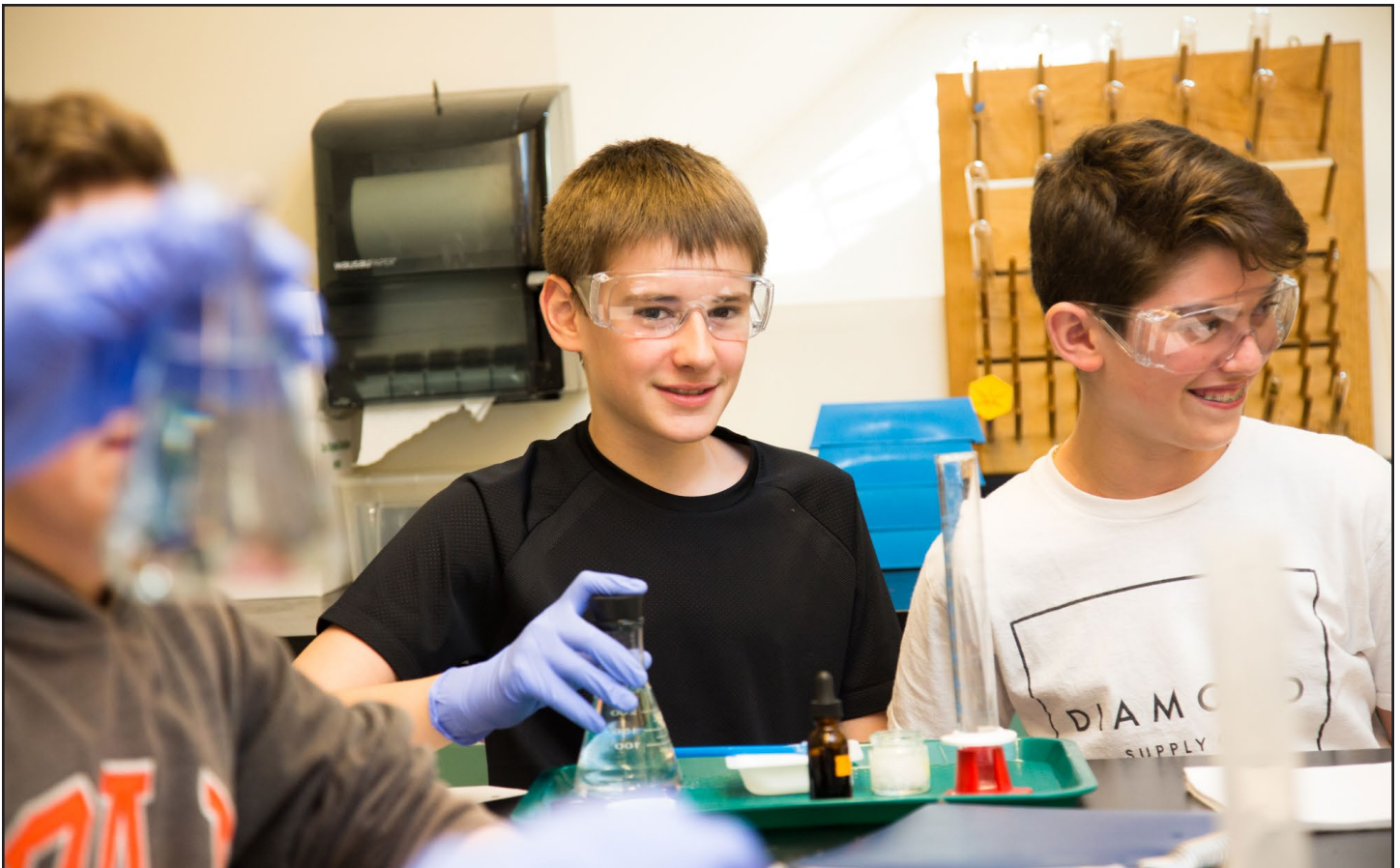




Arts Center. This performing arts complex includes new music rooms, a state-of-the-art MIDI studio for music composition and technology, a dance studio, dressing rooms, and set construction and costume design facilities. Also included is the Pratt Theater with retractable stadium seating, state-of-the-art computerized lighting, and sound equipment. The Pratt Building, built in the 1950s, contains two full-size gymnasiums and also a fitness center, used by students, faculty, and staff. Packer uses field, pool, and court space at Red Hook Recreation Area and Brooklyn Bridge Park, among other local venues. Across the “Garden”—the school’s urban oasis that combines playground, piazza, and patio with shade trees and plantings—the Preschool currently occupies a comfortable brownstone. The libraries, as well as the entire campus, are equipped with wireless access, supporting the laptop program (the first all-school laptop program in NYC) and enabling Internet access for devices throughout the school.

In September 2018, the new Packer Early Learning Center will open at 100 Clinton Street, one block north of the main campus. This new facility will not only provide classrooms specifically designed to meet the cognitive and developmental needs of the school’s youngest learners but will also free up existing space on the current campus that will be re-purposed and used in support of a variety of curricular initiatives, including increased interdisciplinary study and project-based learning and maker space for students in all three divisions. There is something special and magical about having 15 grade levels interacting and passing each other essentially under one roof.





## BROOKLYN, NEW YORK

Packer is located at the edge of downtown Brooklyn in the Brooklyn Heights neighborhood. Originally known as Brooklyn Village, the stroll-friendly streets and bluff-side waterfront location of Brooklyn Heights helped establish its reputation as one of the most idyllic neighborhoods in the five boroughs.

Brooklyn Heights is defined by natural and architectural beauty, and upscale-casual food and entertainment options. The school's direct proximity to downtown Brooklyn makes for bustling retail stretches along busy Court Street, as well as restaurant patio-packed Montague Street, and a sense of small-town charm tucked within a big city. The abundance of quiet streets, public green spaces, and playgrounds make Brooklyn Heights a welcome area. Manhattan is only a five-minute commute by train or ferry. The Borough Hall subway station is on the same block as Packer and is one stop from Wall Street.

Rapidly developing Brooklyn Bridge Park is an emerging city landmark; scenic piers, iconic Jane's Carousel, and seasonal attractions from movie screenings and pop-up pools to free ferry rides keep the activities going year-round. Come weekends, food, fitness, and fun options also center around the waterfront, from runs along Brooklyn Promenade to cult-loved Ample Hills Creamery's newly opened Pier 5 outpost. All this adds up to a neighborhood that can feel worlds removed from New York's typical hustle and bustle, while remaining convenient to all of the city's most exciting perks.



## OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

While the success of Bruce Dennis's tenure positions the school well to attract talented new leadership and to ensure the school's continued excellence, the next Head of School will need to lead Packer into and through the following set of strategic, educational, and operational issues:

- A new Strategic Plan needs to be developed
- Campus planning design and use—using existing plans and reviewing overall campus planning
- Thoughtfully nurturing the Packer community as it continues to evolve
- Continue to refine and enhance the rigor of the academic program
- Developing the full potential of alumni and development functions to benefit Packer's future
- Managing affordability issues—both tuition and financial aid components
- Championing an atmosphere of tolerance so members of the school community can speak honestly and openly and feel safe doing so
- Integrating further the use of data in decision-making
- Developing further school-wide systems across divisions and functions
- Further integration of and connectivity among the three divisions

## DESIRED QUALITIES AND QUALIFICATIONS

The Search Committee is seeking candidates who can embrace Packer's mission, reflect and drive the school's values, and whose personal qualities include:

- Stellar character and judgement
- Well-read, intellectually curious, and able to communicate important and relevant ideas
- A champion of academic excellence
- Understanding of effective teaching and learning at all grade levels PK through 12
- Culturally competent, personally experienced in the work of diversity, and able to lead the community's progress on these issues
- Sure-footed decision maker in all situations, routine to difficult to critical
- Resourceful in considering ways in which an independent school can be financially sustainable
- Outgoing and personable; able and eager to engage with all constituents that make up a PK-12 school—students, faculty and staff, alumni, parents, and the surrounding community
- Good at communicating with people one-on-one and to groups of all sizes; self-aware
- Energetic, enthusiastic, and visible and present in the community

In addition, the experiences and capabilities which the Search Committee feels would be most suitable to leading the school include:

- Demonstrated ability to understand and manage large, diverse, and complex educational institutions
- Vision—experience in bringing a community together to engage in strategic planning and subsequent execution
- Successful experience in building, leading, and managing administrative teams
- Successful at hiring, supervising, and nurturing faculty and administrators
- Genuine interest in or experience with fundraising
- Experience managing long-term fiscal planning and annual budgeting components of schools

- Understanding the factors in managing and creating a functional and vibrant overall educational campus and its constituent spaces and buildings (preferably in an urban setting)

## COMPENSATION

Salary and benefits for this position will be competitive with other New York City schools. Packer also owns an apartment in Brooklyn Heights for the exclusive use of the Head of School.

## TO APPLY

Interested and qualified candidates should submit electronically in one email and as separate documents (preferably PDFs) the following materials:

- A cover letter expressing their interest in this particular position;
- A current résumé;
- A one-page statement of educational philosophy and school leadership practice;
- A list of five professional references with name, phone number, and email address of each (references will not be contacted without the candidate's permission) to:

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