President Ann Aurigemma called the meeting to order and welcomed parents back for the first Parents Association (PA) meeting of 2012-13. She shared that Bruce Dennis would be speaking, and introduced Andrea Kelly as the new Assistant Head of School and Advisor to the PA.

Bruce thanked the PA for inviting him to speak about the State of Our School, which he said was very strong. Over the summer, successful renovations and upgrades took place in the front hall, two Upper School physics labs, the athletic corridor, and a new office was created for the health department and Lower School psychologist. There was also ongoing maintenance of the building’s exterior. Plans continue over the next three years to rehab every teaching and learning space in the school. Next summer there will be work done in the Upper School on the 4th and 5th floor, and two third grade classrooms will be renovated. In summer 2014 the remaining 2nd and 3rd floor Lower School spaces will be renovated, and in 2015 the garden and 1st floor Lower School spaces will be upgraded.

Bruce shared that school opened on time, fully staffed, and fully enrolled with a total of 1007 students. That number comprises 375 in the Pre- and Lower School, 276 in Middle School, and 356 in Upper School including 90 kids in the 9th grade. Admissions are robust and open houses for the fall are effectively all booked up.

Bruce introduced those in new leadership positions at Packer including Andrea Kelly, Assistant Head of School, who was formerly head of the Pre- and Lower School, Jansen Po, Head of the Pre- and Lower School, former assistant head of the Pre- and Lower School, Nisa Frank, Assistant Head of the Pre- and Lower School.

He also shared that there is a new dean for the 5th/6th grades, and 9th grade, three new head teachers in the Pre- and Lower School, a new technology integrator, two
new math teachers in the Middle School. Bruce noted that more information about
the new faculty and staff was available in his Welcome Back letter in the recent
Packer at a Glance email.

Bruce explained that Packer is in the middle of a five-year strategic plan. Packer’s
previous five-year plan successfully met its goals including making faculty salaries
more competitive to match its reference group (e.g. Brooklyn Friends, St. Ann’s,
Poly Prep, Dalton, Trinity, Spence, Trevor, etc.) so that it could attract and retain the
best teachers. The current plan calls for the faculty to develop the academic and
curricular program by writing new curricula, attending conferences and workshops
to enhance their skills, and planning new courses.

Bruce continued by explaining that the strategic plans calls for Packer to become
more of a global school and expand beyond its walls through interdisciplinary
learning, project-based activities, and deepening its service and sustainability
commitments. He shared that a new global initiative will include an annual 10
Grade trip to an international location, which will be supported within the
curriculum – and will be built into the tuition structure so that all students can
attend regardless of ability to pay. Bruce explained that this program is still under
development as the first trip would take place for the graduating class of 2016. This
trip would be in addition to any travel Upper School students undertake with their
global language or study abroad programs. Middle School students currently travel
to Quebec, Washington D.C., and some to Puerto Rico - and those trips are being
reviewed to ensure that they continue to be the best fit with the curriculum. The
Lower School will continue its partnership with the Ndonyo Wasin School in Kenya.

Ann Aurigemma asked for more information about the Ndonyo Wasin partnership,
and Bruce invited Andrea Kelly to speak to the group. Andrea shared that the
Lower School was looking for a project that would be both local and global in which
all students could participate. After much research, they found the partnership
opportunity with the Ndonyo Wasin School located in rural Kenya. The partnership
has given students a unique opportunity to connect with another culture, and
discuss the similarities and differences between themselves and the Kenyan
students. This program is also linked with service, as every other year; the Lower
School organizes some type of “a-thon” to raise funds for the school. These funds,
which totaled over $30,000 last year alone; have built classrooms, contributed to
faculty salaries, created housing for teachers, and provided scholarships for Ndonyo
Wasin students to continue their secondary education.

A parent asked Bruce Dennis to comment on the number of Packer Middle School
students who stayed on for Upper School. Bruce explained that 45 of 69 students
stayed on for 9th grade, with the majority moving on to one of the excellent public
high schools in the city and some going to boarding school. Bruce shared that the reasons for these moves are diverse, as some kids were ready for a bigger school, wanted or needed a different social or academic setting, parents may have wanted to bank four years of tuition, etc. Bruce assured parents, however, that Packer is doing all it can to attract and retain the best kids.

Ann returned to let parents know that there are four PA meetings a year that they are welcome to attend. She introduced the members of the PA Board who were present at the meeting. She reminded parents that they are all automatically members of the PA, and invited them to volunteer further with any committee that was of interest to them.

Mae Hsieh introduced herself as Chair of Pumpkin Patch, and told them that her goal was to get the word out early, often, and repeatedly that Pumpkin Patch is taking place on October 21st. She hoped that all will participate and will feel free to get in touch with her with questions or to volunteer.

Katriona Kearney (Treasurer) – provided a report on the PA’s final 2011-12 budget which has been finalized. The PA was able to donate $260,000 to Packer, which was an increase of 16% from last year. Of this amount, $210,000 supported financial aid, and $50,000 was for the annual fund. This $50,000 includes the $10,000 raised by the Book Fair which is earmarked for the school libraries. This year’s operating budget remains unchanged at $39,000. Last year only about $30,000 of this amount was spent.

Ann reminded everyone that all Board members and PA chairs were listed on the Packer website, and that all have a Class Representative that they will be hearing from.

Ann thanked all for attending and called the meeting to a close.
