School life offers many opportunities for student engagement and achievement. This year’s Merrimac Moments gives an insight into the many activities undertaken by our staff and students.

I am proud of the diversity of activities that range from academic pursuits, sport participation, and school musical to the care programs that engage students.

My thanks to the students, staff and parents for their continued support of our great school.
INDIVIDUAL LEARNING PLANS
All students studying curriculum at a lower or higher level than their timetabled year now have an Individualised Learning Plan (ILP). This plan is drafted in consultation with parents and outlines the teaching differentiation. The resultant personalised learning ensures that all students are learning and achieving.

Merrimac teaching and learning programs build on student interests, strengths and learning needs. The cognitive, affective, physical, social and aesthetic needs of all students are addressed. ILP learners in our community include students with disability, students who are gifted and talented, students with learning difficulties and students for whom English is an additional language.

JUNIOR SECONDARY
Junior Secondary is a phase of education in state secondary schools encompassing Years 7, 8 and 9. It ensures the bridge between primary and secondary school is safe, strong and consistent for all students.

The development of 6 key areas within Junior Secondary; distinct identity, quality teaching, student wellbeing, parent and community involvement, leadership and local decision making has been researched and refined over the last 3 years.

Teachers of Junior Secondary undertake professional development in research-based strategies and techniques that enable them to understand, motivate and engage adolescent learners in the 21st Century.

GRIFF IT & GRIFF MATHS PARTNERSHIPS
45 students are participating in University level courses in Information Technology and Mathematics. Our teachers deliver the courses onsite and submit the student assessment to Griffith University for verification. The students are excelling in their studies and will exit the courses with guaranteed entry to Griffith University. Our Griff Maths students recently enjoyed a day at Griffith University Gold Coast Campus meeting Professor Yuri Anissimov, and attending a lecture in the 600+ capacity lecture facility. This partnership with Griffith University is providing Merrimac students with a significant head start to their tertiary studies.

ART AND SCIENCE OF TEACHING
The Art and Science of Teaching (ASOT) has been implemented school-wide to improve our teaching and learning. Dr Robert Marzano’s pedagogical framework is leading the way internationally as the current best practice for effective instruction. Many Australian schools are adopting the framework as ASOT places a strong emphasis on high-order thinking skills, cognitive processes and a range of explicit teaching strategies to maximise student learning. All Heads of Department, Deputy Principals and the Principal have completed two-days of intensive professional development in coaching and mentoring. The Marzano journey is on-going as Merrimac SHS continually strives to excel as an educational community.
Merrimac Master Classes focus on extending the core academic skills students require for success in their schooling, in the Queensland Core Skills Test and in their lives after school. This school-funded initiative hones key numeracy and literacy skills essential for reading and interpreting information. The classes also develop the skills and terminology students require to effectively articulate their responses.

Senior students attend a weekly 2 hour Master Class on their flexible-learning Monday in both Years 11 and 12. This focussed effort resulted in 87% of our recent graduates receiving an Overall Position between 1-15 and 100% of students receiving an offer for tertiary education.

INTRODUCTION TO SPANISH
Spanish has been introduced as the third foreign language in our curriculum. Classes have commenced for Year 8 students, and will progressively grow each year until we have Spanish throughout the entire school by 2018.

YEAR 8 & 9 STUDENTS ENJOY EXTENSION WORKSHOPS
Year 8 and 9 students displaying aptitude in literacy and numeracy have been participating in exciting extension workshops. These workshops are led by Deputy Principal Mrs Karen Farrow, Head of English Miss Kylie Wilson, Head of Mathematics Mr Paul Gray, and Literacy Coach Miss Angela Collins. The students rotate through 3 activities: reading, writing and mathematics. The co-curricular activities challenge students and provide them with opportunities to further develop their skills and knowledge. Merrimac SHS is pleased to be able to reward and extend its talented Junior Secondary students.

HEALTH
Health Education has been introduced as a subject for senior students. The curriculum encompasses; Personal Health, Peer Health, and Family and Community Health. Workshops, excursions, primary research and guest speakers form integral components of the subject. Students enthusiastically engage with the contemporary topics relating to body image, nutrition, mental health, alcohol misuse, organ transplantation and ageing.

"The co-curricular activities challenge students..."
NaMWaN Thasaenwong - Chinese Scholarship Student
One of our outstanding Year 12 Chinese students, Namwan Thasaenwong, has been awarded a scholarship to attend the Shanghai International Sister Cities Youth Camp. She is one of only six students from Queensland to be selected and has achieved this honour amidst state-wide competition of a very high standard.

AmBER Pilley – Rugby Union 75
Amber’s exceptional talent and enthusiasm for Rugby Union earned her a place in the Australian Under 18 Rugby Union 7s Team. The Australian team competed at the World Championships in Japan earlier this year and were unlucky to be beaten in the final. Amber has just been named in the Australian team for the Youth Olympics to be held in Nanjing China in August 2014.

International Surf Camp
Our International students engage in a three day ‘Learn to Surf’ program at beautiful Byron Bay as part of their Sport Studies. The students learn the basics of surfing and also gain insights into why surfing is such an important part of Australian culture. The students always rate this camp as one of their favourite experiences during their Australian exchange.

School of Adobe Creative Excellence
Merrimac State High School has joined with Adobe in an innovative partnership. Over the next three years we will jointly pursue new teaching and learning experiences which will lead to improved student outcomes. Adobe has provided our staff and students with the full Adobe CC Cloud applications for their laptops and provided training and resources for staff.

MUSICAL – HAIRSPRAY
Hairspray, the musical, was staged at the Gold Coast Arts Centre on 30 May. The school musical gives students the opportunity to perform in a large venue with an enthusiastic audience. Over one hundred students performed on stage, while many more were involved backstage and in the pre-production of the show. Over 50 wigs and 200 costumes were specifically created for the students. The proverb; Teamwork divides the task and multiplies the success, was certainly true for Hairspray. The IT and Art Departments designed and constructed the sets, the Home Economics Department created the costumes and the Performing Arts staff provided extra tuition to cast members.

Leading cast members included: Aizha Poynton as Penny Pingleton, Matiah Sessarago as Tracey, Taylor Sorensen as Amber and Starla Martineer as Velma. Congratulations to all - it was a great night!

HERON ISLAND REEF TRIP
Merrimac Education students travel to Heron Island on the Great Barrier Reef to experience one of the natural wonders of the world. To snorkel and swim amongst the coral with sharks, manta-rays and turtles is a once in a life-time experience for students. This reef experience enables the students to fully appreciate how fragile and endangered the coral is and why efforts must be made to protect it.

Year 12 Students Compete in Bond University Quiz
Year 12 students represented Merrimac SHS at the annual Bond University Best of The Best quiz for secondary schools in South East Queensland and Northern NSW. Students answered questions on science, general knowledge, history and popular culture. Congratulations to: Shannon Minehan (Captain), Michael Muni, Emily Smith, Steffi Tan, Brock Smith and Remy Hein who were the top performing State High School team in the competition!

Merrimac By Moonlight
As part of Merrimac By Moonlight, Year 8 parents were invited to join their student in a lesson once the sun went down. Spelling tests, scientific experiments, fitness circuits and composing music were some of the challenges faced by parents as they experienced life today as a Year 8 student. Parent engagement was high as students tried to outscore their parents and prove that youth and enthusiasm can outdo experience and maturity. The evening ended with a hilarious ‘get to know you’ activity that had parents trying to complete a questionnaire about their child’s friends in the quickest time possible. The evening was successful in strengthening the valued partnership between school and home.
NEW BUILDING PROGRAM
To accommodate Year 7 students in 2015 we have undertaken a building program to increase our school classroom capacity. The new Year 7 block, costing $7.3m, has provided 11 new classrooms and 2 collaborative areas. The building has been designed to enhance our approach to teaching and will accommodate the needs of the estimated 250 students. These world class classrooms integrate technology to support student laptops, and a generous undercover area promotes play and structured lunch time activities.

The program included redevelopment of our science block, with 6 new laboratories and the latest science equipment. All students will benefit from this cutting edge learning space. The laboratories have been designed to meet the current and future needs of students from Year 7 to 12.

WELCOME TO NEW STAFF
Welcome to our 5 new permanent staff. This is the largest intake of new staff for many years and we value their contribution and the richness they add to our school community. Breanna Griffin (Dalby) and Sean Zhu (Moranbah) transferred in from country areas, Tracey Hoppner (Miami SS) and Scott Gray (Nerang SHS) moved across from local Gold Coast schools while Geetika Sodhi (a former student of the school) joined us as a new graduate.

CHAPLAIN – CHRIS PERRY
Mr Chris Perry is our new Chaplain or “Chappy”, as students call him. You’ll often see Chris in the playground during breaks engaging with students or cooking pancakes before school as part of the Breakfast Program. The school Chaplain works with outside agencies facilitating educational support programs and runs co-curricular activities such as camps.

GUIDANCE OFFICER – ELAINE SEARS
Ms Elaine Sears has joined Mrs Kate Careless in the Guidance Department. Elaine grew up in the Lakes District in England and moved to Australia five years ago with her family. She recently became an Australian citizen. Elaine counsels students and provides course and career advice.
ANZAC COMMEMORATION
The school’s annual ANZAC commemoration provided our school community with the opportunity to reflect on the sacrifices of fallen Australians and reaffirm their commitment to our ANZAC heritage. Our ANZAC commemorative service reflected a dedicated team effort from all students involved – school Captains and Prefects, band, army, navy and airforce cadets, singers and audio specialists. The commemoration was honoured by the attendance of the following guests from the wider community – Major M Blair (LWC Canungra), Mr C Godlee (Gold Coast Legacy), Mr R Stevens MP, Mr K Orr (Surfers Paradise RSL Sub-Branch), Mr J Lofthouse (Southport RSL Sub-Branch), Mr J Dorrington (representing Mr S Ciobo, MP), Mr G O’Brien (Bugler), Mr G Lewis (Piper) and CUO J Scott (232 AAFC Squadron).

MERRIMAC CARES
Mr Steve Strong and Mr Kevin Hoschke and teacher Aides Mrs Marion Davis and Mrs Julie Van Donge oversee the Merrimac Cares student group. Activities have included visiting Pacific Fair shopping centre to strengthen the relationship between our school students and the local retail staff. The students have also visited the Tricare Retirement Home at Mermaid Beach. Merrimac Cares provided the retirees with attentive company and lively conversation, whilst the residents bestowed beaming faces and crinkled smiles on the students. It was reminiscent of grandparents spending a pleasant afternoon being visited by their grandchildren. The CARES students were provided with afternoon tea and engaged in memorable conversations. Merrimac students CARE about their local community.

DUKE OF EDINBURGH
The Duke of Edinburgh students are active in our school. A recent trip to Sydney was generously sponsored by Surfers Paradise RSL and the school P&C. Students participated in activities which covered all areas of the curriculum: an historical ghost walk in the evening, and visits to Taronga Zoo, Imax theatre, the Museum and the Art Gallery. Students also attend an adventure camp at Maroon Dam and experience the excitement of camping out in tents, and participating in canoeing, rock climbing and other challenges. This group of students is working towards attaining their bronze awards.

KOKODA CHALLENGE
Our students compete in The Kokoda Challenge; a 96 kilometre event held in the Gold Coast Hinterland each July. This year, Mr Daniel Ricardo and his team of 4 senior students: Remy Hein, Hamish Morton, Connor Flood and Narissa Campbell, will walk the steep and often slippery track. They compete against themselves and other school groups in completing the gruelling exercise over a 24 hour period. Central to this challenge is the spirit of Kokoda, embodying courage, endurance, mateship and sacrifice. Through undertaking the challenge, Mr Ricardo and his team are inspiring all students to do extraordinary things and are reigniting those timeless Kokoda values.

CUDDLE BUGS PLAYGROUP
Cuddle Bugs Playgroup is open each Monday morning during the school term, for parents and their children aged 5 years and younger. The playgroup has been running since 1998 and is very popular with the wider community due to the high quality activities the Year 11 Early Childhood students provide. Our students are also able to achieve a Certificate III in Childcare.
CONTACT US

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