Members of the Merrimac State High School Community, it is with great pride in the students and staff of Merrimac State High School that I commend to you this year’s edition of Merrimac Moments.

When you read the articles I am sure you will be impressed with our academic achievements along with the numerous other activities. The increased emphasis we are placing on student wellbeing, is paying off with a stronger culture of caring evident within the school. Later this year we will also expand our focus on caring with in the community, with our Year 9 students undertaking organised community service.

The richness of the educational experience at Merrimac SHS continues to enhance our school philosophy to build positive relationships, value difference, encourage life-long learning and contribute to school, family and community.

Please enjoy the story of our 2018 journey.

Chris Tobin
Principal
STEM CUP
This after-school Science, Technology and Mathematics (STEM) competition is for students in Years 5, 6, 7 and 8. The students compete in division two, over a period of seven weeks. Teams score points weekly for the challenges they complete with the top scoring teams earning a place at the STEM Cup grand final held at Griffith University. The competition covers a broad range of topics across Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. Challenges aim to link learning to real world applications. Our teams have really enjoyed this style of competition and the girls’ team have been particularly successful.

WORLD ROBOTIC CHALLENGE
Our 2017 World Robot Summit team and their talented teacher, Mr Daniel Ricardo, travelled to Tokyo and returned triumphant in both categories of the World Robot Summit. This achievement demonstrates the strength of our Science, Technology, Enterprise, Arts and Maths program (STEAM). We are very excited that two teams have made the finals in Tokyo in October this year and we wish them every success in the competition. Our students are true leaders when it comes to STEAM Education. We are very proud of their many achievements.

LITERATURE
Leading into 2019, a new English subject is being studied in Year 10. Literature focuses on complex narratives, and tasks designed to enhance analytical and creative skills. Also Literature will be offered to Year 11 students in 2019. Studying Literature is exciting for students with a passion for reading and a desire to utilise the power of writing.

FOCUSED READING PROGRAM (RDG)
Junior Secondary students are continuing to benefit from weekly RDG classes. These 35-minute lessons engage students with challenging cross-curricula texts, and equip them with essential comprehension strategies. Successful reading equals successful learning, and our students will continue to be the beneficiaries of this school-wide focus.
BOSS CHALLENGE
What could you do with $20? Year 10 Social Science classes have been involved in a nationwide $20 Boss Challenge, where students are provided with a $20 start-up capital loan from the National Australia Bank. Students then compete with each other to sell their products during a Market Day in order to repay their loan. This year the students raised an impressive $940.65, which has been donated to their chosen charity Youngcare. Following our successful Qld State Award for Rookie Enterprise of the Year 2017, the opportunity to inspire the minds of our students, in teaching real world, hands on, transferrable life skills continues.

HIGH PERFORMANCE SPORT SUMMIT PROGRAM (HPS)
The HPS program for Years 7 – 9 caters for talented sporting students. Students’ engage in work which extends their physical skills and knowledge in relation to training, sports nutrition and sport psychology. Students also participate in extension programs such as gymnastics, sports aerobics, surfing and diving.

RUGBY UNION PROGRAM
Twenty-five girls and eighteen boys from Years 7 – 9 are part of the Rugby Union Program overseen by Mr Moon and Miss Greenwell. The students train hard each week and play in weekly competitions. They also participate in Rugby 7s gala days.

GEORGE ELLIS WORKSHOP
Instrumental Music students were starstruck when they participated in a workshop with conductor, composer and musical arranger, George Ellis. Mr Ellis has a rich and extensive repertoire of music skills and shared his knowledge and experience with our students while providing professional feedback and direction as they prepared for the competition season.

PHOENIX ORGANICS FROM THE SEP
As part of, Garden to Table, learning experience the SEP has once again processed the annual crop of rosellas into a beautiful, tart flavoured jam. The rosella bushes are grown organically each year from seeds harvested from the previous crop. Students must learn and follow strict health and safety processes. Enterprise skills are developed by creating labels, discussing costs and profit, promoting and selling the jam within the school community. The jam has been used in the SEP to make a delicious coconut and rosella jam slice, but is best enjoyed with scones and cream.

PRIMARY SCHOOL TRANSITION LIGHTNING CARNIVALS
Each year during May, Merrimac hosts two multi-sport carnivals for Years 5 and 6 students from local primary schools. Students enjoy playing a range of sports at the carnival while experiencing time in a high school setting, preparing them for the transition from Year 6 into Year 7.
STUDENTS

STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL (SRC)
The SRC have had a great year so far with the Swimming Carnival, Mini Marathon Colour Run and the Mother’s Day Stall. This fundraising supports students via the Student Council’s initiatives. The SRC focussed on increasing participation at the Mini Marathon by organising a free colour run. The event was a great success with many happy students covered in coloured powder. The focus for the SRC has now turned to planning for Multicultural Night in October.

KAYAKING PROGRAM
Selected students are participating in a kayaking program overseen by Mr Porche during Wednesday Sport. Students are refining their skills and will be competing in a number of competition events in the coming months.

GRANITE BELT PERFORMING ARTS CHALLENGE
Junior and Senior Dance troupe travelled to Stanthorpe to compete in the Granite Belt Performing Arts Challenge. After all the hard work and rehearsals, we achieved amazing success, with one 1st place, four 2nd places and two 3rd places.

WINTER ARTS FESTIVAL
Now in its second year, the Winter Arts Festival, showcases the wide and diverse range of talent across all the Arts. Visual Art, Music, Media, Dance, Drama and Instrumental Music are on display for everyone to see and experience.
INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS
Each year we welcome many wonderful students who come here to have an unforgettable experience both in our school and Australia. We provide them with a range of opportunities including visits to Cairns, Tangalooma, lunch at the Q1, Seaworld, Numinbah, Natural Bridge and the Daintree Rainforest. From seeing a wild cassowary, snorkelling on the beautiful reef, to milking cows and sitting in a natural hot spa under the stars, the trip to Cairns is a highlight in the international calendar. With a growing program and diversity in our student intake, we welcome all international students into our school. Their active involvement in our school enhances our global and cultural awareness.

FUN FRIDAY - YOU CAN SIT WITH ME
You Can Sit With Me is an amazing initiative from our Student Council to create a space where all students can come to feel safe, supported and to interact positively with peers and teachers. Students have the opportunity to ‘hang out’ with friends, meet new people and participate in fun activities. You Can Sit With Me has an amazing vibe and everyone is always encouraged to come and join in.

YEAR 12 LEADERSHIP INITIATIVES
Our 2018 leaders’ initiatives include everything from a ‘Photo Wall’ highlighting the fun and friendships at Merrimac, to SEP lunchtime activities, breaking down the barriers and ‘Year 12 Excellence in Effort’ parties. They organized mixed-gender-mixed-age basketball tournaments, music appreciation groups, games during the You Can Sit With Me Friday lunchtimes, and Drama games for junior students. They invited guest speakers to Year 12 assemblies, developed programs to integrate International Students into the community and mentored Junior Leos Club. The 2018 Year 12 Mission Statement of, ‘enriching understanding, acceptance and respect for one-another within the school community, benefiting current and future generations,’ was most certainly met!

MELANIE HANSON - 2017 GRIFFITH SCHOLARSHIP WINNER
Melanie Hanson was awarded The Deans Sir Samuel Griffith Scholarship for 2017. This scholarship provides Melanie with $60,000 towards her studies at Griffith University. We wish her every success in her future endeavours. We also encourage all students to explore the multiple scholarship opportunities each university has on offer.

PEER MENTORS
The Peer Mentors are an incredible group of Year 10 students who encourage and assist all of our Year 7 students. While on camp the Peer Mentors were involved in activities allowing them the opportunities to develop the necessary skills to support our Year 7’s including their transition into high school, ensuring they feel comfortable and thrive in their new school environment.

MERRIMAC LEO’S
The Leo’s committee has been busy raising money and helping communities in Australia and around the world. Their first initiative was to help Alzheimer and Dementia patients of the St George Community where studies have shown that memory is stimulated when people with degenerative diseases of the brain listen to music. Books have been collected and sent away to the Lesotho Community in Africa, helping both primary and secondary schools to establish libraries. Monies were raised at the Swimming Carnival and Mini Marathon to help with the postage of the book packages. The students have shown incredible drive and initiative when running these campaigns, and have genuinely felt the warmth that comes with helping others.

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WORLD CHALLENGE
In November twelve students will be travelling with two teachers to Thailand for four weeks, to complete the final phase of their World Challenge Program. These students have completed fundraising activities, training camps and numerous meetings in preparation for this exciting journey. The trip comprises an acclimation phase, trekking phase, community volunteering phase and finishes with some well-earned R&R. The life skills and experience gained from this opportunity will have a significant impact on the participant’s maturity and confidence as well as being a very valuable asset to add to their resume. Safe travels!

BULLYING NO WAY!
On 16 March, our school took a stand against bullying and celebrated the eighth National Day of Action against Bullying. Hundreds of students signed a petition to show their support and stood united to stamp out bullying. It was amazing how much support there was from the school community to drive this important message.

STYMIE - IF YOU SEE SOMETHING, SAY SOMETHING.
This year, to build on our approach to dealing with bullying across the school, we initiated STYMIE, the anonymous online notification system of harm or bullying. To ensure success of this system, we ran an information session for staff, parents and students in each year level. Students were challenged on their approach to bullying and what they would do if they saw poor behaviours occurring in the playground. Statistics show that over 85% of young people admit to seeing behaviour that is harming or dehumanising and never report it to an adult. We aim to reduce that number by having a visible Student Services Support team and offering STYMIE for all students to access and seek much needed support for those in need.

MINDFUL MERRIMAC - SMILING MIND
Merrimac Minds Matter (MMM) lessons focus on different strategies that our staff and students could use to reduce levels of stress, anxiety, improve sleep and general wellbeing. Smiling Mind is one program where students are given the opportunity to experience a form of guided meditation run at the start of period seven each week. Smiling Mind provides an opportunity for our students to begin the lesson in a calm and focused way. Being mindful, assists with self-regulation and allows us to be more controlled in challenging and stressful situations.

COMMONWEALTH GAMES CLOSING CEREMONY PERFORMERS
When the biggest sporting event of the year comes to town, everyone wants to be involved! For twenty five of our students it was the performance of a lifetime, when they took to the stage for the closing ceremony. We couldn’t be prouder of how professional they were during the process.

COMMUNITY ARTS
The Community Arts Program started as a way of linking school arts with engaged and interested students. Working together across all year levels, students’ work is displayed around the school, adding to the culture and our community spirit here.
ADOBE AMBASSADOR | ROSE DUGGAN

Rose Duggan continues to represent our school through her position as an Adobe Education Leader and Trainer. Rose runs successful learning sessions for students and teachers, in school and online. Rose has been invited to present a workshop at Education Queensland’s iEducate conference. Our students are fortunate to benefit from such an innovative educator.

EVERYDAY HERO | CASSIE JAMES

Cassie James felt honoured to be chosen to participate in the segment of the Commonwealth Games Closing Ceremony called Everyday Heroes. Nominees were chosen from government departments such as Department of Education, Police Service, Ambulance Officers, Hospital Emergency staff, Surf Life Savers, GLink and QBuild personnel. Cassie reported the nominees undertook hours of gruelling practice to ensure drum beat patterns were synchronised and the high powered choreography was perfect on the day of the Closing Ceremony.

OUTDOOR GREENSPACE

The greenspace outside O and N blocks has been transformed in a major landscaping project, undertaken earlier this year. A new grassy outdoor space has been created with garden beds encased in block walls that double as a seating option for students. Our groundsman David, has hand selected the trees and plants for the gardens ensuring longevity and shade as a consideration for students. Included in the design is a concrete area with combination tables and seating units. The expansive grassed area has been connected to our automated irrigation system. This much needed outdoor learning and recreation space has been fully utilized by students. Our You Can Sit With Me lunchtime activities have spread from its original site to encompass this additional space and recently our Boss Challenge event was held in this area. Students and staff commented on how great it was having this area for school events. This greenspace was funded by our fantastic Parents and Citizens Association who work tirelessly to provide attractive facilities and grounds for our school community.

PRIMARY SCHOOL TECHNOLOGY CHALLENGE

This year, in conjunction with a group of our partner primary schools, we are offering a Primary School Robotics Challenge. Our staff have been working with students and teachers from Broadbeach SS, Worongary SS and Robina SS to develop student capabilities in STEAM. Students are working towards competing in the first Lego League Competition, developing robots made out of Lego and writing code to solve different missions. This is very exciting and we look forward to expanding this competition.

OUTDOOR GREENSPACE

An electronic remote controlled wheelchair lift was installed to the rear of the stage in the school hall. Students who use a wheelchair, will now be able to join their peers on the stage for important events such as Presentation Night. When not in use, the lift can be folded away and locked in place to allow ease of access to the stairs, and protection for the device.

EVERY STUDENT COUNTS

Every student counts.