Dear Parents, Friends, Staff and Students,

The following text is part of an address delivered to the College Board last week by Ms Jo Howe, Director of Literacy/ Head of English. It is a wonderful article articulating the personal vision of a fine educator inextricably linked to the foundational principles of the College about learning and teaching.

**Great Expectations — Pedagogy and Practice**

Curriculum it seems recently is in a constant state of flux. Tonight I would like to explore the tension between the politically mandated curriculum and the broader philosophy that I hold as an English teacher. I want to take you on a journey behind the scenes of Mt St Michael’s English programming to try to discern how we create 21st century literate, global citizens.

2014 was an exceptional year for Mt St Michael’s. We achieved outstanding results in both the QCS test and Naplan National Testing. Literacy skills are integral to every aspect of these tests and to every piece of assessment students undertake. Students perform well in all aspects of the QCS test most notably the Writing Tasks and the Short Response items.

Naplan data is also encouraging. Year 9 Term 2 is the time we can receive some clear indications on the value we add to the MSM student. When we view the data in comparison to national averages and other like schools we can see that Mt St Michael’s is performing exceptionally well, particularly if we keep in mind the fact that we are not a selective school, nor do we draw students from a homogenous social setting. I believe we are adding value to the students who present at our College gates and who exit through those same gates in their final school journey.

Yet I also believe there is more to it than that. While standardized testing is useful for diagnostic indicators it does not always provide a full picture of what our students can do. I think we do excellent work in the College despite the national standardized testing, rather than in response to it. If we were only interested in the numbers this would be a very impersonal educational process indeed, focused on performance statistics and funding...
rather than the individual’s ability. The Naplan test, for example, does not really allow for critical thinking nor creative control. One of the recent changes in the Writing Task has been prompted by schools teaching in a formulaic way to produce a persuasive piece rather than allowing for a more creative, original response to stimulus. But surely a test with so many strings attached will only produce this kind of dilemma. The Australian Curriculum (AC) also demands that literacy offers an ‘expanding repertoire of English usage’ yet it is so full and demanding it actually reduces opportunity to engage in a range of texts types and modes. So the national testing instrument for literacy does not test the key demands for 21st century citizens. At MSM we have acknowledged these tensions and instead strive for a far broader ideal in the shaping of student learning outcomes.

I want to firstly focus on the English teacher in this presentation because we do not work in mechanistic systems of data rather in communities of people.

Keeping this affirmation of teachers in mind I recently asked my English team what they value as English teachers. They gave me a range of responses from the fresh new teachers – ‘I want to make a difference’ to the more mature hands who want to equip students with the skills for engaging in an ever changing global world’. But most consistent was the call for creative and critical thinking. A call that mirrors the broader educational aims of this College.

How do we achieve this? Well English teachers are the primary stakeholders for the delivery of literacy in the school. But literacy has changed dramatically even over my teaching career. English teachers are now also visual art teachers, design teachers as well as teachers of the old basics such as spelling, punctuation and grammar. We live in a multimedia world so we now need to teach visual grammars as well as mastery of and access to new technologies. This can be a stretch for us. We have had to learn to adapt, adopt and accept. So the old world of simply teaching the traditional 3Rs is no longer enough for a new world that uses varied and diverse modes and media. So problems we face are many: the competing aims of the AC, the grammarphobic student and teacher, the effective use of technology and getting that balance right and the broader goals of encouraging creative, critical thinkers.

How do we solve these competing tensions? With a steady hand and clear focus. With a marriage of the old and new literacies. With a balanced approach to technology and the other older technology of the pen and paper. With a simple philosophy of students needing to be able to walk before they can run. We embrace the 3 Rs – reading, writing and ruminating.

Reading – it is the cornerstone of our core business. I am an advocate in marinating students in text. We have many vibrant reading programs
throughout the English curriculum and I think, contrary to popular belief, our students actually love to read. We encourage them to read for pleasure not just for curriculum outcomes and I think this is a far sneakier way to actually achieve those outcomes. We have invested in class texts for Year 7 and 8 Literature Circles, we have worked in conjunction with the library to have depth in our reading shelves to suit out different units. I provided a detailed suggested reading list to new Year 7 students before they even arrived and we have a wonderful reading unit as the last unit for Year 12 to encourage them to pick up books again as they leave us. I recently engaged in a Book Chat with Year 12 students that was instigated by the students. I gave them a classic to read and I read one of their novels. It was a great way to chat about books outside of the curriculum yet still meet the aims of our broader philosophy – just a simple love of subject English.

The second ‘R’ is writing. Clearly we have this formula right according to all external data but we have decided to try something new this year to continue to improve. When students come to MSM it is with a basic assumption they have covered the curriculum material in the primary years of schooling. The AC for Year 7 and 8 works on this assumption expecting more complex exploration of grammar. Unfortunately not all students have this basic knowledge so we have undertaken a grammar project utilizing the grammar expertise of one of our members of staff. She has lectured at universities and has an admirable CV regarding her linguistic skills. While the aim is to continue to improve student outcomes in this area, we have also acknowledged some broader needs. After a pedagogical shift in the way grammar was taught in the 1970s there are many teachers who do not have the grammar knowledge of our more experienced teachers. So a targeted program, guided by an expert, allows for a common language for both teachers and students to engage in. This passing of the linguistic flame from a generation of grammarians to a new generation of teacher will only provide a better future for student outcomes. We are in the early stages trialing the program in Year 7 and 8. We began with a diagnostic test to ascertain need and we have targeted a program to suit. I also have encouraged other subjects to use spelling lists and word walls to develop subject specific vocabulary. With this approach we hope to create a firmer basis on which our students can begin to jog and then run.

Finally we want the girls to think – to ruminate. We need them to use their detailed knowledge of language structures and their immersion in texts to have something to say. We want them to creative, to imagine, to design, to argue, to challenge, to critically analyse. We want them to experiment with language, to test their boundaries and the genres. We want them to understand that learning is an exchange – a way of finding out more about their world and what it means to be human. We want them to run. We have often been damned for marking too hard, for expecting too much and for creating a program that is too challenging. But clearly it is working. The data points out this approach is effective. The student by the end of their schooling at MSM has been given a gift. They are literate 21st century
citizens who can think and innovate and create. Many leave saying they loved English and for me that is all the data I need to affirm our approach.

Alison Terrey
Principal
**MEGGHANN THOMAS** has once again been selected to represent Queensland in the National Artistic Roller Skating Championships in July. This is her third year representing Queensland and she was also a member of the Australian Oceania team that competed in an international competition in April.

At the state competition last weekend, Megghann was the Queensland champion in all five of the disciplines in which she skated. A marvellous achievement!

**GEMMA CARTER, GRACIE EGAN, ANNALISE GOWING, GRACE PORTER** and **GEMMA SWANSON** on their selection to represent Australia in aerobics at the ANAC World Championships from 26th – 31st July.

**IMOGEN BARRY** on being the recipient of the Year 10 Star Student for this fortnight. Imogen was nominated not only for her outstanding contribution and commitment to her school work and co-curricular activities both Cultural and spiritual, but also for her respectful and gracious manner.

**ZOE DRYNAN** (Year 9) on being selected for the U15 North West Independent Basketball team to compete at the Met North Trials on Tuesday 19th May.

**MSM’S INTERMEDIATE A TENNIS TEAM** played Loreto in the Grand Final on Saturday, 09 May. The team played exceptionally well and won three straight sets after being two sets down. In the end it came down to the final doubles, but unfortunately MSM lost by two games. Great effort!

Towards the end of next week, you will receive details of an online survey regarding the operation and effectiveness of the College.

This survey forms part of our process to continued improvement and our Non-State Schooling Assessment (NSSAB) cyclic review.
Mt St Michael's College is pleased to announce the launch of a new range of College merchandise.
The College Principal, Ms Alison Terrey and the President of the Past Pupils’ Association, Ms Keleisha Rigby-Smith cordially invite you to the

90TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

OF

Mt ST MICHAEL’S COLLEGE

on Saturday August 1st 2015

at 10:30am in the Sophia Centre

After the Liturgy and Tours of the College,
Light refreshments will be served.
Our celebrations will conclude at 12:30pm.

To confirm your attendance at this event RSVP by 5th June
please click here)

Mary Aikenhead Day on Friday 31st July will provide the student body with the opportunity to celebrate the 90th Anniversary of MSM. This event on August 1st is predominantly for the wider MSM community: Sisters of Charity, past pupils, current and past parents, past and present members of staff and all those who have contributed to our community in significant and meaningful ways.

For further details contact Sloane Poole-Warren on
Telephone: 3858 4967
Email: pastpupils@msm.qld.edu.au

WWW.MSM.QLD.EDU.AU
Marriage Encounter Notice

Worldwide Marriage Encounter: A weekend away for married couples in peaceful, picturesque surroundings – away from the distractions of everyday living. Take time out of your busy schedule, to invest in your most precious asset . . . your Marriage! This is a unique opportunity to recharge your relationship batteries, refocus on each other and fall in love all over again!

Weekend date: 15th – 17th May 2015

Venue: Santa Teresa Spirituality Centre, Ormiston QLD (on Brisbane’s bayside)
For bookings/details contact: Maria and David Murphy, ph (07) 3342 1456, dandmmurphy@optusnet.com.au
Information website: www.wwme.org.au

Blazer Sleeve Alterations

$12 to let sleeves down
$18 to take sleeves up

Contact Fran Harry at Tattie Ann
0402 159 092
fran@tattieann.com.au

Fran Harry is a Past Pupil of the College.
She manages our Secondhand Uniform Shop and can also be contacted at the College.

P&F Ladies Lunch

SAVE THE DATE

Friday, 21 August 2015
Mt St Michael’s Staff and students take great pride in the Mission and Values of the College and as an extension of this, we are continuing with our Ministry Care Programme in 2015.

We are aware that there are students and families within our community who are at risk due to a variety of factors. So, through the various networks of the Parents & Friends Association, the College Foundation, the Past Pupils, the Pastoral Programme at the College and simply by word of mouth, we hope to become aware of these situations and to respond on a case by case basis.

The College acknowledges that just by being here we are carrying on the mission and vision of the Foundress of the Sisters of Charity, Mary Aikenhead. The poor, the vulnerable, the marginalised in society were always close to the heart of Mary Aikenhead.

Therefore we continue to respond as a community through preparing meals for families whose difficult circumstances we had been made aware of. We will continue this over the course of this year.

If you would like to contribute to the Ministry Care Programme and support those who are going through difficult times, please contact Stephen Campion on scampion@msm.qld.edu.au

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Dear Parents & Guardians

Onsite parking in the Grantuly grounds, undercover in the Ionian Centre and within the campus near the Sophia Centre is only permitted for staff.

Please also refrain from parking across driveways, adhere to the 40 km speed limit around the side streets and also be considerate of those living around the College, when dropping and picking up students.

Please do not drop off or pick up students within the College grounds.
CALLING ALL MARTHA STEWARTS

We need your help in donations of baked goodies for our cake stall and cafe, on MSM OPEN DAY on SUNDAY, 17 MAY 2015.

Suggestions are:
Whole cakes, brownies, shortbread biscuits, fudge, toffees mini-muffins/ large muffins cupcakes, mini quiches etc.,

Donations can be dropped off on Saturday, 16 May midday to 3.00 pm
Grantully Board Room
(Please note packaging will be available from the reception area of Grantully, if you wish to pre-package)

If you are willing to donate baked items, please email:
Christine Lenthal on Christine.lenthal@bigpond.com
Maria Wong on mariaerrols@bigpond.com