Dear Parents, Staff and Students,

This morning I decided it was time for a break from my meetings and emails; it was time for a walk around the College, to find some classrooms that I could wander into and be inspired. When I take time for this, it invariably becomes the highlight of my day. And so it was.

In the Dance studio adjacent to the auditorium, Mrs Brasch-McPhee was commencing a warm up routine with her Year 11 Dance class. I was keen to know what the students enjoyed about studying Dance and why they thought education in the Arts was important. We chatted about the importance of appreciating the differences in learning and the importance of being able to express yourself in different ways. In thinking about the Arts in general, it was a broader concept; the expression of thoughts, ideas, feelings, essentially in my words, exploring what it is to be human. We all thought that this was rather important.

Next stop was the Music classroom with Ms Townsley working with a Year 10 music class, a small group, but I told them how important I believe it is that we resource music education in our curriculum. As we chatted about their work they demonstrated why this is so. They were working on music composition, having been given a series of short documentary videos to which they had to compose a sound track. With 21st century technology at our finger tips, we listened to the sound tracks they had composed, analysed the music structures and notations, which we could see on the screen, the old blackboard of bygone days, whilst watching the video clip to accompany the music composition. Their analytical discussion focused on what the composer was trying to achieve and the skills required for this task.

One of the critical dynamics that was happening in this classroom was the way the students and the teacher were discussing their work, which was a first draft, without fear or embarrassment; simply learning from each other in a collaborative and trusting setting. This was the norm. Little wonder that these young students love learning music. In their words, Allysha: “we can express who we are”; Emma: “we can express our identity and personality and gain confidence through performance”; Grace: “it is more exciting than other subjects due to lots of choice and room for creativity”,
and Roisin: “your work is a reflection of yourself and you can express it to other people”.

We then talked about musicians and artists who reach the pinnacle of artistic excellence and Ms Townsley emphasized the importance of developing skill with words similar to the expression that I have often used, “deliberate practice”, over and over. In achieving excellence, this is more important than having a natural gift and it applies to everything that we choose to learn.

They also told me how inspired they were by the amazing Year 12 Art work which is now hanging in the foyer and mezzanine floor of the Ionian centre. They were amazed at the technical quality of these works. I, too, am amazed by the high level of skill, but equally inspired, perhaps more so, by the conceptual thinking processes and exploration of ideas, along with the personal courage and humility that is integral to these final pieces of work. With permission, I would like to reflect on the work of Grace Wallace. Her major body of work is titled “Numinous” which is defined as: “Describing an experience that makes you fearful yet fascinated, awed yet attracted – the powerful, personal feeling of being overwhelmed and inspired.” It consists of a graphite drawing and a series of photographs.

Grace was in her study period so I was able to find her and I asked her to tell me about her work and what she was attempting to achieve. Grace spoke about life as a journey and how we become marked by our experiences, the joyful and the challenging, like roads on a map or stamps on our passports. She spoke about the young girl who is at the heart of her portrait photographs (she is the younger sister of one of her friends), how every time she meets her, Grace is taken by her joy in life and her capacity to embrace every delight. In positive psychology we call this “awe and wonder”.

Grace sums up what she is trying to achieve in her art work with these words: “This artwork is about letting our life colour every inch of our being with our stories, our journeys and our adventure, allowing ourselves to be overwhelmed, fearful, attracted, inspired.”
In our conversation we also spoke about “deliberate practice”, the hours that have been put into this work; the thinking, the exploring, the researching, the conversations with her art teacher, Ms Dobrenov, drafting, trial and error. And now with some pride we can look at this final product, in awe and wonder. It was a wonderful conversation.

Meanwhile, across the corridor we had a totally different learning experience happening with students from other colleges, even including some young men, joining our young Mt St Michael’s women who have a love of learning Mathematics. They were part of the Days of Excellence programme and our HOD of Maths, Ms O’Neill was engaging them with challenging problem solving activities. When I asked why they chose to be here, it was for the challenge of a new experience, out of their comfort zones, the love of problem solving and how even though this was in Mathematics, it was learning that could be applied to everything. We thought about this rich opportunity and the young girls abducted in Nigeria, taken from their families and denied this priceless gift of learning.

On this morning walk, I did not get further than the ground floor of the Ionian Centre, but what a walk it was.

Learning, what a gift it is.

Thank you to all our teachers, our staff and our students from whom I learn something new every day. You are inspiring.

Sincerely,
Alison Terrey

Learning is a life-long journey.

I am taking study leave in July, travelling to the United States, fulfilling some dreams with:

- One week at Harvard Graduate School of Education on: Leadership - an Evolving Vision
- One week at Boston Theological College studying Scripture and Theology: An Abundant Life in Christ.

I will be back during Week 3 in Term 3.

Mrs Rosie Simpson is also travelling to the US for further study in the July holidays. It is the ISTE conference at Atlanta, Georgia. This is a conference which focuses on the use of computers in education and is the largest educational conference in the USA with about 18,000 delegates.

We are both looking forward to these rich opportunities and will return with new ideas and visions to be shared.
Congratulations

Australian Brain Bee Competition
The following Year 10 students participated in the Queensland Brain Institute’s ‘Australian Brain Bee Competition’, a University of Queensland initiative.

Tayla Linton-Smith, Gabby Brown, Emily Passmore, Beccie Stegman, Olivia Humphreys, Catherine Toppping, Annabel Wallace, Nicola Simitci, Laura Straede, Alexandra McDonough, Sammi Knott, Nicole Westerdale, Amber Sawford and Georgia Smith. Gabby Brown was successful in making it through to the state round.

Hannah Murphy, Emily Wright and Brittany Yarde on their selection in the Met North Cross Country team to compete in Toowoomba in July.

Georgia Atcheson who competed in the Regional Finals of the Rostrum Voice of Youth Competition. She has won her heat and will compete at the South Queensland Semi-Finals this Saturday.

To all members of the MSM Interact Club who were recently awarded a 2013–2014 Presidential Citation from Rotary International for actively working to ‘Engage Rotary, Change Lives’. Mrs Shaughn Forbes (The Gap/Ashgrove Club) presented the club with the award and thirty students with their Interact Badges and Rotary’s 2015 pin “Light Up Rotary”.

To our new UQ Science Ambassadors, Grace Heron and Natascha Kamp. Both are Year 11 students and they were presented with their badges at a recent whole College assembly. Their role is to liaise between the University and the College regarding upcoming workshops, presentations and seminars that students are invited to attend.

To our Maths students, who participated in the recent Maths Teams Challenge. The results being, 1st Brisbane State High, 2nd Brisbane Boys Grammar Team 1, 3rd Brisbane Boys Grammar Team 2, St Joseph’s Gregory Terrace, Padua College, The Gap SHS and then MSM!

The final placings of the four MSM teams were as follows:

- MSM Team 1 7th
- MSM Team 2 11th
- MSM Team 4 20th
- MSM Team 3 27th

Congratulations to all those students that competed. You were all a credit to MSM!
As you are now undoubtedly aware, MSM has launched its own dedicated Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/MtStMichaelsCollege and updated our College website http://www.msm.qld.edu.au

As a result of these exciting developments the format of the Spirit has changed. It will continue to include the Principal's reflection, congratulations and community news.