

Boys and girls,

I would like to say a few words now that we are at the end of the 2016 school year.

First, I asked you two questions at the beginning of the first trimester in April. I hope that you remember them. They were ‘What do you want to be in the future?’ and ‘What is it that you desire the most?’ You probably haven’t yet found any final answer to either of them. They are very difficult questions.

Steve Jobs once said, “If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?” Steve Jobs died six years ago at the age of 56. I am almost the same age, and I sometimes ask myself the same question. “If today were the last day of my life, would I want to do what I am about to do today?” This question means a lot as you get older. Life is short, and not always fair. Not every good person is able to live a

happy life. And not a few good people are sometimes burdened with diseases, injuries, money problems, or other unhappy things. There are no guarantees that diligence and honesty will bring you good luck.

I think we have to continue gaining knowledge before we will be able to find answers that are right for ourselves. That may not be easy. There are no guarantees that you will ever come to a final decision. I certainly can't promise that you will. Even so, you should not take a dark view of life. I hope you will learn as much as you can, for learning is the only thing we can do. And I believe Aoyama High School is a good place for all of you to learn many things in a variety of fields. This will surely give you a chance to gain intellectual strength, judgment, and powers of expression.

Now, to you eleventh graders,

I am sure that you all enjoyed visiting Kyoto, Nara, and Osaka. These three cities have much longer histories than do those of the Kanto plain, including Tokyo. There are countless important cultural properties there, such as historical temples and shrines, as well as traditional handicrafts and arts. It goes without saying that we are all able to find a guide for tomorrow by taking lessons from the past. It must have been a great opportunity for you to visit the cities and learn something about the old that you had never imagined before. It must also have been a good chance for you to discover things that have been created there quite recently, too.

The school trip to the three cities gave you a chance to reaffirm your identities as modern Japanese who have a rich past to be proud of. I think the school trip offered wonderful opportunities for you to start thinking about where you have come from and where you will

be going, as well as about what you will pass on to the next generation and how you might be able to change society for the better.

Next,

since the government has lowered the voting age, some of you will have a chance to vote in the Metropolitan Assembly election in July. Your *sempai*, the 69th graduating class, had a chance to vote two times last year: in the House of the Councilors election and in the election for Governor of Tokyo. Voting is one of the important rights guaranteed to us under the Constitution, and it is also a civic duty. The Metropolitan Assembly election will be a very good chance for you to think about some of the political issues we face in our society today, such as so many children on waiting lists for kindergartens and nursery schools, our social security system facing challenges in this aging society, and too many

young people being forced to give up studying because of the lack of money. You should all take an interest in political issues in order to try to help make our society better. It is you, boys and girls, who can change the world.

Finally,

You may at times feel in low spirits. There will surely be hardships and, perhaps, bitter experiences. But such things are necessary for you to become mature. They will make you stronger, more patient, and wiser. So don't hesitate to accept as many new challenges as you can. But if it is hard striving to solve your problems all by yourselves, please talk to your friends or family, teachers or the School Councilor, or me. We will always try our best to give you useful advice, and we will always be at your side.

I would also like to give you all my best wishes. I look forward to seeing you on the first day of new school year this coming April.

Thank you very much.

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