

Boys and girls, I would like to say a few words now that we are at the end of the 2017 school year.

On February 16th, we had a long-distance race at the *Meiji Jingu* Ballpark for the first time. A lot of photos and short videos on Instagram have shown me that many of you enjoyed the race. I think it is good for us to have good relationships with facilities nearby our school, such as the Nippon Seinenkan, the Chichibunomiya Rugby Field, and the National Stadium, which is still under construction. I would like to have a school event in collaboration with one of them next school year, too.

This month, our tenth-graders learned how to help people who would not be able to get home in case of a huge earthquake. Many foreigners may evacuate to our school—old people and children, too. You would have to take care of them as well as of yourselves, probably while worrying about your families, too. You might have to prepare rooms for women, or people who have been injured. It is impossible for us to prevent natural disasters from occurring, but we will be able to reduce the damage that they produce.

And the eleventh graders visited Kyoto, Nara, and Osaka. These cities have much longer histories than do those of the Kantō plain. 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. I hope all of you were able to find a guide for tomorrow by taking lessons from the past. The school trip to these cities has given you a chance to reaffirm your identities as modern Japanese who have a rich past to be proud of. I think the school trip has 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.

I would like to talk about two things today.

First, I hope that you remember what I told you at the starting point of this school year, last April. It was that it is important for you to maintain a willingness to accept the challenges of new things. Make the best use of activities after school, discuss things with your friends, and accept as many new challenges as you can. Do what you can do today for the sake of your future self.

Steve Jobs, ex-CEO of Apple Computer, 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 seven 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. 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 that 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, powers of expression, and the bonds of friendship.

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Second, and last,

Learning a foreign language is good for you not only for gaining a means of communication but also as a way to widen your thinking. You can't think anything without language. And a language gives you a way to think. You think differently in a different language. Thus, if you learn a foreign language, you will be able to learn a different view of things, too. You may be able to think more logically and genuinely in a foreign language since you don't have any particular preconceived notions when you think in a foreign language. You may have quite different images in your mind when you hear the word "inu" and the word "dog." "Inu" may remind you of a *mameshiba* dog, and "dog" may make you think of a Golden Retriever. You understand much more clearly when you hear the word "identity" than you do when you hear *jikodouitsusei*. You understand you have to think differently when you translate a Japanese sentence without a subject into English. What subject should you choose?

The principal of my own high school made his speeches in English. I was always very much impressed by them. I remember I was very happy to be a student of a sophisticated high school. Unfortunately, I forgot almost all the content of his speeches, though I still respect him and am still proud of being part of that school. He exchanged morning greetings with his students, including me, every morning at the entrance to that school. After more than four decades, I still cherish his way of treating us as soon-to-be adults, not children anymore.

In closing, you may sometimes feel in low spirits, and if it is hard striving to solve your problems all by yourselves, please talk to your friends or family, teachers, the School Counselor, 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.

998 words ( including omitted parts: 210 words )