

Boys and girls, at the end of the first semester, 2016, I would like to talk about three things today,

First,

I asked you two questions at the beginning of this semester in April.

I am sure 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.

Actually, **even** I myself **am** still not completely confident

of the wisdom of my decision,

which I made when I was still young, to become a school teacher.

Was it a good one or a bad one for me?

What about my students?

Was Mr. Ozawa a good teacher for them or not?

I have been asking myself these things for a long time.

And I still don't think

I have found a final answer yet.

I think most of us 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, I hope you will learn as much as you can  
since learning is the only thing we can do.

Second,

Twelfth graders, since the government has lowered the voting age,  
some of you had a chance to vote in the House of Councilors election  
on the second Sunday of this month.

I hope all of you who have got the right to vote went to the polls.

What did you want candidates to do?

What campaign promises were you interested in?

Did they seem possible?

Did you think they were feasible?

Did you check into candidates' political achievements?

Did you refer to any articles on the Internet before voting?

Voting is one of the important rights

guaranteed to us under the Constitution,

and it is also a civic duty.

I have a great interest in the voting rate among the young, age 18 and 19.

The House of Councilors election

was a very good chance for you  
to think about some of the political issues  
we face in our society today.

And some of you will have the chance to vote again at the end of this month.

There will be an election for the Governor of Tokyo.

I think we should all take an interest in political issues  
in order to try to help make our society better.

It is essential for you to have critical ways of thinking;

to compare campaign promises,

and to learn about candidates and their political parties.

It is you, boys and girls, who can change the world.

Third, and last,

As you know, every morning I say hello to you at the entrance to our school.

I feel very sad

when some of you pass right in front of me without saying anything,

not making eye contact with me,

or sometimes even hiding your faces with umbrellas.

I once told my daughters, who are 19 and 22 years old, how I felt.

One of them said,

“Oh, Dad. I hate going to a school

where the principal stands in front of the gate  
and says good morning to students every morning.  
It's awful.”

Still, I do hope you might say ‘Good morning, sir.’

or ‘How are you, Principal?’ with a big smile on your face.

Let's exchange morning greetings.

I have told you three things today;

first, to keep trying to find future goals for yourselves,

second, to take an interest in political issues,

and, finally, to say hello to me with a smile.

Boys and girls,

during the summer vacation,

and as you look forward toward the School Festival, the Gaien-sai,

accept as many new challenges as you can.

And, of course, study hard.

In closing my speech,

I will tell you the same phrases

that I told you at the beginning of this semester in April.

Do what you can do today for the sake of your future self.

Where there is a will, there is a way.

Work toward realizing your dreams.

Thank you very much.