

Boys and girls, here at the end of the first trimester of 2019, I would like to talk about “diversity.”

Cultural diversity is very important for the continued improvement of our lives. The lack of diversity in a society can make it difficult for its members to understand people from other countries and cultures. A diversity of people and ways of thinking can, first of all, stimulate our curiosity, which is the mother of knowledge.

Our history gives us good examples. In the Asuka and Nara Eras, our ancestors imported from China not only *kanji* characters but also a political system, in addition to Buddhism, city planning, and a wide variety of trees, such as the plum, as well as flowers and other plant life. They could not have improved Japan without such things from China. In the early Meiji Era, the government decided to import advanced technologies and systems from European countries and the U.S. Within a very short time, there were countless imports in such fields as administration and legislation systems, military affairs, engineering, economics, medicine, industry, culture, and art. They also had to translate European languages into Japanese, and for this they often created new Japanese words, such as *kokka* (nation), *shinpo* (progress), and *kyōiku* (education). They also added new meanings to some *kango*, or Japanese words of Chinese origin, such as *jiyū* (freedom), *ishiki* (consciousness), and *kakumei* (revolution). Some of these were later exported to China, and it is said that 70% of two-character vocabulary items in written Chinese are from Japan. In any case, our predecessors could not have created a modern state without things from Europe, the U.S., and many other countries. One particularly important thing is, I believe, that our ancestors were very lucky to have learned the use of *kanji*, for without it they would have had much more difficulty translating European languages.

With too much sameness in culture and historical background, people are likely to be reluctant to accept new things, and it may take a longer time to improve their lives. While sameness may contribute to stability, it is obviously impossible for a nation today to live alone, separated from other countries economically, politically, and culturally. We need to understand other value systems, other ways of thinking, and other ways of living. We have to cooperate with one another and have mutual respect for our different cultural backgrounds. Diversity gives us a good chance to improve our society—a good chance to create new things and new values. A society without diversity would be unable to produce many things that would be helpful to it. While Japan may not yet be a country that generally values diversity, we can certainly learn from the benefits that the great cultural and linguistic diversity in Europe and in the U.S. have produced. We should be willing to accept diversity in order to improve our society.

省略（始） Secondary schools and universities without diversity would be unable to offer sufficient stimulation of students' curiosity. You have met many good students here at our school, some who are better than you in certain fields. Your friends' good points are, by extension, your own good points. It is important to spend your school lives in friendly rivalry with others who are better than you in certain fields.

I think learning a foreign language is one of the most useful ways of helping you understand diversity. It is good for you not only for gaining a means of communication but also as a way to widen your thinking. Thought itself is impossible without language, and a language gives you a way to think. You think differently in a different language. If you learn a foreign language, you will be able to learn a different view of things, as well. You may be able to think more logically and meaningfully in a foreign language because, when you think in a foreign language, you don't have any particular preconceived notions.省略（終）

Today I have talked about how important it is for us to respect cultural diversity.

In closing my speech, let me just say that 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, 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 hope you will try as many new things as you can during the summer vacation. I look forward to seeing you at the starting point of the second trimester.

Thank you very much.

768 words