

Principal's speech at the starting point of the second trimester of 2019

First of all, how did you spend your summer vacations? Many of you attended the summer training camps for club activities. Many of you must have spent a lot of time preparing for the *Gaien-sai*. And many of you, especially the twelfth graders, must have studied hard. This year we had a long rainy season, but after that we had some very hot days, more than fifteen days over 35 degrees Celsius. And it will be very hot this weekend by the weather forecast. Please take a good care of yourselves. It is only five days to go to the *Gaien-sai*.

Boys and girls, here at the starting point of the second trimester of 2019, I would like to talk about two things.

First, I hope you remember that I talked about cultural diversity at the end of the first trimester. It is very important for continued improvements in our lives. A 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.

With too much sameness in cultural and historical backgrounds, 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, or 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 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.

Last year, I introduced to you the words of Kazuo Ishiguro, a British novelist and Nobel Prize Laureate born in Japan: “We’re living in a time when everybody is fracturing into rival groups, even within countries that have held together for some time,” adding that he would be content if his work could somehow help reverse this current negative mood across the globe.

Unfortunately, I’m afraid we face difficult situations in which we need to be even smarter than before in dealing with other nations.

I have been worrying about so many conflicts all over the world: chaotic conditions in Syria, the trade war between the U.S. and China, continuing demonstrations in Hong Kong against extraditing criminal suspects to mainland China, and an awkward relationship between Japan and South Korea, conflicts between Russia and the EU and the U.S. resulting from the annexation of Crimea by Russia; conflicts between China and Vietnam and the Philippines over a Chinese artificial island in the South China Sea. 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. Our school is no exception. We should be willing to accept diversity so as to improve our school. It's the same reason. Every student should be respected. I hope you agree with me on this point.

Second, and last, as I often tell you, learning is essential for us. We must keep on learning until we leave this world, which has always been changing in its societies, cultures, traditions, value systems, worldviews, and religions. Such things may seem unchanging and unchanged, but even a small change each year could result in a huge change over decades. Hans Rosling, the author of "Factfulness," wrote in that book, "Cultures, nations, religions, and people are not rocks. They are in constant transformation." If we ignore this fact, we will lose a chance to improve our society. That's why we must continue to learn. He also wrote that "People who took my tests over the years, did have knowledge, but it was outdated. People had a worldview dated to the time when their teachers had left school." When I was a child, I learned at school the world population was about 3.6 billion. It is about 7 billion now. It almost doubled in only fifty years. What will be the number by the year 2100, about 80 years from now? The UN predicts the world population will have increased by another 4 billion. That will be 11 billion. It is thought that that will be the peak. But the number of children has already arrived at its peak. Rosling wrote, "Over the last 50 years, the number of babies per woman dropped all the way to the amazingly low world average of just below 2.5. This includes the populations of Iran, Mexico, India, Bangladesh, Brazil, Turkey, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka." It seems that the poorest 13 countries in the world represent only 6 percent of its population. "The annual number of births in the world has already stopped increasing," he wrote. Did you know that? I think we must learn as many new things as we can. You will learn many things at universities in a few years. But please remember that what you will learn there may be outdated within 10 or 15 years of graduating. That's why recurrent

education is regarded as being very important. I hope you will continue to learn, with high aims of making our society better through your lives.

Today I have talked about two things: first, how important it is for us to respect cultural diversity and, second, how important it is for us to keep on learning.

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 second trimester. I look forward to seeing your enthusiastic activities during the *Gaien-sai*. It doesn't matter whether you will be playing an acting role or working behind the scenes. Help one another, and enjoy yourselves. And after the *Gaien-sai*, I hope you will concentrate on studying again.

Thank you very much.

1,085 words → 801 words