

At the end of the 2019 school year

This month, our tenth-graders learned how to help people who would not be able to get home in case of a major 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 own 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 would be able to reduce the damage that they produce.

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 them and learn something about the past that you had never imagined before. I hope all of you were able to find some guidance for the future by learning 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 at the end of the 2019 school year.

First, Hans Rosling writes in his book *Factfulness* that “Societies and cultures are not like rocks, unchanging and unchangeable. They move.” “... societies and cultures move --- often much faster,” because of “... the spread of the Internet, smartphones, and social media, ... .” He also writes, “What you learn about the world at school will become outdated within 10 or 20 years of graduating. So we must find ways to update adults’ knowledge too.” As I often tell you, we live in an age of uncertainty. We don’t know what will happen in the next 10 or 20 years. That’s why we should be lifelong learners. Don’t take only dark views of your lives. There may be many more chances to leave your marks and achievements in this age than in times when humans lived in surroundings that didn’t change much. We don’t have time to spend complaining about the age that we live in. Rosling also writes, “Cultures, nations, religions, and people are not rocks. They are in constant transformations.” Enjoy changes in our society. Take on as many new challenges as you can. If you can’t adapt yourselves to changes, you will never be happy. And you should be lifelong learners, so as to be able to adapt to changes in our society. Life should be full of adventures. Be ambitious, boys and girls.

Second, not a few good people are sometimes burdened with diseases, handicaps, or other misfortunes. But every human being hopes

to be happy, and everyone has the right to be happy. Let's think about people, including children, who are handicapped or who have serious diseases. Things must be very difficult for them. They must have experienced a lot of suffering. Think about them. They are part of our society. We need to consider how we treat one another — and to remember that we should be considerate toward others in our communities. Everyone deserves respect. That's why here at our school diversity among students should be respected. You all have quite different backgrounds, surroundings, and personalities. You should respect your friends and people around you. Prejudice comes from ignorance. And I believe it is important to have personal contact with others who are different from you. This will help liberate you from the chains of ignorance. I hope our society might become one in which everyone is respected and has the opportunity to try to do what he or she wants to do for his or her own personal purposes. Let's work together to help make our society better.

Today I have told you two things: first, that you should be lifelong learners and, second, that you should respect one another.

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, 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 offer 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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