

At the End of the 2019 Academic Year

Boys and girls, I had planned to talk about two things today: first, that you should be lifelong learners; and, second, that you should respect one another. But I've changed my mind.

As you probably know, WHO has announced that the pandemic of the new coronavirus is accelerating. This month, our tenth-graders were supposed to have learned how to help people who would not be able to get home in case of a major earthquake. The eleventh graders were supposed to have visited Kyoto, Nara, and Osaka on a school trip. But we have been forced to cancel almost all of our educational activities. That has made us very sad.

The outbreak of the new coronavirus has concerned all of us during these past few months. We have seen very many people infected with COVID-19 worldwide—and more than 12,000 deaths due to it. The number of the deaths was roughly 5,000 just ten days ago, and it has been skyrocketing. Fear of this pandemic has spread all over the world, negatively impacting global transportation and the economy.

On the news we have heard that “while Japan has narrowly kept the outbreak of COVID-19 under control, the current situation could still lead to “over-shooting,” a nationwide explosive surge in infections.” It is unclear when and how the spread of this coronavirus will cease, and it is said that it will be a year or more before either an antidote or a vaccine can be developed.

It took more than two years for the last major pandemic, the Spanish flu in the early 20th century, to subside. It infected about a quarter of the world's population at that time, and it killed as many as 100 million people.

We have to protect ourselves medically. Never forget to wash your hands before and after having meals or using the bathroom, or after returning home from school or from any other place. Wear a medical face mask when you come to school and go home, as well as at any time that you use a train or bus. Avoid visiting crowded places. It is very important for all of us—you and your families, my fellow teachers and myself—not to get infected with COVID-19.

A terrible plague in Europe in the 14th century, known as the Black Death, resulted in greatly increased anti-Semitism and the persecution and massacre of huge numbers of Jews. Many Christians believed that Jews had maliciously poisoned water wells. Now,

with respect to the new coronavirus, you must learn that there is a danger of a growth in anti-Asian sentiment in many parts of the world. We should all be wise enough to avoid discrimination and prejudice.

In closing, I would 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. And one last thing: I would like you to compare two scripts of today's speech—before and after revision—which I will soon have posted on our school website.

Thank you very much.