

Starting Point of the 2020 Academic Year

I had planned to talk about two things today: first, that I do hope you follow the rules that I have made for the period of the Olympic Games; second, that you should keep on learning so as to be able to help change society for the better. But I've changed my mind.

Boys and girls, tomorrow, on Tuesday, we had been scheduled to have our 75th Entrance Ceremony, and all of you must have been looking forward to this experience. Many of you had been planning to try to induce freshmen to join in your club activities. There must be a lot of good things that you want to pass on to them. I hope you will tell them a lot about our school and its proud traditions.

But not tomorrow. On the news I have heard the government is going to declare a state of emergency tomorrow. We have to protect ourselves medically first. The Metropolitan Board of Education has decided to postpone the beginning of the 2020 academic year until after the end of the Golden Week holidays in May. Until then, you will come to school in groups of your own particular grades, or individually, once or twice a week. There will be no club activities, no extracurricular activities, no school excursions, and no study hours in the study rooms of our school. This is an emergency situation.

And even if we are able to resume lessons after the end of the Golden Week, we will not have enough time to compensate for the hours we will lose in April. That is why I have decided to give you 7 lessons a day over the two months of May and June, plus five days after the first trimester examinations, making lesson hours shorter than usual, to 45 minutes for each—starting at 8:30 and finishing at 15:20, which will give you enough time for club activities. The fundamental role of high school is to give you a curriculum from which you will be able to learn things necessary for you to make yourselves wiser and stronger. I know it will be hard for you to study longer hours a day than you would under the original curriculum, but this is essential for all of you.

There may also be no training camps for club activities in the summer. And if the spread of the new coronavirus has not ceased by then, we might be forced to give up having the Gaien-sai, or we might be forced to perform plays without audiences. I'm not sure when or how the spread might cease, but will take a year or more for an antidote or a vaccine to be developed. **It seems almost an**

impossible hope that you will all have as fulfilling student lives at Aoyama High School as we would wish. I have to tell you again that thus is an emergency situation. We must be patient, wise, and strong enough to win this fight against a surge of COVID-19.

I know how uncomfortable and inconvenient this will be for you. I know it must seem unfair that you have to experience this horrible nationwide and worldwide infectious disease outbreak. But as you have probably heard, worldwide, more than 1,100,000 people (in the morning, now 1,200,000 people) have been infected with the virus, and more than 60,000 people (in the morning, now 68,000 people) have died from it. I'm afraid the spreading may soon become much more serious in Africa and Central and South America. I do hope you will understand the situation and will follow the rules that I have made.

One more thing—I hope all of you will be gentle and kind with one another, not ignoring your friends or speaking ill of them. Every student deserves respect. As I often tell you, diversity among students is very important. Any school without diversity would be unable to offer sufficient stimulation to students' curiosity. It is essential for you to spend your school lives in friendly rivalry with others who are better than you in certain fields. 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.

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