

Starting Point of the 2022 Academic Year

Everyone, we are going to have our 77th Entrance Ceremony, and all of you must have been looking forward to seeing the new freshmen. Many of you are probably planning to try to induce them 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.

At the starting point of the 2022 academic year, I would like to talk about two things.

First, as you know, we have gone through states of emergency five times and states for the prevention of infectious diseases. There may be another state of emergency, and the Metropolitan Board of Education might decide to restrain the educational activities of Metropolitan high schools. We have to be prepared for that. We have to create new ways of doing our curricular and extracurricular activities, ways in which will be possible for us to do them well even under emergency conditions.

The fundamental role of a high school is to provide students a curriculum from which they will be able to learn things necessary to make themselves wiser and stronger. I know it will be hard for you, being restrained from doing various activities as you would have done them under the original curriculum, but we don't have time to spend complaining about the age that we live in.

As you know, humanity has been fighting against countless infectious diseases throughout its history, and that will surely continue. This outbreak of COVID-19 might just be a wake-up call. We are in the midst of a crisis. It's a good time for us to consider what we think about our response to disease outbreaks. A disease in a remote part of the world can be in anyone's backyard tomorrow. I hope we will be able to win this fight, and maybe the next one, sharing information on unusual clusters of illnesses in any place in the world, from local to global.

Second, and last, Russia has invaded Ukraine and been waging war there for more than a month. President Putin still seems to insist on the disarmament and neutralization of Ukraine. The U.S. and allies, including Japan and South Korea have begun to impose severe sanctions on Russia's economy with the hope that these sanctions will loosen Putin's hold over his country.

However, these sanctions are a double-edged sword. They have already begun to affect our daily lives; the prices of many things, such as gas and wheat, have risen and begun to affect our economy. Are you ready to be patient for a while longer, wishing to help the people of Ukraine? Can we really believe that this “military operation” by Russia is to be limited to eastern areas of Ukraine and will end in a short period? Is it actually possible for our country, in the Far East, to support Ukrainian refugees? Or would it be much better for us just to provide financial support for the refugees rather than trying to help them more assertively, through the support of NGOs who want to work there or by dispatching Self Defense troops? We should think about what we can do for them, but it will not be easy to find fully satisfactory answers. There is one thing that I am sure of: we should be concerned about that country and its people. I hope many of you will be interested in what is happening there.

Today I have told you two things: first, that we must be patient, wise, and strong enough to win a fight against any new surge of COVID-19 and, second, that we should think about what we can do to help people in Ukraine.

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. *Ad alta!* Aim high, everyone!

Thank you very much.

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