

令和4年度 1学期始業式式辞

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.

713 words

令和4年度 入学式式辞

令和4年度第77回入学式校長式辞

新入生の皆さん、入学おめでとうございます。

保護者の皆様、お子様のご入学まことにおめでとうございます。

新型コロナウイルス感染症が世界的に拡大してから2年以上が経ちました。我が国でも五度の緊急事態、蔓延防止等重点措置を経験し、今また第6波が押し寄せています。第7波の始まりかとも言われています。ワクチン接種が始まり、国民の8割が2度の接種を終え、3度目のブースター接種を終えた人も全体の4割になりましたが、次々に現れる変異種に、果たして感染の収束に希望がもてるのかどうか分からない状況です。一つ確かなことは、もう元のとおりには戻れないということです。感染症に対応した新しい生活をしていかなくはなりません。しかし、悲観してはいけないと思います。人類の歴史は感染症との闘いの歴史でもあります。その都度、先人たちが新しい生活様式を築き、そして今日の世界ができています。私たち一人一人が正しい行動をとることが重要です。保護者の皆様のご協力の下、強い意思と忍耐力で、気を緩めずに新しい時代を切り拓いていきましょう。

さて、青山高校は、昭和15年に東京府立第15中学校として開校し、本年1月18日に創立82年を迎えた、伝統ある進学校です。昨年11月には、延期していた創立80周年を祝う会を行いました。新入生の皆さんと共に、青山高校の歴史をこれから積み重ねていきたいと思っています。

本校は、東京都教育委員会の「進学指導重点校」の指定を受けています。AD ALTA「高きを望め青山で」をスローガンに、一人一人の生徒が、知性と感性を磨き、心身の健康を培いながら、高みを目指す学校です。

学習の成果は、授業に臨む目的意識によって左右されます。授業の理解度も、学んだことを応用する力も、そして学力向上の実感も、目的意識をもっている生徒の方が圧倒的に高いことが証明されています。本校では、こうしたエビデンスに基づき、全ての教科・科目の学習到達目標を設定するとともに、授業のねらいを明確に示し、学んだことを活用する場面を与えることを通して、主体的に学ぶ力を育成しています。また、ホームルーム活動においても、発表や話し合い活動を重視して生徒の自主性を育むとともに、生徒に対して学校生活や将来の進路への期待を担任が定期的に表明することにより、主体的に学び続けようとする態度も培うよう努めています。

みなさんには、学ぶことは楽しいという実感がもてるようになってほしいと願っています。また、学校行事や部活動も、健康な心身をつくり、教養を高めるうえで極めて重要です。制限や制約があるとしても、それに打ち勝って、様々な体験や友人との切磋琢磨を通して、人間として大きく成長していくことを期待します。

本校は、都教育委員会指定の英語教育研究推進校でもあることから、少しでも皆さんに英語でお伝えします。

I would like to talk about two things at this starting point in your high school lives.

First, as you know, we have gone through states of emergency five times and extended states of prevention of infectious diseases for the past two years. You must have been forced to give up very many things through your junior high school days that the stress you received may have been severe. But don't take only dark views of your lives. There may be many more chances for you to leave your marks and to make achievements in this age of uncertainty. Let's 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.

Also, some economists say two-thirds of human jobs will be replaced by IoT and AI. It is hard to imagine how our society might change in the next ten years. That's why you all should be lifelong learners. I think we learn because we want to be happier. And to stop learning means to stop becoming happier. If you stop learning, you will not be able to adapt yourselves to changes in our society. If you can't be happy yourself, you won't be able to make our society better. You will learn critical thinking and methodology at our school. That will help you adapt yourselves to new realities.

I have told you two things: first, that we should create new ways of doing our activities and, second, that you should become lifelong learners.

In closing my speech, I would like to tell you one more thing. Aoyama High School is a school in which each student lives in friendly rivalry with others. There will surely be hardships and, perhaps, bitter experiences. However, such things are necessary for you to become mature. But if it is hard striving to solve your problems all by yourselves, please talk to us. We will all do whatever we can to help out, and we will always be at your side, close to you.

Thank you very much.

本校では、授業評価や学校評価等の結果を随時学校ホームページに公表し、授業をはじめとする教育活動の充実・改善を保護者や生徒の皆さんと共に進めています。また、今年度から都立学校全校で導入される一人1台端末を活用した学習についても、昨年度から先行導入し、学習等への活用方法を研究してきました。さらに、外苑地域の諸団体と連携協定を結び、探究的活動など多彩な教育活動も行っています。皆さんが、まだ気づいていない自分自身の可能性を発見し、その実現に向かって進めるよう、祈っています。

令和4年4月7日

東京都立青山高等学校長 小澤 哲郎

令和4年度 1学期終業式式辞

On July 15th, the Governor of Tokyo, Ms Koike Yuriko, visited our school for the second time. Her visit had been in 2018. She visited a few classes, including a tenth graders' *Jōhō* (Information) class and eleventh graders' *Tankyū* (Inquiry) Activity classes, and she expressed her hopes for you, saying, "Try to become like Elon Musk and Bill Gates, who have succeeded in creating new businesses without being biased by 'common knowledge' and old standards. It was a great honor to welcome the Governor to our school. There is one thing she told me secretly when she saw 'Happy Birthday, Yuriko!' on the blackboard in a certain class, "The last birthday I had was twenty years ago."

At the end of the first trimester, 2022, I would like to talk about two things.

First, as you know, twenty-eight months have already passed since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and we are still in danger of explosive spikes in infection rates. Booster vaccinations are being conducted, but a new mutant strain of the Omicron virus has been found in Japan, as has another virus, monkeypox. That makes the situation even more complex.

As you know, we are in the seventh surge of COVID-19, and more than 30,000 Japanese have died in total. The number of those infected with COVID-19 had been slowly decreasing until the middle of June, but since then it has risen to almost 20,000 a day in Tokyo. 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 create new ways of conducting our curricular and extracurricular activities, ways in which will be possible for us to do them well even under emergency conditions.

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. We should, however, move forward. Let's be patient, strong, and wise enough to strive for a new way of living together.

Second, Russia has invaded Ukraine and been waging war there for more than five months. President Putin still seems to insist on the disarmament and neutrality of Ukraine, but it is apparent that he has the ambition of gaining territorial profit from Ukraine, and

Russia is actually occupying eastern and southern areas of Ukraine. The U.S. and allied nations, including Japan and South Korea, have imposed severe sanctions on Russia's economy with the hope that these sanctions will loosen Putin's hold over his country. However, such sanctions are a double-edged sword. They have already begun to affect our daily lives for a number of months; rising prices of such things as fuel and wheat have begun to push up the prices of many other things: electricity and transportation, bread and pasta. At the starting point of this trimester, I asked you whether or not you were ready to be patient for a while, wishing to help the people of Ukraine. At that time some of us expected that this war would not continue for such a long time. It has been more than five months now. It seems that more than 1,000 Ukrainian refugees are now staying in Japan. I think we were sure five months ago that we had to help them, but how about now? An island nation in the Far East has decided to accept Ukrainian refugees, which is a right decision, but quite rare in its history. Are you still sure that we should be patient with the rising prices of daily goods during this war? Should we help the people of Ukraine more assertively, such as helping NGOs to work there or dispatching Self Defense troops? Opinions among our politicians vary. We have to elect leaders who will be able to contribute to world peace and prosperity. I imagine that most of the one-third of the twelfth graders who had already legally become adults and got the right to vote went to the polls for the House of Councillors election on the 10th of this month. It's not easy to find fully satisfactory answers, but there is one thing that I am sure of: we should be concerned about this war, and Ukraine and its people. I hope many of you will maintain an interest 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—we succeeded in conducting this year's Sports Day with students from all three grade levels together, and with many of your guardians watching your races, matches, and performances. I am proud that you didn't complain about the conditions you have been in, and that you were able to create a new way of holding this event. Our next big school event will be the *Gaien-sai* in September. I do hope you will be able to create new ways of conducting your various performances. To do so, it will be essential for all of you be gentle and kind with one another, not ignoring your friends or speaking ill of them. I hope every student who participates in the *Gaien-sai* will be respected.

To the tenth and eleventh graders, enjoy your summer vacation, enjoy your summer training camps. To the twelfth graders, enjoy your summer lessons, and improve your fundamental academic abilities. Ad alta! Aim high, everyone.

Thank you very much.

971 words

令和4年度 2学期始業式式辞

It has been hot this summer, though it is already autumn in old lunar calendar. During the summer vacation, I visited some of your summer training camps, where you welcomed me very warmly. I am glad that we were able to have summer training camps for the first time in three years. We have proved that we can do our school events even under emergency conditions by creating new ways of doing them. And we are going to have our *Gaien-sai* this year in five days. I am sure that you will be able to make your *Gaien-sai* a success, a festival through which, even under emergency conditions, you can meaningfully pass on your proud school traditions to your *kōhai*, the next generation. We should be thankful that it will at least be possible for us to perform plays in front of classmates, your guardians, and some junior high school students. I know it will be hard for you, being restrained from performing plays on stage with the usual kind of audiences, as you would have been able to do under the original rules, but we don't have time to spend complaining about the age that we live in. I do hope you will accept the reality and enjoy new ways of making your *Gaien-sai* one of the unforgettable ones.

At the beginning of the second trimester, 2022, I would like to talk about two things.

First, as you know, it is 77 years since Japan accepted the Potsdam Declaration and surrendered to the allied forces of that time. There seem to have been many geographical and political reasons that our forebearers decided to declare war against the allies, which you have learned about in history classes. It may have been because they needed natural resources from far-flung territories in the Pacific Ocean that were essential for them to continue war on the continent, or it may have been because they wanted to construct the Greater East Asia Co-prosperity Sphere by liberating colonized countries from their European rulers. In 1941, Japan decided to declare war against the U.K., the U.S., Australia, and the Netherlands, while having continued to prosecute an endless war against China for more than 11 years. After the four-year-long devastating war against the U.S. and its allies, major cities, including Tokyo, Osaka, Hiroshima, and many others, were almost completely destroyed, which must have forced our forebearers to accept Japan's defeat and its surrender. I think it was clear to everyone at that time what the reckless and insane war had brought upon them. Since then, the world has changed a lot, especially in the fields of the economy and information technology. Many nations rely on one another economically, which has come to make it impossible for individual nations to live alone. And the global network of information supported by global satellite systems, many of which are run by private companies in the U.S.

and Europe, seem to make it impossible for any nation to invade another nation without being damaged severely. Today, scientists can analyze anything the size of 30cm square on the ground from outer space even when the earth is covered by heavy clouds. I have heard that is why the U.S. was able to predict that Russia was ready to invade Ukraine in the middle of February. Those technologies, however, may bring us new possibilities in the field of agriculture, business, and the battle against global climate change. In this modern age, we must live in harmony with other nations, helping each other, which is essential for all people in the world to improve their lives and be prosperous together—with the help of ICT. There are, however, not a small number of nations that are dominated and oppressed by dictators who control the use of such horrible weapons as nuclear missiles. Those leaders also can achieve technological expertise. It is dreadful that a single dictator might be able to lead us to total destruction. And in those nations governed by such leaders, it seems that people have been deprived of human rights, especially freedom of speech and expression. I think we must do something to help them build democratic societies. But there are counter-opinions in those nations, opinions which say that they do not necessarily want or need a democratic society. They just need a strong leader whom they can trust and who they believe will help them create a better society, a better world. We cannot force them to think in our way, but we must try to help them to get accurate information, help them to distinguish truth from propaganda. That may take time. We must unite together and be wise enough to make the world a better place.

Second, the number of our graduates admitted to national and municipal universities has dropped sharply. With respect to the top four national universities and medical departments, the number for 2021 was 24 and only 18 this year; with respect to the top ten universities and medical departments, the number for 2021 was 40 and only 25 this year. And more than 40% of our graduates decided to go to private universities. This tendency is quite characteristic of our school; there are no other such examples among the top seven metropolitan high schools, including Hibiya, Toyama, and Nishi. This may have been due to surges in COVID-19 infection rates. It is understandable that many of our graduates may have hesitated to leave Tokyo for study. However, I do hope you think about what the purpose is for you to study at a university. National universities have certain advantages over private universities: close relationships with professors in smaller groups of students, access much more generous research funding, and cheaper tuition fees. It would not be a bad choice at all for you to study at a top private university, but I do hope you consider striving for admission to a top ten national university and medical departments. If you have not yet decided what you will major

in, you should try to get into the University of Tokyo; if you are interested in STEAM, then try to get into the Tokyo Institute of Technology. Don't hesitate to set high goals for yourselves. The possibilities for you are infinite. There must be many good things about yourself that you haven't yet discovered. It is very important for you to live in friendly rivalry with excellent students who are better than you in certain fields, who may motivate you to learn more so as to become more like them. Don't choose an easy way. Accept as many new challenges as you can. Where there is a will, there is a way. Ad alta.

Today I have told you two things: first, that people need to be able to distinguish truth from propaganda, and second, that you should accept as many new challenges as you can.

One more thing—I hope all students who participate in the *Gaien-sai* enjoy themselves and add bright new pages to their book of high school memories.

Thank you very much.

令和4年度 2学期終業式式辞

At the end of the second trimester, 2022

Looking back on the year 2022, there was, unfortunately, very much sad news. In February, Russia invaded Ukraine. It's already almost ten months since Russia began its so-called "special military operation," supposedly undertaken to protect people in the eastern part of Ukraine. President Putin claimed that there were many Russian-speaking citizens living there who wanted their land to become independent of Ukraine and become one of the republics of the Russian Federation. What do you say to that logic? What if a foreign nation sent people into our country and then some years later that country claimed that the people they had sent wanted independence from Japan—and, following that, the foreign nation invaded our country, saying the invasion was to protect their own people? It's completely ridiculous, but that is how one war was actually started. Lies and disinformation are designed to weaken people's confidence in their understanding of what is right and what is wrong. As I have told you before, we live in an age of uncertainty, an age in which a single dictator can lead people all over the world toward total destruction. We must stop that. We must be patient for a while longer, even under our current conditions, in which, due to the Russian invasion, the prices of almost all goods have risen radically, including those of tofu, eggs, and bananas, whose reliable price stability had been gratefully appreciated for a very long time. We may suffer from radical inflation, uncertain foreign exchange rates, and unsteady international political conditions, but we should never lose our faith in the importance of working together towards world peace and prosperity.

In July, former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was shot dead by a man who claimed to have been victimized because his family had been ruined by the organization formerly known as the Unification Church, which, he insisted, Mr. Abe had supported as Prime Minister. The act was horrible, but the man was, in fact, a victim himself. This month, members of Japan's House of Representatives voted to pass a new law designed to protect people from becoming victims of religious organizations that coerce members to contribute money to them. The law may, however, be a double-edged sword. I'm afraid it might adversely affect freedoms of expression and religion.

In October, in his speech to the National People's Congress, President Xi Jinping didn't mention his previously announced target of China's doubling its national GDP by 2035. The policy of zero-COVID may have affected progress toward the target to some extent, but I think China has begun to face its critically declining birth rate and shrinking workforce, which has its root in the one-

child policy that was implemented continuously over a period of 35 years. China has already begun to suffer from countless problems resulting from a dramatically aging society and an extremely small number of children. They have wanted to become strong economically and militarily so as to compete with the U.S. China used to be big but not strong. That is the way Russia looks now. China wants to shift its economy toward high technology, just as Japan does. It goes without saying that China is economically and geopolitically very important—and that our own prosperity is dependent of the stability of Chinese society.

There was also some good news in 2022, however. Shohei Ohtani, for example, won 15 games as a pitcher and hit 34 homeruns. He did not win the Major League Baseball MVP Award this year, but I'm sure that he made us proud of him, and his performance ranked among that of the greatest MLB players. The Samurai Blue made us happy, too, at the FIFA World Cup in Qatar, defeating both Germany and Spain, each of which nations are previous World Cup winners. I'm sorry Japan lost its game against Croatia, but it was surely one of the greatest matches they have ever played. When they finished as the top team in Group E, which included Germany and Spain, it was truly exciting.

What impressed you most this year, everyone?

The outbreak of the novel coronavirus has concerned all of us during these past 33 months. As you know, we have been through seven surges of COVID-19, about 50,000 Japanese have died, and the spread is not yet under control. We might be in the midst of an eighth surge of COVID-19 now, due to the Omicron variant. The current situation could, conceivably, lead to what the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare refers to as an “overshoot,” a strange term that the Ministry says means an explosive spike in coronavirus infections in which the number of patients doubles within two to three days. It is feared that such an “overshoot” might lead to the collapse of the health care system. It is still unclear when and how the spread of this coronavirus will cease. Even though roughly 80% of Japanese have received original and booster vaccinations, only about 10% have received vaccinations for the Omicron variant. We need to protect ourselves medically. It is very important for all of us—you and your families, my fellow teachers and myself—not to get infected with COVID-19.

Finally, to twelfth graders, there are just 22 days to go before the Common Test for University Admissions, and you need to concentrate on your studies more than ever. Do what you can do today for the sake of your own futures. After the examination,

your focus will shift to the secondary examinations for individual universities. You will have plenty of time, almost forty days, before taking them. Don't be afraid to set high goals for yourselves. I am sure that you will be able to make it. *Ad alta!* Aim high!

And, to everyone, you may at times feel in low spirits. There will surely be hardships and, perhaps, bitter experiences, especially during surges of the novel coronavirus. When it is hard striving to solve your problems all by yourselves, please don't hesitate to talk to your teachers, or to the School Counselor, or to me.

In closing my speech, I would like to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. I do hope the year 2023 will be a much more peaceful one for people all over the world.

Thank you very much.

1,053 words

令和4年度 3学期始業式式辞

We have seen the old year out. We have welcomed in the New Year, 2023, Reiwa 5. It is the 83rd year of our school.

During this winter vacation, you have been busy doing many things, especially the twelfth graders, who are preparing for the Common Test for University Admissions. Even so, I hope you have had enough time to enjoy good food and to spend quality time with your families. We have been forced to accept so called new ways of living due to surges in COVID-19 infections. Be patient. Please concentrate on your studies a bit longer.

Everyone, I would like to talk about two things today at the starting point of the third trimester.

First, in an age of uncertainty, it is essential for everyone to keep on learning. I want you to be life-long learners. What you learn at school may be outdated within a decade or so. That's why recurrent education is regarded as being very important. I hope you will continue to learn, with high aims for making our society better through your own lives. The possibilities for you are infinite. You can choose any career you want. You may have great personal potential that you have not yet realized. Thus, I don't think it would be right for you to stop learning after graduating from high school or university. Learning will always offer sufficient satisfaction to your curiosity and may help you change your lives for the better—and our society for the better. I hope you will be able to have fun learning new things. You should accept the challenges of as many new things as you can. Don't shun them. I hope you will always enjoy changes. You may have many more chances to leave your marks and achievements in this age of uncertainty than might be possible in an age of an unchanging society. I do hope you will come to make important contributions to our society.

Second, and last, China seems to have given up on its zero COVID policy, abandoning strict restrictions and loosening the hold on its citizens. I saw on TV and on the Internet citizens in such big cities as Shanghai and Beijing demonstrating on the streets, shouting 'Freedom to go out!' 'Communist Party, step out!' 'Xi Jinping, resign!' That reminded me of the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989. At that time, I did hope that Deng Xiaoping would decide to make a historical shift towards democratization, a shift similar to that he had made towards transition to a market economy earlier in his political career. I know I should not hope too much, however; the Beijing government changed its zero COVID policy without ever saying that it had been wrong. President Xi may simply have been afraid that people's demonstrations would become big movements all across the nation. He

has looked careful and cautious since beginning his third term two months ago. It seems that citizens there can now go out to buy daily goods, eat out, and use subways and buses without having to show a negative test-result certificate. On the other hand, it also seems that many citizens and motorcycle delivery drivers in some big cities, such as Beijing and Shanghai, rushed out to drugstores to get antigen test kits. It looks like there is some confusion in citizens' daily lives. Last year, President Xi appeared to be quite confident about being able to persuade his people to believe him, but he now appears to be uncomfortable with a situation in which he has to get COVID infections under control and improve the nation's economy at the same time. He insists that such a thing is only a minor problem, but his political enemies might make use of it as a result of political errors made by him. I wonder where this Asian giant is headed and am afraid that some drastic political changes might occur in the near future. What do you think, everyone?

Today I have spoken about two things: first, that you should become life-long learners, and, second, that China is a very important neighbor who looks quite fragile just now.

One last thing, to the twelfth graders who are going to take the Common Test for University Admissions within a week. Believe in yourselves. I'm sure you will be able to make it. Don't be afraid to set high goals for yourselves. The possibilities for you are infinite. Aim high!

In closing my speech, as I have told you many times, I hope all of you are gentle and kind to one another, not ignoring your friends, and not speaking ill of them. Every student deserves respect. And as I have also told you many times, it takes only a moment to destroy a good relationship, but it takes very long time to become reconciled with one another. Help each other. Respect your friends. And work together toward achieving your dreams. There is always hope to be found in the hardships of life. Ad alta!

Thank you very much.

742 words

令和4年度 卒業式式辞

75th Commencement Wednesday, March 15th, 2023

I would first like to say a few words to our new graduates at this, the 75th commencement of Aoyama High School.

Three years have passed since you began your studies at this highly selective and historically important Metropolitan High School. There must be countless things that have concerned and interested you during these years.

Three years ago, all of you were still junior high school students, but now, since the amended Civil Code has been implemented, most of you have already become legally adults and have, to some extent, gained intellectual strength, judgment, and powers of expression. That makes me very happy. You have gained the right to do many things, and at the same time you are responsible for how you behave as adults. Even though it may be difficult for most of you to be independent economically from your guardians, you should be independent as young adults in other ways and be responsible for the principles by which you live.

There have been many things that have seemed especially noteworthy during these past three years.

In March of 2020, the government declared a state of emergency. We were forced to lockdown our school for nearly three months. We had to cancel or postpone our entrance ceremony, school trips, the Sports Day, the *Gaien-sai* Festival, and the 80th Anniversary Ceremony. These unfortunate reversals must have been especially disappointing to you, your guardians, and my fellow teachers. Since then, we have also had to go through eight surges of COVID-19 infections.

In March of 2021, vaccinations began. Now nearly 80% of us have been fully vaccinated, and about 30% of us have been booster vaccinated as well. But we had to hold the Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games without ordinary audiences in the summer. Even though the stadium is within hailing distance from us, we could only watch the Blue Impulse jetfighters flying over our school. There was some good news, however, that made us happy, such that Japan won 58 medals in the Olympic Games, in which many young athletes attracted interest and achieved good results, that Shohei Ohtani appeared in the MLB All-Star Game and was named the MLB's MVP, that Sōta Fujii won five Shōgi titles, and that Dr. Syukuro Manabe won the Nobel Prize in Physics. He pioneered research on climate change.

In 2022, there was, unfortunately, very much sad news. In February, Russia invaded Ukraine. It's already more than a year since Russia began its so-called "special military operation," supposedly undertaken to protect people in the eastern part of Ukraine. In July, former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe was shot dead by a man who claimed to have been victimized because his family had been ruined by the organization formerly known as the Unification Church, which, he insisted, Mr. Abe had supported as Prime Minister. There was also some good news in 2022, however. Shohei Ohtani, for example, won 15 games as a pitcher and hit 34 homeruns. The Samurai Blue made us happy, too, at the FIFA World Cup in Qatar, defeating both Germany and Spain, each of which nations are previous World Cup winners. On July 15th, the governor of Tokyo, Ms Koike Yuriko visited our school for the second time, followed by her visit in 2018. It was a great honor to welcome the governor to our school. Another thing that made us very happy is that you have proved that you can do your school events even under emergency conditions by creating new ways of doing them. I am sure you must feel that you were able to make your *Gaien-sai* a success, a festival through which, even under emergency conditions, you succeeded in passing on your proud school traditions to your *kōhai*, the next generation. You should be thankful that it was at least possible for you to perform plays in front of classmates, your guardians, and some junior high school students. We don't have time to spend complaining about the age that we live in. I do hope you will accept the reality and enjoy new ways of making your days from now on unforgettable ones.

And this year, on February 6, a major earthquake of M7.8 occurred in southeastern Turkey. The collapse of buildings, which added to the damage caused by this mega earthquake that claimed the lives of about 50,000 people in Turkey and Syria, occurred within a range of about 300 kilometers from the hypocenter, which is almost equal to the distance between Tokyo and Nagoya, and in many areas, floors fell vertically and stacked on top of each other like pancakes. Let's pray for people in the areas devastated by this major earthquake.

The world is full of wars, political and economical conflicts, natural disasters, and environmental problems caused by climate change. We must keep on moving forward so as to solve all these things. It's a long and hard way to go. But we must keep on moving forward.

It is hard to imagine how our society might change in the next ten years. That's why you all should be lifelong learners. I think

we learn because we want to be happier. And to stop learning means to stop becoming happier. If you stop learning, you will not be able to adapt yourself to changes in our society. If you can't be happy yourself, you won't be able to make our society better. We must keep on moving forward. And you should remember that there will be many chances to leave your marks and to make achievements that will change our society for the better in this age of uncertainty. I do hope you will be able to make important contributions to our society in the near future.

Some of you will begin studies at a university and others will prepare for another try for admission next year. And some of you may have to move to different areas. You may feel depressed to discover that some people you meet are better than you in certain fields. But communicating with those people will help you mature and make you stronger and wiser. Working together creates strength.

Japan has little in the way of natural resources. Our nation's greatest treasure is its citizenry. You are part of that great treasure. Each of you is irreplaceable. Believe in yourselves. The possibilities for you are infinite. *Ad alta*. Aim high, everyone!

Thank you very much.

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At the end of the third trimester, 2022.

On 15th of this month, we had the 75th commencement of our school. We celebrated 270 of our new graduates, with their guardians, honorable guests, my fellow teachers, and school staff. They had been forced to give up very many things, just as you have been, and about that I'm truly sorry, both for them and for you.

Of the 75th graduating class, 97 students passed entrance exams for national or municipal universities. Further, other students were accepted to private universities known to be highly selective. They did a great job. I'm really happy. But it is not so important for you just to succeed in passing entrance examinations for highly selective universities. You are expected to come to make important contributions to our society in the future, and you should have a strong will to study further, in your future education, what interests you most. I would like you all to aim high.

I would like to talk about two things today at the end of the 2022 school year. First, the eleventh graders have just come back from a school trip to the Kansai area. It was the first time in the last three years that our students were able to visit there on a school trip. There are countless important cultural properties in the Kansai area, such as historical temples and shrines, as well as traditional handicrafts and arts. I am sure that the visit to Kansai was truly fruitful. You spent three nights and four days together with your friends. You must have talked about whatever excited your imagination while visiting the various sites and finding out what they might reveal to you. It goes without saying that we are all able to find a guide for tomorrow by taking lessons from the past. I'm sure the school trip to cities in Kansai gave 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 our society for the better. The school trip must surely have become an unforgettable one, one which you and some of my fellow teachers will cherish for a long time. Since we have gone through eight surges of COVID-19 infections and we have been struggling to restore the lives that we had been living before, it was a great pleasure to me that you had a chance to visit the Kansai area on a school trip.

Second, it is more than a year since Russia invaded Ukraine. I couldn't believe how President Putin would dare to continue war against Ukraine, and I wonder how he could end this insane invasion. Russia's invading its neighboring country was illegal, irrational, and insane. This war has been brought on by Putin's wrong understanding of Russia's history and his insanity and madness, hatred and anger. Who would dare to say 'No' to him? No one. No one seems to be able to do so there. It must be fear that is dominating people in Russia. Dictators try to control their people by fear, and they threaten them into obedience, while pretending to implement

democratic policies in their administrations. What is it that produces such dictators? Why can't we share the same values or at least respect our neighbors? The U.S. and western allies, as well as Japan as one of the G7 countries, have been imposing severe sanctions on Russia's economy with the hope that those sanctions will loosen Putin's hold over his country. But a year has passed. The deaths and injuries suffered by Ukraine's citizens and soldiers, as well as by Russian soldiers, have been reported in newspapers, on TV, and on SNSs, and it seems quite difficult for anyone to imagine when and how this war will end. Who knows whether or not support for Ukraine will continue? The price of almost everything has been rising since this war began. I'm not sure how longer we will be able to endure such conditions. Let's think about what the people of Ukraine need and about what we can do for them, everyone.

Today I have told you two things: first, that the eleventh graders succeeded in restarting our school trip and, second, that you should think about what we can do for the people of Ukraine.

In closing, the coronavirus seems not to stop changing into new mutant strains, and it is still very important for us not to get infected with COVID-19. It is also important for us to be wise enough to avoid discrimination and prejudice regarding the disease. We don't have time to spend complaining about the age that we live in. Everything that surrounds us is in constant transition. We ought to be able to 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 yourselves to a changing society.

One last thing, speaking about myself, I am going to be transferred to another high school next month. It has been a great pleasure for me to spend seven great years as the principal of this highly selective high school with its long history and rich traditions, and I do hope that I have been somewhat helpful in ensuring that those traditions will continue to be passed on to future generations. Despite all the hardships caused by COVID-19, these past seven years have been the most wonderful ones that I have ever had. The things that have given me the greatest pleasure have been our kind and intelligent students, their supportive guardians, our highly motivated teachers, and the support of cooperative communities and organizations near our school, including some big companies. I am proud of you, my students, the best students I have ever met. I am proud to have been your principal. I would like to offer you all my best wishes. I look forward to seeing you somewhere in the future. Thank you very much, everyone. Ad alta.

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