

On July 15<sup>th</sup>, 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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.

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