

Good morning students and teachers. Thank you for inviting me to give a short message in English today.

First, congratulations on completing the spring semester at Nara Kokusai. We are in the middle now of a historic year and an unforgettable year in your life. You will not forget this year ever. For two reasons: (1) Because you are the first class at this new international school. This school is unique and you are the pioneers who are helping to shape its future. And (2) because we are dealing with a global pandemic that is impacting the world in serious ways. This global crisis is giving us a chance to reevaluate some of our values, including our values concerning education and future careers. This pandemic is a crisis, of course, yet it is also an opportunity to slow down and really think about what is important and what is not.

For example, what do you really desire from your three years in high school? We adults in education often focus on test scores and trying to motivate our students to study more and more to do well on exams, but many people in the world are realizing that focusing on exams and test scores is an out-dated way of thinking.

There is a lot of talk now about the “4th Industrial Revolution” that is coming, and that we are now entering. The future of work will include much more automation, much more robots and AI that will replace a lot of the work humans do now because new technologies will do it better, faster, and cheaper.

Jack Sim is a famous business person and thinker in Singapore. He says we must become the kind of people that can do the work and add value in ways robotics never can. So this means we should focus on how to become better human beings, not merely the kind of people who can memorize the most formulas because robots can do that better.

As teachers should try to help you find your own unique talents and gifts. Aptitudes such communication, compassion for your fellow beings — animals and humans— big-picture thinking, imagination, problem solving, community organization skills, interpersonal skills, artistic expression, and emotional characteristics such as grit and resilience and the ability to stay positive and hopeful even in hard times, and to cooperate and collaborate with others are abilities that we will need more in the future.

As Jack Sim says:

“Humans have spirituality, morals, ethics, aesthetics, philosophy and love. Our future competitiveness against robots lies in these human virtues. Our ability to care, love and imagine will allow us to continue to be masters of robots, and not their servants.”

Please use this summer to relax and recharge yourself. And also take some time to reflect on your future and your special gifts and what passions you would like to explore. Think about the kind of contributions you would like to make to your community, to society, and to the world.

Have a great summer break!

Garr Reynolds
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