

August 2020

To all students,

(児童生徒等や学生の皆さんへ)

I am sure that ever since the coronavirus outbreak began you have been worried about what will happen with school and in the future. As the new school term approaches, I have something I would like to talk to you about.

First of all, there are several ways to prevent infection. As you have already been doing, you must wear a mask when you talk, wash your hands, and stay home from school if you're sick. And, above all, it's important to live a healthy lifestyle. Having said that, you have all had colds or the flu in the past. Now, on top of that, the coronavirus has also become an issue.

These three illnesses have similar symptoms. So, all of you will experience these symptoms in the future. Out of all the people who get sick, it may be someone close to you who is infected by the coronavirus. Of course, if you find out that it's your friend, you may be worried about yourself as well.

Anyone could be infected with the coronavirus. It does not mean that the person who got infected is bad. If there is an atmosphere at school or in the classroom that it's bad to be infected, people become afraid of being suspected of being infected by the coronavirus, and if they get sick, they are less likely to say anything or may delay going to the hospital. This may cause further spread of the infection in your area.

Rather than blaming people who have become infected or who have symptoms, I would like you to have compassion for them, encourage them to get well soon, and warmly welcome them back when they return to school. I would like you to think about and do as you would want your friends to do if you became infected or had symptoms.

There have already been cases of people who have been infected being spoken to and treated in an unkind manner. We would like you to help us to make sure these things don't happen around you as well.

In addition, elderly or sick people may develop serious symptoms if infected. You may feel that if you're not sick then it does not concern you, but please have consideration for the sick and elderly to be sure that they don't become infected.

The coronavirus outbreak has profoundly changed all of our daily lives. Many of us see our friends less than we used to, have less exposure to sports and culture, and are more anxious and stressed about our future.

We humans have experienced new diseases like the coronavirus before. And, each time, researchers around the world have searched for the cause of the disease, looked for ways to prevent it, and developed drugs. And so we live with these diseases. History repeats itself. As research on the coronavirus progresses and we learn more about it, we will be able to prevent and treat it and start a new coexistence with the disease.

We adults are here to support you. We have a vision for the future, and we will maximize opportunities for you, the future leaders of society, to learn, play and interact with each other. Until then, I hope that you will take the preventative measures you can now, set goals for the future, and continue your studies every day at home and at school.

Kōichi Hagiuda
Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

August 2020

To all parents, guardians, and members of the community,

(保護者や地域の皆様へ)

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to you, the parents, guardians, and community members for your understanding and cooperation in efforts to prevent infection, which have enabled us to make progress in our steps to ensure that students can study at school.

However, even with these efforts, the risk of infection in schools, homes and society cannot be reduced to zero. Anyone could become infected. On top of that, there are still some aspects of coronavirus infections that are not yet understood, and a vaccine is still under development, so, many people are concerned about it.

We need to properly confront this infection and the social changes it has brought about, based on the scientific knowledge and views we have at this time. I would like to make the following two requests of parents, guardians, and community members.

The first is that we will not tolerate discrimination, prejudice or slander of any kind against infected persons.

Since anyone can be infected, it is important not to blame the infected students, faculty, or school for their response, but to practice good hygiene and prevent further infection.

In addition to not discriminating against others, if you see comments or actions around you that lead to discrimination, such as identifying and blaming an infected individual or school, or suspecting that people in the same office as an infected person or a family member of a medical professional or other person may be infected, please don't go along with them, but instead speak up and say, "Let's not do that." People's kindness can be a powerful weapon in the fight against the virus.

If an atmosphere of blaming others for infection spreads, it may lead to hiding of the infection or delays in visiting medical institutions, which may eventually lead to the spread of infection in the community. From this point of view, too, it is a necessity to prevent discrimination and the like.

Secondly, I would like to ask for your understanding and cooperation in balancing infection control measures and educational activities in schools.

Since it is expected to take a long time to deal with the outbreak, schools are taking infection control measures and, valuing the learning opportunities that only a school can provide, moving ahead with educational activities, in order to guarantee, to the maximum extent possible, a healthy learning experience for children. We also request that universities take thorough infection control measures and, at the same time, ensure learning opportunities, including face-to-face instruction.

We ask for your understanding and cooperation in the continuation of schools' educational activities so that students can acquire the skills they will need to live in the unpredictable times ahead.

It is essential that we receive the latest scientific knowledge and other information in order to properly deal with not only the coronavirus but other infectious diseases as well. As a government, we're trying to make our public relations efforts easier to understand, and we hope that you, the parents, guardians, and members of the community, will make use of scientific knowledge in your daily lives.

Kōichi Hagiuda
Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology