

Hino Sakura
Class of 2026

How to achieve my “Bunbu Souzen (文武双全)”

Coming from a background of frequent school changes in my academic career, I have sometimes found it difficult to feel a true sense of belonging before. Keio Academy of New York, however, changed everything for me. I can confidently and proudly say this is ‘our’ school, or even more, a home, a community, and a family. The most meaningful chapter of my life has been my experience in the Keio family. A guiding philosophy that shapes who I am and connects me with this community is “Bunbu Souzen.”, a key principle that I have respected and represented throughout my time at Keio, which I deeply value.

Some people may recognize “Bunbu Souzen” means just to keep a good balance of time in doing academic and athletic activities, but this does not capture the full picture. I believe the goal of “Bunbu Souzen” is to integrate excellence in both academics and athletics, which are mutually connected and can be evolved in a compatible way. It shows that the two support each other and grow together, rather than developing separately. Mastering both intellectual and physical activities as one continuous and integrated path, leads to true human growth. More importantly, I also believe it is not limited to combining academic and athletic excellence in one person. I believe “Bunbu Souzen” ultimately encourages mutual collaboration with people to develop multiple aspects of human activities and that is why I am thinking this is one of the key guiding principles of our school to shape who I am and also who we are as a family.

These values are not just words on paper to me, but live in my daily experiences. Since joining Keio, I have devoted myself to compatible growth in both academic and athletic areas as a collaborative effort with people in Keio. When I first entered Keio, I struggled heavily in communication, especially difficulty in expressing myself correctly. I did not have sufficient skills and vocabularies in both English and Japanese to have proper and respectful communication with people who are very mature. I recognized my challenges and put my best effort in improving my communication skills and vocabularies. That was, of course, challenging and took a lot of time. During my freshman year, my academic scores stayed low, and my results in athletic activities were not great. My first GPA at Keio was around 3.0 or lower with a TOEFL score of 527 and I could not achieve any remarkable results in sport activities. Although this challenging situation of low academic scores and less desirable results in athletic activities persistently continued throughout my 9th grade, I did not stop changing my status quo and

improving my communication skills. Thanks to continuous support from teachers and friends, I overcame this barrier in the later half of the 9th grade and now I can communicate confidently in any setting.

Better communication leads to better actions and closer relationships enable us to construct a productive environment. This helps us no matter what we do, academics or athletics, and it is also obvious that collaborative efforts of multiple people generate stronger outcomes than those from a single effort of an individual. This is the key part of how I recognize “Bunbu Souzen” and how I try to achieve that. From late 9th or early 10th grade, I was finally welcomed by the Keio family, and gradually observed better outcomes in academics and athletics simultaneously as a result of collaborative effort with teachers and school mates.

On the academic side, I achieved a GPA of 3.4 or above in all quarters of 10th grade, and made the Honor Rolls in the second and third quarters of 11th grade. I was honored to receive the Physical Education award in 9th grade and the English award in 10th grade. One of my proudest achievements was earning a score of 105 on the TOEFL iBT, which is equivalent to approximately 620 on the TOEFL ITP test and an improvement of nearly 100 points from my initial score in 9th grade. Building on my personal achievements, I have recently extended my contributions to the school community. Next year, I will proudly serve as Event Committee Leader and am applying to the National Honor Society to represent Keio Academy of New York..

At the same time, athletics have played a major role in shaping who I am. Playing tennis as one of the representatives of Keio Academy of New York was one of my dreams and that came true in 11th grade. As a captain of the team, I had the opportunity to lead and support my teammates through every match and practice sessions, and mutually got strong inspirations and learning opportunities from them. In 2024, I was able to be a champion in the New York Section 1 Girls Sectional Singles Tournament and finished fourth place in the NYSPHSAA State Girls Tennis Championships. I was also honored to receive the Section 1 Sportsmanship Award, which reflected not just my performance, but the respect and humility I brought to the competition. In parallel with the captain role in Tennis, I also served as a captain of the varsity girls Lacrosse team. I have never played Lacrosse before coming to this school, and the journey from a beginner to the captain has been filled with challenges. However, every moment, every practice, and every game has taught me resilience, communication, and the importance of teamwork. Sports have taught me that leadership is not about being the best player; it is about making others feel seen, supported, and confident in their roles.

As I move into my final year, I promise to continue striving, to grow stronger in both mind and body, to deepen my leadership, and to inspire others through collaborative effort to live by the spirit of “Bunbu Souzen”. I will take everything I have learned from the classroom, the court, and the field, and carry it forward with pride. I sincerely appreciate everyone who has guided me—my teachers and coaches, classmates and teammates, and parents.