

## Afterword

We will deliver the “33rd Collection of Essays by Elementary and Junior High School Students Contemplating Peace”. This year, a total of 99 works were submitted, 30 from elementary school students and 69 from junior high school students. The works, written from the perspective of elementary and junior high school students, conveyed that they seriously face and think about the tragedy of war and the preciousness of peace.

They included works that made students think about war and what they can do in class, works that focus on the misery of war that students felt from materials and images about war, and works that convey students’ thoughts in reaction to hearing stories of war. All of the works were filled with the strong wishes of elementary and junior high school students for peace.

Seventy-seven years have passed since the end of the war, and most generations living now in Japan have no experience of the war. For children who have never actually experienced war, while they understand that war is deadly and terrifying, it must have seemed to be an unbelievable event that happened somewhere else.

But in February of last year, the invasion of Ukraine began, and the heartbreaking devastation began to appear in the news every day. Knowing that the beautiful townscape has been devastated and the lives of many people living there have been lost, children must be keenly aware that there is nothing good about war. And they recognized again that war is not something that happened in the past, but rather a familiar problem that is still happening today.

In order not to repeat the same mistakes in the future, we think it is important for elementary and junior high school students who will be responsible for the future to think about peace in their own way, discuss it, and disseminate what they have learned. Therefore, we hope that the elementary and junior high school students of Numazu will be able to discuss with the people of the world what real peace is and hopefully connect their hopes to the future through this collection of essays.

In addition, Numazu City has pledged in its “Declaration of a City of Peace to Abolish Nuclear Weapons” to “protect a beautiful earth and a peaceful life for all generations to come” in the hope that the children will continue on with recognition of the weight of the responsibility.

Finally, we would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to all of you who have read this collection of essays.