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When I was thirteen, I got connected with Akira Tanaka, an eminent jazz pianist. His precious suggestions have made me what I am.

During my first year at junior high school, I had trouble managing both study and school club activities at the same time. I was very satisfied with the chorus practice we had almost every day. But my parents attributed my bad grades to the practice and urged me to quit the club. When I was thinking about giving up, I met Mr. Tanaka, who was invited to give a speech at my school.

He said to us, "I decided to be a pianist at the age of forty." I thought to myself, "It sounds like a miracle. You must be talented enough. I'm just another guy..." Then he said, "I did not have a piano. I practiced at a community center, paying two thousand yen per hour. It was only there that I could practice playing the piano, which made me a serious learner. Had I had a piano at home, I couldn't be a professional pianist now."

His words moved me, reminding me that I had spoiled myself. I said to myself, "Even if I quit the chorus club, I will not get better grades." Since then, I have successfully been enjoying good grades and the chorus club — my school combines junior and senior high school together.

Mr. Tanaka is the best teacher I have met. Firstly, he changed me by offering rays of hope. Secondly, he helped me realize my own weakness. I believe a good teacher encourages his or her students to improve independently.