

Nagano Municipal Higashijo Elementary School, Grade 3

Our SDGs: Learning from Nature, Life, and Community

The third graders at Higashijo Elementary School in Nagano City deepened their learning with a focus on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through exploring local nature in Matsushiro, interacting with living creatures, and engaging with community members, they learned the importance of protecting nature, valuing life, and showing kindness to others. Their journey helped them discover what actions they themselves could take to contribute to a better world.

Caring for Life Through Hands-On Experiences

In science and life studies classes, the students raised Asian swallowtail butterflies, silkworms, and Japanese emperor butterflies. Observing the full life cycle of the butterflies – from eggs to chrysalis to emergence – filled them with awe and excitement. Raising silkworms began with collecting mulberry leaves, cleaning up their droppings, and watching them spin silk to make cocoons. These experiences gave students a sense of wonder about the life processes of living things.

With support from the local community, the children also participated in Japanese emperor butterfly conservation. They protected the larvae from predators like spiders and birds by covering them with nets, and in autumn, they watched the adult butterflies emerge. Through these efforts, the students learned that life thrives within nature, and they developed a deeper respect for all living beings.

Learning from Community Connections

The students also visited a local elder care home, Showaryo, and a conservation area called Hotaru-no-Sato (Village of Fireflies). They sang songs and performed dances, sharing joyful moments filled with smiles and applause. They also had the opportunity to meet an Assistant Language Teacher (ALT) from Clearwater, Florida, a sister city of Nagano, making this a valuable cross-cultural experience. These encounters helped students realize how many people support their daily lives and nurtured a spirit of compassion and appreciation.

Connecting Daily Life to Global Challenges

In integrated studies, the children explored the relationship between global environmental issues and their daily lives. They learned about zero carbon initiatives, plastic waste reduction, and reducing food waste. They discovered that everyday action, such as using eco-friendly bags or recycling, can contribute to protecting the Earth. Together with their families, they also took on a Zero Carbon Challenge, demonstrating how individual and family actions can support sustainability.