

## Chino Municipal Eimei Elementary School, Grade 3

### Silkworms Are Amazing – Learning About Life Through Traditional Sericulture

Third graders at Eimei Elementary School in Chino City explored the region's traditional culture of sericulture by raising silkworms and observing their life cycle. Through hands-on experiences and a deep dive into the history and respect surrounding silkworms, often referred to as Okaiko-sama (Honorable Silkworms), the students learned important lessons about life, gratitude, and sustainability.

#### Raising and Observing Silkworms

In June, each student received a tiny silkworm larva from the Okaya Silk Museum and began raising it with great care. They fed the silkworms mulberry leaves three times a day and carefully monitored their molts, learning firsthand how delicate and demanding it is to care for living creatures. As the silkworms entered their fifth instar, they began consuming large amounts of mulberry leaves. The students relied on help from the community to gather enough food, reinforcing a sense of interdependence and shared responsibility.

#### Discovering the Cycle of Life Through Cocoon-Making

The students observed the silkworms as they spun their cocoons, and afterward, used the finished cocoons to make crafts like dolls and keychains. Some of the cocoons were also used in a silk reeling activity, allowing the students to extract actual silk threads of up to 1,200 meters in length. They also learned how silkworm droppings and pupae can be repurposed as fertilizer, food, medicine, and cosmetics, which helped them appreciate the full cycle of life and resource use.

#### Learning About Life and Gratitude

In addition to the biology of silkworms, students also explored the cultural aspects, such as the tradition of referring to silkworms with respect and the worship of silkworm deities at local shrines. Through this, they came to better understand the meaning of "Itadakimasu," the Japanese expression of gratitude when receiving food. The experience of raising silkworms helped the students develop a sense of reverence for life and a deeper awareness of the bonds between nature, culture, and daily living.