

## **MISS NIBBLES - Life-skill Lessons Learned from a Classroom Pet**

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During 2010-2011, my multi-grade elementary classroom adopted a two-year-old, English lop-eared rabbit. In JL's words, "She was a pesky bunny; a nibbler and a pooper; a smart little fat bunny. She was a kicker and a jumper. She was an awesome bunny." Over the year, she taught us many lessons. We all wrote about our experiences. Here are some of our memories of Miss Nibbles, under life-skill lesson headings.

**Initiative and Cooperation:** In WD's words, "The story begins in the second week of school. We were doing work. It was a good day." RC continues, "All was quiet when Mrs. T said, 'We should get a bunny. Here's a cute bunny.' We all went to the computer to look at it and the whole class agreed that we should get it. Mrs. T said, 'I will go and visit the bunny and if I like it, we will get it.' Once the bunny was at school, we generated a list of possible names for our new pet. Through voting and the process of elimination, we came up with the name 'Miss Nibbles'.

**Responsibility and Organization:** Miss Nibbles roamed the classroom during the day and slept in a large cage at night. She spent the week at school and the weekends and holidays at my house. We made up a list of duties for sharing the workload. Weekly, alternating pairs of students would take responsibility for cleaning her cage, changing her water, and filling her food dish. Everyone was on poop patrol during the day. RC wrote, "There was one thing we did not like to do; clean the cage and pick up the poop. Yuck! Well, we had a choice. It was yes all the time, so we took the time to do it."

**Problem Solving and Common Sense:** NC wrote, "One time Miss Nibbles got out of her cage at night and we had to figure out how she got out." The cage had a six inch square opening at the top, because it once had a breeding box attached to it. WD wrote, "AA found some bunny hair in the wire hole." "I found out how she got out," wrote AA. She must have jumped up on her kennel inside the cage, squeezed herself through the hole, jumped down on a tall box next to the cage, and then to the floor. We moved the tall box, so she couldn't do that again! Luckily, she didn't get into trouble while she was out.

**Patience and Perseverance:** "Miss Nibbles was a bad bunny sometimes," reported NC. One day she chewed the protective coating off a computer cable. We blocked the area with plastic containers, large books and boxes. That day, the whole class worked together to herd her into her cage for her own protection. We were always on the watch to keep erasers, pencils, books and other things off the floor and away from her gnawing teeth.

**Friendship and Humor:** Miss Nibbles brought a spirit of fun and friendship into our classroom. During the day, I would often see children take a mini-break from their work to pet and hug Nibbles. Around Easter, I purchased a *Mrs. Potato Head* toy that looked a bit like our bunny. One day, bunny was nibbling on our bean bag chair and eating the beads inside. I said, "She shouldn't eat those, they're plastic!" RC said, "Hey, she might turn into a plastic bunny like *Mrs. Potato Head!*" We all laughed. Miss Nibbles has a new home now, but we will always cherish memories of the love and joy she brought us.