

# Snowflake, the Stargarden Bunny

by Betty Jane Enno

For many years, Snowflake has been a cherished member of our Stargarden kindergarten, serving as our esteemed “service Bunny.” His father, Ginger, also held this honorable title before him, further solidifying our kindergarten classroom's legacy of bunny service, love, and companionship.

Having classroom animals available to children regularly provides many learning opportunities. Animals provide multi-sensory experiences that engage sight, hearing, touch, and smell, to name a few. Compassion and caring for other living creatures are enhanced, and social awareness of the animals' needs and ways to fulfill them as a class shared responsibility enhances a burgeoning sense of morality. The following are some examples of these benefits.

The joy and excitement that fills the classroom when children interact with Snowflake are genuinely palpable. This interaction not only aids in developing their tactile senses, as they feel the softness of his fur and the gentle vibrations of his movements, but also enhances their visual tracking and observation skills as they watch the rabbit hop and interact with the environment. Listening to the rabbit's quiet sounds and movements can improve auditory processing and attentiveness, further enriching the children's sensory learning experience.

The anticipation of giving Snowflake a carrot—especially at drop-off time, when separating from caregivers, which can be challenging—provides comfort for the children. Saving a carrot to share from lunch also cultivates thoughtfulness on the children's part. These activities enhance a predictable rhythm that supports the child's natural development, fostering stability and well-being.

Caring for the rabbit in the classroom and outside in the garden or playground is a joyful activity and a powerful tool for developing core values and skills. Integral to Waldorf Education philosophy, this experience not only cultivates a sense of wonder and respect for living beings but also nurtures the children's capacity for empathy. The hands-on experience of nurturing a living creature fosters a compassionate and responsible attitude

towards the environment and all its inhabitants, aligning with our educational goals. This caring extends into our community as volunteer families host Snowflake for the weekend or during school breaks.

Our care routine for our classroom rabbit, including feeding and grooming, is not just a task but a **privilege**. It offers a consistent structure that helps children feel secure and grounded. It provides a comforting rhythm that supports the child's natural development, fostering stability and resilience.

I should also mention that Snowflake appreciates the care the children give him. He rubs his head against the hand that is petting him and eagerly sits up to receive a carrot. I often share my observations with parents and teachers that Snowflake is a helpful additional classroom assistant.

If you don't have a farm school, I highly recommend a class pet for the children. Suggestions include a bird, turtle, fish, etc., which can all complement the classroom curriculum.