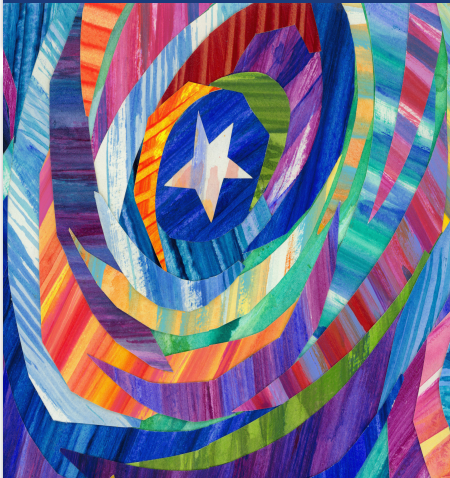


# The Early Years Count **Literacy** Connection



## **Tarra and Bella: the Elephant and Dog Who Became Best Friends**

Written and photography  
by Carol Buckley

*Preschool edition*  
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### **Overview of Book**

A heartwarming story about Tarra, the once roller-skating circus elephant who now lives in an elephant sanctuary, and her unlikely best friend Bella, a stray dog. This is a true story of animal friendship and contains information about how animals understand each other.

Genre: Non-Fiction

### **Vocabulary**

Books are a rich source of words new to children. Here are some from *Tarra and Bella* to introduce in your classroom:

mystery	inseparable
entertaining	sanctuary
graze	room

Each time you read the book, choose 2 or 3 words to highlight.

Use age-appropriate definitions and/or the illustrations to help children gain an understanding of each word's meaning.

Use these new words throughout the day, reminding the children, "That's a word from our story!"

### **Connecting with the HighScope Curriculum**

*COR Advantage 1.5*

Approaches to Learning  
Item A (Initiative and planning)

Social and Emotional  
Development  
Item D (*Emotions*)  
Item F (Building relationships  
with other children)

Science & Technology  
Item BB  
(*Observing and classifying*)  
Item DD  
(Natural and physical world)

### **Reading Tips**

Express joy when you read about Bella's recovery. Ask how the story made the children feel. Connect the story to the children's lives by asking them to describe a special friend.

Comment on the difference in size between the two friends and ask, "How do you think Bella keeps from stepping on Bella?"

Download a recording of elephants trumpeting and play it after you read the section about Bella and Tarra understanding each other's language.

Three readings are recommended to familiarize children with the story. Each reading provides an opportunity to introduce new vocabulary words, pose open-ended questions, and engage children in activities that make the story "come alive."

### **Throughout the Routine**

Refer to the book throughout the day and use new vocabulary words in meaningful ways. Active engagement with the story helps the content come alive.

At **Transition Time**, invite the children to move like an elephant or dog. Have the children try out other animal movements.

Provide various writing and drawing materials at **Small Group** and encourage children to draw their best friend or make them a card.

Practice trumpeting like Tarra during **Outside Time**.

### **Around the Room**

Highlight the book's content and build on the children's excitement in a variety of locations.

Gather the elephant figures in the **Block Area** and encourage children to build "sanctuaries" for them.

Post pictures of "real elephants of the sanctuary" from the website [www.elephants.com](http://www.elephants.com).

Add materials in **House Area** for "veterinarian play."

Display *Tarra and Bella* along with other friendship books in the **Book Area**.

### **Open-ended Questions**

Enhance active engagement and early critical thinking skills by asking open-ended questions. These questions encourage children to explain why or how things happen, make predictions, or brainstorm possibilities rather than give one "right" answer.

Here are some questions you might ask for *Tarra and Bella*:

How do you think Tarra felt before she found her special friend?

What kinds of things do you like to do with your friends?

I wonder why Tarra stood in that one spot for 2 days?

How do you think Tarra knew to look for Bella in the barn?

*For more information on how to use books and stories with children to enhance your curriculum, contact*  
***The Family Connection:***

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### **@ Home**

Since many of the children in our county will have this book at home, use it as a way to further the home-school connection. In your daily contact—in person or by text, email or other notes home—encourage families to share this book with their child. Here's a sample message you can send:

The children have been fascinated by the story of *Tarra and Bella: the Elephant and Dog who became Best Friends*. We've discussed lots of new words that we found in the book, including "mystery," "graze," "roam," and "sanctuary." Did you know that you and your child can watch live elephant cams online? If you have Internet access, visit: [www.elephants.com](http://www.elephants.com). This book opens up lots of possibilities to have conversations about elephants and where they live. You might even want to brainstorm with your child why our local zoo does not have elephants and what the zoo would need to house them.