

**Ripe for Change: Garden-Based Learning in Schools.** Jane S. Hirschi. Harvard Education Press, 2015, 149 pages.

Community gardens are popping up all around the country. You see them everywhere—outside churches and schools, and within neighborhoods. The opportunities to learn within a garden setting are endless, and community gardens put those opportunities in the hands of children and adults who have been raised in a processed and fast food world.

Jane S. Hirschi's book will inspire you with her garden-based learning advocacy. Written in a practical tone, *Ripe for Change: Garden-Based Learning in Schools* promotes the concept of gardening in schools by providing the



philosophy of and process for creating a school-based community garden. It also details how to overcome barriers to the process.

Each chapter brings you deeper into the world and benefits of community gardens. Hirschi highlights actual teachers and students doing real learning through the gardening process. She writes that school gardens give students context for understanding both simple and complex concepts, and engages them in hands-on opportunities. Teachers can use the garden for a single lesson or series of lessons with curricular connections. From math problems to science observations to creative writing, Hirschi shares stories of children who have been inspired to learn from their exposure to community garden-based learning.

The author also shares five models for garden-based learning from schools across the United States, providing the historical background, design, funding process, and support and assessment systems for each

model. By providing the historical background, Hirschi alleviates some of the weight of the daunting task of creating a community garden-based learning program in your school.

Lastly, *Ripe for Change* provides a set of valuable assessment tools to determine the impact and benefits of a garden-based education program. Considering that funding for a garden-based learning program may come from multiple stakeholders, an assessment to provide feedback on the program's success is imperative for support.

I found Hirschi's book to be inspiring. She writes with passion for the topic as a leader in the garden-based learning arena. The book is a manageable read at 149 pages, and provides practical information on a process that could bring immense benefits to your students.

*Reviewed by Kristin Liewehr Bishop, an elementary school principal in Plano, Texas. NAESP MEMBER*

**Building Trust in Teacher Evaluations.** Shelly M. Arneson. Corwin Press, 2015, 118 pages.

Teacher evaluations are now at the forefront of education discussions across the United States. With a new evaluation model starting in the 2015-2016 school year in my state, South

Carolina, I was excited to read *Building Trust in Teacher Evaluations*. In it, Shelly M. Arneson takes an in-depth look at the topic of trust and how it can build or be a barrier to a school. She argues that developing trust is vital for educational leaders if they want to successfully and effectively evaluate teachers.

Arneson begins her book by defining trust as the willingness to be vulnerable to another person who is



open, honest, reliable, and competent. The author also describes trust as having an emotional bank account with another person: The account is available for deposits that occur when someone does something that adds trust to another.

After presenting these definitions to readers, Arneson then goes in-depth about how trust should be established to make evaluation systems effective. Communication also is necessary, and should be open and allow both parties to speak, the author explains.

Throughout the book, Arneson presents many examples and scenarios on how to build trust. I was particularly interested in the chapter that discusses building relationships. Being honest, open, and providing effective feedback to teachers is identified as being crucial to effectively evaluating them. Arneson says that teachers must be given time to talk, and the evaluator must listen. Principals also must be

present, both physically and mentally, when evaluating teachers.

It is such a paradigm shift to evaluate teachers these days, especially because evaluations can be linked to teacher pay. Arneson explains that principals must be up-to-date with instructional practices to increase trust and open the lines of communication. Providing support to teachers also is identified as a way to build trust.

Arneson says principals must give teachers a voice and allow them the opportunity to make decisions. This idea of shared leadership will go a long way in building trust.

*Building Trust in Teacher Evaluations* was an easy read and was a constant reminder for me that to build trust, a leader must first build relationships with their staff.

*Reviewed by Allen Fain, principal of Pickens Elementary School in Pickens, South Carolina. NAESP MEMBER*