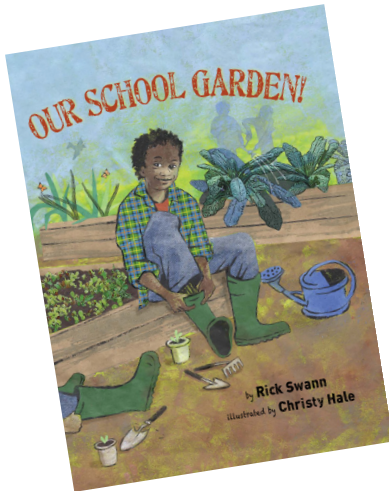


Reading with children can improve their language, literacy, and social-emotional skills, increasing their knowledge of the world around them. With the right book choices, reading can introduce children to healthy eating habits too!

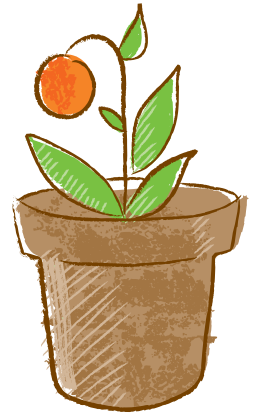


### OUR SCHOOL GARDEN!

by Rick Swann

#### What It's All About

Michael moves to a new school and discovers something wonderful: a school garden! Michael and his classmates spend all year caring for their garden; getting the ground ready, growing and harvesting the vegetables, and of course, eating what they grow!



#### Discover a World of Words

Throughout the story, introduce new vocabulary words using gestures, tone of voice, pointing to illustrations, or providing brief explanations. Examples include:

- *stalk*: a stem of a plant
- *harvest*: the gathering of a crop
- *armored*: protected by a defensive covering
- *tenderly*: soft or delicate; gentle

#### Make Connections Beyond the Book

After reading the story, make connections to an aspect of the child's real life by:

- Making "School Garden Stone Soup" and inviting friends over to share it with you. As it says in the book, it is good to share food with others!
- Growing your own seeds indoors. Plant the seeds in soil, water them, and watch them sprout up towards the sunlight.
- Taking a trip to the grocery store and looking for fruits and vegetables that can be grown in a garden.

#### Dig into the Story

Develop children's comprehension of the story by discussing higher-level information (e.g., link characters' feelings to their actions and/or events in the story, predict what might happen, summarize chunks of text). Use prompts throughout the story, such as:

- *Julie and Michael go on a scavenger hunt. They are looking for leaves they can eat. Julie asks Michael if she likes spicy, sour, or sweet leaves. Michael chooses spicy. Which would you choose?*
- *At Harvest Day, everyone is celebrating and helping in the garden. What do you see happening in this picture?*
- *On the last day of school, Michael and his friends are taking care of the garden. Some friends are drawing in their notebooks while others are watering the plants. How do you think everyone is feeling?*

**Jumpstart**

Jumpstart is a national early education organization working toward the day every child in America enters kindergarten prepared to succeed.

Learn more at [jstart.org](http://jstart.org).

## Together Time Activity

### BE A HARVEST DAY PARTY PLANNER

As Michael learns in the story, gardens bring people together and help build community. All around the world, people gather to plant, tend, and harvest food.

In many cultures, harvest celebrations are important times of togetherness. In the United States, we celebrate Thanksgiving. There's also Pongal in India, the Moon Festival in China, Lammas Day in the United Kingdom, Sukkot in Israel, Olivagando in Italy, and many others.

Imagine you are planning a harvest festival for your school community:

- What local crops and regional foods would you celebrate?
- What would you serve to eat and drink at the event?
- What time of year would you plan the event?
- Would there be entertainment: music, performances, or poetry readings?
- What activities would you plan for kids: hands-on art projects, seed planting, vegetable tastings, or making simple salads?
- Would you make your event a fundraiser? Is there a craft item you and your friends could make or a service you could sell to raise money for your school garden?



Dream up as many ideas as you can and make a list or write a story about your harvest festival.

### Talking Points:

- What are some edible plants that grow well in your area? Search online to find out the answer. Are any of those plants used in popular local or regional foods or traditions?
- Find out if any local farms or farmer's markets host a harvest festival, mark it on your calendar and make a plan to attend.
- Does your school have a garden? If not, talk to parents, teachers, and friends about the idea of planting one. Put some of your harvest festival ideas into action!