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## Idea Books

An idea book records personal experiences so that the individual can express and learn from them. For an idea book to be an effective learning tool, the students and teachers must desire to reflect, create and think about their own experiences. An effective idea book reflects the writer's active involvement and participation in her/his own life. An idea book is used in grades K-12 for observation, reflection, and research.

### Mechanics

Bound books such as the traditional marbled composition books, which are fairly sturdy, make an excellent choice for an idea book. Student-made books are also fine as they create pride of ownership. They can be created with lined or unlined paper using either construction paper or board (e.g. a cereal box) for the covers. In either case, the students should have an opportunity to create covers that express their own individuality (ownership). Types of entries in the idea book encompass a variety of methods including words, illustrations, drawings, and photos. Students should have a variety of tools for their entries including pencils, pens, marking pens, crayons, newspaper and magazine stories and images, glue stick, paint, photos, digital images, and any other materials that support the goals of observation, reflection, and research.

### Modeling

It is very important for the teacher and other classroom adults to keep and use an idea book concurrently with the students. Their modeling includes regularly using and sharing their own idea books.



### Sharing

Each student should regularly share his/her idea book with their peers. The students can share their entries:

- student to student (pair-share)
- small group share (3 or 4 students collaboratively)
- whole group share (presentation)

Pair-share and small group sharing are recommended, followed by several students sharing to the whole group. Effective sharing includes compliments, insights, questions, and observations (teacher to student, student to student, and student to teacher). Each student should regularly share their idea book with the teacher (once a week or once every two weeks – regularity is important). When meeting with the teacher, the student should share their one or two favorite entries. High level questions are most effective in discussing the entries with the student. After sharing the entry, the student is asked if they would like to photocopy their favorite entry to post in the classroom (actual hanging provides ownership) as a model for ideas, concepts, structure, and self esteem. The examples on the walls provide a variety of modeling to the class that extends their exploration of their own experiences.

## Observation

An observation entry is words and pictures of things that are part of your life. Observations can come from within the school setting, home, places you go in your neighborhood, etc. Students should be encouraged to use the idea books at school and outside of school so they begin to use it as an important part of their life with purposeful connections. Examples include:

**Objects** – the students initially sketch objects in their classroom, then expanding to the school and at home. The purpose is to build observation skills, drawing ability, use of Thinking Maps, vocabulary, and to use the books as a research tool.

**Newspaper and magazine images** – by clipping and including images and words from publications the students are building their awareness of media including current events, what they are seeing &/or reading, and common interests. They will be building vocabulary

**Saturation reporting** – the students will record in words &/or drawings all the sounds, smells, and sights they have in one location (e.g. classroom, cafeteria, restaurant, etc.).

**Sounds** – the students will use tape recorders to record sounds from various locations. They would then be revisited with other students. Students can document in their idea books what they heard in drawings &/or words.



**Person** – create a bubble map of different peers and family members. This would include a picture of the person (e.g. the face with 3 distinguishing characteristics) with descriptive words about the person. Excellent lead-in to a double bubble map.

**Read-Move-Write** – students observe a tableau of one or several students and record observations that reflect their posture, expression, and reaction to each other. Excellent for observing and building of vocabulary.

**Creating directions** (e.g. origami, cooking recipes, art project, how to construct a peanut butter and jelly sandwich) – students would document a procedure or creation of an object in their idea book. This promotes observation while documenting a process.

## Research

A research entry is an ongoing compilation of information for investigating one or more topics. The purpose of an idea book is to have a readily accessible place to record an idea as well as later reference drawings and writings.

**Quick notes** – if the student observes something of interest, having their idea book provides an excellent means of keeping the thought and a place to readily access later. It is very important that the teacher also regularly uses their idea book in a similar modeled manner.

**Internet** – record through writing or a printed page websites of interest to include with classroom research projects.

**Data Collection** – the collection of data is an excellent math application. For example, the school has decided to change the food in the cafeteria – who would we survey, what would we survey, and who would we present our findings to? Could create hand drawn graphs or use a graphing program or spreadsheet on the computer to create graphs.

**Field Trips** – used to record observations and information on field trips. Can include pasting in pictures from a brochure or handout as well as drawings and words. Students should bring cameras (film or digital) to take photos specifically for their idea books.

**Interview** – interviewing people around the school and in the community.



## Reflection

A reflective entry is a record of memorable experiences and the writer's thoughts and feelings about them. Reflection entries are excellent for processing recent learning experiences (e.g. your reactions to reading).



**Reflective Journal Entry** – The journal entry consists of two columns or two pages:

- The left side is for recording (what you saw, heard, read, did, etc.).
- The right is for reflection (reactions to your observations: what you felt about what you saw, heard, read, did, etc., and/or what concerns, insights, desires you have).

**Areas of Strength & Areas Needing Improvement** – In words and pictures student will have two entries on separate pages:

- An area of strength in the classroom or outside the classroom (hobbies, athletics, subjects, or other skill or interest).
- An area the student would like to improve in the classroom or outside the classroom.

The student can later start adding what they have done to support the area of strength or will do to succeed in the area desiring improvement.

**Statement or Question** – a student or teacher poses a statement or question for the class to respond and reflect on in their idea book. It is very important for students to also contribute to the creation of statements and questions so they have ownership with the ideas. An example is if you could keep one memory, what memory would you keep? The entries in the idea book should vary with drawings &/or words.

**Feelings** – students use the idea book to record feelings that they record (diary), share as a journal, and use to see needs and growth.

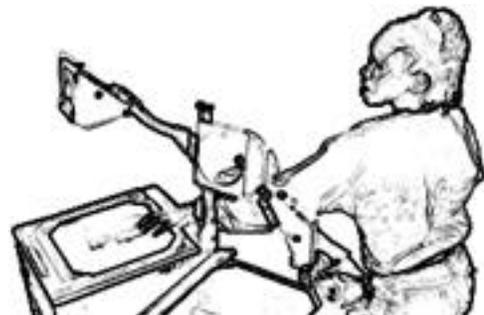
**Children Solve Problems** – students are posed a question that requires higher order thinking skills to solve. It is very important to share their ideas upon completion to allow the students to build upon each other's ideas. Example questions include:

- How do you stop a dog and cat from fighting? Conflict resolution is an extension.
- How would you design and equip a spaceship? Links with observation and needs skills.
- How would you design a perfect room at home?
- How would you design and equip a classroom?
- How would you equip a person to fly?

**Video Tape 'Idea Book'** – students tape themselves and their observations to watch and use for reflection. Incredible way to learn about and improve on oneself. First through twelfth grade classrooms can use video equipment completely on their own.

## And...

Some other ideas for observation, research, and reflection in the idea book include street signs, the elements of art, modes of transportation, collections, timelines, cartoons (clip and respond or create own bubbles), and...



## And...

**Science** – excellent for regular observations over time in the field (e.g. with gardens).

**Math** – word problems, sketch and calculate the sizes of objects, buildings and rooms, sketch and describe shapes, and ???!

**Art** – superb for sketching objects as part of observations to understand & reference.

**Physical Education** – use to document and/or describe regular exercises, feelings about activities, and goals (if any).

**Language** – storyboard the sequence of a story, write down words of interest, imitation writing of song lyrics, words of interest, synonyms, stories, etc.

**Technology** – take and print digital images of areas of interest and study to paste in the idea book. Go to [www.mapquest.com](http://www.mapquest.com) and create a map from the school to home to include as part of an observation assignment.

## Using In and Out of the Classroom

**Homework** – students use their idea books to develop classroom lessons further (e.g. with observation have students do similar exercises in their homes or on the way home). To develop ownership and buy-in, have students select their own topics for homework.

**Field Trips** – students use the idea books to record observations and reflections on field trips that provide a research tool in the process.

**Transitions** – can be effectively used with transitions in the classroom (e.g. have the students do a reflective entry on what was just finished in the classroom).

## Thinking Out of the Box

**Idea Book Ideas** – to build ownership it is important to generate ideas from the students and let them have a say in the selection of ideas to explore. When initially using the idea book elicit suggestions from the students and post in the room. Share ideas with a neighboring classroom to develop more possibilities.

**Audio Tape Response** – students listen to a posed question on a cassette tape, then on another tape respond to the question. At the end of the day, the responses are shared.

**Panoramic Idea Books** – take the idea book out of the book and to the classroom walls.

**Calendar Entry** – each day on a calendar a different student (or two) talk about an event for the day (current or historical) &/or their day at school.

**Group Books** – each group of approximately three to five students would have a group book.

This book could be kept in class and used by different groups as they are in the classroom. The book would have a topic which would require collaborative entries. The purpose is to work together to share ideas and develop a collaborative resource.

**Living Talking Book Journal** – students create drawings of a partner, then each develops a call and response or statement. Examples include:

- What is your opinion about \_\_\_\_? My opinion is \_\_\_\_.
- What do think about \_\_\_\_? I think \_\_\_\_.
- What is your favorite thing at school? I enjoy \_\_\_\_.

