

Expert Books

Helping learners see themselves as sources of knowledge

An Expert Book is a class book with a page for each learner that shares something the learner does well and something they are still working on. The book can be used for ongoing conversations about how students learn from and with one another.

Process

- ▶ Ask each learner, “What is something you are really good at?” or “What expertise do you have and appreciate about yourself?” “What is something you are still working on?”
- ▶ Each learner creates one page, including an image (photo, drawing) of the learner.
- ▶ Create a page for yourself too! Your learners will appreciate you modeling this for them and sharing your expertise and learning in progress. Other adults in the school can also make a page for the book.
- ▶ Once the book is created, read it together as a class and look for connections. Is Yalda working on her writing skills, and is Bea already an expert? They might learn they have something to talk about together!
- ▶ When a student is stuck working on a problem or topic (e.g., algebra), refer them to the Expert Book to see if another learner could offer expertise.

More Than One Way

- ▶ Learners can interview each other about their expertise and what they still want to learn.
- ▶ Books do not have to look one way! Printed paper books are great, and so are digital versions. Try creating a book in PowerPoint or a similar program, so you can either share it on-screen or convert it to a PDF for easy printing and sharing.
- ▶ As an alternative to a book, you could also create an Expert Card deck with your learners (see example on the next page).
- ▶ Short videos about each member of the classroom community could be created instead of, or in addition to, a book.
- ▶ Turn over editorial decisions to the students.
- ▶ Include family members (parents or other caregivers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, and cousins) in the Expert Book. Family members can create their own pages at a school event, or students can interview them to create a new page. Try to include a page from each student’s family.
- ▶ Partner with the art teacher to create a book.
- ▶ Creating a class book of things that each learner does well, along with things they are still learning, can be a great way to appreciate and learn from one another’s expertise, as well as value the fact that everyone is working on learning new things all the time. The book can ground conversations about risk-taking, how making mistakes is part of learning, and the importance of trying again.



Examples

- ▶ **Young learner (age 8):** Luis is an expert at speaking Spanish, building with LEGO bricks, and playing soccer. He still wants to learn how to divide.
- ▶ **Adult learner:** Yalda is an expert cook, distance runner, and scientist. She is working on her writing skills.