

TEACHER SUGGESTIONS AND PROMPTS

The overarching focus for this survey:

- Our musical tastes are influenced by our social settings (family and friends), surroundings, experiences, and cultural boundaries.
- A student whose parents are big ‘metal heads’ and been exposed to that growing up will have different tastes than the child of a concert cellist!
- Having students reflect on those influences (siblings, parents, their musical experience - even if it’s as a performer - not a musician) will give them insight into what makes their musical ‘tastes’ unique.
- One of the useful byproducts of that info is for students to find commonality with each other and give the teacher a chance to discuss genres, artists, and other ways music is used/consumed in their life.

Below is a set of follow-up conversation themes and specific questions a teacher can use to help students find *common ground*, even when their survey answers differ widely. These prompts are designed to promote empathy, curiosity, cultural awareness, and connections across differences.

1. Focus on Shared Purposes for Music

Even if students like different genres, they often use music for similar reasons.

Conversation Prompts

- **“When do you use music the most?”**
Compare responses: studying, relaxing, sports, family events, waking up, falling asleep.
- **“What mood does your music help you with?”**
→ stress relief, energy, concentration, comfort.
- **“Do you listen alone or with others? What’s that like?”**

 Goal: Help students see that music plays similar *roles* in their lives, even if the playlists differ.

2. Shared Listening Spaces

Where and how students listen creates natural overlap.

Follow-up Questions

- “Who else is usually around when you’re listening to music?”
- “What’s your favorite place to hear music, and why?”
- “Do you prefer headphones or speakers? Why?”

 Goal: Highlight common routines and environments that transcend genre differences.

3. Family Musical Influence

Answers about siblings, parents, and grandparents create a way to connect across family cultures.

Conversation Prompts

- “What music from your home or family influences you the most?”
- “Did you ever start liking a song because someone in your family played it a lot?”
- “Do you and your family ever argue about what to listen to? How do you decide?”

 Goal: Normalize how families shape taste—and show that everyone experiences musical “hand-me-downs.”

4. Childhood Music Nostalgia

Students often bond over childhood memories, even if the songs differ.

Follow-up Questions

- “What’s the earliest song you can remember liking?”
- “Did you have a song from a movie/game/cartoon you loved?”
- “Does any old song still make you smile or laugh?”

 **Goal: Build emotional connection through shared childhood experiences.**

5. Social Identity & Peer Influence

These conversations help students unpack assumptions rather than judge one another.

Conversation Prompts

- “How do your friends’ music tastes influence yours?”
- “Have you ever been surprised by what someone you know likes?”
- “What makes something feel ‘cool’ at your school?”
- “Why do people sometimes hide music they like?”

 **Goal: Encourage critical thinking about popularity, stereotypes, and identity.**

6. Cultural and Generational Connections

Use questions about grandparents’ music to connect across generations.

Follow-up Questions

- “What stories do older relatives tell about concerts, dances, or musicians?”
- “Do you notice any similarities between today’s music and older music?”
- “Which genres span multiple generations?”

 **Goal: Show that music is a bridge between eras and cultures, not a divider.**

7. The Role of Music in Activities

This expands the conversation beyond taste and into lived experience.

Conversation Prompts

- “What events in your life wouldn’t feel right without music?”
- “Do you connect any song to a sport, hobby, celebration, or family tradition?”
- “Does music help you perform better at something?”

 **Goal: Find shared experiences, not just shared interests.**

8. Listening Habits & Discovery

This helps students relate even when their genres differ.

Follow-up Questions

- “How do you discover new music—friends, algorithms, radio, family?”
- “Have you ever fallen in love with a song you didn’t expect to like?”
- “Do you prefer playlists, albums, or random shuffle?”

 Goal: Show that people often find music in similar ways.

9. Create Student Interaction Activities

Here are short activities that spark connection naturally:

A. “Find your match”

Students walk around and find someone else who:

- uses the same streaming service
- listens in the same place
- uses music for the same purpose
- liked a similar childhood song

B. “Music Story Swap”

Pairs share a funny or meaningful music-related memory.

C. “Surprise Playlist”

Students choose a favorite song, but don’t reveal it.

Others guess the genre, not the song, based on described feelings or memories.

 Goal: Highlight connection **through experiences**, not labels or genres.

10. Questions That Build Common Ground Explicitly

End with questions that *invite connection*:

- “What’s one thing you appreciate about a genre you don’t listen to?”
- “What’s a musical stereotype you discovered wasn’t true?”
- “What makes a song meaningful to you, regardless of genre?”
- “What’s something that almost everyone likes in a song?”
(catchy beat, good vocals, strong rhythm, emotional lyrics, etc.)

Summary: What a Teacher Should Focus On

- ✓ Roles of music in students’ lives
- ✓ Emotional experiences rather than genres
- ✓ Family influence across generations
- ✓ Social identity and peer assumptions
- ✓ Childhood memories and nostalgia
- ✓ Discovery habits and music-sharing
- ✓ Activities that highlight connection over difference