

Attendance Question of the Day

Every teacher has a reputation—a brand—that conveys something about that teacher. Whether you are the “tough, but fair” or the “mom who cares” teacher, students generally come to similar conclusions about teachers once getting to know them—and sometimes before that. A brand often surpasses subject matter or any other particular aspects of teaching, moving into what educator and author Trish Rubin says is the “tangible and intangible presentation of who you are” (as cited in Solomon and District Administration, 2017, p. 10).

Part of my brand undoubtedly is centered on my unique approach to taking attendance and the sense of community it fosters. I ask an attendance question of the day by writing it on my whiteboard (and including it in the week-at-a-glance document) for students to answer. Not only do the questions get them practicing public speaking, but they break down barriers and typically produce a lot of laughs. Don’t be concerned that this will take too long. If the typical response for attendance is “Here,” answers to “What was your favorite elementary school gym class activity” (“The parachute game”) is not significantly longer. It’s just much more interesting!

I randomly select questions from my list, keeping track and crossing them off each day to avoid repeating any. Some align nicely with holidays and seasons, but most are interchangeable for any day of the school year. The attendance questions that follow are from a stockpile that I have accumulated over the years.

- What is your favorite . . . ?
 - Family or holiday tradition
 - Breakfast cereal
 - Computer or console game or website
 - Store
 - Musical artist
 - Song
 - Children’s book
 - Childhood movie
 - Fast food restaurant
 - Photograph
 - Hair product
 - Book or movie character
 - Fair food
 - Candy
 - Scent
 - Sport to watch
 - Cake flavor
 - School lunch food
 - Ice cream flavor
 - Road trip pastime
 - Late-night snack
 - summer activity
 - Field trip
 - Novel
 - Movie (TV show, sitcom, or musical)
 - Snack at the theater
 - Parent, guardian, or grandparent memory
- What would you tell me if you told me something good?
- What would you tell me if you told me something I don’t already know?
- If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go and why?
- What would you do in the circus?
- What’s the best thing about living in our state?
- What would your talent be in a talent show?
- What is taking up the most storage space on your phone?
- If you had \$500 to donate, what would you do with it?
- What has been the biggest waste of time in your life?
- What magazine cover would you want to be on, and what would be the headline?
- If you could be a decoration, what would you be?

- What is one thing you have learned in the past week?
- If your house were on fire, what one object would you grab?
- What is your dream extreme activity (skydiving, swimming with sharks, and so on)?
- What instrument do you wished you played?
- What is the latest you have ever stayed up studying?
- What do you wish you hadn't quit?
- What do you wish you could quit?
- What is your dream career?
- What have you learned from your favorite teacher?
- What are you thankful for?
- What is your most recent musical purchase (vinyl album or download)?
- What is the best thing about fall (winter, spring, or summer)?
- What is the ideal outdoor temperature for you?
- What motivates you?
- What color would your light saber be?
- What have you learned from someone else besides me in this class?
- What trait would you not tolerate in a roommate?
- What is the farthest you have ever traveled?
- What would you eat for your last meal?
- If you could change your name, what would it be?
- Where do you see yourself in ten years?
- If you were in charge of homecoming or prom, what theme would you choose?
- What class are you most looking forward to taking next year?
- What TV show do you binge watch?
- What class are you most relieved to have finished?
- If you could put yourself in a book, which book would you choose and which character would you be?
- What would your future pet be named?
- What has been the biggest surprise of your life?
- If you were to get a tattoo, what would you choose and where would you get it?
- What sport would you want to participate in in the Olympics?
- What is the craziest sport that should be in the Olympics?
- What do you dread?
- What age would you want to be forever?
- What course would you like to see added to school?
- What school rule or policy would you change?
- What band (artist, politician) would you want to tour with?

- How would your sibling describe you in one word?
- How would your best friend describe you in one word?
- What is a secret talent you have?
- What is your New Year's resolution?
- Where is your happy place?
- Who would play you in the movie of your life?
- What can you never have too much of (not including money)?
- Where do you get your news?
- What fictional item would you like to have?
- What would be on your vanity license plate?
- If you could hang out with one fictional character, who would it be?
- What do you really want?
- What is your city of birth?
- What is the best book or short story you've ever had to read?
- If you had an extra hour to do something today, what would you do?
- What is the best gift you ever received or given?
- What is the greatest stressor in your week?
- What is the worst homecoming or prom theme you could imagine?
- What song would you sing at karaoke?
- What is your biggest pet peeve?
- What athletic opening day are you looking forward to?
- What is something nice about the person whose name is just before yours alphabetically in this class?
- What food do you stash in your room?
- What is the weirdest food you've ever eaten?
- How many hours of sleep did you get last night?
- What theme park job would you want?
- What do you cook really well?
- What is the worst household chore?
- What two items would you want on a deserted island?
- What song pumps you up?
- What did you most recently buy with your own money?
- What is the best advice you've ever gotten, and did you take it?
- What did you hope to accomplish over break but didn't?

Sheninger, E., & Rubin, T. (2017). BrandED: Tell your story, build relationships, and empower learning. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Solomon, J., & District Administration. (2017, September 7). Building your brand. Accessed at www.nxtbook.com/pmg/DA/DA_1017/index.php?startid=10#/p/10 on January 8, 2021.