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## CONVERSATION STARTERS

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We all need and want empathy. Our relationships with family, friends, our community and our world are based on the need to understand and also be understood. As you work on this musical, discuss some of the questions below with your students. The questions you ask will be determined by the age of your students.

*In the story, If You Could Dance in My Shoes, Penny lives in a car with her dad. They don't have money for a house or even for new shoes. Shoes may not seem very important, but to many people they are.*

1. Do you, or did you, have a favorite pair of shoes? Why were they your favorite? How did wearing them make you feel?
2. Have you ever worn shoes that hurt your feet? Did you have to wear them?
3. Why is it important to have shoes that fit?
4. Would you be allowed to come to school without shoes? Go to a store? A restaurant?
5. What would you do if you didn't have shoes that fit? Could you buy more? What if you couldn't?
6. How would you feel if you had to wear shoes that were falling apart, didn't fit, or hurt?
7. In some places in the world shoes are expensive and families can't afford them. Children often go barefoot. What could happen to you if you always walked in bare feet?
8. In some places, shoes and school uniforms are required to go to school. If you don't have those things, you can't get an education. What would you do if you didn't have the money for shoes and a school uniform?
9. How can you help children who don't have shoes?

*Penny and some of the other children in the show have no place to live. This sometimes happens in real life when unexpected, difficult things happen to families.*

1. There are families who can't afford shoes or even a place to live. Some sleep at friends or relatives' houses. Some go to homeless shelters. Others even live in their cars. What do you think it would feel like to not have a home? Have you ever worried about this?
2. Why would it be hard to live in your car?
3. Sometimes a family may have a home but can't afford to keep it when a parent loses a job or has a lot of expenses. Has this ever happened to anyone you know? (no names)
4. It can be scary to not know whether you will have a safe place to sleep at night. If you knew someone like this who was scared, how could you help?
5. If you found out that your friend didn't have a home, how would you feel about your friend? Would you think less of them because they were poor? Would you want to help?

*Penny has a difficult time making friends. So does Travis. Not everyone is easy to be friends with, or has an easy time making friends.*

1. If there was a student in your class who was difficult to get along with, would you try to be nice to them anyway?
2. If you didn't like another student, would you wonder what makes them hard to get along with, or would you just ignore them?
3. Is it easier to help someone who is nice than to help someone who isn't very nice?
4. Should you only be friendly with people who are nice to you and easy to like?
5. Think about someone you don't like very much. Can you think of any good qualities that person has?

*Penny is afraid that other students will find out that she lives in her car. Aleah finds out, but she knows that Penny is ashamed of her situation.*

1. Are there times when you worry that your family won't have enough money or a place to live? Is there someone you can tell your worries to?
2. Everyone needs help sometimes. When you need help, do you feel like you can ask for it? Or are you afraid that people won't like you as much if they know you need help?
3. Have you ever been without a home? Where did you live? Did someone help you find a place to live?
4. Why is having a home so important?