FIRST DAY
TEACHING TOOLKIT

AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S
TELEVISION FOUNDATION

ABOUT THE FILM

First Day follows main character Hannah as she finishes primary school and begins her secondary schooling. Hannah experiences all the excitement and fear associated with this transition, but her first day of high school is even more significant: it's the first day she will wear a girl's uniform to school and go by her chosen name, rather than the boy's name she was given at birth.

USING THIS RESOURCE

This resource will support Year 6 and 7 teachers and students to explore the themes in *First Day*, and help students to prepare for, process, and reflect on their own transitions to secondary school. The learning tasks encourage inclusive behaviours in the classroom, and remind students that we are all more alike than we are different.

Before viewing *First Day* or using this resource, teachers are encouraged to consider whether their class includes any transgender students and how this may affect them. It is imperative that transgender students' privacy is upheld, and that they are not inadvertently 'outed' to peers or faced with unwanted attention. Teachers may choose to remind students that their peers have the right to privacy, and that private information should not be revealed without consent.

BEING TRANSGENDER

WHAT DOES TRANSGENDER MEAN?

Gender identity – a person's internal sense of being male, female, both, or neither – does not always correlate with the male or female sex they were assigned at birth. The term transgender (or trans) is often used to describe people whose gender identity is different to the sex they were assigned at birth. As an example, the character Hannah in *First Day* was assigned male when she was born, but she identifies as female.

SCHOOL LIFE FOR TRANSGENDER STUDENTS

Schools are likely to have transgender students in their communities. According to Parents of Gender Diverse Children, the number of Australian school-aged children who identify as transgender or gender diverse is currently cited as 1.2% and 2.5% respectively by the Telethon Kids Institute at Perth's Princess Margaret Hospital and the Royal Children's Hospital Gender Service in Melbourne.

Some transgender children are safe and supported in their school community, but many experience bullying, harassment or discrimination. This puts already marginalised students at further risk of poor wellbeing and academic outcomes. Building respectful and inclusive learning environments will help all students to feel valued, supported and safe at school.

TASK 1:

INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

Clip: Meeting the principal **(0:00 - 02:49)**

Offering Hannah a Year 7 place for the following year, Principal Nguyen says, 'We want Hillview to be an inclusive and safe school for everyone.' In a class discussion, ask students to define the word 'inclusive', and to identify inclusive behaviours in this scene. What did Mr. Nguyen say and do to make Hannah feel welcome and supported? Are there ways the school could have been more inclusive?

Now have students consider how inclusive and safe their own classroom is for all members of the school community. In groups, ask them to brainstorm behaviours and mindsets that will foster a supportive environment for everyone, including gender diverse students. This might include a commitment against bystander behaviour, identifying ways to acknowledge and celebrate diversity, or reviewing school policies. Have students represent their thoughts visually, perhaps through a poster or anchor chart that could be displayed in the classroom and referred to throughout the year.

Students' suggestions could be incorporated into their classroom behaviour agreement as agreed expectations and responsibilities, and also communicated to families. As an extension task, the class could conduct an audit or interviews to learn more about how safe students and staff currently feel at school, with the aim to improve their experience.

TASK 2:
VALUES

Clip: Hannah at primary school **(03:57 – 05:25)**

On Hannah's final day at primary school, she is confronted by a group of girls who tease her; it is clearly not the first time. Ringleader Isabella harasses Hannah while her two bystander friends watch on, echoing Isabella's words and laughing in agreement.

School transitions are an ideal time for students to move on from negative friendships like these, and instead build positive friendships which are aligned with their values.

In a group discussion, ask students to reflect on the values of their schools, families, and themselves. How do values such as honesty and kindness influence the friendships they seek out, and the ways they interact with friends? To creatively share what they value in friendships, have students curate a themed playlist on the topic. The class could then compare playlists to identify shared values and/or song choices.

TASK 3:
IDENTITY

Clip: Christmas holidays **(05:26 – 07:16)**

Hannah's gender, and how she chooses to express this, are just part of her identity; she is also a daughter, a sibling, a friend, a gamer, and so on. Ask students to watch this clip and then discuss what they learnt about Hannah's identity.

Have students represent aspects of their own multifaceted identities visually, using a graphic organiser such as a mind map. Following this exercise, display students' work around the room and ask them to take a 'gallery walk'. This gives students the opportunity to view others' work, and to identify things they have in common with their peers. To close the lesson, ask students to share any observations about things they have in common, and any conclusions they have reached about identity.

TASK 4:

TRANSITIONS

Clip: The night before **(07:17 – 08:35)**

The night before Hannah begins Year 7, her mum reassures her that: 'The first day is always the hardest.' In pairs, ask students to reflect on the transitions they have already experienced. This might include changing schools, moving house, developing a new interest, or the arrival of a sibling. Was the first day really the hardest? Were these transitions ultimately positive or negative experiences? What helped them to move through these periods of change?

Ask students if anyone is comfortable sharing their reflections with the wider group. What can everyone learn from these examples?

Have students now consider the impact of these transitions on their identity. How did they change throughout primary school, and what remained constant during this time? What is likely to change during secondary school? Have students document these changes through a digital 'map of identity', using a timeline, flow chart, illustration, or other process to share their thinking.

TASK 5:
FIRST DAY

Clip: Hannah arrives at school **(09:28 – 10:24)**

In a class discussion, ask students what Hannah might be feeling and thinking in this scene. What techniques have the filmmakers used to create these impressions? How do they help the audience understand Hannah's perspective and care about what happens to her?

Have students prepare a T-chart with the headings 'Visual' and 'Audio'. Explain that they will watch the scene a second time, focussing on how visual choices help viewers understand and connect to Hannah's character. This includes framing, point of view, and frame rate. Ask students to record their thoughts or questions in the 'Visual' column.

Now play the clip a final time, with a focus on the film's audio. This includes sound effects, music, dialogue and silence. Ask students to record their thoughts or questions in the 'Audio' column. Have students share their observations of the way this scene was constructed with a partner, and then with the wider class.

TASK 6:
FIRST DAY FEELINGS

Clip: Hannah arrives at school **(09:28 – 10:24)**

Have students write a 'two word poem' about the first day of high school, either from Hannah's perspective or their own. In this accessible poetry form, students compose a poem from lines containing just two words each. Poems do not need to rhyme; the staccato phrases will create a rhythm. Including sensory details and imagery will help students to craft an evocative piece of writing.

TASK 7:
FRIENDSHIP

Clip: Hannah meets Olivia **(09:59 – 12:29)**

For most students, starting high school involves making new friends. When watching the above clip, have students examine what Olivia does to forge a new friendship with Hannah. For example, she finds common ground, seeks her out at lunch time, and shares information about herself. Can students suggest any further strategies for building new friendships?

To demonstrate and develop their interpersonal skills, have students use Google Forms (or a similar tool) to create a survey aimed at getting to know others. They should draw on their knowledge of how to initiate conversations with others, how to find common ground, and interesting questions to ask. In a subsequent lesson, students could interview their classmates with the questions they devised.

TASK 8:
RESILIENCE

Clip: Hannah sees Isabella at Hillview **(12:38 – 16:24)**

Hannah's world is rocked when she encounters Isabella at Hillview. Having retreated to the sick bay toilets, unsure of how to handle this challenge, she recalls her parents' words of encouragement. Their unfaltering support gives Hannah the strength to approach Isabella: it helps her be resilient.

As a class, have students identify and discuss the practical and emotional support that Hannah's family provides during her transition to secondary school. For example, they purchase her uniform, reassure her, and help her plan responses to potentially difficult questions. This support contributes to Hannah's resilience.

Ask students to brainstorm people or places that could assist students who do not have the same level of parental support. This might include siblings or extended family, trusted non-family adults, new friends at school and their families, a homeroom teacher, school counsellors or community organisations. Selecting one option from this brainstormed list, have students create a page for a class book: 'Where to turn for support'.

TASK 8:
INCLUSIVITY

Clip: Hannah approaches Isabella **(15:12 – 16:24)**

When Hannah realises that Isabella is struggling with her own challenges, she asks if she is ok and offers her a second chance at friendship. In doing this, Hannah demonstrates inclusive language and behaviour.

Challenge students to reflect on what 'being inclusive' actually sounds like in practice. Provide students with speech bubble sticky notes, or alternatively ask them to draw a number of speech bubbles on a sheet of paper. In each bubble, ask students to write a phrase or question that demonstrates inclusivity in a school context. Their work could be added to a class anchor chart and referred to throughout the year.

TASK 10:
VALUING DIVERSITY

First Day features a transgender main character, and the film has a culturally diverse cast. In a group discussion, ask students to consider the ways in which valuing diversity can benefit individuals and communities. How does their school benefit from diversity, and how is diversity currently celebrated at school? Have students research an organisation that promotes diversity in their local community, and then share their findings with the class through a short presentation.

CURRICULUM LINKS

	YEAR 6	YEAR 7
CRITICAL & CREATIVE THINKING	Pose questions to clarify and interpret information and probe for causes and consequences. Identify and clarify relevant information and prioritise ideas.	Pose questions to probe assumptions and investigate complex issues. Clarify information and ideas from texts or images when exploring challenging issues.
ENGLISH	Make connections between students' own experiences and those of characters and events represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts. **(ACELT1613)** Participate in and contribute to discussions, clarifying and interrogating ideas, developing and supporting arguments, sharing and evaluating information, experiences and opinions. **(ACELY1709)** Use comprehension strategies to interpret and analyse information and ideas, comparing content from a variety of textual sources including media and digital texts. **(ACELY1713)** Experiment with text structures and language features and their effects in creating literary texts, for example, using imagery, sentence variation, metaphor and word choice. **(ACELT1800)** Use interaction skills, varying conventions of spoken interactions such as voice volume, tone, pitch and pace, according to group size, formality of interaction and needs and expertise of the audience. **(ACELY1816)**	Identify and explore ideas and viewpoints about events, issues and characters represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts. **(ACELT1619)** Compare the ways that language and images are used to create character, and to influence emotions and opinions in different types of texts. **(ACELT1621)** Use comprehension strategies to interpret, analyse and synthesise ideas and information, critiquing ideas and issues from a variety of textual sources. **(ACELY1723)** Use interaction skills when discussing and presenting ideas and information, selecting body language, voice qualities and other elements (for example, music and sound) to add interest and meaning. **(ACELY1804)** Experiment with text structures and language features and their effects in creating literary texts, for example, using rhythm, sound effects, monologue, layout, navigation and colour. **(ACELT1805)**
HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION	Examine how identities are influenced by people and places. **(ACPPS051)** Investigate community resources and ways to seek help about health, safety and wellbeing. **(ACPPS053)** Practise skills to establish and manage relationships. **(ACPPS055)** Recognise how media and important people in the community influence personal attitudes, beliefs, decisions and behaviours. **(ACPPS057)** Identify how valuing diversity positively influences the wellbeing of the community. **(ACPPS060)**	Investigate the impact of transition and change on identities. **(ACPPS070)** Practise and apply strategies to seek help for themselves or others. **(ACPPS072)** Investigate the benefits of relationships and examine their impact on their own and others' health and wellbeing. **(ACPPS074)** Analyse factors that influence emotions, and develop strategies to demonstrate empathy and sensitivity. **(ACPPS075)** Investigate the benefits to individuals and communities of valuing diversity and promoting inclusivity. **(ACPPS079)**
PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CAPABILITY	Identify a community need or problem and consider ways to take action to address it. Identify the differences between positive and negative relationships and ways of managing these.	Acknowledge the values, opinions and attitudes of different groups within society and compare to their own points of view. Identify indicators of possible problems in relationships in a range of social and work related situations.

INTERVIEW WITH DIRECTOR,
JULIE KALCEFF

WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO WRITE AND DIRECT *FIRST DAY*?

With *First Day,* I not only want to increase visibility of the LGBTQIA+ community, but to tell an uplifting story of empowerment about a transgender teenager. My hope is that this will increase understanding and acceptance amongst the target audience and the wider community, and help give a voice to those who struggle as a direct result of not seeing themselves represented on screen.

WHY WAS IT SO IMPORTANT TO CAST A TRANSGENDER GIRL AS HANNAH?

I have a personal connection to the subject matter and know a number of transgender people and parents of transgender children, some of whom I am very close to. However, I acknowledge that I am not transgender and, in many regards, this isn't my story to tell. It was extremely important therefore to me, producer Kirsty Stark, the ABC, and Screen Australia to cast a transgender girl in the lead role. We were incredibly fortunate to be able to cast the talented Evie Macdonald as Hannah. Although scripted, this is Evie's story and it's our job to ensure that she has the tools and support she needs to tell it. The courage, maturity and sheer natural ability and talent Evie has shown throughout this process – a 12-year old girl who has never acted before and who is in every scene – is inspirational.

WHY DOES DIVERSE MEDIA REPRESENTATION MATTER?

When we don't see ourselves and people like us reflected in the media it affects the way we feel about ourselves and the way we see the world. The message is that we're invisible, that we don't count, or worse still, there's something wrong with us. We begin to wonder about our place in society and if we're valued as a person.

Stories shape the way we see the world and the way we see ourselves. The Geena Davis Institute has conducted extensive research into the representation of women and girls on screen in the belief that "if she can see it, she can be it". But the importance of representation goes beyond that for members of the LGBTQIA+ community, people of colour, and those of varied abilities. For many it is a lifeline. It helps our world to open up and reminds us we're not alone. For LGBTQIA+ people in particular, seeing someone like them represented on screen can help make sense of how they're feeling. It can give them the vocabulary and the impetus they need to start the conversation they might have been too afraid to have.

Of course, the type of representation matters. If a character is merely defined by their 'otherness' and is used solely as a plot device, it can be more damaging than helpful. We need representation of complex characters who are three-dimensional human beings, and being transgender, lesbian, gay, bisexual, a person of colour, someone of varied ability, or a woman is only one aspect of the character, not their defining feature. This not only benefits those finally seeing themselves represented, but also creates empathy within the wider audience.

Stories are powerful and have the potential to create change - now more than ever.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The *First Day* film and teaching toolkit explore complex issues including gender, identity, and bullying. This content may elicit an emotional response in some students, or encourage them to disclose personal experiences with a teacher or classmates. A range of national youth services – including free and confidential counselling services – are listed below. These details could be shared with students or families in need of support.

EHEADSPACE: https://headspace.org.au/eheadspace
A confidential, free and secure service where young people and their families can speak with qualified mental health professionals by phone, online chat or email.

HEADSPACE: http://www.headspace.org.au
A national youth mental health foundation dedicated to improving the wellbeing of young Australians.

KIDS HELPLINE: https://kidshelpline.com.au
A free, private and confidential phone and online counselling service for young people.

MINUS18: https://www.minus18.org.au
A national youth-led organisation that caters to the diverse needs of LGBTQIA+ young Australians. Minus18 provides support, advocacy, training, and runs inclusive social events.

PARENTS OF GENDER DIVERSE CHILDREN: https://www.pgdc.org.au
PGDC provides support to families of transgender and gender diverse children, and professional development for organisations that work with young people, parents or families.

STUDENT WELLBEING HUB: https://www.studentwellbeinghub.edu.au
The Student Wellbeing Hub provides information and resources related to the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework, including guidance in creating safe and inclusive schools for transgender and gender diverse students.

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