

A young girl with her hair in a bun, wearing a blue and white checkered dress, white socks, and black Mary Jane shoes, stands in the center of a school hallway. She has her arms crossed and a serious expression. The background is filled with blurred figures of people walking, suggesting a busy school environment. The lighting is dramatic, with a bright light source from above creating a strong shadow on the floor.

FIRST DAY

TEACHING TOOLKIT - SERIES

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ABOUT THE SERIES

It's Hannah Bradford's first year of high school. As a transgender girl, Hannah not only has to navigate the challenges that come with starting a new school, but also find the courage to live as her most authentic self.

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. Suggested learning tasks for each episode relate to inclusivity, identity, relationships, and wellbeing. Tasks will help students learn about respectful relationships, and remind them that we are all more alike than we are different.

Transgender people do not look or behave a certain way, so it is not possible to look around the classroom and know if there are transgender people present. Before viewing *First Day* or using this resource, teachers should be aware that their class may include transgender, gender diverse, or gender questioning students, and that this content should be explored sensitively. Please be aware that transgender people may find some scenes in *First Day* upsetting, such as those involving judgment, rejection, bullying, and 'deadnaming'.

It is imperative that transgender and gender diverse students' privacy is upheld while viewing this series, discussing it, and undertaking the learning tasks in this resource. Teachers may choose to remind students that their peers have the right to privacy, and that private information should never be revealed without consent. By establishing expectations for behaviours and discussion, teachers can minimise the risk of students sharing experiences that make themselves vulnerable or distressed, and the risk of transgender or gender diverse students from being 'outed'.

Class conversations about gender, identity, and bullying invite a diversity of opinions to be shared, so it is essential that teachers establish a safe and supportive learning environment for all students to engage with this series. Respectful classroom behaviours such as active listening and 'no put-downs' will allow students to share their ideas, express their views, ask questions, and learn from each other.

BEING TRANSGENDER

WHAT DOES BEING 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. Every person who is transgender has a unique experience: Hannah’s story reflects the fictional experience of just one character.

SCHOOL LIFE FOR TRANSGENDER STUDENTS

Schools are likely to have transgender, gender diverse, and/or gender questioning 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 at home and in their school community, but many experience bullying, harassment or discrimination. This puts already vulnerable and marginalised students at further risk of poor mental health, wellbeing, and academic outcomes. (See the Trans Pathways Report in the Additional Resources section for more information about the mental health experiences of transgender youth.)

Building respectful and inclusive learning environments will help all students to feel valued, supported and safe at school.

EPISODE SYNOPSSES



01.

Hannah Bradford, a 12-year old transgender girl, is nervous about starting at a new school. It doesn't take her long to make friends and she discovers the first day of high school is difficult for everyone.



02.

Hannah feels left out when it appears that she's the only one not sleeping over at Jasmine's party. With Olivia's help, Hannah decides to make the most of the time she is there and has a better night than she expected.



03.

After being outed on social media, Hannah withdraws from those closest to her. It isn't until Olivia and Natalie pay her a visit that Hannah remembers how much her friends mean to her and she decides to return to school.



04.

At school camp, Hannah's friends throw her a surprise birthday party and at the end of the night she finds herself around a campfire fielding questions about being transgender. As the crowd grows, so does her confidence.

LEARNING TASKS





INCLUSIVITY

Watch: Episode 1

Hannah Bradford, a 12-year old transgender girl, is nervous about starting at a new school. It doesn't take her long to make friends and she discovers the first day of high school is difficult for everyone.

Task 1: Inclusive language

Clip: 01:15 – 02:30

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 language and behaviours in this scene. What did Mr. Nguyen say and do to make Hannah feel welcome and supported?

Challenge students to reflect on what 'being inclusive' sounds like in their own communities. Provide students with speech bubble sticky notes, or alternatively ask them to draw 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 2: Inclusive schools

Clip: 02:31 – 04:06

In this clip, Hannah changes her appearance – removing accessories and makeup – before returning to her primary school. Hiding aspects of her identity and begging her mum for the day off school, the audience can infer that Hannah does not feel safe to be herself at school.

Everyone has the right to feel safe and protected at school. In groups, ask students to brainstorm rules, behaviours, mindsets, expectations,

and language that will foster a safe and inclusive environment for everyone in their own school community, 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. Students could also present their work to their school leadership, School Council, Student Representative Council, or the wider school community.

As an extension task, the class could conduct an anonymous survey (or refer to recent surveys about attitudes to school) to better understand how safe students and staff feel at school, with the aim to improve their experience.

Task 3: Valuing diversity

Clip: 12:00 – 13:30

First Day features a transgender main character, and the film has a culturally diverse cast. View the above clip as a class, asking students to focus on the diversity of the school community depicted in the series.

In a group discussion, ask students to consider the ways in which valuing diversity can benefit individuals and their own 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.



Australian Curriculum Links

	Year 6	Year 7
ENGLISH	<p>Make connections between students' own experiences and those of characters and events represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1613)</p> <p>Participate in and contribute to discussions, clarifying and interrogating ideas, developing and supporting arguments, sharing and evaluating information, experiences and opinions (ACELY1709)</p> <p>Plan, rehearse and deliver presentations, selecting and sequencing appropriate content and multimodal elements for defined audiences and purposes, making appropriate choices for modality and emphasis (ACELY1710)</p>	<p>Identify and explore ideas and viewpoints about events, issues and characters represented in texts drawn from different historical, social and cultural contexts (ACELT1619)</p> <p>Identify and discuss main ideas, concepts and points of view in spoken texts to evaluate qualities, for example the strength of an argument or the lyrical power of a poetic rendition (ACELY1719)</p> <p>Plan, rehearse and deliver presentations, selecting and sequencing appropriate content and multimodal elements to promote a point of view or enable a new way of seeing (ACELY1720)</p>
HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION	<p>Identify how valuing diversity positively influences the wellbeing of the community (ACPPS060)</p> <p>Practise skills to establish and manage relationships (ACPPS055)</p> <p>Investigate community resources and ways to seek help about health, safety, and wellbeing (ACPPS053)</p>	<p>Investigate the benefits to individuals and communities of valuing diversity and promoting inclusivity (ACPPS079)</p> <p>Investigate and select strategies to promote health, safety, and wellbeing (ACPPS073)</p> <p>Plan and use health practices, behaviours and resources to enhance health, safety, and wellbeing of their communities (ACPPS077)</p>
CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING	<p>Imagine possibilities and connect ideas</p> <p>Consider alternatives</p> <p>Transfer knowledge into new contexts</p>	
PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CAPABILITY	<p>Understand relationships</p> <p>Contribute to civil society</p> <p>Appreciate diverse perspectives</p>	

IDENTITY

Watch: Episode 2

Hannah feels left out when it appears that she's the only one not sleeping over at Jasmine's party. With Olivia's help, Hannah decides to make the most of the time she is there and has a better night than she expected.

Task 1: Transitions

Clip: 01:17 – 02:30

Before discussing life transitions, be aware that the class may include students who have transitioned, are transitioning, or are intending to transition, to affirm their gender. Remind students that some transitions are deeply personal, and – to protect their privacy and wellbeing – sharing these with the class may not be appropriate at this time. For example, Hannah's transition from primary to secondary school is publicly known, but her transition to affirm her gender is private information that she has chosen not to share with others. By establishing boundaries for discussion, teachers can minimise the risk of students sharing experiences that make themselves vulnerable or distressed, and the risk of transgender or gender diverse students from being 'outed'.

Moving from primary to secondary school is a major life transition which involves leaving the familiar behind. This change is difficult for many young people, and mixed feelings are common. Like her peers, Hannah is excited about making new friends at school, but she is also worried about not fitting in.

In pairs, have students reflect on and discuss the (publicly known) life transitions they have already experienced. This might include moving to a new house, developing a new interest, or the arrival of a sibling. Were these transitions ultimately positive or





negative experiences? What helped students to move through these periods of change? Ask students if anyone is comfortable sharing their reflections with the wider group.

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 2: Identity map

Clip: 03:31 – 05:23

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 student, a gamer, she practices Taekwondo, and so on. Ask students to watch this clip and then discuss what they learnt about Hannah's identity. How do the settings and other characters in this sequence help viewers to learn about her 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 3: Empathy

Clip: 14:52 – 18:27

Despite worrying about her reaction, Hannah decides to tell Olivia that she is transgender after the party. Hannah trusts Olivia and feels that sharing her gender identity will allow her to be more open with her. Olivia takes a moment to process what Hannah has told her, but it makes no difference to how she sees her friend. Through her words and actions, Olivia shows Hannah that she will continue to be a supportive friend.

Have students divide a blank page into four quarters, and label these sections 'Feel', 'Think', 'Say', 'Do'.

Play the above clip, asking students to focus on Olivia's reactions. What might Olivia be feeling and thinking in these scenes? What does she say and do in response to her feelings and thoughts? Have students identify and record examples for each of these sections. Ask students to share their work, and extend their thinking with the following questions:

- How do Olivia's words and actions connect to her thoughts and feelings?
- What does Olivia say and do to make Hannah feel supported?
- How do you think Hannah feels after this conversation? Which words or actions make you think this?

Australian Curriculum Links

	Year 6	Year 7
ENGLISH	<p>Use a range of software, including word processing programs, learning new functions as required to create texts (ACELY1717)</p> <p>Participate in and contribute to discussions, clarifying and interrogating ideas, developing and supporting arguments, sharing and evaluating information, experiences and opinions (ACELY1709)</p> <p>Use comprehension strategies to interpret and analyse information and ideas, comparing content from a variety of textual sources including media and digital texts (ACELY1713)</p>	<p>Use a range of software, including word processing programs, to confidently create, edit and publish written and multimodal texts (ACELY1728)</p> <p>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)</p> <p>Use comprehension strategies to interpret, analyse and synthesise ideas and information, critiquing ideas and issues from a variety of textual sources (ACELY1723)</p>
HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION	<p>Examine how identities are influenced by people and places (ACPPS051)</p> <p>Examine the influence of emotional responses on behaviour and relationships (ACPPS056)</p>	<p>Investigate the impact of transition and change on identities (ACPPS070)</p> <p>Analyse factors that influence emotions, and develop strategies to demonstrate empathy and sensitivity (ACPPS075)</p>
CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING	<p>Thinking about thinking (metacognition)</p> <p>Imagine possibilities and connect ideas</p> <p>Identify and clarify information and ideas</p>	
PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CAPABILITY	<p>Recognise emotions</p> <p>Recognise personal qualities and achievements</p> <p>Express emotions appropriately</p>	

FIRST DAY



RELATIONSHIPS

Watch: Episode 3

After being outed on social media, Hannah withdraws from those closest to her. It is not until Olivia and Natalie pay her a visit that Hannah remembers how much her friends mean to her and she decides to return to school.

Task 1: Friendship

Clip: 06:19 – 08:30

For most students, starting high school involves making new friends. When watching the above clip, have students examine what Olivia and Natalie do to cement their new friendship with Hannah. For example, they encourage and support Hannah, meet her family, and share fun experiences together. 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 2: Peer influence

Clip: 09:00 – 10:05

The desire to be accepted and valued by friends can make young people susceptible to peer influence. Negative peer influence – or ‘peer pressure’ – is frequently discussed, but friends can also encourage and inspire each other to do positive things.

Play the above clip, asking students to focus on the positive influence Olivia and Natalie have on Hannah.

Hannah has withdrawn from others and is staying home from school after being outed on social media. This means that someone revealed Hannah's gender identity without her consent, despite all individuals having the right to privacy.

It's not until Olivia and Natalie visit her that Hannah remembers how much her friendships mean to her, and she decides to go back to school. They also support and encourage Hannah on the day she returns to Hillview.

As a class, discuss the clip and brainstorm further examples of positive peer influence. Then in an independent writing task, ask students to respond to the following 3-2-1 prompt in their journals:

- Three positive things that they have encouraged or inspired friends to do
- Two positive things that friends have encouraged them to do
- One thing they learnt from this clip or lesson

Task 3: Values

Clip: 10:07 – 12:58

When Hannah returns to Hillview, she finds that some peers are more supportive than others. Seemingly influenced by her mother's values, Jasmine believes that Hannah kept a secret from her; she chooses to walk away from their friendship.





Isabella – a bully from Hannah’s primary school – continues to threaten and intimidate her.

It is sometimes difficult to identify and move on from negative relationships. But school transitions are an ideal time for students to reflect on their relationships, and to prioritise positive friendships which are aligned with their own 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.

Australian Curriculum Links

	Year 6	Year 7
ENGLISH	<p>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)</p> <p>Use comprehension strategies to interpret and analyse information and ideas, comparing content from a variety of textual sources including media and digital texts (ACELY1713)</p> <p>Use a range of software, including word processing programs, learning new functions as required to create texts (ACELY1717)</p>	<p>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)</p> <p>Use comprehension strategies to interpret, analyse and synthesise ideas and information, critiquing ideas and issues from a variety of textual sources (ACELY1723)</p> <p>Use a range of software, including word processing programs, to confidently create, edit and publish written and multimodal texts (ACELY1728)</p>
HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION	<p>Practise skills to establish and manage relationships (ACPPS055)</p> <p>Investigate resources and strategies to manage changes and transitions associated with puberty (ACPPS052)</p>	<p>Investigate the benefits of relationships and examine their impact on their own and others’ health and wellbeing (ACPPS074)</p> <p>Evaluate strategies to manage personal, physical, and social changes that occur as they grow older (ACPPS071)</p>
CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING	<p>Pose questions</p> <p>Organise and process information</p> <p>Seek solutions and put ideas into action</p>	
PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CAPABILITY	<p>Communicate effectively</p> <p>Contribute to civil society</p> <p>Develop reflective practice</p>	

WELLBEING

Watch: Episode 4

At school camp, Hannah's friends throw her a surprise birthday party and at the end of the night she finds herself around a campfire fielding questions about being transgender. As the crowd grows, so does her confidence.

Task 1: Seeking support

Clip: 13:40 – 16:10

After listening to Hannah answer questions about being transgender, Sarah approaches her for a private conversation. Sarah asks Hannah how she made her parents understand that she is transgender, saying that their own attempts to discuss gender identity with their mum were rejected: 'She just won't listen. Any time I try to talk to her about it, she just says she doesn't want to hear it.'

Hannah has a supportive and affirming family, but not all young people have the same experience. Considering a range of situations and events that young people may face, ask students to brainstorm people or places that could assist students who do not have parental support at home. 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 2: Protective factors

Clip: 16:11 – 17:56

The words and actions of her peers at school camp make it clear to Hannah that she has their support. This gives her the strength to stand up to Isabella: it helps her be resilient.

Protective factors are the mindsets, strengths, resources, supports and strategies that enable people to cope with transitions and overcome challenges.





Discuss this concept as a class, then split students into three groups for a jigsaw task about protective factors. Allocate one of the following categories to each group: Individual, Family, Community. Reflecting on what they know about Hannah from this and other clips, ask groups to identify, discuss, and record protective factors that have contributed to Hannah's resilience. Examples for each category are listed below:

- Individual (e.g. Hannah participates in sports)
- Family (e.g. Hannah's parents are affirming and supportive)
- Community (e.g. Hannah has good relationships with teachers)

Have each group share their thinking with the wider class, recording their examples on the whiteboard to build a full picture of Hannah's protective factors. Ask students to add any further examples groups may not have identified.

Students could repeat this process as an independent reflection task, documenting the individual, family and community factors that will help them cope with challenges in their own lives.

Task 3: Belonging and connectedness
Clip: 18:53 – 21:11

All individuals should feel that they belong in their school community. Having a strong sense of belonging gives students the confidence to participate and helps them to reach their potential.

In the final scenes of *First Day*, Hannah makes amends with Isabella before running to the water and diving straight in. During school camp she has strengthened friendships and developed confidence, and finally has a sense of belonging and connectedness with her school peers. After viewing this clip, discuss how Hannah would now feel. Ask students which communities they feel connected to, and how this connection makes them feel.

Have students write a 'two-word poem' on the theme of belonging and connectedness, 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.



Australian Curriculum Links

	Year 6	Year 7
ENGLISH	<p>Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, choosing and experimenting with text structures, language features, images and digital resources appropriate to purpose and audience (ACELY1714)</p> <p>Participate in and contribute to discussions, clarifying and interrogating ideas, developing and supporting arguments, sharing and evaluating information, experiences and opinions (ACELY1709)</p> <p>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)</p>	<p>Plan, draft and publish imaginative, informative and persuasive texts, selecting aspects of subject matter and particular language, visual, and audio features to convey information and ideas (ACELY1725)</p> <p>Identify and discuss main ideas, concepts, and points of view in spoken texts to evaluate qualities, for example the strength of an argument or the lyrical power of a poetic rendition (ACELY1719)</p> <p>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)</p>
HEALTH AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION	<p>Investigate community resources and ways to seek help about health, safety, and wellbeing (ACPPS053)</p> <p>Plan and practise strategies to promote health, safety, and wellbeing (ACPPS054)</p> <p>Examine the influence of emotional responses on behaviour and relationships (ACPPS056)</p>	<p>Practise and apply strategies to seek help for themselves or others (ACPPS072)</p> <p>Investigate and select strategies to promote health, safety, and wellbeing (ACPPS073)</p> <p>Analyse factors that influence emotions, and develop strategies to demonstrate empathy and sensitivity (ACPPS075)</p>
CRITICAL AND CREATIVE THINKING	<p>Imagine possibilities and connect ideas</p> <p>Organise and process information</p> <p>Transfer knowledge into new contexts</p>	
PERSONAL AND SOCIAL CAPABILITY	<p>Contribute to civil society</p> <p>Recognise personal qualities and achievements</p> <p>Recognise emotions</p>	

BEHIND THE SCENES



ON SET WITH EVIE MACDONALD



INTERVIEW WITH LEAD ACTRESS, EVIE MACDONALD

What would you like the outcome to be for the audiences watching *First Day*?

I'd like for people watching the series to think, 'Wow, she's just like me: she's not that different!' I want people to see that.

What was the best moment on set for you?

The campfire scene, that was fun. Filming all of the scenes at camp was amazing. We got to spend time just playing. I feel that by just hanging out with the cast, I got to connect with them.

Tell us about Isabella's story arc.

I don't think Isabella has much support at home. Being treated so horribly at home can really impact somebody and their emotions. Seeing someone like Hannah, who is happy and trying to get on with her life, could be irritating for someone like Isabella who is going through such a hard time.

What are the similarities between Hannah and Isabella?

They are both going through their own problems. I think the audience will feel compassion for Isabella. It doesn't always feel like it, but there are always two sides to any story. Hannah's a very compassionate person and she can see that there's something going on.

Tell us about the importance of Hannah's friends in *First Day*

Olivia and Natalie help Hannah a lot. Having support means you feel more comfortable; you have people to talk to, people to go to. You feel like you're not alone. Being trans myself, I know that you can feel alone a lot when you're growing up. Hannah would consider herself lucky to have Olivia and Natalie as her friends. Without Olivia especially, I don't know where Hannah would be. From that first day when they meet, Olivia is a really good friend to Hannah.

In *First Day*, how supportive are Hannah’s parents?

Hannah’s mum is always there for her and I feel like that support really helps Hannah – even when Hannah doesn’t realise it. Some of the script was based on things my mum told Julie about our family life. The rule where Hannah’s not allowed to sleepover, I grew up with that rule. It stopped me from going over to people’s houses. Now I can see that was just there to protect me.

Do you think this series might bring about any positive changes in society?

When kids watch the series, I want them to realise that even if they are going through something, like Isabella was, they still shouldn’t treat people the way she treated Hannah.



INTERVIEW WITH WRITER/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. However, I acknowledge that I am not transgender and, in many regards, this is not 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 she has the tools and support she needs to tell it. The courage, maturity, natural ability and talent Evie has shown throughout this process 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.



ON SET WITH DIRECTOR, JULIE KALCEFF

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.

REFLECTION BY PRODUCER, **KIRSTY STARK**

There is a point when you release a project into the world that it ceases to be yours and instead becomes your audience's. Of course, a film or television project never truly belongs to one person even in its creation: it is a labour of love made up of input, insight, love, blood, sweat and tears from so many people along the way. But once it airs on television or screens in a cinema, it becomes its own entity, and reflects the different perspectives and experiences of its individual audience members.

Throughout development of *First Day*, Writer/Director Julie Kalceff and I knew that this was not our story to tell. We are not transgender, and recognise that Hannah's experience of starting high school as a trans girl is not one that we can ever fully understand. For this reason, it was a priority for us to have a transgender writer and a parent of a trans child in our writers room, to cast trans kids in our trans roles - including the amazing Evie Macdonald as our lead - and to consult with organisations including GLAAD and Parents of Gender Diverse Children to ensure that our scripts were as accurate and authentic as possible.

However, none of this fully prepared me for the responses that the trans and gender diverse community would have to the series once we began to share the finished episodes. Our first "public" screening was to a small group of advocates from LGBTQI+ support organisations and was held internally at the ABC ahead of the series' release. Although I still respond emotionally to the series myself, despite having seen each episode dozens of times, I didn't realise the impact that a children's show would have on the group of adults assembled in the room. They were not only drawn in by Hannah's journey and the drama on screen, but appeared to experience it more viscerally than I would ever be able to, in connection with their personal experiences, and those of the families and children that they work with.

Although I thought I had understood the responsibility that came with telling a story like Hannah's, the nuances and layers

in the responses from adults and children who have seen the finished episodes over the past week has made me realise I greatly underestimated the impact of the work we were creating. We have heard from trans adults of the joy of seeing a young trans girl living so authentically on screen. About the significance of having someone like you represented proudly on television on a national broadcaster; not needing to seek it out as 'niche' content online. Of the fear to watch a show of this nature, because of its potential to unleash so much of your own trauma, and the gratitude that once you did, it offered hope. Of the wish that Hannah's story will be the first of many - because it represents just one trans story; not all trans stories.

Since the series launch, Julie and I have been reading and listening to people's responses, and learning so much from everyone who has been generous enough to write and share their experiences and feedback. That input will help us to shape the support materials, viewer advice and teaching toolkits that will surround the series as it continues its life in the world, and I'm incredibly grateful to have expanded my own understanding of the project we made, by seeing it through others' eyes.

I also want to acknowledge the effort and care that Julie put in as the writer and director of *First Day* to ensure that the show was as accurate and authentic as possible. I know she often questioned whether she was the right person to tell the story, or whether she was representing it in the right way, but given that it's near impossible for a 12-year old trans girl to finance and produce a television series, her commitment to enabling Hannah's story to make it to screen with such authenticity is something that I think deserves acknowledgement. I'm truly proud of some of the small details within the show that have been specifically called out by the trans community for their accuracy, and it was Julie who ensured they all made it onto the screen in a subtle and balanced way.

This is only the beginning for *First Day*, and we hope that it is a project that will continue to be seen around the world for many years, and used as a tool for education and understanding for both children and adults.





THE FIRST DAY SET

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES





RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

First Day explores 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.

RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

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.

Trans Pathways Report

<https://www.telethonkids.org.au/globalassets/media/documents/brain-behaviour/trans-pathways-report.pdf>

This report by the Telethon Kids Institute looks at the mental health experiences and care pathways of trans young people.

Supporting Gender Diverse Students

For current policies and procedures relating to transgender and gender diverse students, please contact your state / territory education department or Human Rights Commission.

***First Day* Short Film (2017)**

Teachers wanting to learn more about the *First Day* short film (2017) can access the following content and resources from the ACTF.

First Day – Short Film

<https://actf.com.au/education-programs/id/152/>

First Day teaching toolkit – Short Film

https://actf.com.au/teaching_resources/id/10405/

First Day Q&A Webinar

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dnQjtTarkww>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sections of this resource were originally published in the Teaching Toolkit for the *First Day* short film (2017). ACTF Education would like to thank the people we consulted with for the original resource: Julie Kalceff, *First Day* writer and director; Kirsty Stark, *First Day* producer; Jo Hirst, Parents of Gender Diverse Children board member; and Briony O'Keeffe, curriculum consultant.

Written and Directed by **JULIE KALCEFF**

Produced by **KIRSTY STARK** and **KATE CROSER**

Co-Produced by **KATE BUTLER** and **JULIE KALCEFF**

Executive Producers **BERNADETTE O'MAHONY, JAN STRADLING**
and **AMANDA ISDALE**

Starring **EVIE MACDONALD** as **HANNAH**

AN EPIC FILMS PRODUCTION IN ASSOCIATION WITH KOJO ENTERTAINMENT. PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCTION FUNDING FROM SCREEN AUSTRALIA. FINANCED WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE SOUTH AUSTRALIAN FILM CORPORATION. DISTRIBUTED BY THE AUSTRALIAN CHILDREN'S TELEVISION FOUNDATION. DEVELOPED AND PRODUCED IN ASSOCIATION WITH THE AUSTRALIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION



First Day Teaching Toolkit (Series) developed & distributed by Australian Children's Television Foundation.

