

Dear Educator,

The breathtaking, generation-defining Broadway phenomenon *Dear Evan Hansen* becomes a soaring cinematic event this fall, as Tony, Grammy, and Emmy Award winner Ben Platt reprises his role as an anxious, isolated high schooler aching for understanding and belonging amid the chaos of the social-media age. It's a story of longing to be *found* and discovering who you really are, set to some of the most uplifting music of our times.

Inspired by the upcoming film, this free teaching kit from Universal Pictures, the Child Mind Institute, and the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired, invites high school students to explore the film's themes, including concepts of identity, empathy, inclusivity, communication, support, and hope. The program is designed to encourage and support educators, students, and families in engaging in meaningful discussions on these topics at school and home, with a focus on the inspirational elements of the film. Through exploration and collaboration with peers to complete the activities, students will gain a better understanding of identity, others' perspectives, and acceptance, and learn skills and strategies to apply these ideas to their own lives to build supportive school communities.

Please feel free to share these resources with other educators who teach students ages 14 to 17. And let us know your thoughts about the program by visiting ymiclassroom.com/feedback-dearevanhansen.

Sincerely,



Dominic Kinsley, PhD
Editor in Chief
Young Minds Inspired



Questions? Contact YMI toll-free at 1-800-859-8005, or by email at feedback@ymiclassroom.com.



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YOU WILL BE FOUND

TARGET AUDIENCE

Students, ages 14-17

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

In completing the activities, students will:

- Develop an awareness about personal identity
- Practice strategies that show empathy to peers
- Collaborate to promote a supportive school community
- Employ effective interviewing techniques
- Write short, informative narratives from multiple points of view
- Explore ways to strengthen social and emotional wellness

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Available at ymiclassroom.com/dearevanhansen:

- This two-page teacher's guide
- Four reproducible student activity sheets
- A family take-home letter
- Four-page digital student magazine
- Audio sampler of songs and lyrics from the film
- Standards chart
- Feedback form

HOW TO USE THIS PROGRAM

Download and photocopy the activity sheets and take-home letter for your students, and follow the suggested agenda for each activity. Students do not have to view *Dear Evan Hansen* to complete the activities, but viewing the film makes for a more meaningful learning experience. Before starting the activities, establish class discussion guidelines so that students feel comfortable sharing if they choose to. Remind students to be respectful of each other, as the activities focus on empathy and inclusivity.

PROGRAM GOAL AND SENSITIVE CONTENT

The film *Dear Evan Hansen* addresses sensitive topics. This program aims to engage students in reflection around themes of identity, perspective-taking, and support through activities that encourage students to consider who they are, how they relate to others, and how seeing the world through another's perspective can be a way to support their peers.

It is important to note that, while these activities are meant to promote connection and wellness within school communities, any student experiencing significant challenges with their mental health will require additional support, as this program is not designed to address these concerns.

Please visit childmind.org for information if you, or someone you know, is experiencing mental health struggles.

Before starting the program, consider how you might collaborate with colleagues to build support around identity, empathy, and resilience for your students and encourage discussions among educators, students, and their families to build supportive school communities.

ABOUT DEAR EVAN HANSEN

Evan Hansen (Tony, Grammy, and Emmy Award winner Ben Platt) is a lonely high school senior who suffers from an anxiety disorder and feels invisible to his fellow classmates. But when Connor Murphy (Colton Ryan, *Little Voice*), a volatile loner in Evan's class, takes his own life, a letter found among the boy's things leads Connor's parents to believe that Evan was their son's best friend. Evan, wanting not to hurt them further, doesn't reveal the truth — that he and Connor barely knew each other, and that Connor had no friends.

What begins as a lie of compassion soon spirals out of control and Evan, suddenly offered everything he ever hoped for, struggles for the courage to tell the truth and to be seen, and loved, for who he truly is. The film is rated PG-13 and arrives in theaters September 24, 2021.

For more information about booking a school or class screening of *Dear Evan Hansen* at your local theater, please email DEHGroupSales@nbcuni.com.

DEAR EVAN HANSEN

ONLY IN THEATERS
SEPTEMBER 24



ACTIVITY 1 WAVING THROUGH A WINDOW

Materials: Lyrics and recording of “Waving Through a Window” available at the YMI program site; copies of the activity sheet

Agenda: Listen to the song and review the lyrics. Discuss what the song’s title means as related to someone expressing their identity. Explain that sometimes we can feel like we’re waving through a window — that is, we’re on the outside and people can’t see who we really are. In this activity, we’ll talk about how people might open that window and step into the community as their authentic self.

To start, ask students to brainstorm whom they admire — e.g., characters from their favorite novels or films, a family member or adult in their lives, or significant figures in history. Prompt students to describe their role models’ admirable qualities and how they express their authentic selves. Then pass out the activity sheet and have students profile their role models.

In small groups or as a class, have students share their profiles, and record the admirable qualities they identify. If a student feels uncomfortable sharing, they can have a friend read their profile for them.

Close with a short discussion about what the students’ role models have in common. Ask: *How can you use their example to find strength to ‘open the window’ in your own life and express parts of yourself authentically with others?* Solicit responses, and offer your own ideas for the qualities you’d hope to see students be able to express.

ACTIVITY 2 YOU ARE NOT ALONE

Materials: Lyrics and recording of “You Will Be Found” available at the YMI program site; copies of the activity sheet

Agenda: Have students read and listen to the song’s lyrics and explore their meaning in a class discussion.

Ask: *What are some aspects of yourself that you wish you could show to the world a bit more? Are there things you struggle with, that you wonder if others struggle with as well? What supports you during those tough times when you feel alone?* Explain that in tough times, as *Dear Evan Hansen* shows us, it helps to know that you’re not alone.

Divide the class into small groups and have students use the T-chart on the activity sheet to collect examples of times they felt alone and times they felt connected — or *found* — to their peers, family, a coach, counselor, or someone else.

After about 10 minutes, have each group share an example from either side of the T-chart. Then discuss as a class: *What similarities did you hear among times we felt alone? How about when we felt found?*

Have the groups create strategies to help them and others feel included and found. In addition to their own experience, students can use resources found on childmind.org.

ACTIVITY 3 YOU’RE YOU AND THAT’S ENOUGH

Materials: Copies of the activity sheet; chart paper; index cards

Agenda: Begin with the question: *Can you think of a time when you noticed that your perception of a friend was different from what they were feeling or thinking on the inside? Can you think of a time when someone drew a conclusion about you that was different than how you think of yourself?* Examples could include interactions on social media or hearing gossip about someone. Draw the conclusion that we don’t always know the reality of what we think we see, a theme we learn in *Dear Evan Hansen*.

Explain that students are going to work in pairs to interview and get to know each other. Discuss class guidelines that will make everyone feel safe to participate. List students’ ideas on chart paper to hang at the front of the room. Reiterate that all students should follow these guidelines for this activity.

Discuss what makes an effective interview (asking open-ended questions, good note taking, and a warm, accepting approach) and brainstorm questions students can use to interview each other.

Put students in pairs, distribute the activity sheet, and give each student an index card. Ask students to list three things that make them unique on the card and give it to their partner. Then have students use the index card information as a jumping-off point to compose interview questions on the activity sheet. Then allow students about 20 minutes to interview each other.

Facilitate a reflective perspective-taking discussion: *How did what you learned in your interview differ from what you perceived about your partner? How was it the same?* Larger question: *Now that we’ve learned how what we think we see can be different from the truth about someone,*

how can we use this concept to be more empathetic toward each other?

Close by having students write a positive statement on an index card that encourages their peers to be more empathetic and accepting. Display the cards on a bulletin board for all classes to enjoy.

ACTIVITY 4 SOCIAL SUPPORT

Materials: Copies of the activity sheet; internet access; old magazines and newspapers for images; glue, tape, and posterboard

Agenda: Begin by asking: *What role does social media play in your life? What are its positives? How about its negatives?* Have students note their ideas on the activity sheet.

Next, have students search their preferred social media platforms (Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, TikTok, etc.) for positive, supportive, and inspiring content. Have them record their findings in the sections of the activity sheet’s graphic organizer, citing sources.

Discuss obstacles students might have encountered in finding positive social media content. Were there differences across platforms?

Finally, explain that students will create collages from materials in magazines and newspapers that include the messages of support they wish they saw *more* of on social media. Their collages should highlight positive, inspirational messages that let peers know they’re not alone and are accepted and celebrated. When students complete their collages, display them in the classroom.

Close by asking students for a quick written response (less than a paragraph) explaining what they took away from the activity.

DIGITAL MAGAZINE AND AUDIO SAMPLER

Have students use the digital magazine and audio sampler at the YMI program site to explore the music in *Dear Evan Hansen* and learn more about the film.

RESOURCES

- YMIclassroom.com/dearevanhansen
- Universalpictures.com/movies/dear-evan-hansen
- Childmind.org

WAVING THROUGH A WINDOW

In the film *Dear Evan Hansen*, high-schooler Evan Hansen feels he's always waving through a window — that is, he feels that he doesn't belong and is on the outside, looking in on his peers. This is a feeling many people can relate to at one time or another. But one of the key messages in the film is that, in fact, we all are worthy of belonging and are all unique and valuable. Think about someone you admire, someone who is a role model for living their full, authentic self. How does this person inspire you to open up and express parts of yourself with others?



Person I admire: _____

Describe this person. _____

Why did you select this person? _____

Why do you consider this person a role model for living life authentically and expressing their true self?

Does this person inspire you to express yourself and parts of you that otherwise feel lonely or isolating? If so how? _____

Besides your role model, where else do you find strength to open that window?

Share your role model profile in a class discussion. As you listen to your peers, jot down any facts and ideas that are surprising or interesting to you, or that you could draw inspiration from.



DEAR EVAN HANSEN

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SOCIAL SUPPORT

Raise your hand if you spend more time than you intend to browsing social media. (You raised it, right?) As the characters in *Dear Evan Hansen* learn, social media has a lot of plusses, but can also have less positive effects. What social media upsides and downsides can you see? List them here.



SOCIAL MEDIA POSITIVES	SOCIAL MEDIA NEGATIVES

Now, to focus on the uplifting aspects of your favorite social media platforms, use this graphic organizer to find quotes, posts, and influencers that are aspirational, empathetic, encouraging, and make you feel good all around. List each here, along with its source. Find the messages of support!

“ Influencers

”

“ Quotes

”

“ Posts

”

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YOU WILL BE FOUND

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

The breathtaking, generation-defining Broadway phenomenon *Dear Evan Hansen* becomes a soaring cinematic event this fall, as Tony, Grammy, and Emmy Award winner Ben Platt reprises his role as an anxious, isolated high schooler aching for understanding and belonging amid the chaos and cruelty of the social-media age. It's a story of longing to be *found* and discovering who you really are, set to some of the most uplifting music of our times.

Your child's class has been exploring the themes of *Dear Evan Hansen* with a free educational program made possible by Universal Pictures and the Child Mind Institute, and developed by the curriculum specialists at Young Minds Inspired. Tailored to high schoolers, the program is designed to encourage educators, students, and families to engage in meaningful discussions about issues raised by the film at school and home. While the film does contain some sensitive content, the program's classroom activities focus on its inspirational, inclusive elements to help students gain a better understanding of identity, others' perspectives, and acceptance, and learn skills and strategies to apply these concepts in their own lives to build supportive school communities.

As a family, you can reinforce and complement these lessons by discussing what your child has taken from the classroom activities and exploring together questions such as:

- Where and when do you feel like you most belong?
- How can you help others to feel that sense of belonging?
- What advice would you give to a teen who feels alone or different?
- What's unique about you? What do you see as unique about your family members?
- How does social media affect your day-to-day life? How can you use it to focus on messages that help you and your peers to feel supported?

About DEAR EVAN HANSEN

Evan Hansen (Tony, Grammy, and Emmy Award winner Ben Platt) is a lonely high school senior who suffers from an anxiety disorder and feels invisible to his fellow classmates. But when Connor Murphy (Colton Ryan, *Little Voice*), a volatile loner in Evan's class, takes his own life, a letter found among the boy's things leads Connor's parents to believe that Evan was their son's best friend. Evan, wanting not to hurt them further, doesn't reveal the truth — that he and Connor barely knew each other, and that Connor had no friends.

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